

Role of Women in the Odyssey

By looking at Homer's Odyssey, we can begin to get an idea as to how the ancient Greeks regarded their women. Men treated them almost as though they were possessions and not people, and many times women had to resort to deception to accomplish their own goals and desires. By interpreting Homer's view of women, one can draw a bigger picture of the role of women in ancient Greek culture. In the Odyssey, we learn that women were placed on pedestal as beautiful creatures, but were often subordinate to men, had little input and involvement in government. The three types of women illustrated within the poem, the goddess, the seductress, and the good wife are all important roles in making Homer's Odyssey an epic. Each of the three basic roles of women, the goddess, the seductress, and the good wife, adds a different essential element to the telling of the story.

The role of the goddess is one of a supernatural being, but more importantly one in a position to pity and help mortals. Athena, the goddess of wisdom, is the most important example of the role; in the very beginning of the story, she is seen making a plea for Odysseus' return home from war and assists him throughout his journeys in the first half of the book. She is the driving force behind Odysseus' return home. In books 1-4 she helps Telemachus, Odysseus' son, gather the courage to go out and find out the status of his father on his own in the path to becoming a man. Even Circe and Calypso help Odysseus tremendously with information and supplies. It is the role of the woman goddess and not the male god to pity and offer help to the suffering mortal. The next and less benevolent role is that of the seductress. Two stories about such women referred to in the Odyssey are those of the half-sisters Helen and Clytemnestra. The entire Trojan War was caused by Helen's unfaithfulness to Menelaus; her affair caused many deaths, as Odysseus would not have had to leave home with so many men if she had not run away with Paris. Clytemnestra also caused pain and suffering by having an affair and then killing her husband, Agamemnon, with her lover Aegisthus on his homecoming day. The seductress is always looked upon as dangerous and harmful to mankind. The Sirens symbolize this role; their song seduces and compels anyone listening to linger until death. Circe tries to seduce Odysseus before she helps him, and the beautiful Calypso, who entices him with sex and immortality, will not release him to go home until forced. It is the hero's job to resist the temptation of the seductress or it will lead to his downfall.

In direct contrast with the seductress is the good hostess or wife. Penelope, Odysseus' wife, and the obvious bearer of this title, is the very image of faithfulness, waiting years for Odysseus' return. Even the intimidating suitors do not sway her from her constancy. Another example of faithfulness is Eurycleia, who matches Penelope in steadfastness to her job as Telemachus' nurse, as she once had done for Odysseus. Nausicaa is a good example of an excellent hostess to Odysseus, providing him with a bath, clothing, food, and advice, while paying attention to her image as a virtuous woman. Her mother, Queen Arete, is good hostess as well; it was said that her favor would assure Odysseus a ship ride home. The role of the hostess is similar to that of goddess because they are both assisting those in need, namely Odysseus. More significantly, the role of the good woman is to provide a model that makes up for the seductresses. They are there to show that Agamemnon's statement that Clytemnestra's actions defiled herself and all of her gender then and yet to come, including the few women who may be virtuous, is untrue. The women in all three of these roles personify an essential part of the events of the story. The hero is helped by the goddess and the good woman, and must overcome her opposite, the seductress. The relationship between the hero and the women, in fact, forms the majority of the story. Thus, the role of women in Homer's the Odyssey plays an integral part to making this epic poem.

role women odyssey looking homer odyssey begin idea ancient greeks regarded their women treated them almost though they were possessions people many times women resort deception accomplish their goals desires interpreting homer view draw bigger picture role ancient greek culture odyssey learn that were placed pedestal beautiful creatures were often subordinate little input involvement government three types illustrated within poem goddess seductress good wife important roles making homer epic each three basic roles goddess seductress good wife adds different essential element telling story role goddess supernatural being more importantly position pity help mortals athena wisdom most important example very beginning story seen making plea odysseus return home from assists throughout journeys first half book driving force behind odysseus return home books helps telemachus odysseus gather courage find status father path becoming even circe calypso help tremendously with information supplies woman male pity offer help suffering mortal next less benevolent that seductress stories about such referred those half sisters helen clytemnestra entire trojan caused helen unfaithfulness menelaus affair caused many deaths would have leave home with many away with paris clytemnestra also caused pain suffering having affair then killing husband agamemnon lover aegisthus homecoming always looked upon dangerous harmful mankind sirens symbolize this their song seduces compels anyone listening linger until death circe tries seduce before helps beautiful calypso entices immortality will release until forced hero resist temptation will lead downfall direct contrast good hostess wife penelope obvious bearer this title very image faithfulness waiting years return even intimidating suitors sway from constancy another example faithfulness eurycleia matches penelope steadfastness telemachus nurse once done nausicaa example excellent hostess providing bath clothing food advice while paying attention image virtuous woman mother queen arete hostess well said that favor would assure ship ride similar because they both assisting those need namely more significantly woman provide model makes seductresses they there show agamemnon statement clytemnestra actions defiled herself gender then come including virtuous untrue three these roles personify essential part events story hero helped must overcome opposite relationship between hero fact forms majority thus plays integral part making this epic poem

Essay, essays, term paper, term paper, term papers, term papers, book reports, study, college, thesis, dissertation, test answers, free research, book research, study help, download essay, download term papers