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Journey Essay

Abraham Lincoln said it best, "Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe". What did he mean by this? More often than not, we as human beings have an ultimate goal that we are determined to reach at one point. Unfortunately, we will sometimes make gratuitous and foolish mistakes when trying to accomplish that goal, such as rushing or not thinking things through, because we believe that it is the goal of ours that is most important, that all will be well as long as it is accomplished. But with all the mistakes made, was the goal really accomplished, at least to the fullest extent? We must learn to first take the time to sharpen our axe, and any problems that may occur in doing so, we must learn to fight off. If we do not take the time to sharpen the axe, the tree can still be cut down of course, but the result will not be as pleasing. The tree and the stump will be ragged and torn up, rather than a smooth cut. This is similar to how one must seek a journey. A journey matters more than the destination because journeys are full of excitement and hold new experiences and learning opportunities that one may obtain while on their way to their destination, yet they require patience. Journeys contain obstacles in which one must learn to use perseverance and determination to overcome their struggles, and once at their desired destination they will feel accomplished. And when on a journey, one can discover themselves, who they are now compared to who they were before they embarked on their expedition.

One lesson a voyage can teach is that of opportunities and experience, yet patience if the destination shall be reached with the fullest extent of pride and accomplishment. This is exemplified in C.P. Cavafy's poem "Ithaka" when the author suggests that "Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey. Without her you would not have set out. She has nothing left to give you now. And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you. Wise as you will have become, so full of experience, you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean"(673). One could interpret "Ithakas" to mean journeys, in which case the author would be explaining how said journeys provide wisdom and experience, as Cavafy stated, that will allow the seeker to fully understand the voyage that they seek. In the poem, Cavafy proceeds to elaborate on the idea of having patience, "But do not hurry the journey at all. Better if it lasts for years, so you are old by the time you reach the island, wealthy with all you have gained on the way...(672). In other words, the voyager should not rush their travels because it would be better if it lasted longer, that way he or she is prosperous with all of the knowledge that they have gained by the time their travels come to an end. Traveling cannot be rushed, the traveler must have patience in order to fully understand and absorb all of the things they have learned and seen along the way.

Also, journeys may require a strong sense of steadfastness in order to endure the struggles that one may face. In the epic poem, *The Odyssey*, the author writes of the lotus flower that "those who ate this honeyed plant, the Lotus, never cared to report, nor to return: they longed to stay forever, browsing on that native bloom, forgetful of their homeland"(Homer, 564). This demonstrates that people can often lose sight of what they want to accomplish, of what they desire, when they are faced with temptation or laziness of other obstacles that may get in their way. But no matter the issues, one must avoid them or overcome them or even face them in order

to reach one's goals. In the poem, Odysseus and his men forget their ultimate goal that they have been striving for but Odysseus does not give into the temptation of eating the lotus flower. He remains determined to get to his destination, which is why he was the only one out of all of his men to be able to push through the problems and remind them all of their goal so they were all able to continue their journey. Another example of overcoming obstacles is in *The Odyssey* when Odysseus and his men had to tolerate the singing of the Sirens, which lures sailors to their destruction, in an attempt to follow the course that the goddess Circe had advised them in getting home. Odysseus had put wax over his companion's ears so that they could not hear the Sirens and he ordered them to tie him up so that he could not do anything to hurt himself or his fellow shipmates. Homer mentions that while Odysseus struggled to be set free, his companions rowed on as they were told and two of them even held him down so as not to cause further ruckus (583). To elaborate, Odysseus and his men had to have a firm sense of determination so that they could avoid the temptation to listen to the Sirens and continue onward towards their goal. Overall, Odysseus displays the significance of learning to conquer the challenges that expeditions such as his may give to a traveler, and the importance of not giving into things such as temptation because that will hinder one's determination to achieve one's goals.

To finish up, expeditions bring out the courage and fear in someone to open their eyes to see the real world, and witness the progression of themselves during their life. "Courage", a poem written by Anne Sexton, is about the evolution of fear, courage, and change that one goes through in the different stages of life. This poem exhibits the idea of change, especially bravery, that people go through in order to discover themselves. Sexton shares that "When they called you crybaby or poor or fatty or crazy and made you into an alien, you drank their acid and concealed

it" (671). The author means that during the journey to building courage, people may degrade one's personality or looks and this will result in the growth of fear that one will start to develop at an early age. In terms of seeing the world in its true form, Sexton detailed how people will treat others in order to bring them down and spark the fear inside of them. However, journeys may also teach that of the growth of courage. As Sexton continues to state, "Later, if you have endured a great despair, then you did it alone, getting a transfusion from the fire, picking the scabs off your heart, then wringing it out like a sock"(671). To put it differently, after defeating the anguish that one has felt for someone, which could have taken a toll on their journey, they must recover in order to continue on with their lives, with their growth and development. And they must find the courage to eventually pick the scabs off of their heart and wring it out like a sock, as the author stated.

In essence, the destination is not as valuable as the journey it takes to get there because it is the explorations that teach us various different things. From appealing new events, to learning to pursue problems that one faces, to self-revelation, journeys ultimately enlighten people to become their best selves by the time of their arrival. It has been made clear that traveling must be appreciated more than the arrival, but people still tend to focus on just attaining the goal rather than focusing on what it will take to actually accomplish it. There are steps and requirements that one must meet if they wish to conclude their journey with satisfaction. People should realize the significance of a journey, how much importance they hold, how cherished they should be. They create meaning in the lives of the curious, erudition for the once oblivious, and predicaments that force the feeble to express their concealed fortitude. Destinations would cease to be endeavored, they would become futile, if it not for journeys. As Dwight D. Eisenhower claimed,

“Accomplishments will prove to be a journey, not a destination.”

Works Cited

Cavafy, C.P. "Ithaka." *My Perspectives, California*, vol. 2, Pearson, 2017, pp. 672-673. Grade 9

Homer. "The Odyssey." *My Perspectives Digital*, Pearson.

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