

Amanda Rosen  
December 15, 2002  
English 3

Homer's choice in narrator helps in revealing the purpose of The Odyssey, to describe the Greek culture. Homer changes narrators at the beginning of books 5, 6, and 7. He does this to show the different sides of the "story" and point of views in The Odyssey.

Book 5 begins with Athena as the narrator. She is advocating for Odysseus' case one more time to her father, Zeus. Although she herself is a god, she is asking permission to help Odysseus from her father before she actually goes and helps him.

*Father Zeus - you other happy gods who never die - never let any  
sceptered king be kind and gentle now, not with all his heart, or set  
his mind on justice - no, let him be cruel and always practice  
outrage. Think: not one of the people whom he ruled remembers  
Odysseus now, that godlike man, and kindly as a father to his  
children. he's left to pine on an island, racked with grief in the  
nymph Calypso's house - he hold him there by force. He has no  
way to voyage home to his own native land, no trim ships in reach,  
no crew to ply the oars and send him scudding over the sea's broad  
back. And now his dear son... they plot to kill the boy on his way  
back home. Yes, he has sailed off for news of his father, to holy  
Pylos first, then out to the sunny hills of Lacedaemon. (V, 8-23)*

She retold of what Odysseus has gone through being away from his family and his kingdom. Athena speaks of Odysseus' family and people not remembering who he was because he has been unable to return home. This is because Calypso has held Odysseus by force on her island.

Book 6 narrators are Athena and Nausicaa. Athena needs to come up with a plan to have Nausicaa find Odysseus who is sleeping by the stream. Athena disguised herself into Nausicaa's dream and tells her that she should clean her clothing down by the stream. There she may find the person she is to marry but she will only meet him if she goes at the break of dawn. *"Daddy dear, / I wonder, won't you have them harness a wagon for me, the tall one with the good smooth wheels... so I can take our clothes to the river for a washing?"* (VI, 61-64). And so this begins Nausicaa's narration, which leads her to find Odysseus and lead him to her home.

Odysseus narrates in book 7. This is seen when he first meets Queen Arete.

*Queen, / Arete, daughter of godlike King Rhexenor! Her after many trials I come to beg for mercy, your husband's, yours, and all these feasters' here. May the gods endow them with fortune all their lives, may each have down to his sons the riches in his house and the pride of place the realm has granted him. But as for myself, grant me a rapid convoy home to my own native land. How far way I've been from all my loved ones-how long I have suffered!* (VII, 172-181).

Odysseus wants to make a good first impression to the King and Queen. He shows how a houseguest of that time would act. Odysseus does not want to offend the King and Queen, so he wishes the god grant everyone who was at the feast good fortune so as to pass down to their sons. He hopes that by doing this he will be granted passage home to his family.

Homer changes narrators to move the story from point A to point B. Seeing the story from different sides explains why things happen. If Homer did not show Athena advocating for Odysseus' case, then we would not have learned how and why he was allowed to leave the island.