

Homer's Epic Poem, The Odyssey Essay

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In Homer's epic poem, the *Odyssey*, the recurring theme of intelligence is important because through intelligence, Odysseus is able to utilize wit and cunning to suit his needs and wants, as well as defeat bigger and stronger opponents than he. Through the stories of Odysseus' sufferings throughout the [Trojan War](#) and his struggles of homecoming, [Homer](#) portrays intelligence as being an effective application of strength used to gain an advantage over his opponents. Odysseus is depicted as an intellectual hero, who focuses on brain and sophrosune, rather than the typical martial hero, such as [Achilles](#) in the *Iliad*, who focuses on brawn and action provoked by emotion.

The first instance when readers are told of Odysseus' great skill in the use of cunning and wit is in Book 3 when Nestor explains that "no one [at the Trojan War] could hope to rival Odysseus, not for sheer cunning [for] at every twist of strategy he excelled [them] all" (3.134). Then later in Book 4, Menelaus tells of how Helen was trying to trick them out of hiding to win glory for Troy but Odysseus knew it was a trick and "reined [Diomedes and him] back...and saved [them] all" (4.318-322). Another example of his intelligence is shown when Odysseus "scarr[ed] his own body with mortifying strokes, throwing filthy rags on his black like any slave" (4.274) to disguise himself as a beggar so he could hide his true identity. These descriptions help characterize Odysseus as a hero who excels in his ability to actively use his brain over his emotional instincts, utilize intelligence to deceive others,

and to think ahead. This contrasts with Achilles, in the Iliad, because he allows his emotions to impede his ability to act rationally in situations such as when Achilles rages...

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...tions rather than logic, as opposed to Odysseus who is an intellectual hero who uses wit and cunning as an effective application of strength used to gain advantage over opponents.

Overall, Odysseus possesses martial strength as shown in his ability to stab and blind Polyphemus, but what is practiced and utilized more is his ability to think clearly and act deceptively. Odysseus' intelligence and wit separates him from the "typical" Greek heroes because by exemplifying the virtues of sophrosune, Odysseus contemplates his decisions wisely, relying on cunning forethought rather than emotional impulse, such as Achilles.

Works Cited

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