
The Characters Fates In The Odyssey By Homer

The Odyssey by Homer and translated by Robert Fitzgerald is a complex novel pertaining the main characters complicated journey home from Troy to his throne in Ithika. The Greek gods play a big part in his long 10-year journey back home. Are they to blame for the difficult times Odysseus had to endure? It is important to remember that the Greek gods supposedly had full control over mortals like Odysseus, Telemakhos and Penelope. This entails that mortals are the Greek gods' "puppets", any mortal that fails to follow the Greek Ethos may be eternally punished. Choice and fate both play a part in The Odyssey, but essentially it comes down to the choices that the characters make. Odysseus and his men make controversial decisions that anger the gods, which play a part in their prolonged journey. The choices that characters in the Odyssey make can change their fate. The characters fates are decided by the Greek gods that have total control over them, if a character's fate is suffering, it is likely that the certain character has angered the gods by not following the Greek Ethos. These bad choices most certainly can affect a character's fate, it is possible to reverse it by proving to be a good citizen to the gods. Rather than fate good and bad choices play a major part in Odysseus' decade long journey back to Ithika.

There are some vital decisions that Odysseus and his men make that directly affect their journey home. In book IX when Odysseus is telling his story to the Phaiakians, he tells the story of how they pillaged a village of the coast of Kikones. Odysseus proceeds to explain that they enslaved the woman on the island, that they killed all men. He explains that they butchered all the sheep, but quickly the survivors informed the main army of Kikones. After the battle "Six benches were left empty in every ship" (Homer. IX. 67). The pillage of the city on the coast of Kikones is one proof that it is Odysseus' choices that caused his journey home to take 10 years. "So, doom appeared to us, dark word of Zeus for us" (Homer. IX. 59-60). Odysseus explains that him and his men knew doom was approaching because of what they did. The severity of the issue caused an enemy (Kikones army), this proves that choice played a role in this instance of The Odyssey.

In The Odyssey there are two moments where Odysseus, the main protagonist of the story, falls asleep at a very important moment. The first occurrence is after Odysseus and his men leave Aiolos' island. Before they leave, Aiolos gives Odysseus a bag of wind to help him on his journey home, they sail for nine days until finally they can see Ithika. Odysseus however is very tired and falls into a deep slumber, leaving his men are curious as to what is inside the bag since Odysseus has not told them. They open the bag because they are filled with temptation as they expect to find treasures inside. When they open the bag, the wind blows against them and sends them back to Aiolos' island. This is a major setback in Odysseus journey home because he was almost home until his choices got in the way. Not only is it his men's fault but it is also his. His decision not to tell them what was in the bag created an even stronger temptation for his men to open to open the bag. As well as that Odysseus fell asleep when they were almost home, this invokes that Odysseus was not being a good leader towards his men. There is a second time where Odysseus falls asleep, this is when he and his men are on Helios' island. They were told not to eat Helios' cattle, once again his men's temptation gets the better of them and they kill and eat the cattle while Odysseus has fallen asleep. "O Father Zeus and gods in bliss forever, punish Odysseus' men!" (Homer. XII. 484-485). The choice

Odysseus' men make affects the groups' fate. They have angered Helios' which angers Zeus. Their choices completely affected their fate since Zeus has total control over it. Before this passage Odysseus tries to blame his men for this, since they are the ones that killed the cattle. Affectively it is also Odysseus fault for falling asleep and not remaining in control of his men. This occasion really proves how by making bad choices Odysseus and his men suffer because their fat has been changed by Zeus himself.

The third instance where Odysseus experiences a setback in his journey home to Ithika, is after he stabs the Kyklops in the eye. Part of the trick that Odysseus plays on Polyphemos (the Kyklops) is that he tells him his name is Nobody. When Odysseus heads back to his ship Polyphemos has no way of knowing who stabbed him in the eye. Odysseus' hubris kicks in and he tells the Kyklops that he is the one who stabbed him in the eye. This choice ends up cursing Odysseus, since Polyphemos tells his father Poseidon the god of the sea. "Should destiny intend that he shall see his roof again among his family in his father land, far be that day" (Homer. IX. 580-582). This is implying that the Kyklops is asking Poseidon to change Odysseus destiny in other words his fate. This passage once again proves that in The Odyssey, your free will or choices change your fate. Since Odysseus blinded the son of Poseidon, he becomes his enemy and Poseidon later sinks the boat of the Phakains who had helped Odysseus back to Ithika. The Greek gods can change characters' fates at any time depending on their decisions.

Some may argue that fate plays a bigger part in The Odyssey since this is the eternal reason why Odysseus is being held back. This argument links to gods being in power, which can affect what will happen to a mortal. What is important to remember is that if Odysseus and his men hadn't made several bad decisions their fates would have never been changed. Arguing towards that fate plays a bigger role, would disregard all horrible choices that Odysseus and his men made. This would mean acknowledging that raiding the city of the coast of Kikones and enslaving the women did not have any consequences. When Odysseus did this, they disregarded being good guests, they instantly received a punishment. Being an unwelcoming guest can end up with severe consequences since it plays a big role in being a good Greek citizen.

Finally, Odysseus comes home through some luck and a lot of help from Athena. This proves that his choices changed his fate causing him to need multiple divine interventions from Athena in people's dreams and visions. The three main occurrences where Odysseus makes poor decisions instantly change his fate. The first is the raiding of the village of the coast of Kikones were Odysseus and his men were bad guests. They were punished instantly by Zeus and provoked the island of Kikones' army to come. The second moment was the two times where Odysseus decided to go to sleep, in these moments his men made very poor choice resulting in severe consequences. What is important to remember is, that the stories that we are reading are being told by Odysseus. When he is explaining the two times where he fell asleep, he is saying that it wasn't his choice and that his sleep took him away. Odysseus is telling the Phaikans his story while acting as innocent as possible, and it is very possible that Odysseus decide to go to sleep instead of his sleep taking him away. "I believe that fate is choices - it's not chance." (Newton).