

Is Achilles A Real Hero?

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Introduction

The Homeric Hymn to Demeter a Religious Ritual MythIn ancient Greece, myth was greater than science, legend was greater than history, and folk tales were greater than entertainment itself. *Iliad* is Greek mythology that gives an account of the events that took place during the course of the Trojan War. Although the mythology centres on the war, it does not provide a comprehensive overview of the war because it only narrows down to the events which took place towards the end of the war. The main protagonist of the epic is Achilles, an ordinary child who would later emerge as a heroic figure in Greece following his victory in this particular war. Despite his successes in the battle, there is a divided opinion regarding Achilles. To his admirers, Achilles is a hero. However, to his critics, Achilles does not deserve the heroic title because of misbehaviour like pride, rage, and stubbornness. The purpose of this paper is to use Campbell's Hero Journey to support Achilles as a real Greek hero (Christensen, 2022).

Defending Achilles as a Hero

Despite the accusations labelled against Achilles, he still remains a real hero. The counter-argument that Achilles does not deserve to be regarded as a hero does not hold water. Even if Achilles conducted himself as a proud and stubborn person, he was, in no way, a loser. He still remains a hero because these are normal weaknesses that characterize all human beings. In entire human history, there have been many heroes, but none of them has ever lacked any weaknesses (Stein 444). For instance, in the Bible, Moses and David were Jewish heroes. However, each of them had weaknesses that, in one way or the other, hindered them from effectively serving God. Therefore, this paper acknowledges Achilles as a real hero because he made an accomplishment that no one could do in his community. He, at one point, said, "I myself desire that my people be safe, not perish" (1.116-119). His heroism should not be seen from the perspective of his weaknesses but from the fact that he achieved something that was worthy of himself and his people as well. After all, his heroic journey falls within Campbell's departure, initiation, and return stages (Grethlein, 2023).

Heroic Origins and Early Development

The heroism in Achilles did not manifest itself during adulthood but started right from his infancy. In Greece, there were families which were associated with heroic acts. A child from such families would emerge as a hero. Achilles happened to be one of the children born into such a family. His family background was unique because his mother was an immortal Nereid Thetis. At the same time, his father, mortal Peleus, served as the king of Myrmidons. The name denotes that his father was a member of a special Greek family which had been associated with extraordinary skills like courage, strength, and intelligence. Meaning that it was likely that their son would become a fearless soldier when he grew up. From this analysis, it is evident that Achilles' lineage demonstrates that he was born in a complicated family tree that had been associated with mythological heroes. As if this was not enough, Achilles' acts of heroism were prophesied when he was still a young child. At the age of nine, a seer prophesied that Achilles would be a hero who would fight and win the Trojan War before dying as a hero (Bacigalupo, 2022).

Courage and Loyalty in War

Achilles was a real Greek hero because he distinguished himself as a strong, fearless, and loyal servant to his people. Although the readers are not aware of the beginning of the Trojan War, the audience is adequately informed about how the war was fought during Achilles' time. Since he took a leading role in the war, there is no doubt that he is credited with the successes he has realized (Murty 82). During the entire period of the war, Achilles appeared as an extraordinarily powerful and courageous soldier who could not fear anyone regardless of their perceived strength. He faced his enemy to ensure that he challenged them no matter what it cost him. His success is described when the narrator says, "Forever quarrelling is dear to your heart, and wars and battles; and if you are very strong indeed, that is a god's gift" (1.177-178). For example, one of his greatest successes was when he managed to slay Hector. The killing of Hector was Achilles' greatest success because he was the principal enemy whose elimination would guarantee Achilles and his soldiers the desired victory in the fiercely fought Trojan War. All these are acts of heroism because if he were not a hero, he would not have managed to do so (Pearce, 2023).

Achilles' Relationships and Reputation

Achilles' heroism is seen in the manner in which he relates to other people both within and outside of the battlefield. Achilles is an adorable hero because everyone acknowledges and recognizes him as a person who has made tremendous contributions to his people. He is a real hero because he did not fight for personal gain; he was using his prowess to bring glory to his people. Everyone, including the leaders, wanted him to participate in the war because they knew that he was a strong and courageous soldier who could fight anyone who came his way (Edwards 27). An example of a leader

who admired Achilles' heroism was King Agamemnon, who fondly referred to him as a godlike hero.

Conflict with Agamemnon and Reconciliation

However, when it happened that the king angered Achilles, he had no choice but to comply with Nestor, who had directed him to give in to Achilles' demands and sent Phoenix and Ajax to appease him by giving him many gifts, including Brise. The poet writes of him, "Then when the king knew him for the powerful stock of the God, he detained him there, and offered him the hand of his daughter, and gave him half of all the kingly privilege (6.188-193). If the king, for example, did not recognize Achilles as a hero, he would have either ignored or killed him because he had become a bother to him. All these are clear indications that the ordinary Greeks, as well as their leaders, recognized Achilles as a hero who would save them from their enemies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is no single reason to believe that Achilles was not a hero. Despite suffering from what is known as Achilles' heel, Achilles still came out as an extraordinary figure who had all the qualities of an ideal Greek hero. In Greece, a hero was not a perfect person but could have some weaknesses like pride which, in most cases, led to their downfall. By leading and winning the Trojan War, Achilles proved that he was indeed a hero whose powers no one could match. Many people admired him because he was a celebrated hero who brought glory to the community. His heroism did not come as an accident but stems from his lineage. After all, he was living to fulfil the prophecy which had been made to affirm that he would live and die as a hero.

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