

Compare and contrast penelope and circe essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The theme of the two woman's relationship with Odysseus is complex however they are both very different in what, to them justifies as a relationship. Penelope is very loyal to Odysseus right to the very end of the odyssey as she has lots of suitors and does not pick any or give in to the temptation that is around with the increasing advances of the suitors, they are continually throwing themselves at her in an attempt to make her their bride. However she does not stray from Odysseus even though he had been gone for 20 years.

The promise that she made to Odysseus that when telemachus has grown a beard and has become a man, then she will remarry, true to her word she does intend to remarry as she sets out the challenge of the great bow to stall time, also she makes a cloth to mourn Odysseus to stall time as well. So Penelope's relationship with Odysseus is one of love and compaction were, although she still believes him to be alive she is willing to honour the promise she made to him at Telemachus's birth and remarry when he is a man.

Circe however is portrayed as a deceiver and a witch ' Circe had bewitched them' (10, 212) and her relationship with Odysseus is mainly sexual as straight after she has admitted to turning Odysseus's men into pigs she invites him into her bed. ' But now put up your sword and come with me to bed. ' (10, 333) Circe keeps Odysseus at her palace for 2 years and the men did not question it until later on.

When Odysseus asked Circe whether he and his men could go home she let them go at once and gave them the ' clue' to their next destination on the

voyage back to Ithaca. The question is why did Circe want Odysseus to stay so long with her, did she really love him or was he just an lover, she let him go easily when he asked so maybe she did love him and wanted what was best for him, but if this was the case she would have fought harder to keep him on the island.

If he was just her lover she could have accepted that he still loved Penelope and in his heart wanted to return to her and so she let him go. Or she could have just become bored with him. The text is not detailed enough to determine why she let him go so easily so we will have to make a knowledgeable guess at why this was and what she really felt for Odysseus. Did they Help or hinder his journey?

Penelope was Odysseus's wife and he loved her and she loved him, because of this love I think that it helped him through his journey, it was his driving force that pushed him towards his goal, returning home to Ithaca. Although he was the king there he was still determined to see her and return to her. Odysseus would not have spent so long at calypso's and Circe's island's. Odysseus's first thought as he arrives back in Ithaca is ' may I find my wife and loved ones safe' (13, 42) this shows that he really cares for Penelope and wants to find her again.

Circe on the other hand helped and hindered his journey as she kept hi on her Island for years which delayed the journey but when she let him go she told him were to look next ' make another journey and find your way to the halls of Hades' (10, 488) she goes on to tell him how to sacrifice the heifer and who to talk to in order to continue so in this way she also helps

Odysseus get home because he would not have gone to Hades of his own accord as it is Hell. Circe may not be the driving force that Penelope is but she certainly helped him on his quest, even if she did hinder him by keeping him at her palace as well.

Do you see evidence of other men as well as Odysseus? In both cases there is no evidence for the two women, Circe and Penelope actually being with another man. Circe's main role is in book 10 and there is no reference or text suggesting that there is another man as well as Odysseus however there is defiantly the animals that she had turned from men into their animal like state as she had turned Odysseus's men into pigs however she only slept with Odysseus because he was immune to her powers and Hermes the trickster god had said that she had to.

So I don't think that she had actually slept with the men that she had turned into animals because they were obviously not immune like Odysseus was. Penelope was also surrounded by men however they were not animals, however much they behaved like one, again there is no evidence in the text or in the references that she was unfaithful to Odysseus in any way. Characters- The characters of Penelope and Circe are very different and yet similar as they are both described by homer as beautiful.

In Circe's case homer does not actually describe her directly as being beautiful but he does describe that everything she does and everything she possesses beautiful for example 'singing in her beautiful voice' (10, 222) and 'lovely goddesses palace' both of these are like many more quotes from the book which describe her and her possessions as being beautiful, not

directly but however we do get the feeling that she is a beautiful goddess from these descriptions.

Penelope is also described as a beautiful women ' her beautiful work' although there is not a s much reference to Penelope being beautiful as Circe you get the impression of her being more beautiful than Circe because of her inner beauty that seems to shine through whereas Circe has a deceptive character and this affects how we perceive her looks for although she is described with great beauty she does not appear to have any inner beauty and so therefore Penelope is perceived as more Beautiful than Circe.

Penelope is always described as being wise or intelligent ' wise Penelope' and ' the great Penelope' ' the cautious Penelope' this shows that she is like her husband and is cunning an wise, which becomes apparent when she tests Odysseus, to see if it is really him, by asking the nurse to move the great bed in her bedroom. She knows that if this really was Odysseus then he would know that he built it around a tree and it cannot be moved. This shows cunning and resourcefulness that Odysseus is also known for.

Circe however is not like that at all and has had no mention of her being great or resourceful however the text does say that she used winged words ' Her words had wings' (10, 327) which means that she had chosen her words carefully so this might show some wit and quick-thinking similar to Penelope. Circe is described as evil and using black magic to turn men into animals ' her black magic' (10, 290) which shows that she is not good and pure as Penelope appears.

Circe also deceives the men into drinking the potion and turning them into animals, similarly Penelope deceives the suitors as she gives them the task of stringing the Great Bow knowing full well that they would not be able to do it. Also she weaved a tribute to Odysseus and unpicked it at night so that it would take loads of time to complete and would stall time for her to marry one of the suitors. In this way Penelope and Circe are quite similar however Penelope uses wit whereas Circe uses magic to deceive people. Fate made by the Gods

Both of the women are visited by the gods, Penelope has visits from the Goddess Athena, she makes Penelope appear more beautiful towards the Achaeans ' the great goddess then endowed her with immortal gifts, to make the Achaeans marvel at her beauty' (18, 190) Athena then goes on to make her more beautiful when she was asleep so that Penelope would not know that it was a goddess doing the ' meddling' and think that she was just having a nice dream. Whereas Circe's fate with the gods is much more upfront as she is herself a goddess.

In book 10 Hermes appears to both Odysseus and Circe and tells them how to react and what to do when they met each other for the first time ' the Giant killer with the golden wand always told me to expect you' (10, 131) this shows that Hermes has been meddling with their fate and he has basically told them to sleep together. Circe's fate and meeting with the gods is much more upfront as she is one herself whereas Penelope's meeting is much more secretive because unlike Circe she is not a goddess herself.