

In book XXI of Homer's the Odyssey, the stringing of the bow implies Odysseus's true identity and reveals his inherent superiority to the suitors, representing a dominance in strength, riches and reestablishing ones superiority over others.

Telemachos sets up the axes

My own beloved mother, though she is sensible, tells me that she will forsake this house and go away with another;

And then, in the wilderness of my heart, I laugh and enjoy it.

But come, you suitors, since here is a prize set out before you, a woman; there is none like her in all the Achaean country, neither in sacred Pylos nor Argos nor in Mykene,

nor here in Ithaka itself, nor on the dark mainland.

You yourselves also know this; then why should I praise my mother? But come, no longer drag things out with delays, nor turn back still from the stringing of the bow, so that we may see it.

I myself am also willing to attempt the bow. Then, if I can put the string on it and shoot through the iron, my queenly mother would not go off with another, and leave me sorrowing here in the house; since I would still be found here as one now able to take up his father's glorious prizes.

He spoke, and sprang upright, laying aside from his shoulders the red cloak, and from his shoulders too took off the sharp sword.

He began by setting up the axes, digging one long trench for them all, and drawing it true to a chalkline, and stamped down the earth around them; wonder seized the onlookers at how orderly he set them up. He never had seen them before. He went then and tried the bow, standing on the threshold.

Three times he made it vibrate, straining to bend it, and three times he gave over the effort, yet in his heart was hopeful of nocking the string to the bow and sending a shaft through the iron.

And now, pulling the bow for the fourth time, he would have strung it, but Odysseus stopped him, though he was eager, making a signal with his head. The hallowed prince, Telemachos, said to them:

'Shame on me, I must be then a coward and weakling, or else I am still young, and my hands have yet no confidence to defend myself against a man who has started a quarrel.'

Come then, you who in your strength are greater than I am, make your attempts on the bow, and let us finish the contest.'

So he spoke, and put the bow from him, leaning it on the ground, and against the compacted and polished door leaves, and in the same place leaned the swift shaft against the fine handle, and went back and set in the chair from which he had risen.

Now Antinoös the son of Eupheibos said to them:

'Take your turns in order from left to right, my companions

all, beginning from the place where the wine is served out.'

So spoke Antinoös, and his word was pleasing to all of them. Leodes was the first to arise: the son of Oinops,

who was a diviner among them, and sat always in the corner beside the fine mixing bowl. To him alone their excesses were hateful, and he disapproved of all of the suitors.

He was the first to take up the bow and the swift arrow now. He went then and tried the bow, standing on the threshold, and could not string it; before that he ruined his soft, uncalloused hands, pulling at the string, and now he spoke to the suitors:

'Friends, I cannot string this; let one of the others take it. Here is a bow such that it will sunder many of the princes from life and soul, since truly it is far better to die than go on living and fall of that for whose sake we forever keep on gathering here, all our days in expectation.

Now a man may be hopeful and in his heart desirous of marrying Penelope, the wife of Odysseus. But when the bow has been attempted, and all is made plain, then one must count some other fair-robed Achaian woman, and strive to win her with gifts of courtship; she will then marry the man she is fated to have and who brings her the greatest presents.'

So he spoke, and put the bow from him, leaning it on the ground, and against the compacted and polished door leaves, and in the same place leaned the swift shaft against the fine handle, and went back and set in the chair from which he had risen.

But now Antinoös scolded him, and spoke out and named him: Teodes, what sort of word escaped your teeth's barrier? A terrible and shameful word. I am outraged to hear it; if this is to be such a bow that will sunder the princes from life and soul, because you are unable to string it. You were not such a one, when the lady your mother bore you, as ever to be able to manage the bow and the arrows. But presently the other lordly suitors will string it.'

So he spoke, and now urged Melanthios the goatherd: 'Come now, Melanthios, light us a fire inside the palace, and set beside it a great chair with fleeces upon it, and bring out from the inside stores a great wheel of tallow, so that we young men, having heated the bow and rubbed it with fat, can then attempt to bend it, and finish the contest.'

Odysseus = Godly (?)

Godly

more powerful

more powerful

more powerful

more powerful

more powerful

more powerful

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more powerful

more powerful

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more powerful

more powerful

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but fails with the bow

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(125)
(240)
(470)

Telemachos's attempt signifies although he is not quite ready to take on the leadership, he is indeed ready to take on the helm