

# [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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