

Family as a social institution in odyssey by homer

[Literature](#), [Mythology](#)



Family as a social institution in Odyssey by Homer One of the social institutions that play a very important role in the Odyssey by Homer is the family. The importance of the family and home are highly extrapolated in this work of art, the main character, Odysseus really demonstrates the role of home and the family. Even before the reader goes deep into the text, there are certain facts that are established about the family and its role in this book. Although most critics and readers focus on the exploits made by Odysseus, the book deeply focuses on the role of the family. The main character's aim in this book is to return home. This is overwhelmingly evident in the story through the fact that he is ready to make several sacrifices in order to return home. Throughout the book, he is given countless opportunities to settle anywhere else apart from home, but he refuses. He resists all the temptations to go back to Penelope. The main theme in this epic novel is reunification of the family. This is illustrated by the attempts of the protagonist to return home and reunite with his wife and son. The entire novel highlights various examples of families. There are good families that prosper. There are bad ones that fail. As Odysseus struggles to return home and Telemakhos struggles to be a man, the book stresses on the concept of a healthy family (De Jong 119). In the long run, at the resolution of the conflict in the novel Odysseus is reunited with his family. Therefore, a united family can overcome all the challenges and obstacles that comes its way. At the beginning of this work of art, the family as a social institution is in shambles. No one knows about the whereabouts of the protagonist. Penelope has spent many years keeping suitors at bay as she cries for Odysseus. Telemakhos, his son, has grown without a fatherly figure

which makes him confused and unsure of whom he is. The long period of absence of Odysseus makes his family unstable. His son Telemachos is judgmental on his mum who is under intense pressure to deal with the unstable family. When he returns after 20 years absence, he re-unites with the wife and his son. They are able to re-establish the almost fallen family and bring harmony to the home. Despite all the odds against them, they are able to preserve and reinforce the values of their family. His return portrays home and family as the centre of what makes life worthwhile. According to him, the family is the fundamental background of human identity. This poem by homer promotes family as the centre of existence of human beings. When Odysseus gets home to his family his life gets a new meaning, without his family, his life had started losing its meaning. A family in shambles creates disarray in the kingdom. Ithaca, Odysseus homeland has no king in his absence, meaning that it lacks a fatherly figure. Lack of a fatherly figure affects the growth of the sons of the kingdom who act egregiously, harassing people and perpetrating impunity. Telemakhos grows doesn't know of how a functional and sound family should be but when he travels in search of his father; his eyes get opened as he learns about the tenets of family life. When he visits Pylos, he meets Nestor who requests his son to accompany Telemakhos. For the first time, the son of the protagonist has a real friend. When he visits Sparta, he meets king Menelaus and Queen Hellen celebrating a double wedding and this teaches him about how a functional family should be (Jones 34). This family had been hit hard by the Trojan War but since the relationship between its members was strong and sound, it manages to survive the vagaries of the Trojan War. This thriving family also

enables the whole Spartan kingdom to thrive well. King Menelaus has a brother called Agamemnon who in contrast does not have a healthy family. His family is an example of what a family should not be. His family is an exact opposite of Menelaus and Helen marriage though he is married to his sister Clytemnestra. During three Trojan War, Agamemnon was absent from his family for a long time. Instead of waiting for her husband to return from war, Clytemnestra cheats on him with a younger liver called Aigisthos (De Jong 102). When he returns Agamemnon and his slave mistress called Cassandra are executed by his wife and this leads to more murders in the family. Agamemnon's son Orestes kills his mother Clytemnestra for destroying the family. Clytemnestra had destroyed the family and her actions could not go unpunished. Odysseus journeys also teach him about the role of family life. In the entire book, his main motivation is to go back home to his wife and son. There are several adventures that highlight his motivation but the major one is his quest to leave Calypso. Odysseus had been held by her as a slave in the island of Ogyioa. Calypso offers him many gifts such as youth, immortality and her eternal love if he agrees to remain in that island. However, he chooses to forego the all aforesaid and return home to his wife and son, who he had not seen in two decades. This action by the protagonist portrays the family as the most vital aspect of the novel *Odysseus*. Throughout this epic poem, the importance of quality family life is constantly highlighted. Using Menelaus and Helen and the tragic marriage of Agamemnon and his wife, the story illustrates that unity is very important in the success of a family as a unit (Kirk 190). The reunification of the protagonist with his people illustrates that through love and commitment, all

the obstacles and challenges that come in the way of a family unit can be overcome.