

Cold mountain the odyssey comparison essay sample

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Cold Mountain/The Odyssey Comparison Essay Sample

More than twenty-five hundred years ago a renowned epic of Greek mythology was written. This work, known as The Odyssey, illustrates the journey home made by Odysseus, a Trojan war hero, who seeks his wife Penelope. Similar in plot, though written only four years ago, Cold Mountain is a romantic saga which depicts the travels of Inman, a Confederate soldier, at his attempt to reunite with his love Ada. Homer's The Odyssey and Charles Frazier's Cold Mountain tell of the struggles faced by the man and woman of each novel's relationship. Although these works are written thousands of years apart, both incorporate one man's effort, after fighting war, to return to his love while encountering several obstacles that hinder and assist his journey.

In The Odyssey, Penelope faithfully waits for Odysseus to return home. She is unsure as to whether or not he is alive, but even so, she remains loyal to her husband. While Odysseus is overcoming obstacles along his journey home, Penelope also survives through her own difficulties. She is in the palace with her son, Telemachus, and hundreds of rude, hopeful suitors. In order to avoid choosing a new husband, Penelope devises a plan: she insists that she will choose a suitor upon her completion of sewing a shroud for Lord Laertes' eventual death. " So by day she used to weave at the great web, but every night she had torches set beside it and undid the work. For three years she took us in by this trick." This plan works for her until a servant betrays her and tells the suitors about it. Another clever scheme Penelope forms is to suggest an archery contest and have the winner become her new husband.

However, Penelope knows there is only one individual capable of shooting Odysseus' arrow through twelve axes, and of course that individual is Odysseus himself. These are two of the tricks that Penelope plays in order to cope with her struggles during Odysseus' absence.

Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* tells the story of Inman, a soldier, and Ada, his love. As the novel progresses, Ada must alter her lifestyle in order to survive. During the war, her father dies and the workers on her farm leave, forcing her to fend for herself. Because Ada has no knowledge of farming, she struggles immensely. That is until Ruby, a local girl, transforms Ada into a strong, hard-working, nature-smart woman. Together, Ada and Ruby are able to save the farm and withstand the effects of war on their home. Ada deals with arising difficulties by reminiscing about the times spent with Inman. Both Ada and Inman are able to overcome obstacles using only the love they have inside for each other.

As Penelope encounters problems at the palace, Odysseus comes across his own set of hardships. After the Trojan War, he begins his journey home. However, it takes Odysseus ten years before he actually arrives back to his wife and son. This delay is due to the several obstacles which Odysseus must face. On his first attempt home, Odysseus is sidetracked by a storm that Poseidon sends to destroy him. He is able to overcome this hurdle and resumes travel. Then the men arrive at the Land of the Lotus-Eaters. They forget the mission to return home and seek comfort of the lotus plants. Once they escape this place, they end up on an island that is inhabited by a huge cyclops named Polyphemus. Odysseus blinds Polyphemus and the men

sneak off of the island by clinging to the bellies of sheep. Throughout the remainder of his journey, Odysseus survives several mishaps and encounters with evil. He ends up being the only survivor of all of his men and lands at the island of Ogygia. This is where Calypso keeps him for seven years.

During this time there are many suitors in the palace who plan to kill Telemachus. He must destroy their plot, while trying to find and free his own father. Each member of Odysseus' family has individual struggles to deal with in order to see the success of Odysseus' trip home.

Just as Ada overcomes barriers in Cold Mountain, so does Inman. He encounters many people along his journey home; these characters vary in wealth, and some help him while others hinder his progress towards home. Not long after Inman leaves for Cold Mountain, three men by a store attack him. He defeats each of them and continues his trip, but the men follow him for a while later. Afterwards, Inman comes upon a man with whom he helps to pull a dead bull out of the water. This man, Junior, feeds him and is friendly until his wife begins to hit on Inman. When Junior catches them together, he becomes very angry. Inman is captured by guards and taken on a detour from his trip. During the remainder of his journey, Inman comes upon several different people. Many of them feed him and give him a place to sleep for one or more nights. Soon after, Inman meets up with Ada in a cabin on the mountain and spends some time with her. It is not until the final stretch home that Inman meets Teague, a horseman in the woods. Teague and his men cause problems for anyone who confronts them. Inman gets into a brawl with them and kills Teague. He could have easily killed the boy

that was following Teague, but wanted to handle matters more civilly.

Because Inman chooses not to hurt the boy, the boy shoots him, and he is never again to return to Ada.

Though *The Odyssey* and *Cold Mountain* are similar in the concept of having one man overcome obstacles throughout his return home from war, these novels also have distinct differences. In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus is wealthy, well-known, and well-liked. He returns home as a war hero after ten years of fighting and ten years at an attempt for homecoming. He is married to Penelope and has one son. Penelope remains loyal to Odysseus despite the hundreds of suitors throughout the palace. Odysseus does not have to worry about gathering food during his trip, but he is forced to serve as both Circe and Calypso's lover. Eventually Odysseus overcomes all of the barriers he faces and returns home to his family.

On the other hand, in *Cold Mountain*, Inman is an average citizen with only Ada knowingly caring for his existence. He escapes the hospital during the war because he does not even agree with the war's intentions. He is not married to Ada, but the two write to each other a bit. Ada remains loyal to Inman because all of the men her age are out fighting the war. Inman struggles to find food in order to stay alive. He overcomes several obstacles throughout his journey and sees Ada once again, but Inman never returns home.

Both Homer's *The Odyssey* and Frazier's *Cold Mountain* describe one man's journey home to his love. Throughout the journey, each man is forced to face

obstacles that set him back from his intentions. Although these novels share a similar plot, they are written in very different times and also have many differences. For instance, *The Odyssey* is written about Odysseus' trip home from the Trojan War, and *Cold Mountain* describes Inman's escape from the Civil War. However different these novels are, they are still worth comparing as it is intriguing to find similarities between styles which are thousands of years apart in age.