

Odyssey: Back To Circe To Bury Elpenor

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The Odyssey is a poem written by Robert Fagles which describes the ups and downs of every individual in their life. Due to the lyrical mastery displayed in the poem, it is evident that Robert successfully gave the literature fanatics a masterpiece to adore and treasure. The poem is among the ancient Greek poems which have been attributed to Homer. The poem primarily focuses on a Greek legend who is called Odyssey and the obstacles he faced in his quest back home after the fall of Troy. It is after ten years of the Trojan War that the poem begins. Apparently, Odyssey is yet to return home to Ithaca to his Empire. He had to go through various challenges as indicated in the multiple episodes. In some instances, he was required to do something. This essay will focus on what Odyssey experienced in episode 11, called Back to Circe, to bury Elpenor (Homer).

In the episode "Back to Circe to bury Elpenor," the poem describes the various challenges Odyssey faced. In this event, the Odyssey is required to travel underground to make offerings by the Circle. While underground, he meets Elpenor who narrates what happened. Elpenor requests him to go back and honour his death by constructing a burial mound for his body. Another surprising thing that happens is that Odyssey saw his mother's shade. He is traumatized by the fact that he did not know of the death of his mother and undoubtedly, this was not the best way to find out. She was well and healthy the last time he recalled hearing of his mother.

He is distracted by the arrival of the dead blind prophet known as Teiresias. After drinking the blood from Odyssey's sacrifice, he directs him on what to do. Odyssey is warned not to eat the Helio's cattle at Thrinakia. He also tells Odyssey that he is destined to survive alone. This meant that all his crew and companions would die in their quest. He is informed that he will get back home but will be challenged by the troubles he will find there. The suitors streaming to his home will have to pay for their insolence by the blood. Once he defeats the suitors, Odyssey is instructed by Teiresias to go to an island until he gets to a point where an area of the earth has never seen the sea. Once here, he will have to play to Poseidon for a peaceful seaborne death once he reaches old age. His folks would be by his side on his deathbed.

Once done with the prophet, Odyssey requests to talk to his mother. She explained the situation at home in Ithaca to him. They speak of his wife's infidelity. She terms his wife's behaviour as a sticky stain wherever she went. Odyssey is advised to arrive home in secrecy and withhold some information and things from her. While Odyssey tries to hug his mother severally, he realizes it is impossible since she's dead. Since few people face the underworld, most people queue to talk to him. Odyssey draws his sword with the aim of holding them back. The effectiveness of this move is not apparent since these were shades of already dead people. He later permits them to drink each at a time.

One of the most significant heroic acts and values Odyssey displays is persistence. This is an

unrewarding character that Odysseus possesses. He is patient enough to go through all the challenges in his quest to get back home. This attitude is also displayed by Sisyphus. He forever pushes a boulder uphill without giving up however much it is. He is determined that he will make it home eventually. Despite the challenges that lay ahead, as predicted by the blind prophet, Odysseus does not fear but instead pushes on. He is also humble. He takes his time with the shades, giving each of them a chance to drink the blood of the sacrifice and talk to him. Despite having many issues awaiting him and a long journey home, he speaks to each of the dead listening to their stories before continuing with his mission.

This episode is very significant. It facilitates the flow of the plot. At this stage, Odysseus is advised and guided on how to conduct himself what to do and when. Skipping this scene means that Odysseus would not get to know how to hold himself or what to avoid. He might as well have ended dead by taking Helios's cattle. He would not know how to repent for his sins of blinding his son, and he would have to face the wrath of the god.

Also, in this episode, while visiting the underworld, Odysseus is privileged to speak with Agamemnon, his crew member. Agamemnon recounts his tale which Odysseus only heard from other people. He narrates how his wife was deceitful and how he died at her hands. His story is similar to the Odysseus's, and their flow is almost parallel. He is cautioned by Agamemnon not to trust women and to return home under total secrecy. Odysseus is also sure that long gone are the days which had faithful women and wives.

One of the themes enhanced by this episode is persistence. Odysseus had gone through a lot of challenges, but he did not stop. He is determined that he will eventually get home. Despite being told of the rough terrain that lay ahead by the blind prophet, he does not even think of abandoning his mission. Another theme is faithfulness. Odysseus is told of his wife's infidelity. This means that she was no longer faithful to her husband whom they thought was dead. This theme is also displayed by Agamemnon who his wife killed for another lover. Also, there is the theme of obedience. Odysseus is advised on what to do and where to go which he unquestionably follows. He is keen not to break any advice, meaning he is obedient.

After the quests, Odysseus reveals himself to the whole palace and finally reunites with Penelope. He later travels to see the return of his son, which reinvigorates his ageing father Laertes and his father. With his son's return, Laertes is motivated and kills Antinous's father to put to a stop the attacks. The relationship between Odysseus and his wife is restored and what was once a dream, is now a reality. With his power secured and his return home to reunite with his family, Odysseus' ordeals and trying experience end.

Conclusively, Odysseus is a legendary individual who, despite being mortal, was recognized as a good. He is the main character who undergoes numerous scary moments, and frightening episodes yet remains focused on getting home. He is determined, and throughout the poem, he is seen as a committed person. His keenness in listening to his crew members shows that he was a real leader

who was concerned with the welfare of his men and took into account their words, opinions, and suggestions. He is also right in keeping his promises since after leaving the underworld, he gave his crew member, Elpenor, a decent and honourable death as a sailor. The character of the Odyssey was desirable and impressive despite his heroic and legendary attributes.

Work Cited

Homer, and Robert Fagles. *Homer: The Odyssey*. Softback Preview, 1997.