

The a mortal and
cannot accomplish all



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The *Odyssey* is an epic poem by Homer about the 20-year journey of a war hero's homecoming. Odysseus can be seen as the typical epic hero, but has contradicting characteristics and actions that challenge his heroism.

Odysseus is a noble leader with superhuman strength, and wit, but along the journey shows himself to be arrogant, sly and dependent on the gods. There is no doubt Odysseus is a hero as he overcomes a god's obstacles on his journey home from a successful war and saves his family from wretched suitors. Odysseus above all is a strong warrior. Menelaus, a comrade in arms from Troy, speaks highly of Odysseus to Telemachus, as he "never once laid eyes on a man like him...the hero that dared and carried off in a wooden horse" ready to bring Troy to an end (Homer, *Odyssey*, 4. 302-306).

Odysseus demonstrates his bravery and wit by filling a wooden horse with his men and leading them to infiltrate Troy's walls. Not only is he a good leader, but he takes care of his men. After his men go behind his back and release the sack of winds gifted to him by King Aeolus, they come upon a mysterious land, and Odysseus sends off men to explore. Only Eurylochus returns with news that the men have been held captive by goddess Circe and advises Odysseus to set sail at once. Although they have betrayed him, the king refuses as "necessity drives him on" (*Odyssey*, 10. 300).

Odysseus puts himself at risk in order to save the trapped men and bring them home. The king also has a strong mind on his shoulders. Poseidon finds his ship once again and has left Odysseus in the middle of the sea with no way out. But at last he fought his way to the surface spewing bitter brine, streams of it pouring down his head. But half-drowned as he was, he'd not forget his craft- he lunged after her through the breakers, laying hold and

huddling amidships, fled the stroke of death (Odyssey, 5. 355-359) Odysseus is hit hard but uses every bit of strength left inside of him to keep on swimming and get to land once more. As mighty as he is, Odysseus is still a mortal and cannot accomplish all victories through his sole talents. Thus, many times the Gods lend a helping hand to the king.

When Odysseus decides to rescue his men at Circe's palace, the gods know Odysseus does not stand a chance against Circe's magic. Hermes comes to the rescue and tells Odysseus "I can save you, free you from that great danger./ Look, here is a potent drug.../its power alone will shield you from the fatal day" (Odyssey, 10. 317-319). Hermes gives Odysseus a magic herb that will counteract any spells Circe sets upon him and advice on what he must do to get his men back without falling into Circe's enchantment.

Without this help, Odysseus would not have been successful and ended up an animal like his other comrades. Circe tries to trick Odysseus on their first encounter but before he heads out, she tells him what path to take. Without this information, he would be lost. Moreover, it is thanks to the gods who permitted Odysseus to be able to return home. By stabbing Cyclops Polyphemus's eye, Odysseus angered Poseidon, his father, and got him and his crew cursed.

As he is the god of the sea, he does everything in his power to delay the men's voyage home, and no other gods intervene. It is the goddess Athena who pleads Odysseus's case to the almighty Zeus, her father, and gets her father to say that "he shall see his loved ones,/ reach his high-roofed house, his native land at last" (Odyssey, 5. 45-46). It is through the gods' intervention of Poseidon's punishment and their guidance that Odysseus makes it home.

Yet, it is Odysseus's own arrogance why it takes him twenty years to land on the shores of Ithaca once more.