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Narration with Process Explanation: Suffering the Mistakes of Odysseus

In *Homer's The Odyssey* translated by Ian Johnston, Odysseus is a great warrior whose decisions caused an epic drama between the gods and humans. As he and his men were faced with a great Cyclops monster named Polyphemus, Odysseus instructed his men to pursue stabbing out the monster's eye. Because the Cyclops was the son of the god Poseidon, there were surely consequences to endure. The Cyclops Polyphemus, son of Poseidon, prayed,

“Hear me, Poseidon, Enfolder of the Earth, dark-haired god, if I truly am your son and if you are my father, as you claim, grant that Odysseus, sacker of cities, a man from Ithaca, Laertes's son, never gets back home. If it's his destiny to see his friends and reach his native land and well-built house, may he arrive there late and in distress, after all his comrades have been killed, and in someone else's ship. And may he find misfortune in his home” (Homer).

Because Odysseus mistakenly provided his name, he became cursed, bringing years of misery and misfortune to his men, his family, and himself.

First, because of Odysseus' past mistake, his men were doomed to suffer and die. He and his men got trapped on an island called Thrinacia due to Poseidon's strong winds making it impossible to escape. The men were stuck there for three months. Their food and supplies went by fast and they were on the verge of starvation. The men were getting tired of just waiting to die and decided that they would rather eat a good meal and be killed rather than sit around waiting

for starvation to overtake them. The men slayed and skinned Helios' cattle while others went to the boat to get wine. They offered their food to the gods as a sacrifice and then had an amazing feast. The only person who did not participate was Odysseus for he did not want to risk dying from eating a cow. When Helios saw the men eating his beloved cows, he had a fit and immediately went to Zeus begging for him to avenge his cattle. Somehow Poseidon knew what Zeus had been planning to do and went ahead and let the men get back in their boat. A few minutes after they have made it out to sea, they ran into a massive storm produced by Zeus. Zeus then threw down a massive lightning bolt at the ship and all the men and all the boats were completely destroyed. Only Odysseus still remained alive for he did not indulge in the feasting of the cattle.

Meanwhile, Odysseus' family also endured hardship as a consequence of his decision to reveal his name to the Cyclops. Due to the curse of the Cyclops monster, Odysseus hadn't made it home for many years, making others believe that he had died on his voyage back from war. The people were now expecting Penelope to remarry, causing much stress into her home. Many suitors showed up at the palace and stayed there for five years waiting for Penelope to choose her new husband. During these five years, the suitors devoured all of their food, began sleeping with her maids and some of the staff, and consistently treated everyone as if they were already deemed king of the palace. They treated Penelope with much disrespect as well, pestering her on and on to quickly pick a suitor to marry. Penelope knew in her heart that her husband was still alive so she did her best to stall the marriage using her cleverness to trick the suitors. She was able to stall them for ten years, pretending that it took a long time to loom a shroud for her father in law. Telemachus was the son of Penelope and Odysseus, but the last time he got to see his father was almost twenty years ago when he was just a few months old. Telemachus never really

had a father figure or someone to teach him how to be and act like a true man, so others saw him still as an immature child.

Because of Odysseus' curse, he would not make it home anytime soon. After enduring Zeus' brutal storm, Odysseus swam for many days until he had reached an island where a beautiful goddess named Calypso resided. She took him into her cave, provided him with clothing, made sure that he was well fed, and gave him shelter and safety in exchange for using him for her sexual gratification. Odysseus was ready to leave and would spend his free time staring into the distance towards the direction of Ithaca. He felt he was too old and too worn out to try and fight for his freedom and he had lost hope of ever making his way home again. Not only did he just lose his hope, but he also lost friends, companions, and his family. Even though he was so eager to leave, he just couldn't bring himself to muster up the courage to fight Calypso for his freedom and potentially reunite with his family and his kingdom. Thus, he allowed himself to stay trapped on the island for about seven years. He spent seven years with Calypso when the whole time he was thinking about getting back to his home.

The pain and misery that befell those around Odysseus were caused by his own pride and ego. He wanted to get acknowledgement for defeating the Cyclops and stating his name was a mistake that he would regret. With all that had happened to him, he could have easily avoided those years of pain and loss by simply refraining from boasting his name. I believe that Odysseus deserved what he went through, although it was unfortunate that so many of those around him were forced to die and struggle as the result of his poor leadership and misguidance.

Work Cited

Homer. *The Odyssey Abridged*. Translated by Ian Johnson, Ian Johnston, 2019,
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