

Judith- compare and contrast

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Judith – Old English and Vulgate Versions Upon looking closely at the Old English and Vulgate versions of Judith, one can catch a glimpse of how culture was during the time they were written by comparing and contrasting the elements of the story that are presented and modified. The distinct differences that can be found between the Old English and the vulgate versions of Judith provide a clear view of what the Anglo-Saxons considered to be important, and what they felt required respect.

When comparing and contrasting these two versions, one can utilize other Old English works such as *Beowulf* and *The Wanderer* to clearly spot the differences and similarities to receive some insight into the culture and feelings of the Anglo-Saxons. One of the similarities that is shared between both readings of Judith, *Beowulf* and *The Wanderer* is an inherent need to praise God and give Him the glory for all of their actions and accomplishments.

Right from the start this idea is seen in the Old English version of Judith whenever it is said, “That God the Creator might free her from fear” thereby showing the instant need that the Anglo-Saxons felt for a God who would protect them and help them in their endeavors (Judith 4). Judith being freed from her fear is mirrored by *Beowulf*’s confidence in the Lord whenever he proclaims, “wise God, will allot glory, as seems fitting to Him” showing that he has complete trust in who God will choose to win in his gristly battle with the demon Grendel (*Beowulf* 686-687).

The amount of faith that the Anglo-Saxons had in God was very great that he would protect them in battle and all of their endeavors. This sentiment is reflected in the apocryphal version of Judith with her being described as, “ a <https://assignbuster.com/judith-compare-and-contrast/>

holy woman, and one fearing of God” (Book of Judith 8: 29). The respect and deference shown by Judith in both the apocryphal version of the story and the Old English version show a similar respect for God and a tendency to praise him.

This tendency to praise and fear God is reminiscent of Beowulf whenever he allots his victory the gifts that God has given him being the only reason he was able to overcome the monstrous brood of Cain. All of these stories, whether it is the differing versions of the Book of Judith or the epic of Beowulf, seem to have a true desire to glorify God and to even thank him for every victory or effort that the main characters engage in. Contrasting with the previous idea presented is the thought that the Anglo-Saxons put too much emphasis upon their own abilities to fight and battle rather than glorifying and thanking God for their victories.

This idea is first shown in the Anglo Saxon version Judith whenever she prays, “ that I may o’erthrow, with this steel the destroyer; bestow on me weal” (Judith Ch. 10). A contrast with this is shown in the apocryphal Judith with the emphasis place on Judith’s designs succeeding and succeeding not for her own benefit but for the glory of God (Book of Judith 8: 31-33). Judith in the Anglo-Saxon version asks for the Lord to bestow upon her the power to smite her enemies with her sword rather than planning as the apocryphal Judith states.

This reflects the Anglo-Saxon sentiment that problems had to be settled through fighting and the spilling of blood. Although the apocryphal Judith does have its fair share of blood and fighting, the emphasis on the story is placed on God’s power and not theviolencethat takes place. This point is

further built upon with the idea that it seems that a lot of the time the emphasis in the relationship between the Anglo-Saxon heroes and heroines is placed on the human counterpart rather than focusing all the glory upon God.

The fine line between glorifying one's self and glorifying God is a fine line that the Old English Anglo-Saxons seem to walk and not always stay on. Further evidence of the Anglo-Saxon's insistence upon their own glory is found between the contrasting pictures given to us by the different versions of Judith where in the Anglo Saxon version at the very end, " Judith was praised for all this Him, Sabaoth's Lord, who bestowed on her honor, On earth highest worship" while in the Book of Judith the story ends with God being provided the everlasting glory in addition to Judith receiving some recognition (Judith Ch. 0, Book of Judith 16: 23). The idea of Judith being a warrior for the rest of her life seeking glory and fighting in battle was most likely an idea that the Anglo-Saxons could not give up on and shows the need their culture had for heroes that garnered glory. A difference clearly illuminated by examining the two works is the role of women in Anglo-Saxon culture. The Anglo-Saxon version of Judith clearly illustrates the idea of a Valkyrie, a woman who is not afraid to battle, and revels in the thought of Judith being a strong captain or even warrior who leads her people to a bloody victory.

This conception is evidenced by how Judith is characterized in the Anglo-Saxon version being portrayed as a valiant virgin with nerve and vigor (Judith Ch. 10). This stands in stark contrast to the book of Judith verses three through four where Judith is revealed to be a widow who has lived alone for

three years and four months. It's obvious by looking at these two different stories that one can tell what was important to the Anglo-Saxon people. A young woman strong and stable without a care in the world besides who she was fighting would appeal greatly to the warrior culture of the Anglo-Saxons.

But the book of Judith reveals to us a woman in deep sadness who has fasted all the days of her widowhood and who has never picked up a weapon (Book of Judith 8: 6). This belief of a warrior woman held by the Old English people is significant in that it reflects the strongly held beliefs of what a hero should be like to the Anglo Saxon people. There is a certain amount of significance in the detailed imagery that the Anglo-Saxons added to the story of Judith. One such example is the brutal murder of Holofernes that Judith commits.

In verse 8 of the Book of Judith, Judith swings twice with the sword that she found above Holofernes bed and neatly severs the guy's head off. It's pretty interesting that this part of the story stays exactly the same in the Anglo-Saxon version except that in the Anglo-Saxon version we get some really graphic imagery of the act taking place. In the Anglo-Saxon story we get phrases like, " So that his head rolled... the body so foul, lay lifeless behind" that really capture the gruesome nature of cutting someone's head off (Judith Ch. 10).

This type of graphic imagery is very reminiscent of some of the more brutal Beowulf scenes such as the scene where Grendel enters Heorot and begins to terrorize one poor, unlucky soul. Phrases such as, " bit into the bone-locks" and " drank blood from his veins" conjure up very graphic images that Anglo-Saxons would find pleasing and entertaining yet are not as valuable in a biblical context (Beowulf 742). This inclusion of graphic imagery in the <https://assignbuster.com/judith-compare-and-contrast/>

Anglo-Saxon version of Judith shows an important cultural trait of the Anglo-Saxons in their depiction of bloody events.

This violent nature contrasts with the original version of Judith which, although violent, is not graphically disturbing. These two different versions of Judith showcase the traits of the culture of the Anglo-Saxons and illustrate the things that they held to be important in stories. Comparing and contrasting the ways in which the Anglo-Saxons viewed glorifying God reveals a true effort on their part to see Him glorified, but also shows that they believed so much in the glorified warrior that many times this was difficult.

Looking at the differences in the way in which the Anglo-Saxons viewed what a woman warrior could be revealed their belief in a daring heroine flying into the face of danger and coming out victorious. Focusing on the differences and similarities of the Anglo-Saxon Judith and the Apocryphal Judith through a lens of what one knows through stories such as Beowulf gives one an excellent view of the ideas and virtues that the Anglo-Saxon's held dear.