

Graduation Speech

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Good evening. I find myself in front of you all tonight at the close of a four-year journey. There are many ways to describe such a journey together through high school, and among those words that I've heard used recently is "odyssey." After considering the short definition of an odyssey as an extended trip or voyage alluding to the Homeric epic with the titular character, I found myself wondering about the true relevancy of the term in describing our time at Penn Manor High School.

Now, some might wonder if the scope of an "odyssey" is beyond the length that we've travelled since freshman year. After all, it's only a ten minute drive to that frightening spot where many of us were dropped off at an unfamiliar and intimidating school for the first time. However, after some simple math the true scale becomes clear. For example, my own fall and spring semester schedules this year demanded that I traverse nearly the full length of the school four times a day, which according to my measurement of the route as .30 miles long, leads me to calculate the total length that I've travelled within Penn Manor excluding everything but normal classes as 216 miles this school year alone. Multiplied by four years this is over 800 miles, certainly a distance long enough to impress even Odysseus himself.

In addition to the long distance covered, a major similarity between our odyssey through high school and the original odyssey is the guidance of a mentor, or

in the latter case, of old Mentor himself. In the Odyssey, clever Odysseus' son Telemachus is aided by Mentor, the eponymous old man and later disguise of Athena who gives wise advice and leads Telemachus through difficult times. Each of us sitting here today has also experienced a relationship with a mentor, whether it be a coach, teacher, counselor, relative, or other person who has helped make important decisions and directed the path to the future. I feel enriched by and grateful towards my mentors in high school, particularly my advisor Mrs. Sallie Bookman, whose counsel and support allowed me to grow and thrive both inside and outside the classroom, and my science teacher and rocketry advisor Mr. Brian Osmolinski, whose enthusiasm for and dedication to his students and subject have shaped my attitude towards the value of studying the sciences.

Again travelling back a few millennia, old Odysseus manages to make it through his ordeals by remaining alert, logical, clever, and cunning; in short, he is the archetypal analytical thinker and problem solver, the most important role we have learned to play in high school. While he may have avoided certain death at the hands of a Cyclops, escaped from the hands a goddess captor, and sailed through the song of the Sirens instead of writing papers, studying for tests, or completing homework, his legacy of intelligence, logic, and wit has inspired generations.

However, there is one essential difference between ourselves and Odysseus, the difference between a painful tribulation and a truly memorable experience. Odysseus, struggling with loneliness and grief is without a single friend. We, in short, are not. Whether it be a vast social network or a few close confidantes, we

have made the best of our time through our connections, connections that have allowed us to celebrate, despair, feel, think, and act as one. Our lessons may well be forgotten, our wit dulled and our bodies weakened, but friendships remain. In this spirit we have arrived from *our* odyssey not with the exhaustion of a lonely wayfarer but with a hint of regret, the regret that these most memorable of years are now at an end. Thank you.