

How far is Odysseus's status 'safe' in the Odyssey?

Throughout the Odyssey, Odysseus is portrayed as a Greek hero. However this can be contradicted. In many events Odysseus can be perceived as un-heroic at times. Therefore the above statement can be argued. Throughout this piece of work I will be discussing this statement and I will gradually draw closer to a conclusion.

Odysseus shows leadership as he produces very clever ideas and performs quick-thinking actions. Throughout the narrative he has planned strategies, for example, every time Odysseus and his men reach an island he always sends his men first to investigate the surroundings. This quality can be seen as cunning and therefore he can be seen as a hero.

His personality can be seen as caring and scheming. In many periods of the book this can be proved. He stays calm in situations and when his men die he thinks of them, and when in trouble he does his best to help them says quote, "we travelled with heavy hearts, grieving for the loss of our dear friends....." (Book 10 Line 133) Odysseus can be seen as resourceful, for example, he took the undiluted wine with him when going into the Cyclops's cave, which then later came into use as it saved his men and himself escape to safety. He is seen as shrewd as he uses a false name when speaking with the Cyclops which again later on takes its effect when the men are absconding from the dangers of the Cyclops.

Even though Odysseus can be seen as a hero, in some cases he cannot be depicted as cunning. For example, he decided to ignore his crew's suggestion to escape with the food in the Cyclops's cave. Even though he was right to do the hospitable and respectable thing to do, by staying in the cave to greet their 'host', he made the wrong decision as the by staying he risked the lives of his men. Odysseus can be thought of as violent as he blinded Polyphemus with a stake. This could be looked at as un-heroic and wrong, but it can also be seen as him being vengeful for his killed crew. Therefore these different situations can be looked at from two perspectives. He could be seen as hospitable and vengeful, which are true qualities of a hero, or he can be looked at as a violent person who has bad judgement. It all depends on the reader's standpoint.

Odysseus has a very strong relationship with the Gods, especially with Athenes and Hermes. For example Hermes helped Odysseus by giving him the moly flower. This can be looked at from two angles. Odysseus might seem not so heroic as he needs help from the powers that be, and he might be seen as dependent on the Gods. But this can be argued as only some people would think that only a hero can receive such gifts from the gods and that there has to be something special about him, and also Athene was known for helping heroes which could prove that he was one. Therefore, again, this line of reasoning could be argued.

Odysseus and his men have lack trust and confidence in their relationships. This reflects badly upon Odysseus as it shows he is not leadership material. For example When Odysseus and his men sailed away from the Island of Aelia, Odysseus had received the gift of the winds. His crew did not trust Odysseus and opened the bag, thinking it was gold, and released the winds. This shows a lack of trust.

Another example that shows a requirement of confidence in their relationship is when one of Odysseus's men, Eurylochus, says "You will never come back yourself and won't rescue a single man of your crew. I am certain of it. Let you get away quickly with those that are left here." (Book 10 Line 268). This shows that his men think that their destiny with Odysseus will lead to death. They feel as if his leadership is endangering them which shows that they do not think of him as a hero and influences the reader to think the same, even though Odysseus tries his best and up most to rescue his men

In my opinion, I think that Odysseus is a heroic figure. This is because in the book he is proved to be cunning, caring and an important figure. There are many events in the book that contradict this, but they can be argued to whether Odysseus was really in the wrong. For example, he wanted to stay in Polyphemus's cave because he wanted to be hospitable (which is the right thing to do), and he was not aware of the dangers that were at hand. He can be seen as violent, but revenge was his only motivation, when he blinded the Cyclops. Therefore, I think

that Odysseus can be categorised under 'hero', and I think that Odysseus's status throughout the *Odyssey* all depends on how the reader interprets the events that take place as they always have two aspects to look at.