

# The odyssey in comparison with “my father on his shield”

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The Odyssey in Comparison With " My Father on His Shield" Often in literature, writers unintentionally create works that tie very well with one another. Two works that connect well are The Odyssey by Homer, translated by Robert Fitzgerald, and " My Father on His Shield, " by Walt McDonald. While McDonald's poem underscores the tone of mourning and sorrow by the main character, Homer's work elucidates the tone of animosity and hurt. As previously stated, the tone of McDonald's poem, " My Father on His Shield" is one of mourning and grief. The speaker of the poem is grieving his father who he lost to battle and experiences struggles in coping with it all. McDonald's details about the sled mentioned in the poem reflect the closeness that was once there between the speaker and his father, in addition to the level of importance the speaker's father had in his life. The use of diction by McDonald also emphasizes the speaker's mourning, often accompanied by nostalgia, by implicating the repetition of the words " I remember" throughout the poem. This constant remembrance expresses the speaker's difficulty coming to terms with his father's death. In contrast with McDonald's poem, Homer's work, The Odyssey, exhibits a tone filled more with animosity and heartache rather than the previous, more somber and mournful feel. The main character, thus far, is named Telemakhos. The character's father has been gone for many years without returning or sending any messages, causing the boy and his mother to wonder whether he has died, or if he is gone because he does not wish to return. By the use of detail, readers are able to find out that as a result of his father's extended absence, a number of suitors have begun to take free reign over their home and all of their property, seeking to marry the possible widow. Homer uses

diction in order to indicate the Telemakhos' animosity towards his father:

Friend, let me put it in the plainest way. My mother says I am his son; I know not surely. Who has known his own engendering? I wish at least I had some happy man as a father, growing old in his own house — unknown death and silence are the fate of him that, since you ask, they call my father. (Homer 8)

Telemakhos is saying that although his mother and everyone say Odysseus is his father, he does not feel that way because he lacks any memory of him. He wishes he could have his father in his life, and is bothered by the fact he hasn't the slightest bit of knowledge in regards to the whereabouts of his father. Telemakhos and the speaker in the poem by McDonald share similar experiences. They both are dealing with the absence of their fathers who both partook in the military. However, the speaker in the poem actually knows for a fact his father has died, which may be why he copes with the lack of a father better than Telemakhos, solely because he does not need to question whether or not his father isn't in his life due to sheer carelessness. Because Telemakhos hasn't the faintest idea of his father's whereabouts, he is in search for closure, not only for himself, but for his mother and property being destroyed by the savage suitors. Their circumstances are what control the tone in their dialog, allowing the reader to feel the same things the speakers are feeling.