

The Odyssey: Evaluation Argument Model

Argument:

Odysseus is a bad father because

- A. He is often absent
- B. He manipulates his child for his own good
- C. He is impatient with his child

Introduction:

The concept of a bad father can bring to mind monstrous images of beatings and abuse, but the challenges of being a good father are many and the reality is much more complex. Furthermore, fatherhood has always been a struggle, regardless of changing times and pressures, and even the ancient Greeks gave us examples of how hard it is to raise a child. Indeed, in the *Odyssey*, the great hero Odysseus is actually a bad father even though he has had very little contact with his son. In fact, his very absence, although it seems beyond his control, is one of the main reasons that Odysseus is not a good father. However, even when he does meet his son, Odysseus demonstrates other negative qualities of fatherhood: he manipulates his son for his own benefit, and he has little patience for Telemachus. While it is true that ancient Greek culture held different values when it came to parenting and risks, Odysseus still ignores the important role that a father has when it comes to his children, and while he may be a hero, he is not a good family member. Overall, he serves as an example of courage and just revenge, but good fathers have to sometimes put their children first.

Topic Sentence(s) #1:

Although it seems to be beyond his control, Odysseus's absence plays a large role in his poor parenting.

1. "Would to god I'd been the son of a happy man
whom old age overtook in the midst of his possessions!
Now, think of the most unlucky mortal ever born—
since you ask me, yes, they say I am his son" (I, ll 252-256).

When Telemachus says this to Mentos (who is really Athena), he is expressing the unfortunate impact of his father's absence on his own life. The final lines of the quote show that Odysseus's absence has strongly shaped Telemachus's own identity: he is not just the son of Odysseus; he is the son of the "unluckiest mortal ever born." Telemachus even goes so far as to say that he wishes his father were *not* a hero—just an old man who died of old age.

2. Quote + close reading ("interpret" the quote to show how it supports your topic sentence)

Topic Sentence(s) #2:

Even though he has been gone for twenty years, Odysseus's first interactions with his son involve manipulation for his own benefit. Odysseus's own revenge takes precedence over his relationship with Telemachus.

1. Quote + close reading ("interpret" the quote to show how it supports your topic sentence)
2. Quote + close reading ("interpret" the quote to show how it supports your topic sentence)

Topic Sentence(s) #3:

Perhaps his worst quality as a father is Odysseus's lack of patience. Odysseus's own impulsiveness has got him into trouble, but he doesn't teach Telemachus to be thoughtful.

1. Quote + close reading ("interpret" the quote to show how it supports your topic sentence)
2. Quote + close reading ("interpret" the quote to show how it supports your topic sentence)

Topic Sentence(s) #4 (Larger Significance):

Odysseus's poor parenting show that it's very difficult for anybody to be both a hero and a good father because each role takes very different skills.

1. Quote + close reading ("interpret" the quote to show how it supports your topic sentence)
2. Quote + close reading ("interpret" the quote to show how it supports your topic sentence)

Conclusion Ideas:

1. Zeus is the example of the perfect father: he is always present, he lets his children make their own decisions, and he has patience.
2. Odysseus is also a bad son: his testing of his father is unnecessary and cruel, which just underscores how a hero in the world cannot also be a hero at home.

3. Being a good father is a very difficult challenge, and it involves much more than making sure that your children have a home and food to eat. In fact, it's ironic how most good fathers go unnoticed, while "heroes" get all the praise.