

The Odyssey Character Profiles

Human Beings:

<u>Aegyptius</u>	<u>Eurycleia</u>	<u>Mentor</u>
<u>Agamemnon</u>	<u>Eurylochus</u>	<u>Nausicaa</u>
<u>Alcinous</u>	<u>Eurymachus</u>	<u>Nestor</u>
<u>Antinous</u>	<u>Halisthernes</u>	<u>Odysseus</u>
<u>Anticleia</u>	<u>Helen</u>	<u>Peisistratus</u>
<u>Arete</u>	<u>Irus</u>	<u>Penelope</u>
<u>Demodocus</u>	<u>Laertes</u>	<u>Philoetius</u>
<u>Elpenor</u>	<u>Medon</u>	<u>Telemachus</u>
<u>Eumaeus</u>	<u>Melantho</u>	<u>Tiresias</u>
<u>Eupeithes</u>	<u>Melanthius</u>	<u>Theoclymenus</u>
<u>Euryalus</u>	<u>Menelaus</u>	<u>Argus</u>

Aegyptius: One of the chieftains of Ithaca who speaks at the Assembly during Book II.

Agamemnon: The king of Mycenae and leader of the Achaean expedition to Troy. He is one of the dead souls whom Odysseus speaks with in Hades (Book XI).

Alcinous: The king of the Phaeacians who is the husband of Arete and father of Nausicaa. He is a generous, kind, and good-humored ruler and father. It is he who makes the return of Odysseus to Ithaca possible by lending him a ship and crew.

Antinous: The 'leader' of the suitors and the first slain by Odysseus in Book XXII. He is a cruel, greedy, and hypocritical villain, always attempting to justify his evil behavior by distorting the motives or acts of others. It is he who first mistreats Odysseus (disguised as a beggar), constantly harasses Telemachus and Penelope, and who plans the murder of Telemachus. He is not only malicious, but his evil is so intense that he is unwilling or unable to be ashamed of his deeds and proudly admits them.

Anticleia: Odysseus' mother; Odysseus encounters her in Hades (Book XI).

Arete: The queen of the Phaeacians, wife of Alcinous and mother of Nausicaa. She is possessed of understanding and kindness.

Demodocus: A blind bard who entertains at the banquets in the palace of Alcinous. His songs about the Trojan War upset Odysseus and cause him to reveal his identity to the Phaeacians.

Elpenor: A young seaman in the crew of Odysseus who dies in an accident on Circe's island (Book X) and whose soul encounters Odysseus in Hades (Book XI).

Eumaeus: The chief swineherd of Odysseus who remains faithful to Odysseus during his long absence and

plays an active part in assisting Odysseus regain his position when he finally returns to Ithaca. Eumaeus is intelligent, loyal, and compassionate.

Eupeithes: The father of Antinous. He manifests the same rashness and disloyalty exhibited by his son when, in Book XXIV, he leads a band of Ithacans to attack Odysseus and his party. He is killed in this fight by Laertes.

Euryalus: One of the young Phaeacian noblemen in Book VIII. He taunts and challenges Odysseus to a contest but realizes his error and apologizes.

Eurycleia: The faithful and devoted old nurse of Odysseus who recognizes him on his return (Book XIX) by an old scar from a boar.

Eurylochus: One of Odysseus' officers; he is an unimaginative and sober person who wisely avoids Circe's palace in Book X but also slaughters Hyperion's cattle in Book XII.

Eurymachus: The second most important suitor, he is as evil as Antinous but far more soft and cowardly. He attempts to appease Odysseus in Book XXII by offering cash restitution for his sins. Unlike Antinous, he is unable to accept the blame for his deeds.

Halithernes: The soothsayer of Ithaca who, at the Assembly in Book II, is unheeded when he gives stern warnings of the future consequences of the suitors' acts.

Helen: The wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta. She is the cause of the Trojan War, for the war started because the Achaeans were trying to get her back from Troy. She is sympathetic to the problems of others.

Irus: A beggar who is pitted by the suitors against Odysseus (in beggar form) and is severely beaten.

Laertes: The father of Odysseus. He is old, lives alone, and is in good shape despite his age.

Medon: Herald of Ithaca, remains loyal to Odysseus even though he has to serve the suitors.

Melantho: A serving maid at Odysseus' home; she is disloyal and the mistress of Eurymachus; she is hung by Odysseus when he returns.

Melanthius: The chief goatherd of Odysseus, he is disloyal and caters to the suitors. He attacks the disguised Odysseus and aides the suitors when Odysseus fights them. He is also executed by Odysseus.

Menelaus: The King of Sparta, husband of Helen, brother of Agamemnon. He is visited by Telemachus and shows anger at the acts of the suitors, but doesn't help Telemachus.

Mentor: A loyal friend of Odysseus who tutors Telemachus; it is under his guise that Athena often appears to humans.

Nausicaa: The daughter of King Alcinous and Arete. She is the first to encounter Odysseus when he lands on Phaeacia, and she takes him to the palace.

Nestor: King of Pylos, is visited by Telemachus in Book III and suggests that he visit Menelaus. Nestor's son accompanies Telemachus.

Odysseus: The main character and King of Ithaca. After the Trojan War he is prevented from returning home by Poseidon for many years. He encounters numerous supernatural beings and hardships. He is proud, strong, and smart - a man skilled in all ways of contending.

Peisistratus: The son of King Nestor, he accompanies Telemachus on his journey to find news of Odysseus.

Penelope: The wife of Odysseus. She remains faithful to Odysseus despite the harrying of the suitors. She postpones marriage to one of the suitors by saying she will choose a spouse after she weaves a funeral shroud for Laertes, but each night she unravels it, thus preventing its completion. She also tests Odysseus, not yet sure it is really him, by telling him that she moved their bed; this is impossible because it is attached to a tree.

Philoetius: The chief cowherder of Odysseus, he is loyal and stands with Odysseus against the suitors.

Telemachus: The son of Odysseus, he enters manhood and embarks upon a search for his father. He is courageous, steady, and fights the suitors with his father.

Tiresias: A famous prophet who, in his blindness, has the ability to see the future. He is consulted by Odysseus in Hades and tells him his future. He also tells him how to make peace with Poseidon: offer a sacrifice in a place where the oar is a foreign and unknown object.

Theoclymenus: A soothsayer from Pylos who comes to Ithaca with Telemachus and tells the suitors of their impending doom.

Argus: The faithful hunting dog of Odysseus, he lives long enough to see his master and then dies.

Supernatural Beings:

Aeolus

Hermes

Poseidon

Athena

Hyperion

Scylla

Calypso

Ino

The Sirens

Charybdis

Lotus-Eaters

Zeus

Circe

Polyphemus

Aeolus: A mortal, appointed keeper of the winds by Zeus. He lives on a floating island and, to aid Odysseus' return home, bagged the adverse winds to speed his progress.

Athena: Daughter of Zeus and Goddess of wisdom, Odysseus is her favorite mortal. Her spirit always influences and aids Odysseus and Telemachus.

Calypso: The sea nymph who keeps Odysseus captive for nine years and tempts him with immortality if he agrees to remain with her forever.

Charybdis: A raging whirlpool directly across from Scylla. Odysseus must pass between the two. After they pass and enrage Hyperion, Zeus destroys ship and the whirlpool devours all the crew, save Odysseus.

Circe: An enchantress who transforms Odysseus' men to swine. She then takes Odysseus as her temporary lover, after which she provides invaluable advice to Odysseus.

Hermes: Son of Zeus, he prepares Odysseus for Circe, delivers Zeus' message that Odysseus is to be free of Calypso, and takes the souls of the suitors to Hades.

Hyperion: The Sun-god, he owns a herd of golden cattle. These cattle are slaughtered by Odysseus' men, and Hyperion has Zeus kill them for their deed.

Ino: A sea nymph who helps Odysseus reach the island of Phaeacia. When Poseidon causes a devastating storm to prevent Odysseus from reaching the island, Ino lends him her veil for protection from the furies of the storm.

Lotus-Eaters: A group of mortals who eat the lotus-flower, a lethargic drug that takes away any desire to return home. Some of Odysseus' men taste some and remain on the island.

Polyphemos: A cyclops, son of Poseidon. He traps Odysseus' men in a cave and eats a couple. Odysseus intoxicates him with wine; while he is sleeping, Odysseus blinds him and escapes. After he is blinded, Polyphemos begs his father to punish Odysseus.

Poseidon: God of the sea, he tries to prevent Odysseus from reaching home because he blinded Polyphemos. However, the other Gods wish Odysseus to return home and Poseidon must give in.

Scylla: A six-headed, twelve-armed monster opposite Charybdis, Odysseus and his men must pass by her. She eats six of Odysseus' men.

The Sirens: Beautiful women that lure sailors to their island with a song. The bewitched sailor jumps overboard to go to them, but is killed on the rocks surrounding the island.

Zeus: The God of the heavens and the supreme god, he allows Odysseus to leave Calypso's island. He also destroys Odysseus's crew for killing the golden cattle of Hyperion.