

How important is the episode in Phaeacia to the whole poem?

*The Odyssey is a Poem written by Homer, a blind Bard. An account is told of the famous heroic warrior, Odysseus who has been away from home for 20 years after fighting in the Trojan war.*

*Phaeacia is the last place Odysseus visits before returning home to Ithaca. Through out his long enduring travels we see the temptations Odysseus is faced with, but always he turns away as the one main thing on his mind is returning home to his family and homeland.*

*When Odysseus first lands in Phaeacia the first person he meets is the white-armed Nausica. A young beautiful princess whose father is King Alcinous. Along with the help of Athena, Odysseus finds his way to the palace of Alcinous. At this point Odysseus is desperate to get home. He has almost lost all hope as his tragic journey has cost him all his men and he has no treasures or gifts to show for his victory at Troy, if he ever does return home.*

*When Odysseus enters the palace of Alcinous he does not feel the need to give his name. Even after hearing the bards singing his praises and of his heroic victories he does not let on. Odysseus is careful not to reveal his identity because he does not yet know of how these unknown people may react to him. However, this may also be because he wants to earn the Phaeacians respect first and not have to use his name and power to get him places. Instead he uses his wit and crafty ways, complimenting and flattering his way towards what he wants. For example when Odysseus first meets Nausicaa, his body being grimly with salt and a gruesome sight, he still takes the time to think of the best way to go about this in order to win over the girl. He could either throw his arms round her knees and beg for help, which any desperate man on his last straw would do, or he could keep his distance and courteously plead his case. Of course, the cunning and clever Odysseus acted like a gentleman at this drastic time and trying not to overwhelm the young girl managed to flatter her into taking him under her wing and helping him on his way. Although this was an obstacle for Odysseus as Nausicaa could not resist and like the others, fell in love with Odysseus wanting him to marry her. This offer would have been very tempting for Odysseus as it would offer him royalty and riches, but again the loyal Odysseus turned away as there was only one thought on his mind and only one woman he loved. Although, when Odysseus does enter the palace he is not asked who he is because this was seen as inhospitable. A visitor gives his name when he feels ready.*

*When Odysseus does tell Alcinous his name he waits until the time is right, when he knows that he has won their respect. Odysseus, although he is a great warrior and has many victories to gloat about, he never*

*shows any aspects of being hubris, unlike the suitors behaviour. 'Put that Idea out of your mind. I have neither the looks nor the stature of the immortal gods...but those of a human being'.*

*Odysseus makes it clear that he is like any other man and has the same feelings. The temptations he faces on his journeys show us that he is mortal and something's he cannot resist. One of these is having the last word after physically humiliating and degrading the Cyclopes. He just couldn't resist gloating in the face of the now blinded Polyphemus.. Along his journey there is a recurrence of the loss of men. This is important because to be a good leader you are to keep all your men and return home with as many as possible. This is ironic, as Odysseus returns home alone but this don't mean he was a bad leader. Evidence shows us that Odysseus was the best leader he could have been but it was his men's childish and ignorant behaviour that cost them their own lives.*

*An example of this is shown in book 9 when Odysseus and his men settled on the land of the lotus-eaters. Odysseus did what was best for his men and dragged them back to the ships kicking and screaming. What he did was against their free will but Odysseus knew himself what was best for them. When forcing his men away from the lotus-eaters, even though he is thinking of his men and their future he is in fact thinking of his own needs. If Odysseus returned with no men his leadership skills would not show for anything. All the hard work he had put into leading his men home would all go to waste. Odysseus is also desperate to return home and he needs his men to do this otherwise he will have no one to row the ship.*

*Another important feature of his arrival home is the treasures he is expected to bring back from Troy. At this point in the poem when he arrives at Phaacia he has neither men nor treasures to return home with. There is almost no hope for him. This is mainly why Phaacia is such an important part in the Odyssey. It is Alcinous who makes it possible for Odysseus to return home ordering him a ship and men to take him home. Odysseus also ends up better due to the fact that the treasures he receives off Alcinous are by far better and grander than the treasures he recovered from Troy.*

*Now Odysseus is able to return home like a true victorious warrior with his men and treasures under his belt.*

*Another importance of Odysseus landing at Phaacia is that Homer is able to tell the story of Odysseus's magical travels through the words of Odysseus. This way the story is told in favour of Odysseus, exaggerating his careful thinking and actions. Also, Odysseus is more likely to tell the story in a way, which shines the light on him and embellish on his heroic actions. Odysseus is able to do this in a subtle way though as he does not want to come across as in any way hubris.*

*Homer, the Poet sets out the Odyssey in that Odysseus tells his story in the middle rather than at the beginning. This is done to introduce the reader to Odysseus's homeland and family first. This is to allow the reader to know why Odysseus is longing for his home and why he is so determined to get back. In the telling of his journeys we hear of the temptations Odysseus faces on his journey. Most of these temptations being beautiful women wanting Odysseus for their own. Calypso, a beautiful Nymph who sheltered and cared for Odysseus for 7 years. When Zeus commanded his departure she even offered Odysseus Immortality but Odysseus turned it down without a moment of thought. He would rather face the fearful violent seas than be one of the Gods. Just for the chance to return to his home he has longed for.*

*'Calypso, that formidable Goddess with the beautiful locks...offered me immortality and eternal youth...but never for a moment did she win my heart'.*

*A theme in the Odyssey is family and loyalty. Although Odysseus does sleep with these women and allow them to think he feels the same back, Odysseus only ever has one woman on his mind, Penelope. We also see a strong connection ironically as at home Penelope is faced with temptation. This temptation being all the suitors competing for her hand in marriage. Penelope buys her time craft fully, alike Odysseus, as she still has faith in her husband's return after 20 years of his absence. A great temptation for Odysseus is the city Phaeacia. Homer describes the land and its people to be easy living. It would be no problem for Odysseus to settle here and live happily.*

*'Their fruit never fails nor runs short, winter and summer alike...There is never a time when the west wind's breath is not assisting'*

*Odysseus has been away from home for 20 years and his journeys have nearly taken it out of him. When he first landed on Phaeacia he was on his last breath and without the help and assistance of Athena he would have surely died. Any other mortal man would have given up long ago, but the fact that Odysseus overcomes this temptation shows his great love for Ithaca. It also shows his great love for his wife Penelope and son Telemachus whom he has not seen since he was just a baby.*

*Phaeacia plays an important part in the Odyssey, as it is a halfway house for Odysseus. Homer uses this part of the poem to allow Odysseus to recover his sense of identity and worth. This happens when he is telling his tale and sees the response he gets from the Phaeacians. The response he now knows he will get when he returns home. This is the first time in the poem we hear Odysseus tell the full account of his travels. Odysseus gets sympathy from his listeners and this wins his ticket home.*