

### (i) Battle with the Suitors - 2016

**(a) From your reading of Homer's Odyssey, describe how Odysseus defeats the suitors in the battle in the hall.**

Odysseus first manages to get his hands on a weapon. During the task with the bow, disguised as a beggar, Odysseus asks for a chance to string the bow since the suitors failed to do so.

Odysseus does so with ease and shoots the arrow through the axe heads to the surprise of all the suitors in the hall. Now with his weapon of choice, Odysseus uses the element of surprise. Before the suitors can understand what's happening, Odysseus shoots Antinous through the throat.

Believing the beggar has killed Antinous by accident, the suitors are sent into a panic. It is at this moment that Odysseus reveals his identity to the absolute horrified suitors.

The suitors also have no escape from the hall, thanks to Odysseus' loyal men Eumaeus the swineherd and Philoetius the cowherd. Odysseus recruited them just before he volunteered to participate in the test with the bow. While he did so, they locked the front doors and the doors to the women's quarters, leaving the suitors trapped in the hall. Not only are they trapped they're also unarmed thanks to Odysseus' son Telemachus who locked their weapons in the storeroom in aid of his father's plan earlier that day. Eurymachus attempts to reason with Odysseus, insisting that it was Antinous who was responsible for the crimes committed against Odysseus. However, Odysseus, because of what he has heard from his son as well as what he observed as a beggar, declares he will spare none of them. Eurymachus charges at him but his shot with an arrow. Amphinomus is the next to fall, at the hands of Telemachus' spear.

Telemachus then rushes to the storeroom to get weapons for Eumaeus and Philoetius, but he forgets to lock the storeroom in his eagerness. This loyal servant, Melanthius reaches the storeroom and returns with weapons for the suitors. However, when he goes back for more, Odysseus has sent Eumaeus and Philoetius there and they tie him up and lock him in.

Meanwhile in the hall, the battle rages on. Athena appears as Mentor to encourage Odysseus and tells him to recover his strength and courage. The suitors fire spears and arrows at Odysseus but they missed their mark, thanks to Athena. When the suitors threatened her, she becomes enraged and eventually joins the battle itself. Odysseus meanwhile faces the priest Leodes who begs to be

spared but is refused. Only the minstrel Phemius is spared as Telemachus vouches for him as well as the Bard Medon for his loyalty. In the end, all the suitors are dead.

**(b) Do you think that the suitors and the disloyal maidservants deserved their fate? Give reasons for your answer.**

Yes, I believe that both the maidservants and the suitors deserved their fate. One of the main reasons for this is them breaking the laws of Xenia. The suitors remained in Odysseus' home, overstaying their welcome and eating and drinking all his food and wine. The maid servants allowed this in their master's home, were rude to beggar Odysseus when he was a guest (especially Melanthe) and they even encourage the behavior of the suitors (Melanthius.) Not only was it disrespectful to Odysseus and his family but it was also disrespectful to Zeus. Their decision to not partake in Xenia sealed their fate.

Next the ill treatment of Penelope. Considering they serve Penelope; the maidservants are incredibly disrespectful to their mistress as well as disloyal. Melanthe and the others openly disobey her and one of them told the suitors of her plan with the funeral shroud for Laertes. As for the suitors, they constantly harass her as well as openly lying to her about their plans for her son (especially Antinous and Eurymachus.) They want her for her wealth but do not seek her father's permission. They live in her home for four years, sleeping with her servants and plotting against her son.

As well as this, the suitors and the maid servants do not respect Telemachus and plot against him. Melanthius himself wishes Telemachus death at sea. When Telemachus leaves to find news of his father, Antinous and others plot to have him killed upon his return as he begins to become a man. They seek Penelope's hand, yet they plan to kill her so. That is reason enough for them to deserve their fate. If it wasn't for Athena they might have succeeded.

Finally, the reason I think they deserve their fate is the mistreatment of beggar Odysseus. One of the Odyssey's major themes is the use of disguise as a way of revealing one's true intentions. One can tell the kind of person one is by how they treat the less fortunate. Characters like Eumaeus are welcoming and warm to beggar Odysseus, showing him only kindness. The suitors make him fight another beggar for entertainment and Eurymachus and Clisippus throw things at him, causing Telemachus to step in. Melanthe and the other maidservants sneer and jibe him and Melanthius assaults him. They revealed their true colors in how they treat the beggar. They are horrible and cruel although they don't have to be. That is why they deserve their fate.