

Odysseus vs. odyssey: who is the real hero?

Business



Odysseus, a greek hero, embarks upon his journey home after experiencing victory in the Trojan war. His goal is to return back to his wife and son in Ithaca, but faces difficult tasks imposed upon him by the Greek Gods. After constant struggle and multiple setbacks, he is able to use deception and manipulation to return home and find peace. A young college graduate, Jennifer Pharr Davis, feels a calling to hike the Appalachian Trail.

She leaves home and begins on a two thousand mile footpath which extends from Georgia to Maine. This is the setting of Jen's journey home- from a place of self doubt to acceptance and peace with herself. Odysseus and Jen are both on a journey home, yet their strategies for doing so are very different. Each hiker on the Appalachian trail selects a trail name which is a nickname that often reflects characteristics about that particular hiker. They sign trail logs with this name, are called by this name, and identify with their name for their entire journey.

When Jen chooses the name Odysssa, an adaption of the Greek hero Odysseus, as her trail name, she recognizes that she too is on a journey home to peace. Although Jen is on a journey home like Odysseus, the two have very different journeys. Rather than allowing her struggle to uncover certain Odysseus-like qualities — cunning manipulation and excessive pride- the trail enhances her qualities compassion, trust, and faith in God. Instead of becoming like Odysseus, Jen becomes Odysssa-an even better version of the ideal hero. The trail and the struggles that accompany it reveal the qualities Odysssa already had within herself While both Odysseus and Odysssa are quick to accept a challenge, the way in which they meet a challenge

differ. One of the most significant challenges Odyssa faces is the decision to hike a forty mile day despite self-doubt in her ability.

One of the challenges Odysseus faces is being trapped in a Cyclops cave after stealing his food and wine. These challenges may be vastly dissimilar, but the way in which each character attacks the challenge reveals aspects of his or her character. Odyssa attacks her challenge relentlessly and stubbornly, refusing to give up and willing to complete the challenge. She never lies or manipulates anyone into helping her, and she is able to accomplish her goal without violating her morals. Odyssa's captor is her own self-doubt, which she conquers by proving her ability.

On the other hand, Odysseus has to manipulate and deceive his captor by first getting him drunk and then continuing to stab him in the eye. To make matters worse, he feels a sense of pride and power, and reveals his identity to the Cyclops. This results in the Cyclops cursing Odysseus and adds yet another obstacle to Odysseus' journey. Instead of attacking his challenge without violating morals, Odysseus lies and lets his pride get the best of him. Odyssa never feels morose or pities herself because of the obstacles she faces.

When the temperatures reach below thirty degrees, Odyssa hikes through the day. When her eyes freeze shut because of the sheer amount of snow and freezing temperatures, she rubs her eyes and keeps hiking. When she accidentally hikes three miles in the wrong direction, she recognizes her mistake with dignity and grace. She has an ability to separate her mind from her struggles and push through adversity, and never dwells on her

misfortune. Odysseus, on the other hand, reveals a tendency to feel dejection and complain about the obstacles faced before him.

After being trapped and seduced to stay on Calypso's island, he is found sitting on a rock and crying about his situation. Rather than standing up to his problem and finding a way to overcome, Odysseus weeps and feels a sense of pity for himself. Furthermore, when he finally decides to take control of his situation, he shows a lack of faithfulness to his wife back at home by telling Calypso that she is even more beautiful than his wife. While Odyssa accepts her challenges with grace, Odysseus dwells on his afflictions with self-pity and will do whatever is easiest and best for him to get out of his trouble. Odyssa allows her struggles, and her victories, to bring her closer to God, revealing her ability to forgive. While hiking alone, Odyssa finds a body hanging from the rafters of a shelter.

A young man had hiked to the shelter and taken his own life. Odyssa was the first to find his body. For the following weeks, Odyssa questions why God would have allowed her to be the person to find the body. Initially, and understandably, she is overcome with fear and depression, and partially blames God for her struggle. As she wrestles with her faith, she forgives God for allowing her to encounter the body and thanks Him for his protection and ability to recover from her traumatic encounter. On the contrary, when the Gods give Odysseus the knowledge and wit to create the Trojan horse, he believes his intelligence and wit comes from within.

Moreover, he refuses to acknowledge the Gods as the source of his power, which results in Poseidon's grudge toward Odysseus, and is the reason he

has such difficulty returning home. Rather than believing that his wit could have come from another source, his pride has him believe that his wit comes only from within. Odysa never has a sense of entitlement or excessive pride, which allows her to overcome obstacles with ease, while Odysseus believes he is a self-made man which creates further setbacks in his journey. When Jen selected the name Odysa, she hoped she could become as brave and able to overcome adversity as Odysseus was. The trail revealed certain Odysseus-like traits in Jen by presenting her with constant challenges and adversity, but the way she overcame these challenges made her have confidence and identify her value. It was not what she accomplished, but how she accomplished her goals, that sets Odysa apart from Odysseus.

While both Odysseus and Odysa completed a remarkable journey home, Odysa was able to return home without violating her morals or taking an easy way out. Jen had an ideal image of Odysseus in her mind by creating the name Odysa, but in the end Odysa is even more of a hero than Odysseus was because of how she overcame.