

# [The journey of odysseus and telemachos](https://assignbuster.com/the-journey-of-odysseus-and-telemachos/)

In The Odyssey written by Homer and translated by Richard Lattimore,
several themes are made evident, conceived by the nature of the time
period, and customs of the Greek people. These molded and shaped the
actual flow of events and outcomes of the poem. Beliefs of this
characteristic were represented by the sheer reverence towards the gods
and the humanities the Greek society exhibited, and are both deeply
rooted within the story.
In the intricate and well-developed plot of The Odyssey, Homer
harmonized several subjects. One of these, was the quest of Telemachos,
(titled " Telemachy") in correlation with the journey of his father. In
this, he is developed from a childish, passive, and untested boy, to a
young man preparing to stand by his fathers side. This is directly
connected to the voyage of Odysseus, in that they both lead to the same
finale, and are both stepping stones towards wisdom, manhood, and
scholarship. Through these voyages certain parallels are drawn concerning
Odysseus and Telemachos: the physical journeys, the mental preparations
they have produced, and what their emotional status has resulted in.
These all partake a immense role in the way the story is set up, stemming
from the purpose of each characters journey, their personal challenges,
and the difficulties that surround them.

The story commences when Odysseus, a valiant hero of the Trojan war,
journeys back home. Together with his courageous comrades, and a several
vessels, he set sail for his homeland Ithaca. Fated to wander for a full
ten years, Odysseuss ships were immediately blown to Thrace by a
powerful storm. The expedition had begun.
Upon this misfortune, he and his men started a raid on the land of
the Cicones. However, this only provided them with temporary success. The
Cicones had struck back and defeated a vast majority of Odysseuss crew.
This was their first of many disastrous experiences to come.

Storms then blew his ships to Libya and the land of the
Lotus-eaters, where the crew was given Lotus fruit from which most lost
their entire memories from home. Odysseus, and the others who had not
tasted it, recovered the sailors by force, and set sail again, westward,
this time to the island of the Cyclops, a wild race of one-eyed giants.
Leaving most of his men in a sheltered cove, Odysseus then entered the
island with one crew only. They wandered around, encountering, and
foolishly entering an immense cave, awaiting the owner. Moments later, a
Cyclops named Polyphemos, son of Poseidon, entered and pushed a huge
bolder covering the entrance to the cave. Upon this, he immediately ate
two sailors, and promised to eat the others in due time. The morning
came, and Polyphemos had promptly eaten two more seamen, against the will
of Zeus. Odysseus, soon realized that killing him asleep would do no good
since the mouth of the cave was still inescapable. The captain had then
devised a new plan. When Polyphemos returned that evening, Odysseus
showered the monster with wine until he had fallen under a drunken spell.
Then, with the help of his companions took a sharp pole and rammed it
into his large eye, blinding him instantaneously. As the crew sailed away
into the vast dimensions of the sea, Odysseus had unwisely revealed his
name in taunting the poor beast, boasting his excessive pride. Polyphemos
then made a prayer to his father, asking to punish the man who had caused
him this harm.

Several days later Odysseus and his men arrived at the island of
Aeolus, keeper of the winds. There, they stayed for about one month, and
departed, in sight of the long-awaited Ithaca. However, before they left,
Odysseus was presented with a container of winds, carrying each but the
needed West wind. As Ithaca approached, the crew not knowing the
contents of the " skin", opened it up and released all of the winds,
depositing the ships back at the island of Aeolus, who refused to help
them any further.

Setting sail once again, the group headed back west, where they had
come across the Island of the Laesrtygonians, a savage race of cannibals.
Everyone, but Odysseus, lined their ships at the harbor, covered with
rocks. The entire party was attacked and eaten by the Laestrygonians, who
had bombarded them with giant boulders. Having but one vessel left,
Odysseus sailed his ship to the Island of Dawn, inhabited by the
sorceress Circe.
A group of men were sent to explore the island, who were then lured,
feasted, and the turned to swine by Circe. Knowing this Odysseus went
after her, and on his way encountered Hermes who gave him a potion to
withstand the spell. Circe tried, and then she failed. Odysseus had then
requested for his crew to be turned back to normal. She complied, and
eventually housed Odysseus and his shipmates long enough for him to
father three children. Homesick and distraught, Odysseus was then advised
by Circe to search the underworld for Teiresias, to tell him his fortune,
and how to appease Poseidon.
Odysseus agreed and made a trip to the underworld, where he
discovered many of his dead companions from Troy, and most importantly,
Teiresias. With his new knowledge, he returned to Circe, which had
provided him with just the information he needed to pass the Sirens. They
then departed from the island and continued on there journey, ears
filled with wax.

What Odysseus was about to encounter next would be a very difficult
task. He needed to direct his ship through a straight, between two
cliffs, on one side the whirlpool Charybdis, on the other, a monster
Scylla. Trying hard to avoid Charybdis Odysseus came too close to Scylla,
and six members of his ship suffered the consequences. As the journey
continued the Island of Helios stood in path. Helios was the sun-god, and
nurturer of the cattle of the gods. Knowing this, but at the same time
extraordinarily hungry, Odysseus waited for his sea-mates to fall asleep
and slaughtered several of the cattle. This was much considered a lack of
respect not only to Helios, but to the rest of the gods as well.
Zeus, angered by his gesture, struck his ship with thunder,
destroying the entire thing and killing the rest of the crew except for
Odysseus, which floated off to the Island of Ogygia, where he would there
spend the next seven years, made a lover, by the sea nymph Calypso. Upon
Poseidons departure to Ethiopia, Zeus had then ordered that Calypso
release Odysseus, who gave him an ax. With this, he constructed a float,
and continued his expedition. Back from his trip, Poseidon, saw Odysseus
floating in the ocean and felt compelled to drown him, which he almost
did, if it was not for the goddess Ino, who had spared him a magic veil.
He tied this to his waist, and swam to a beach where he immediately fell
asleep.

The next morning he was awoken by maidens playing ball after doing
the wash. There he saw Nausikaa, daughter of king Alkinoos. Odysseus
gently supplicated to the princess. She first took him to the inhabitants
of the island, the Phaiakians, and then Alkinoos, the king. There he
listened to Odysseuss stories, and presented him with lavish gifts and a
furnished ship back to Ithaca. Resenting this fact, Poseidon turned the
new crew into stone for their generosity.

This is the time, nearly twenty years after his fathers departure,
Athene wisely advises the worried, and still immature Telemachos to go in
search of his father. Telemachos agrees with her orders, and before his
departure he makes it clear to the suitors (robbing his home and
proposing marriage to his mother Penelope) that he wants them all out of
his house.
He then requested a ship and twenty men, and sailed off to the
Island of Pylos. There he was immediately greeted by Nestor, in the
middle of offering 81 bulls to Poseidon. Peisistratos, son of Nestor,
then offered some intestines to Telemachos and Athene as far as
sacrificing it in hopes of a safe journey. This was ironic since in
reality, Athene was controlling his journey, and on the other hand,
moments ago, Poseidon, was in fact destroying the journey of his father.
Nestor, once seeing that his guests were finished feasting, asked of
their identities. Once he was recognized, Telemachos asked Nestor about
his father. Nestor rambled on and said nothing of real importance to
Telemachos. At this point Telemachos became pessimistic, and Athene
reassured him with an analogy of Agamemnons short journey, and its
consequences. Still emotionally unstable, Telemachos used this
opportunity to speak of Menaleus, Agamemnons brother.

Nestor agreed that Menaleus may be more knowledgeable that he, and
kindly provided him with a chariot, so that he could travel to Sparta to
speak with him, accompanied by Peisistratos. He arrived at Sparta two
days later, sleeping in the house of Diocles the first night, and
arriving by nightfall the second day. He reached the island just in the
middle of a double marriage ceremony of Menaleuss daughter and son.
At this point, Homer cleverly compared Menaleus to Odysseus in the
readers mind by suggesting the similarities between the both in
background, and " undoubtedly" survival. He also used this scene to
emphasize Telemachoss emotional instability as he burst out crying at
the mention of his fathers name. The night ended and Telemachos was
finally noticed to be Odysseuss son by Helen, Menaleuss wife. Once this
took place, he conclusively mentioned his purpose in visiting: To find
information about his father. Menaleus answered Telemachos by speaking of
his journey from Troy, and reassuring Telemachos of his fathers wit and
cleverness, and almost certain survival.

After the men finished talking, Menaleus showered him with
complements and gifts (one refused, one accepted), and then Telemachos
left, feeling good about himself once again.

After this event, the scene changes back to Ithaca where the suitors
were planning their ambush on the young prince. Telemachos went back
home, only to find out that his father had already arrived before him.
This sets Odysseus (disguised as a beggar) and Telemachos up for the big
scene against the suitors, where father and son, side by side, rid Ithaca
of its cancerous cells, and reunite the " royal" family. Odysseus then
appeased and sacrificed to the god Poseidon in the name of his
misbehavior.

As Homer makes it apparent, there are other underlying themes
embedded in the story that would just confuse the reader if they were not
there. An example of this is the emotional aspects of both characters. If
one does not understand this key element, their is no way that the
sequence of events would cohere. " Why didnt Telemachos look for his
father earlier? Why did Penelope wait twenty years to consider
remarrying? How did this affect Odysseus in his journey?". These are
questions that would go unanswered unless the reader reaches within the
emotions of the character.

In the case of Telemachos, his emotions shaped his well being. For
example, had it not been for Athene giving him confidence, by no means
would he ever have thought of taking such a voyage, hence, Telemachos
would have never participated in his " final test" against the suitors
either. His sorrow and anger from the loss of his father and his mother
constantly being attacked and proposed to by piranha-like suitors were
also driving forces towards his journey. Some of these are brought out in
different situations, both positive and negative, such as Menaleuss
mention of his father, which caused a sudden out-burst of tears, and
the proud and accomplished feeling he received from leaving Sparta..
Odysseuss situation was only slightly different. He, like
Telemachos had his worries about family-life, and his kingdom at stake,
but also had concerns about his wife, possibly triggered by the mention
of Agamemnons by Proteus, who was killed by the hands of his own wife.
These factors probably had taken their toll on Odysseus. At the same time
he had the wrath of Poseidon to contend with. Another factor which could
have also lead to this distress could have been his visit to the
underworld, and in his entire journey, losing friends and comrades
regularly.

The last object of these journeys and possibly the most important
to the reader, is comprehending how these travels actually led to the
final test: The battle against the suitors. This is considered the poems
mental perspective. Odysseus had many things to overcome before he would
be ready to take on this responsibility. His journey prepared him for
that. For one, if he had not have perfected his tolerance abroad and
finely tuned his hubris problems there would have been no possible way
for him to undertake a role such as the beggar, where he must be
constantly enduring both verbal and physical attacks. There is also no
way that Odysseus could have sacrificed and begged forgiveness to the
sea-god Poseidon if he had not learned his lesson about respect from
Polyphemos and Zeus (eating Helioss cattle). These factors play an
immense role in the outcome of the poem. If it had not been for these
events, the story could never have taken place.

The same circumstances applied for Telemachos as well. His goal was
to reach a level of adulthood and to stand by his fathers side, to
mature into a man, and most importantly to gain respect, and to withhold
and protect family kleos. This happened when at first Athene inspired him
to go in search of his father. At that stage he was an inactive, and
boyish young prince. When the challenges rose, however (assisted by
Athene), Telemachos rose to meet those challenges. His first items of
business were to set the suitors straight at home. Although he was not
completely effective, he surprised them a great deal with his authority,
and even his own mother in later books. That proved that Telemachos was
gaining a new awareness, not only about his father, but about the
kingdom, his mother, and the role he needed to partake. By the end of his
long emotional journey, Telemachos realized what it took to be a man,
which could not have been possible without his escapades to Pylos and
Sparta.

In The Odyssey, Homer created a parallel for readers, between
Odysseus and Telemachos, father and son. Telemachos was supposedly
learning the role of his father, the king of Ithaca, to follow in the
footsteps. The two are compared in the poem from every aspect. However,
in analyzing The Odyssey, one may also presume that Homer had not
intended for the Telemachos to be as great a hero as his father. This may
be due to the fact that, for example, he never had a Trojan War to fight,
his setting is in a time of peace unlike his fathers, and more notably-
although matured, Telemachus never really learned true leadership or
chivalry as did his father. Homer has presented the world with poetry so
unique and classic, so outstanding and awesome, that generations to come
will challenge themselves interpreting them until the end of time. Words
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