

(iv) Eumaeus and the disguise – 2014

(a) Analyze the part played by the swineherd Eumaeus in the Odyssey.

Eumaeus has a pivotal role in the Odyssey. His unwavering loyalty to Odysseus is the driving force for the remainder of the story from when Odysseus lands in Ithaca to when the Ithacans discover he is home. It is because of Eumaeus that Odysseus and Telemachus can safely carry out their revenge on the suitors as well as figure out who remains loyal to them. He represents everything a loyal servant should be. He is courteous to his master's son and guests (beggar/nostos Odysseus) remains loyal and grieves for Odysseus, takes care of his master's land, and continues to serve him.

One of the main roles of the character of Eumaeus is his flawless example of Xenia. Though we see great examples of Xenia when Telemachus visits king Nestor and king Menelaus and when Odysseus visits the Phaeacians, we don't see a good example for the common folk who don't have much unlike kings who have everything. Eumaeus has nothing to give but the clothes off his back, but he gives them anyway. He is the first to meet nostros Odysseus on his return and gives him a warm and kind welcome. He provides him with food and shelter before asking for his identity. Although the swineherd doesn't quite believe his story, he gives him his cloak for warmth despite only having one. The theme of the Odyssey is hospitality, and how the abuse of hospitality is an insult to the gods. Those who follow the rules of Xenia are seen as pious and a person's worth can be decided over this. Eumaeus represents a perfect example of how all servants should behave.

Another part played by Eumaeus in the Odyssey is providing our hero Odysseus with the shelter and the space to fulfill a crucial part of his mission. It is under the roof of Eumaeus that Odysseus reunites with Telemachus, and they devised their plan to take their revenge out on the suitors. Thanks to Eumaeus's loyal character and love for his master, both Odysseus and Telemachus have a space safe space in his home. It is also Eumaeus's generosity in letting the nostros Odysseus stay with him and act as his guide which makes Odysseus's disguise more believable and less suspicious. It makes sense that a servant of Odysseus would bring a beggar to his palace rather than the beggar going there himself. Eumaeus also provides vital information about the

suitors' behavior and their mistreatment of Odysseus's household, letting Odysseus and us know why they deserve their punishment.

The final and most important role of Eumaeus as a character is to show contrast between him and the suitors as well as other disloyal servants of Odysseus. Eumaeus is an incredibly kind person. He reveals his true colors in his treatment of the beggar Odysseus. Unlike the suitors who bully and harass him, especially Antinous and Eurymachus, Eumaeus provides the beggar with shelter food warmth and protection for he even knows he is Odysseus. He defends him against another one of Odysseus's slaves Melanthius who abuses the beggar and sides with the suitors. Eumaeus also remains loyal to Odysseus, unlike Melanthius who wishes he and Telemachus die and Melanthe, a servant girl who mistreats Odysseus while also the mistress of Eurymachus. Eumaeus demonstrates what it is to be a servant who is devoted and a subject to is loyal (unlike the Ithacan suitors who are disrespecting their King's home and family.) It is clear by book 22 who is loyal and kind and who deserves to die. When the time comes to kill the suitors, Eumaeus stands side by side with Odysseus against them and obeys his orders throughout the conflict.

(b) What purpose does Odysseus disguise as a beggar serve in the story?

Odysseus disguise is necessary for many reasons. It is because of his disguise that he can safely alert Telemachus of his plan without anyone else knowing that he is in Ithaca. With this, Odysseus can safely walk around Ithaca without being noticed by anyone or recognized. He enters his home after 20 years, unknown to the suitors or disloyal slaves. Odysseus can scout out his home and helped Telemachus hide the suitors' weapons. Then he has the upper hand and can use the element of surprise to kill the suitors.

His disguise also allows him to learn who is loyal to him. Odysseus can see how the suitors (Antinous and Eurymachus) and his servants (Melanthe and Melanthius) would behave if he wasn't there and how he should punish them. It also allows him to gather more to his side like Eumaeus and Philoetius to help in his conflict with the suitors. It also shows how much Odysseus has grown as a character. He is patient and keeps his calm, unlike when he reveals his identity to Polyphemus and when he is provoked to compete in the Phaeacian games by Euryalus. It is thanks to this growth in character that he can really follow Agamemnon's advice and discover where the loyalty of his servants and his wife lie. The use of the disguise helps display Odysseus' growth and change in character.