

We learn from Odysseus's strengths as a clever schemer and a loyal husband and father and his weaknesses of pride and greed that a good leader is intelligent, responsible, and selfless.

Odysseus' greatest strength is his almost unbelievable ability to use his wit and mind to defeat impossible odds in order to save his men from bad situations. After his curiosity leads him and some of his men into imprisonment in a man-eating Cyclops's cave, Odysseus calls himself "noman," so that when he and his men attack the Cyclops, the Cyclops would be unable to gain help, as the monster says "Noman is killing me by tricks" (252). The other Cyclops hear "no man" instead, rendering the Cyclop's legitimate plea for help just a joke to the others. Without Odysseus's word play on his name, all of the men would have had never escaped the cave. Although some rightly point out that it is often Odysseus's fault for getting in a bad situation in the first place, Odysseus never purposely lead his men to their death, unless there was no other choice. When preparing to embark on his ship, Circe prophesied to Odysseus that some of his men would be taken by Scylla. If he informs his men of their doom, the soldiers would "drop the oars" out of fear and bring the ship to a halt, along with their hopes of returning home (308). Although controversial, leaders are tasked with difficult decisions, and Odysseus makes a decision just as any leader should, thinking through each consequence logically and picking the one that he thinks is best for his soldiers, who he believes need to escape their exile regardless of the cost. To counter their suspicion that doom lay ahead when viewing Scylla, Odysseus encourages his soldiers to persevere, reminding them that he knows what is best, using his skills as a tactful speaker, saying, "we got away [from the Cyclops], thanks to my skill / and brains and strategy. Remember that" (212-214). Using his talent as a witty and cunning rascal, Odysseus is able to rescue his men from tricky situations and make well thought out decisions, just as a good leader should.



In addition to Odysseus' quick thinking and creative mind, Odysseus' return home is only made possible by his wisdom or his willingness to listen to advice and to remain faithful to his wife and his son. Odysseus demonstrates unbelievable loyalty to his wife and his duty as a father, when he refuses Calypso's offer of immortality and eternal union with her, because he values his role as a husband and father more than Calypso's "body [that is ]/ better than [Penelope's body]" (211). Wisdom is the sole reason why Odysseus chooses to follow through his commitments he made to being a present husband and a father that he made long ago, instead of taking the easier, more exciting option of making love to Calypso. When Odysseus returns home, it is his experiences and his knowledge of others' experiences that leads him to be cautious and rightfully suspicious of everyone, including his wife. Listening to Agamemnom's own story of how his wife betrays him at Hades, Odysseus takes Agamemnom's advice to heart, knowing fully well that what could happen to Agamemnom could also happen to him. Although Agamemnom's situation is bizarre, being too careful is wiser than being too reckless, and he follows what he knows is best, which demonstrates his wisdom, or his willingness to heed instruction. Before going on his murderous rampage, Odysseus wants to blurt out that he is Odysseus, saying "I am hesitating whether to speak out openly; my impulse/is to be frank" when recruiting the swineherd and the cowherd to help his plan (195-196). Instead of doing what he wants, he controls himself and heeds Agamemnom's warnings and asks both the cowherd and the swineherd that if Odysseus were to return would they side with the suitors or with Odysseus before revealing his identity, so he would know their honest opinion. Only after asking the question does he entrust his whole plan for exterminating the suitors on them by commanding them to lock all the doors. As a leader, Odysseus, for the most part, acts wisely by heeding others' advice when appropriate and by remaining steadfast to his role as a father and a husband.



Although Odysseus' talents as a clever problem solver and wise decision making both suggest Odysseus is a good if not great leader, Odysseus falls short numerous times when considering the duty leaders have of prioritizing their subjects over their own selves. When he and his men finally escape the Cyclops on a ship, Odysseus dooms his future and almost loses all his men by bragging to and taunting the Cyclops. Even after the Cyclops "hurled" a rock "right in front of [Odysseus' ship's] dark prow" only narrowly missing the rudder (481-482), Odysseus continues insulting the Cyclops, causing his crew to "beg" for him to stop (492). Risking his men's lives for his name to be revered and made infamous among the Cyclops island shows Odysseus' selfish desire to achieve status and fame at the cost of his subjects. However prideful and selfish Odysseus is for the majority of situations, Odysseus proves he is capable of acting selflessly on the island of Circe, where he accidentally leads some of his men to an enchantress who transforms his men into pigs. Whether out of guilt or showing off bravery, Odysseus takes responsibility and chooses to risk his human life for the sake of saving his men. Without any hesitation, Odysseus ignores one man's warnings that "[he] will not return" and suggestion that he should forget about his unfortunate men (267). He simply says, "But I will go. I must do this," knowing fully well that a leader's primary task is caring for his or her subjects and that no members of a group should be left behind, even if that requires the leader to risk his or her life (269-270). With the two stories of Odysseus' selfish taunting that almost cost all his men's lives and Odysseus' self sacrificial act of saving his men from Circe positioned so close together in the story, readers are able to realize the value and honor leaders have when acting selflessly, the serious consequences leaders make when choosing to achieve fame at the cost of his or her subjects, and most importantly the drastic difference between the two.

In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus shows by example how leaders should be able to problem solve quickly, heed instruction, and remain faithful to their responsibilities. Even though he



struggles with humility and often lets his desire for fame determine his decisions, his struggle shows the consequences leaders face for both acts of selfless sacrifice and acts of pride and selfishness.

