

Student Essay on Is Odysseus a Hero?

Is Odysseus a Hero? by Homer

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Contents

Student Essay on Is Odysseus a Hero?.....	1
Contents.....	2
Essay.....	3

Essay

I feel that Odysseus, like any person, can be a hero at some times and very selfish at other times. During the war in Troy, Odysseus was surely a hero, thinking smartly and protecting his men well. However, in books 9-12, Odysseus is definitely not playing the role of a hero among his crew. On almost any page you turn to in the book, you can find some act of selfishness coming from Odysseus.

When they were in the land of the kyklops, Odysseus refused to simply raid the cave and leave. He would rather have risked the lives of his men and stay to be foolish.

And then in book ten, while the men were on the island of Kirke, Odysseus was most unfaithful to his wife. He succumbed to the seduction of Kirke, and didn't have a second thought about it. If he had been thinking about Penelope, I'm sure that he could have found another method to get her to release his men from her spell.

In book eleven, Odysseus fails to show the qualities of a hero yet again. When in the underworld, after getting comfortable with the spirits, Odysseus become frightened and runs away like a scared little girl (no insult intended ladies). It is definitely not like a hero to become frightened among his men and let it show, let alone run away from a hardship.

And lastly, in book 12, Odysseus shows another act of selfishness by manipulating what Kirke had said. When she was instructing Odysseus, she had said, "none of the rest should hear that song. But if you wish to listen, let the men tie you in the luger..." (12.59-62), implying that he should listen only if he so desires. However, Odysseus takes her words and tells his men that she "urged that I (Odysseus) alone should listen to their song." (12.193-194) This shows that Odysseus is very selfish and wants to be the ONLY one to hear the songs of the Sireins. So Odysseus really doesn't appeal to me as a true hero. He may have been at one time, but now he just seems to be a selfish and helpless old man.