
Odysseus: Honorable Man Or Dishonest Person

A man in the likeness of dishonesty is like an illusion, one that hides his deception and guile. Odysseus displays a false representation of merit as his more prominent heroic qualities conceal his dishonorable traits. However, mere strength and bravery alone, does not make a hero honorable. Honor can be defined as an individual who adheres to a right or conventional standard of conduct. Odysseus does not abide by these standards, instead creating his own code of conduct for himself and for his men. In Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*, Odysseus's fatal flaws lead to his inconsistent actions, making him dishonorable. He fails to embody the important value of honor by conducting himself in a manner of arrogance and dishonesty.

Odysseus has a tendency of arrogance and selfishness, showing that he is not honorable. His overwhelming pride becomes a burden to himself and his men. An instance of this flaw is when he made his last remark to the enraged Cyclops. Odysseus calls out saying "If I could take your life I would take your time away, and hurl you down to hell! The god of an earthquake could not heal you there!" (479-481) The attitude that Odysseus exhibits to his men and the overbearing confidence, is lacking in humility and compassion, which are necessary characteristics of a leader. The inciting incident occurs as Odysseus provokes the already angered Cyclops. Within Greek culture, the gods do not encourage or tolerate arrogant individuals. Disobeying culture and absorbed in his own self, Odysseus is disdained by Zeus and is prophesied a difficult and long journey back to Ithaca. His actions did not gain respect or relay a positive image for his country. His spontaneity and ignorance become an inconvenience to his men. A leader such as Odysseus cannot be recognized as an honorable man since he causes an issue not only for himself but his crew members as well. His arrogance leads to his hubris of curiosity, enabling him to take on a challenge that he may not be able to handle. Such examples are portrayed when his curiosity tempts him to hear the song of the Sirens and his deadly desire to witness the Cyclops places Odysseus in unwanted situations. Odysseus's men wanted to leave the island of the Cyclopes, yet "[he refuses]. [He] wished to see the caveman, what he had to offer" (172-173) He has a lethal weakness of curiosity that branches from his arrogance. Odysseus congests himself with praise and an exceeding confidence that makes him believe he can take on challenges that may be bigger than he is. His curiosity is an obstacle that obstructs his ability to think ahead of his actions. Rather than considering the consequences, Odysseus is unable to overcome his flaw, lacking a crucial trait of patience and humility in order to be an honorable hero. Odysseus's spite and arrogance negatively becomes an obstacle along his journey and is the cause of his long passage home. An honorable figure is an example to others and is recognized as the most responsible of a group. However, Odysseus is not the epitome of such characteristics and acts rashly, becoming a dishonorable leader as he continues to behave in arrogance and an unrestrained curiosity.

Additionally, Odysseus fails to embody honor by being dishonest and deceptive. He is mercilessly deceitful with his schemes, such as when he was disguised as an old man in order to enact revenge upon the Suitors. As Odysseus reveals himself to Telemachus he reveals that:

[Athena] has the knack to make me seem a beggar man sometimes and sometimes young, with finer clothes about me.

It is no hard things for the gods of heaven to glorify a man or bring him low. (1054-1058) This instance uncovers the inconsistency of the gods and Odysseus, emphasizing his dishonorable qualities. His disguise does not adhere to what is right, rather encourages trickery to achieve a goal. He taints his integrity with dishonesty and uses trickery and deception to massacre the suitors in his home. Despite the state of his home, he conducted himself in a manner that did not abide by his culture. He seems to take advantage of Athena's kindness and ability to morph his appearance, making him dishonorable as he cheats his way with her guidance. Furthermore, he is disqualified from being honorable as he kills all the suitors in his home. Even Odysseus is aware that it is shameful since he tries to hide their deaths and covers up his return. "In blood and dust he saw that a crowd had fallen, many and many slain." (1533-1533) Odysseus leaves the Suitors to "[twitch] their cold lives away" (1538), "heaped on one another." (1539) This scene does not seem to embrace or describe the actions of an honorable hero. Instead of remaining patient and representing an example of mercy, Odysseus behaves with rage and immaturity. Unlike the teachings of Greek culture, Odysseus does not honor the dead suitors and deceives those living outside of his palace, unaware of the deaths of the men. Although Odysseus may be brave, he fails to define honor as a consequence of his mistrustful and deceptive actions. He lacks crucial traits such as humility and patience in order to qualify him as an honorable hero. Indeed, while Odysseus may be clever and self-disciplined, he falls short with his arrogance and dishonesty. His ignorance of others and deception led to the misfortune of those around him. He does not embody an honorable leader with his vindictive nature and inability to act with gentility. Honor is not only defined by strength, bravery, and wit, but is proved with actions of integrity, truthfulness, and humility.