

## Odysseus-The Epic Hero of Ithaca

A hero should always have a clever plan to face or get away from danger. They should stand up to the evils and dangers in the world. Their actions should bring courage to their fellow people. A heroic leader should display confidence under stress and be brave enough to take risks when others are looking to hide. A true hero should be cunning, strong, and brave; essentially, a true hero is someone like Odysseus in Homer's epic, *The Odyssey*.

Odysseus, King of Ithaca, husband of Penelope, and father of Telemachus, is a cunning champion and former commander in the Trojan War. Calypso, a nymph, holds Odysseus hostage for about seven years (1038). Every day, Odysseus sits alone, looking out to sea, wanting a glimpse of his homeland (72-74). Calypso is angered at Odysseus's homesickness and believes the cause is that he wants to go home to be with his wife (101-111). Odysseus thinks of a reasonable explanation to get himself home, stating to Calypso that there is no need for irritation and replies back "Yet, it is true, each day / I long for home, long for the sight of home..." (117-118). Odysseus uses this strategy not only to get himself home, but also to see his wife. Later, when Odysseus and his crew are trapped in the Cyclops's cave, Odysseus pieces together a brilliant plan of how to escape from death by crafting a giant wooden spear to injure their captor (311-321). Odysseus offers Polyphemus the Cyclops some sweet wine to lull him into a drunken sleep. While Polyphemus is intoxicated and awake, Odysseus tells the one-eyed creature his name is Nohbdy (358-361). After Odysseus and his shipmates permanently blind Polyphemus, he alerts his fellow one-eyed beasts on the island that Nohbdy did this to him. This makes his fellow Cyclopes think that nothing happened to Polyphemus because they didn't realize that Nohbdy is actually Odysseus (405-408). My image of a hero is that they should be quick-witted to think of plans to get out of difficult situations, such as when Odysseus leaves Calypso and

later tricks Polyphemus. Many times throughout the epic, Odysseus shows his cleverness to escape from the many dangers he faces on his journey.

Odysseus's characteristic of being strong helps him escape many dangerous situations. At the island of the Cyclops, once Polyphemus was passed out in his cave, Odysseus and his men lift and thrust the heavy, burdensome weapon into the Cyclops's huge eye (374-381), which shows the physical strength of Odysseus. After twenty years away from Ithaca, Odysseus finds that his wife has many suitors. Penelope sets up a test for the suitors that consists of stringing her husband's giant bow and shooting an arrow through twelve ax-helve sockets, a task that only the great Odysseus can achieve (1086). After Odysseus completes this task, he then kills all of his wife's suitors with his bow and arrows, one by one (1294-1303). Odysseus also shows his strength by working hard. It is not just that he's strong; he works harder than anyone else. He never asks his men to do anything that he will not do himself, and Odysseus asks even more of himself. Odysseus is not a person who would be slacking on a couch, bossing people around to tell them what to do; he will be there in the middle of the action and labor with his servants and companions. These statements prove that Odysseus is a powerful man who works hard to protect his people.

Bravery is one of the many traits Odysseus is best known for. Without his bravery, this epic story may not have been as dramatic and suspenseful. One of the many situations that displays this trait is when Odysseus and his men arrive on the land of the Cyclopes, where they find a cave. Inside the cave is a shelf with some cheese laying on it. The men decide to stay in the cave to wait for unknown danger, which turns out to be Polyphemus. This shows his bravery knowing that there is a chance that Odysseus and his crew members are going to put themselves in danger, not knowing the risk. Another situation that displays his bravery is when Circe, an

enchantress and goddess, turns Odysseus's men into pigs (570-576). Well aware of the danger she possesses because of her magical abilities, Odysseus bravely confronts Circe for the current state of his men and forces her to change them into their original human form. Later, Circe tells Odysseus that in order for him to find his way back to Ithaca, he would have to speak with the blind prophet, Tiresias, and get his fortune told in the Land of the Dead (1061). This shows bravery because Odysseus knows he would be fearful when he is in the Land of the Dead, but he stays strong. In my opinion, facing fear shows a true act of bravery. Further on, he faces the Sirens and their deadly song. Rather than panicking and becoming petrified, he orders his men to tie him up to the ship's mast so he is able to hear the detrimental harmonies of the Sirens keeping the ship and his crew out of death's talons. These actions prove that Odysseus is very courageous.

An ideal hero is someone with clever wit, physical strength, and valor. A hero would cleverly think of a way to escape from a giant, one-eyed beast. They would face many threats and dangers head on. A hero would be praised for their fearlessness, outstanding victories, and honorable qualities, which Odysseus clearly displays. The paradigm of a hero is Odysseus.

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