



Score Report

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Analyzing Odysseus: First Impressions

Of all the heroes in Greek mythology, there is only one who had an entire book named after him: Odysseus is the main character in Homer's epic poem called The Odyssey. He is the guy responsible for ending the Trojan War with his trick of the wooden horse, and he is usually considered to be one of the greatest heroes in mythology. Many modern "epic" movies like The Lord of the Rings and Star Wars are based on the traditions that were established in The Odyssey.

So, Odysseus must be a pretty cool guy, right? Well, I don't think so. In the passage where he introduces himself to the king, Odysseus comes across as arrogant, and he doesn't really seem to have the qualities of a great leader. It's true that he seems strong and crafty, as most heroes were, but as a person, he seems like a bit of a jerk.

The arrogance of Odysseus is apparent as soon as he begins speaking: "Men hold me formidable for guile in peace and war: this fame has gone abroad to the sky's rim." In modern terms, that is like Odysseus is saying, "Everybody knows who I am. I am so famous that people all over the world recognize my great deeds." This kind of statement is a sign that he is quite vain because, as a rule, anyone who says something like this is trying to talk himself up or make himself sound impressive. It is the kind of statement that mothers tell their sons never to make in polite company because people will think they are "stuck up." And Odysseus, indeed, seems to be.

Besides arrogance, Odysseus also has a certain barbaric quality, a lack of sympathy, that doesn't seem very heroic by today's standards. In explaining what happened when they reached the land of the Cicones, Odysseus casually mentions that upon reaching the shore, "Plunder we took, and we enslaved the women, to make division, equal shares to all." G Usually we think of the hero as someone who saves women rather than enslaving them. Also, plundering someone's goods isn't considered a heroic feat. This kind of casual brutality is not a quality to be admired, so it is questionable whether or not Odysseus can even be considered a hero.

Some would argue that a character in Odysseus's place would have to be barbaric in order to survive, and maybe that is true. The world was a very different place in 3200 B.C. Not only was it overrun by monsters like the Chimera and Medusa, but it was a tribal place where bands of warriors (like the Cicones) defended their territory and sought to expand it through war. It was a rough

world, full of fear and death, so it might be forgivable that Odysseus and his crew often seem unfeeling. In a way, it was a "kill or be killed" world. Yet, it isn't unreasonable to expect some sensitivity, even from a hero. For example, as part of his introduction, Odysseus reflects on his home in almost reverential terms: "Where shall a man find sweetness to surpass his own home and his parents? In far lands he shall not...." Are these the words of a barbarian? Probably not, but it still seems that Odysseus and his crew often behave in ways that would get them jailed in these modern times. It isn't unreasonable to expect a man who speaks so highly and emotionally of his home to show some mercy when dealing with conquered enemies, especially the women and children. It seems as though there is a disconnection in Odysseus. Sometimes he is emotional to the point of being maudlin, and others he is needlessly barbaric. He is not without his positive qualities, but a true hero would find a way to temper these extremes.

Despite his positive qualities, the reason Odysseus really doesn't deserve the title "hero" is because he isn't a very good leader. His men often don't follow his orders. "...on the spot I told them: 'Back, and quickly! Out to sea again!' My men were mutinous, fools, on stores of wine. Sheep after sheep they butchered by the surf, and shambling cattle, feasting – while fugitives went inland, running to call to arms the main force of the Cicones." Despite his orders, his men get drunk and have a barbecue on the beach while the enemies run to get their entire army. This is not the behavior one would expect from a well-trained army under strong leadership, and as a consequence, a great number of Odysseus's soldiers are killed: "Six benches were left empty in every ship that evening when we pulled away from death." A good leader commands the respect of his men, and they do not endanger the mission for the sake of a meal. Imagine how quickly a modern army would be destroyed if they failed to follow the chain of command. Some might argue that Odysseus's men are simply too stupid to follow orders, but a strong leader commands the respect and obedience of all his men, even the dumb ones, and there are many times in the story when our hero's crew flatly ignore or defy his orders. In the land of the Lotus Eaters, three of his men get hooked on the "drug" that is the lotus plant, and they do not wish to return home. Odysseus has to drag them back: "I drove them, all three wailing, to the ships, tied them down under their rowing benches, and called the rest." So, while it is true that his men were under the influence of the lotus, and the episode does illustrate his amazing physical strength, the fact that his men defy his orders and refuse to return illustrates that he does not truly command their respect. For these reasons, Odysseus is clearly not a powerful leader.

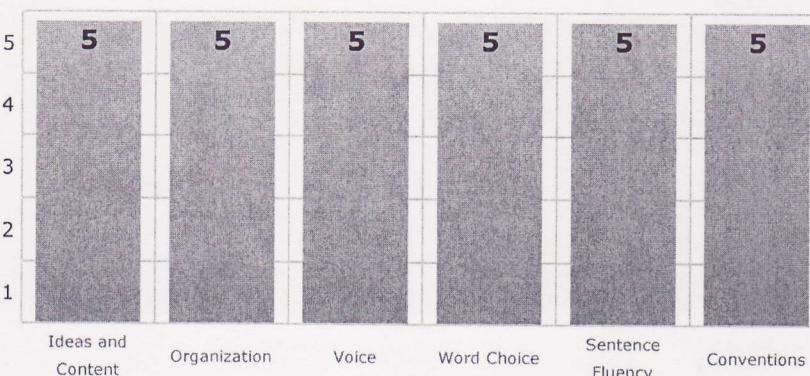
Traditionally, heroes of Greek mythology are strong, crafty, powerful leaders who achieve greatness through their heroic deeds. Some of them, like Heracles, are even rewarded with a place on Mount Olympus or in the constellations. Odysseus is widely considered to be one of the greatest heroes, but I disagree with this assessment based on the passage where he introduces himself and the episode with the Lotus Eaters. Even though he is telling his own story in the first-person, he comes across as arrogant, barbaric, and a poor leader who does not command the respect of his armies. Maybe this is taking the narrow view, and it is possible that other episodes in the story will portray him in a more positive light, but so far he such doesn't seem very heroic.

Scores

This essay's total score is **30**

The essay was scored by PEG, the automated essay scorer, according to the scoring standard for your level. Any trait score below 3 shows a need to strengthen skills in that category.

Trait Scores



Writing Analysis

Ideas and Content



You scored 5 out of 5

EVALUATION

- This essay is clear, controlled and focused.
- Your essay has balance and exhibits good control of connection between ideas.
- You have expressed your ideas in a convincing manner by providing ample support.
- Your essay holds the reader's attention through details and anecdotes that enrich the main idea.

SUGGESTIONS

- Make sure every sentence has a verb.

LESSONS

Building Depth

Organization



You scored 5 out of 5

EVALUATION

- The transitions or connections between your ideas are seamless and smooth.
- An effective introduction and conclusion leave the reader with a sense of completeness.
- Your essay is carefully organized with well-placed details from beginning to end.
- The writing is well balanced and moves along smoothly.
- The organization of this essay enhances and highlights the main idea.

LESSONS

Organization Organization Basics Paragraphing

Voice



You scored 5 out of 5

EVALUATION

- You speak directly to the audience through expressive and engaging writing.
- The language is natural and brings the topic to life.
- The reader feels a strong sense of interaction with the writer and senses the person behind the words.

Word Choice



You scored 5 out of 5

EVALUATION

- The words convey the intended message in an interesting and precise way.
- The words are specific and accurate.
- Your vocabulary is vivid, natural and not overdone.
- Excellent word choice gives this essay power.

LESSONS

Appositives

Sentence Fluency



You scored 5 out of 5

EVALUATION

- The writing in this essay is very natural and fluent.
- The amount of sentence variety present in this essay makes the text interesting.
- The writing is concise and effective in conveying your meaning.

LESSONS

Run-Ons Fragments Sentence Variety

Conventions



You scored 5 out of 5

EVALUATION

- You have demonstrated a good grasp of standard writing conventions.
- This essay is sufficiently long and complex and shows command of a wide range of conventions.
- Errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation are few, if any, and they do not interrupt the flow of reading.

LESSONS

Dialog Punctuation Capitalization Apostrophes

Messages

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