

The Strengths of Odysseus

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Endurance, Intelligence, and the Apparent Vulnerability of Odysseus

Odysseus may seem weak and helpless in Books 5 and 6 of *The Odyssey*, especially when he is shown suffering at sea, struggling after the destruction of his raft, and depending on the kindness of others for survival. However, as the story develops, Odysseus becomes more powerful and impressive through his intelligence, patience, courage, and ability to survive difficult situations. His strength is not only physical; it is also mental and strategic. In fact, one of the most important qualities of Odysseus is his ability to think carefully before acting. His ability to attain what he wants portrays him as a cunning and wise character rather than only a physically strong hero. However, his achievements cannot be associated with a weak person. Odysseus' strength cannot be measured only by his physical appearance, but by his ability to plan, endure suffering, disguise himself, and execute his ambitions efficiently. Various circumstances throughout *The Odyssey* show the strong points of Odysseus and prove that he becomes more powerful with time (Homer, n.d.).

One of the first major strengths of Odysseus is his endurance. In Book 5, he is trapped on Calypso's island and desperately wants to return home to Ithaca. Although Calypso offers him comfort and even immortality, Odysseus still chooses the difficult path of returning to his wife, son, and homeland. This shows that he is emotionally strong and deeply loyal. When he finally leaves the island, Poseidon destroys his raft, and Odysseus is thrown into the dangerous sea. At this moment, he appears weak because he has no ship, no army, and no control over the forces of nature. However, his ability to survive this situation shows great strength. He refuses to give up and continues struggling until he reaches the land of the Phaeacians. This proves that Odysseus' strength is not only found in victory but also in survival.

Another strong point of Odysseus is his intelligence in difficult situations. When Odysseus reaches the land of the Phaeacians, he is exhausted, alone, and vulnerable. Instead of behaving carelessly, he uses wisdom and humility to gain help. He approaches Nausicaa respectfully and chooses his words carefully so that she will not feel threatened. This moment shows that Odysseus understands human nature and knows how to communicate effectively. He does not depend on force in this situation because force would not help him. Instead, he uses politeness, patience, and intelligence to receive assistance. This is one of his greatest strengths because he knows when to act boldly and when to act humbly.

Hospitality, Persuasion, and the Support of the Phaeacians

Odysseus also gains the support of the Phaeacians because he understands the importance of customs and hospitality. In ancient Greek culture, strangers and guests were expected to be treated with respect. Odysseus uses this cultural expectation wisely. He presents himself as a suffering stranger who needs help, and the Phaeacians respond with kindness. They provide him with food, shelter, clothing, and eventually a ship to return home. This episode shows that Odysseus is not only a warrior but also a skilled speaker and observer of social behavior. He knows how to adapt himself to new situations and use available customs to his advantage.

The strength of Odysseus is also visible in his ability to hide his identity when necessary. Disguise is one of the most important tools he uses throughout the story. Later in the epic, when he returns to Ithaca, he does not immediately reveal himself as the king. Instead, he disguises himself as a beggar and enters his own home carefully. This decision shows his patience and self-control. A weaker or more impulsive man might have announced himself immediately and attacked the suitors in anger. However, Odysseus understands that the suitors are many, while he has only limited support. Therefore, he waits, observes, tests the loyalty of servants and family members, and plans his revenge.

Odysseus portrays his strength most clearly in his ability to defeat the suitors who have invaded his home with the intention of taking his wealth, disrespecting his household, and marrying his wife, Penelope. He remains firm even though he knows that if his identity is discovered too early, he may be killed. The suitors are physically strong and greater in number, but Odysseus defeats them through planning and strategy. He participates in the contest of the bow, proves his identity through his skill, and then executes his plan. With the help of his son Telemachus and a few loyal servants, he kills the suitors and restores order to his household. This moment shows that Odysseus' greatest strength is not brute force alone but his ability to combine courage, timing, and intelligence.

Strategic Thinking and the Legacy of the Trojan Horse

Another important example of Odysseus' strength is connected to the Trojan War. He is remembered as the hero who came up with the idea of the wooden horse, which helped the Greeks enter Troy. Instead of trying to defeat the Trojans only through open battle, Odysseus uses deception and strategy. He suggests that Greek warriors hide inside a huge wooden horse, which is presented as a gift. When the Trojans bring the horse inside their city, the hidden warriors come out at night and open the gates for the Greek army. This plan leads to the fall of Troy and proves Odysseus' extraordinary intelligence. His strength is therefore shown through strategy rather than simple

physical power.

Odysseus also becomes stronger with time because he learns from suffering. His long journey teaches him patience, caution, and humility. He faces many dangers, including storms, monsters, temptation, and loss. Each challenge tests a different part of his character. Sometimes he makes mistakes, but he also learns how to continue moving forward. This makes him a complex hero. He is not perfect, but his ability to survive and keep pursuing his goal makes him admirable. His strength comes from persistence and the refusal to abandon his desire to return home.

In conclusion, Odysseus has many strong points that make him one of the greatest heroes in classical literature. Although he may seem weak in certain moments, especially when he is alone and suffering, his true strength appears through his intelligence, endurance, patience, and ability to plan. He survives the sea, gains help from the Phaeacians, uses disguise wisely, defeats the suitors, and contributes to the victory at Troy through the wooden horse strategy. Therefore, Odysseus becomes stronger and more powerful with time, not because he is physically unbeatable, but because he knows how to use his mind, courage, and experience to overcome impossible challenges.

References

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Retrieved from <https://classics.mit.edu/Homer/odyssey.html>