

Name _____



Welcome and Warning

In ancient Greece, the idea of hospitality, or *xenia*, was very important. Travelers depended on the kindness of strangers, and hosts were expected to welcome guests with food, shelter, and respect. In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus encounters many different kinds of hospitality—some kind and generous, others dangerous and cruel.

One of the best examples of good hospitality comes from the Phaeacians, a seafaring people who rescue Odysseus when he is shipwrecked. King Alcinous and Queen Arete welcome him into their palace, feed him, and listen to his story. They even offer him a ship to return home. Their kindness helps Odysseus finally reach Ithaca. This shows how hospitality, when done properly, can change someone's fate for the better.

But not all hosts are generous. One of the worst examples of hospitality comes from the Cyclops, Polyphemus. When Odysseus and his men visit his cave, they expect food and shelter. Instead, the giant traps them and eats some of them! Odysseus, using his cleverness, tricks the Cyclops by telling him his name is "Nobody." After blinding Polyphemus, Odysseus and his men escape. However, when Odysseus reveals his true name, the Cyclops asks his father, Poseidon, to curse him. This shows that bad hospitality can lead to disaster for both guests and hosts.

Another example of bad hospitality is found on the island of the Laestrygonians, a race of giant cannibals. Odysseus and his men arrive hoping for kindness, but the Laestrygonians attack, destroying most of their ships. This encounter teaches Odysseus to be cautious when trusting strangers.

On the other hand, some hosts appear dangerous but turn out to be helpful. The enchantress Circe at first seems cruel, turning Odysseus's men into pigs. However, once Odysseus proves his bravery, she becomes a generous host, helping them prepare for their journey.

Finally, when Odysseus returns home, he finds that the suitors in his palace have been terrible guests. Instead of respecting his home and family, they waste his food and treat his servants badly. This shows that hospitality is not only about how hosts treat guests, but also about how guests behave in return.

Throughout Odysseus's journey, hospitality plays a key role. Good hospitality helps him survive, while bad hospitality creates danger and hardship. His experiences show that kindness, respect, and fairness are important in every home and every journey.