

Modern Interpretations of the Lotus-Eaters

- Three modern works that reinterpret the scene of the Lotus-Eaters from the Odyssey.
- The theme concerns the temptations and challenges that confront the characters.
- The temptation to become distracted and to pause (or stop) the journey is strong, but the need to fulfill the quest wins out.
- The three modern interpretations are:
 - 1) *Star Trek* episode “This Side of Paradise”
 - 2) movie “Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief”
 - 3) video game “Episodes from Final Fantasy”

Comparing *The Odyssey*'s "The Lotus Eaters" and the *Star Trek* Episode "This Side of Paradise" Using Structural Analysis

- By using a simplified version of the Lévi-Strauss structural theory, we are able to compare and contrast the two stories.
- Both tales recount an obstacle in a journey—for Odysseus, it was getting home after ten years of war and nearly ten years of divinely-driven “adventures” at sea. For Captain Kirk, it was his five-year mission that was at stake.
- These two stories share a particular theme: the diversion or halting of one’s journey (either deliberately or accidentally) and how real life (i.e. the journey itself) cannot be lived on the extremes.
- First structural analyses will be of *The Odyssey*, followed by *Star Trek*.
- The six aspects of each story will then be analysed separately. In each example, in both *The Odyssey* and *Star Trek*, the original conflict creates the extreme or unusual circumstances,
- The times in which these stories were written/filmed will be briefly discussed.
- Concluding remarks.

Structural Analysis Chart for *The Odyssey*

Communication	Environment	Productiveness	Emotions	Conflict Level	Awareness
	(at sea) Odysseus & his men sail to the island of the Lotus-Eaters	Odysseus sends three men from his crew to find “men, eaters of bread” (IX:89)		Lotus-Eaters are peaceful; share their lotus fruit	The three men “forget” their way back
Odysseus hears nothing from the three men		The men who taste the fruit wish to do nothing but stay where they are		Odysseus physically removes the men, brings them back to ship against their will	
			The men who ate the lotus are unhappy...	...and must be tied down to the ship’s benches	
Odysseus orders his men to sail	Odysseus and his crew go back out to sea	Their journey homeward continues			Odysseus and crew again seek their way home

Structural Analysis Chart for *Star Trek*, Part 1

Communication	Environment	Productiveness	Emotions	Conflict Level	Awareness
No contact with colonists for over three years		Enterprise finds colonists on Omicron Ceti-3 (OC3)			
	Kirk & his away team beam down from ship to OC3; lush & beautiful planet, despite radiation concerns	Colonists have developed only enough land to feed themselves—no more, no less	Spock meets Leila, an old “friend”; interest in each other obvious	The colonists live in absolute peace & harmony	Colonists seem unconcerned with radiation. Away team (except Kirk) infected by flowers’ pores; become blissful like colonists, forgetting their mission
			Spock’s usual demeanor is altered completely by spores. Concerned only with Leila & staying on OC3		
Spock & others do not obey Kirk’s orders	Spock & others stay on OC3				Crew on board Enterprise affected by spores from plants brought onto ship; react the same way


Structural Analysis Chart for Star Trek, Part 2

Communication	Environment	Productiveness	Emotions	Conflict Level	Awareness
Crew disobeys orders...	...& beam down to OC3	Work aboard Enterprise ceases	Kirk tries to keep emotions in check; he tries to come up with antidote		Plant sprays its spores on Kirk; he becomes like the others, wants to beam down to OM3
			While looking at medals, Kirk becomes angry...		...& the effect of the spores is countered
		Kirk designs a plan to get his crew back—starts first with Spock			
Kirk calls on Spock to come back & “help” him	Spock returns to ship		Kirk deliberately angers Spock...	...& they fight	Spock’s returns to his senses
Spock calls Leila to ship	She beams up to Enterprise		Spock breaks the bad news to Leila—there can be no love between them		The bad news breaks the spell of the spores

Structural Analysis Chart for Star Trek, Part 3

Communication	Environment	Productiveness	Emotions	Conflict Level	Awareness
Through the ship's sound system, an irritating noise is heard on OM3			All on OM3 become agitated...	...& they begin to fight each other...	...thus altering the effect of the spores
	All return to the Enterprise, including the colonists	Colonists agree that they have been unproductive & have failed in their mission	Everyone returns to "normal"		
Kirk sets course...	...& the Enterprise resumes its mission in space...				...fully aware of their duties


1. Communication Chart

Communication	<i>The Odyssey</i>	<i>Star Trek</i>
<p>Poor (extreme)</p>  <p>Good (normal)</p>	<p>1.The three men that were sent out by Odysseus failed to return, disobeying his orders</p> <p>1.Odysseus orders his men to sail away quickly, lest they are tempted as well</p>	<p>1.The colonists lost contact with outside world for 3 years 2.Those infected by spores disobey Kirk's commands</p> <p>1. Spock agrees to back to ship & "help" Kirk 2. Ship's communication device used to break the spores' effect 3. Kirk orders crew to resume mission & is obeyed</p>

Communication—Explanation

- Communication breakdown caused by the effect of the lotus plant/flower spores results in the halting of the journey.
- Without their crew, the captains of the ships cannot leave.
- For Odysseus, this was only a handful of men, whom he was able to return to the ship, albeit not without a fight.
- The rest of his crew obeyed his orders to resume their journey home.
- For Kirk, his whole crew deserted him, despite his orders for them to return to ship or to remain on board the Enterprise.
- As in real life, distractions often result in poor communications. In both stories, the communication gap is not brought on intentionally, but by an innocent contact with a mind-altering substance.


2. Environment—Chart

Environment	<i>The Odyssey</i>	<i>Star Trek</i>
<p><i>Lush, but dangerous (extreme)</i></p> 	<p>1. Crew landed on island that has potable water & food, but the temptation of the lotus fruit is a threat to all</p>	<p>1. Crew ends up on Omicron Ceti-3, with its green & lush environment. Radiation is everywhere</p>
<p><i>Barren, yet necessary (normal)</i></p>	<p>1. Crew return to sea in their attempt to go home</p>	<p>1. Crew goes back on board the Enterprise & continues the mission through the universe</p>

Environment--Explanation

- In both The Odyssey and Star Trek, the rich, lush environment that is found (respectively) on the Lotus Island and Omicron Ceti-3 can be seen as a welcome relief to life on board the ships, travelling across the barren and monotonous sea/cosmos.
- However, these verdant places hold danger to the crews—for Odysseus and his men, it is the lotus fruit; for Kirk and his team, it is the radiation that is bombarding the planet.
- These verdant environments provide a strong temptation for people to stay and abandon their missions
- Despite their barren appearance, the sea/space hold the key for both groups to continue their mission.
- Therefore, it is the barren elements that will prevent distraction and produce the desired results.


3. Productiveness—Chart

Productiveness	<i>The Odyssey</i>	<i>Star Trek</i>
<i>Unproductive (extreme)</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The men Odysseus sends out fail to carry out their mission2. They sit and do nothing but eat the lotus plant	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The colonists have done little except what is necessary to feed & clothe themselves2. The crew abandons ship to join the colonists in their life of bliss
<i>Productive (normal)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. After collecting his men, Odysseus & his men leave to search for home	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The crew return to ship to continue their mission2. The colonists agree that they have been unproductive; they will go on with more constructive lives

Productiveness--Explanation

- The effect of the lotus fruit/flower spores causes the affected individuals to become passive and indolent; they lose all ambition
- Thus, their missions are threatened because any work beyond what is needed to survive is considered unnecessary
- Only when they are shaken out of their stupor do they realise how their time has been wasted
- This is clearly displayed in the *Star Trek* episode; with *The Odyssey*, the attempt to find bread-eating men or to return home is hampered by those who ate the fruit of the lotus plant, and are therefore unproductive


4. Emotions—Chart

Emotions	<i>The Odyssey</i>	<i>Star Trek</i>
<p><i>Unusual Emotions (extreme)</i></p>  <p><i>Usual Emotions (normal)</i></p>	<p>1. The men who eat from the lotus plants are distressed when they are forced to return to their ship; begin to weep</p>	<p>1. After seeing Leila again after many years, Spock's usual unemotional demeanor is thrown off slightly 2. The spores cause Spock to lose all control over his emotions; he thinks only of love and contentment 3. Kirk must be vigilant, now that Spock is no longer around to give him logical advice. He later succumbs to the flower's spores</p> <p>1. Kirk becomes angry when he looks at the medals—counters the spores effects 2. Spock is shocked back into his normal behaviour by the strong emotion of anger 3. Anger used to bring rest of crew to their senses 4. Now that the spores are out of their system, the behaviour of the crew members & colonists return to normal</p>

Emotions--Explanation

- In The Odyssey, the evidence of emotion is meagre. The anger of the lotus-affected crew members can be accounted as unusual, since their anger is misplaced (Odysseus and his men are trying to save them), but can also be considered normal, since this is the usual reaction of those who are forced to do something against their will.
- In Star Trek, the emotions are evident. Spock's ordinarily stoic and logic-based demeanor is completely altered by the spores and his affection for Leila. As the only crew member not afflicted by the spores, Kirk must use every means possible to find a solution to this dilemma.
- Kirk finds that anger is a counter-balance to the effects of the spores.
- Being blissful (or angry) all the time is unusual; more usual are the range of emotions expressed by humans.
- The “enchanted” emotions of the crew prevent them from seeing reality; it also allows them to forget about their mission.

5. Conflict Level—Chart

Conflict Level	<i>The Odyssey</i>	<i>Star Trek</i>
<p><i>Very Peaceful (extreme)</i></p> 	<p>1. Lotus-Eaters are very peaceful, do not “have any thoughts of destroying our companions” (92-93) and give the lotus fruit to the three men</p>	<p>1. Colonists on Omicron Ceti-3 extremely peaceful amongst themselves and the Enterprise’s away team</p> <p>2. Eventually crew members are affected by the spores; become extremely peaceful</p>
<p><i>Conflict (normal)</i></p>	<p>1. Odysseus creates a necessary conflict by forcefully removing his men from the island</p> <p>2. They must be tied down to ship’s benches</p>	<p>1. Kirk’s anger (inner conflict) as antidote to spores</p> <p>2. Kirk angers Spock, rest of crew</p> <p>3. Crew and colonists return to normal</p>

Conflict Level—Explanation

- Conflict here does not mean war; war is another extreme. Conflict is reality, encountered regularly as part of a journey. War and (total) peace can bring a journey to a halt, or alter its intended course.
- The Lotus-Eaters threaten Odysseus' men not by making war against them, but by causing them to forget their homeland. The journey is at peril.
- What is unusual is that fact that the Lotus-Eaters do not even eye Odysseus' men with suspicion, as one would expect.
- The Enterprise also encounters a highly peaceful population on Omicron Ceti-3. There is no conflict, even amongst the colonists themselves. Again, an unexpected situation.
- The absence of conflict, like in the Odyssey, brought about complacency. With no challenges (conflicts), no work is done beyond what is absolutely necessary. Also, one can expand it to spiritual and mental development; with no inner conflicts, one cannot develop into a mature, well-rounded human.

6. Awareness—Chart

Awareness	<i>The Odyssey</i>	<i>Star Trek</i>
<i>Lack of Awareness (extreme)</i>	1. Three men sent by Odysseus forget their way home; have no concerns beyond the present	1. Colonists and affected crew members have no concerns beyond living a peaceful and happy life on Omicron Ceti-3; they forget their purpose
<i>Awareness (normal)</i>	1. Does not mention what happened to the three men brought back; the effects of the fruit must have worn off (?) 2. Odysseus and the rest of crew maintain their awareness and their desire to go home	1. Extreme blissfulness countered by another extreme emotion—anger; ultimately, emotions become balanced 2. Crew and colonists regain their awareness and purpose regarding their mission

Awareness—Explanation

- Both Odysseus and Kirk refused to be side-tracked from their respective missions. Living in either extremes (bliss or anger) leads to an unbalanced perspective and does not, and cannot, reflect reality.
- Like conflict level (above), self-awareness is necessary to lead a normal life.

Reflecting Their Times

- Odysseus had fought ten years in a war against the Trojans. The nature of the war (or any war) and the duration of the Trojan War in particular can be seen as having put Odysseus off-balance.
- Before returning to his family, the ten-year journey that Odysseus must undertake allows him to adjust back to peace-time activities (peace-time does not imply conflict-free!!).
- The journey of Odysseus is his passage back into normal existence, after ten years of war. Anything that threatened this journey threatened this transition.
- The original Star Trek series aired in the late 1960s. It reflects the vast social change that was occurring at that time.
- The idea of living in peace and limiting work activities to only the essentials was (and still is, in many respects) contrary to the religious and political ideologies and realities of that era.
- The strong Protestant work-ethic present in American society meant a constant strive for development and dominance over nature, no matter the cost.
- The colonists failed to do this, thus their attempt to live in peace and to develop only what was necessary was considered a failure (as noted towards the end of the show).
- America was also at war with the Communists in Vietnam. Many believed that peace represented acquiescence and nothing was going to stop America's journey of success and dominance.
- Communism was a threat to everything America stood for, and peace was the antithesis of what was required to eliminate the enemy.
- It was also a time of psychoactive drugs. The spores of the flowers could also represent the dangers of these drugs and their potential to help users escape reality.

Conclusion and Link (Star Trek Preview)

- The journeys in both The Odyssey and Star Trek represent not only the physical expeditions of the captains and their crew, but also a psychological and mental development necessary to complete their missions successfully.
- The Lotus-Eaters/flower spores represent a threat, not because they are an obvious danger to the crew, but because they allowed the lotus eaters or those sprayed by the spores to forget their reality and “drop-out” from their mission and from society at large.

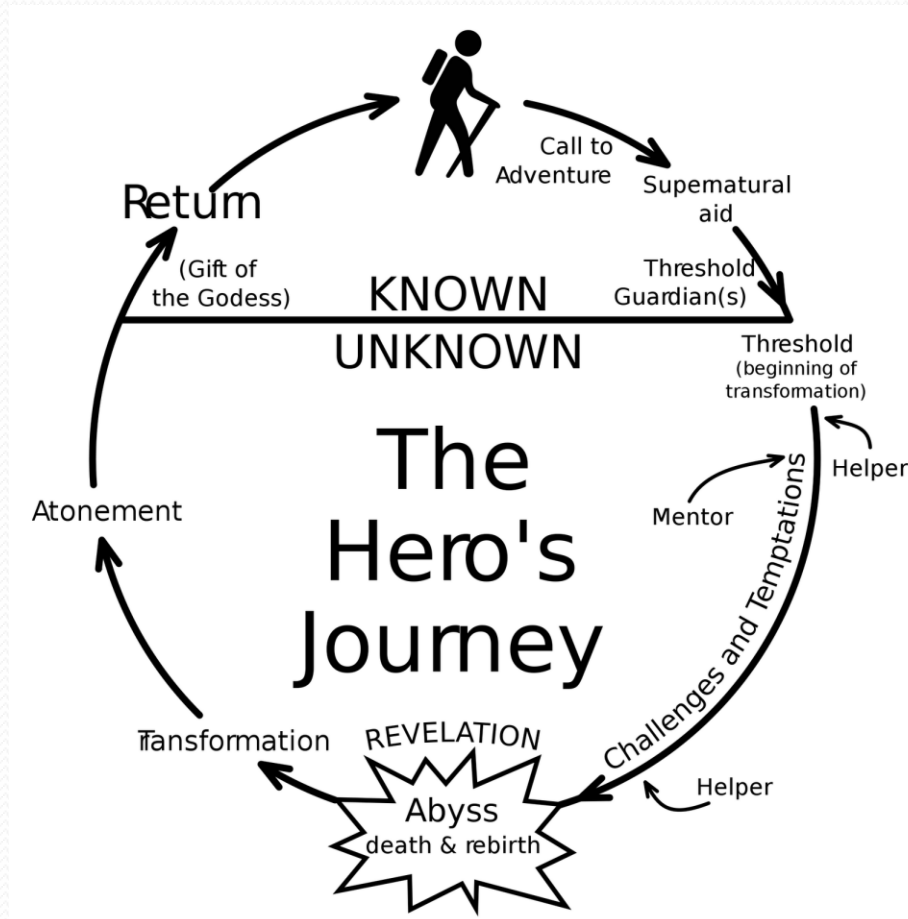
http://www.startrek.com/watch_video/episode-preview-this-side-of-paradise

Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief

- We will be using Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey from chapter 15 to analyze the hero's journey throughout the entire movie and comparing with the journey into the lair of the Lotus-Eaters (the scene begins at 1hour9min) followed by a comparison of the lotus scene from *The Odyssey*.
- Clip from the movie:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yVol3lKito>

Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey:



Percy Jackson

Journey of the Lotus Scene

- **Call to adventure**

Percy is called to adventure by the need of pearls which will enable him to escape from Hades when he will go to retrieve his mother. One of these pearls is at the Lotus Casino in Las Vegas.

- **Supernatural aid**

Luke, the son of Hermes gives him a map which gives the locations of the pearls.

- **Crossing the threshold**

Walking into the casino, right away he is harassed by a worker trying to give complementary items.

- **Trials and temptations**

He must overcome the temptation to eat more flowers and reject the continuous offers. They must escape and evade the guards.

- **Atonement**

He hears his father's advice in his thoughts telling him to stop eating the flowers, which is part of the greater atonement.

He must accept the advice of his father in order to come out of his trance.

- **Revelation and transformation**

Percy learns that the flowers dull the senses and cause the eater to go into a trance and never want to leave. In this scene he hears his father, which will prove later on that his father watched over him.

- **Gift**

He leaves with the pearl, and moves on with the quest.

Journey Throughout the Entire Movie

- **Call to adventure**

Zeus thinks Percy stole his lightning bolt on behalf of his father, Poseidon; Percy is taken to camp half-blood to be safe where he will train then go to convince Zeus of his innocence to prevent a war between the gods.

Percy temporarily refuses the call, claiming that a war of the gods is not his problem, but he is quickly convinced of the detrimental affects to humanity that would result from a war of the gods. Before he goes to Zeus, Hades abducts his mother to use as leverage in order to gain the lightning bolt for himself. Percy decides to go to the underworld to get his mother back.

- **Supernatural aid**

Grover the satyr (his protector), magical pen (sword) from Chiron the centaur, flying shoes of Hermes, shield from Luke and a map which gives the locations of the pearls, which will allow them to leave the underworld.

- **Crossing the threshold**

When Percy goes to Camp Half-Blood, which his mother cannot enter because she is mortal, dividing her with Percy and Grover. At this threshold Percy kills the Minotaur (using the pen/sword for the first time), a symbol that he is in a new, unknown world. This brings out some of his qualities and battle skills: quick-judgment, impulsive (as a positive), bravery... He enters camp Half-Blood where he is among demi-gods like himself, all equal. This can be seen as a rite of passage. Once he learns his true parentage he can attend camp half-blood, where he is equal, and able to learn and train with others also possessing special abilities.

- **In the belly of the whale**

All the demi-gods play a game of capture the flag, using their special skills to win the game. He is almost killed by Annabeth, but discovers his ability to heal himself and gain power from water.

Journey Throughout the Entire Movie

- **Trials**

He must get pearls from the lair of Medusa, the Parthenon, which is guarded by a Hydra, and from the Lotus Casino.

- **Temptress**

He must overcome the temptation to look Medusa, and put aside his humanity and kill her.

- **Death, rebirth and gift**

In the underworld (death) he discovers the identity of the thief and is given the lightning bolt by Persephone. He leaves the underworld (rebirth) and goes to Olympus to give Zeus his lightning bolt.

- **Revelation and transformation**

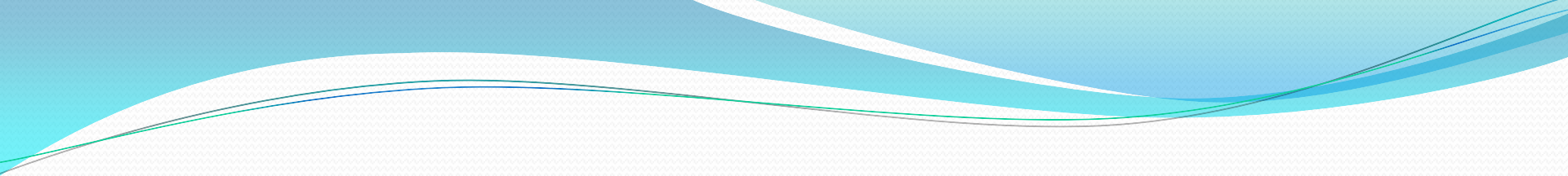
Percy gets to know himself and his true parentage; he finds out where he belongs, and realizes that his father does care and did not willingly abandon him and his mother.

- **Atonement**

Percy must forgive his father for abandoning him, since he learns that Zeus decreed that no gods could have contact with their children. This came into effect after Percy was born because Poseidon was neglecting his Divine duties and becoming mortal by spending too much time with Percy and his mother. At the end of the movie Poseidon apologizes for his absence but assures Percy he has always watched over him and helped him in times of need (lotus scene) and will continue to do so. Only by learning about his father can Percy discover his true self.

- **Return**

Goes to Camp Half Blood with the other heroes to begin his training as a demi-god. He starts a new life.

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- The lotus scene represents one of the trials and tribulations of the entire movie and leads to the completion of his quest.
 - It contains all the elements of the hero's journey, mirroring the major conflicts of the movie as a whole.
 - In the beginning of the movie Percy does not like his surroundings; he struggles with school on account of supposed dyslexia and ADHD. By undergoing his journey he becomes happy with his life and his surroundings.

Atonement

- The atonement of the father gradually occurs throughout the movie, beginning with Annabeth confiding in Percy that she can hear her mother (Athena) in her thoughts during times of distress, Percy realizes he can as well.
- At the Lotus Casino Percy hears his father in his thoughts, telling him to stop eating the flowers, he can also be seen as supernatural aid. Following his fathers intervention, Percy is able to stop eating the flowers and escape. This is one portion of the atonement throughout the movie. Poseidon, by helping Percy along the way proves he watched over him.
- By killing Medusa he is also conquering his father. Medusa once had a love affair with Poseidon, and is clearly bitter. Percy kills her, which could be seen as the early stage of integration of his father into his new life.

Important Women

- **His mother**

She protects him by staying with Gabe (his step father), whose vile odour masks his godly odour. He chooses to face danger in order to rescue her from the underworld. Her good qualities are shared with Percy.

- **Annabeth**

In the beginning she is his opposite:

She has always known her parentage and grew up at camp half-blood. She has trained all her life for combat but rarely goes into the mortal world. Percy, on the other hand, never knew his parentage and grew up in the world of mortals. He has never trained and is thrown into an unknown world. Annabeth accompanies him willingly, helping him combat his enemies, putting the skills she acquired to use. Together they make a great pair, complementing each other well, along with Grover.

Lotus Scene from *The Odyssey*

- **Call to adventure:**

The men are missing, Odysseus must go find them.

- **Supernatural aid**

?

- **Crossing the threshold**

Going into the land of the Lotus-Eaters.

- **Trials**

He must force the men to return with him.

- **Temptation**

Temptation to eat the lotus flowers.

- **Atonement**

?

- **Revelation**

The flowers make the eater never want to leave.

- **Transformation**

?

- **Gift**

?

- **Return**

Odysseus returns to the ship.

Conclusions

- The scene of the Lotus-Eaters in *The Odyssey* does not fully follow the hero's journey as it does in the movie. In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus does not gain anything from this episode, there is no gift, which is a main feature of the hero's journey.
- Based on these findings, the episode of the Lotus-Eaters is more important to the story of Percy Jackson than to the story of Odysseus. In *Percy Jackson*, the lotus scene reflects the whole story and Percy gains what he needs in order to continue his journey, whereas Odysseus gains nothing from this scene.
- Since Percy gains the pearls, which are necessary for his quest, the scene is important and follows a hero's journey pattern to prove the difficulty of the task.
- Using this theory on *Percy Jackson* brings out some great insights into the movie and highlights the important parts which lead to the transformation of Percy.
- The theme of forgetfulness is seen in both *The Odyssey* and *Percy Jackson* and shows how easy it would be for the hero to forget his journey and take "the easy way out". Undertaking a journey takes courage and bravery, especially to complete one. The lotus scene in both shows the strength of the desire to move forward in these two heroes and that they do not choose the easy route, but the journey that will lead them towards the fulfillment of their quests.

The Odyssey Vs. Final Fantasy

A Structural Analysis

- I used the context with which Odysseus in retelling his story to Alkinoos because it is important the themes present in the episodes of the Lotus eaters.

Forgetting	Remembering	Allure of Forgetting	Emotions from memory
	Odysseus gets his name back, recounts his story		
			Grief for the companions lost
Three men given Lotus, lose their memories			
		The three men don't want to return, happy to be away from sorrow	
Forget the way home	Odysseus needs to return to his quest		Sorrow being forced by Odysseus to return
Odysseus fears the sweet allure of forgetting, must leave			
		Sail away from temptation	

The Odyssey

- Remembering/recounting his story is something Odysseus does not want to do, but needs to in order to continue on with his quest and get home.
- The three men sent ahead to scout, after eating the Lotus, are free from all their worries, all the tragedies of the war and the hardships of the journey home by forgetting. However, Odysseus needs to complete his quest, so heads off to find the three men.
- Odysseus wants to leave the place as fast as possible because he fears the temptation of forgetting; it would be much easier to forget and stay happy, eating Lotus for your entire life, than it would be to fight the sorrows and complete the quest Odysseus needs to complete and get home.

Final Fantasy V

Forgetting	Remembering	Allure of Forgetting	Emotions from memory
Lands on planet, forgets his name, purpose and quest			
	Remembers his name is Galuf		
			Puts himself in danger to get to the Wind shrine
Confronted with the past			Troubled makes him impulsive
		Won't have to fight, nor suffer remembering	
	Remembers who he is, needs to leave party		

Final Fantasy V

- The story centres around an old man named Galuf, who is found by the main character Bartz near an asteroid that had landed on the planet and has no memories.
- Galuf has very limited memories when he joins the party with Bartz. The wind on the planet has stopped and Faris knows she needs to get to the Wind Shrine. When Galuf hears this, it triggers his memories and he knows he needs to get to the Wind Shrine.
- Losing his memories is deeply disturbing to Galuf; Galuf becomes increasingly more irrational and more impulsive in his sorrow for not being able to remember his quest/purpose.
- He contemplates the idea of leaving the party to start a life without his memories because it would be much easier and perhaps prevent him from sadness.

Final Fantasy VII

Forgetting	Remembering	Allure of Forgetting	Emotions from Memory
		Able to have a life and a past	
	Learns his past		
Shuts down and completely halts the quest			Sorrows from the past, embarrassed of who he is/his failure
		Constructed a life from himself, takes the success of another	
	Confronted by the truth again		Grief. Needs to find himself and come to terms with himself
	Accepts his past		

Final Fantasy VII

- A scientist confronts Cloud and lets him know that everything he thought he was, a Soldier-First Class, from his home town, was all a lie, he was built in the experiments done by Shinra and was a failure.
- Cloud spires down into a deep depression and eventually losing himself, shutting down and effectively stopping the quest.
- It is not until Cloud can come to accept who he is before the quest can continue.

Final Fantasy Vs. The Odyssey

- From the charts, there is a lot of similarities between the episodes from Final Fantasy and the Lotus Eaters in *The Odyssey*. In each one of the stories, there is some form of forgetting and remembering as well as the effects of each.
- When one forgets, often they come to the conclusion that remembering is not worth it, but in order for their quests to be completed, they need to suffer from the effects of remembering.
- Remembering and forgetting have their own place in the cycle of Levy-Strauss structuralism and they seem to be a part of each episode of the hero's quest.
- Forgetting is always the interruption of the quest, while remembering is how the quest has the possibility to resume.
- However, each one of those elements has an effect on the individual and the group not only in terms of the quest, but also in terms of the emotions which are felt and the temptation to leave the quest because forgetting has its own appeal.
- Each character must therefore face the grief and sorrow to continue on the quest. They must come to terms with the memories they had lost, remember them, and go forward with the quest.

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