

A Hero's Quest

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MSC

Ordinary world

Mulan

- Honor is vital
- Mulan does not fit into traditional female values
- Mulan is quite clumsy
- Embarrasses herself in front of the matchmaker

- King Odysseus is at home in Ithaca, with his wife, Penelope, and newborn son, Telemachus.

Comparison

- Odysseus
 - Full of pride and honor
 - King is respected by his people
- Mulan
 - Clumsy
 - Not respected by her family

Call to adventure

Mulan

- Witnesses her father being conscripted and knows he will die in war
- Decides to pretend to disguise herself as male to save her father
- Mulan's motivation for adventure is saving her father, while in the Odyssey the King's motivation is to save his people

- Odysseus sets out for the war in Troy.

Comparison

- Odysseus
 - King's motivation is to save his people
- Mulan
 - Mulan's motivation for adventure is saving her father

Refusal of the call

Mulan

- Doubts her disguising abilities and almost gives up in front of the training camp
- Mushu convinces her to go anyway

- He does not want to leave his family and sail to Troy; he knows it will be a long trip.

Comparison

- Mulan
 - Fears for herself
- Odyssey
 - Odysseus fears for others
- Shows that Odysseus believes in himself, while Mulan does not

Meeting with the mentor

- Mulan meets with the captain and is inspired by his ridiculing to be a better soldier

- Athena, the Goddess of wisdom, crafts, and battle is Odysseus' guide. She wants to help Odysseus, though she has been instructed not to. She takes pity on him while other gods forsake Odysseus, constantly saves him from death, and gives him guidance.

Comparison

- Mulan
 - Does not have a person that constantly guards her
- Odyssey
 - Odysseus does
- May indicate that Odysseus' struggles will be so much more difficult that he needs others to guard him

Crossing the threshold

- Mulan comes to be respected by the others in the army for her skill

- After the war, the gods become angry with the Greeks for their prideful ways. A great storm emerges and throws them off course.

Comparison

- Odyssey
 - Odysseus does not have a real *threshold* to cross
- Mulan
 - Mulan does
- Implying that the King's journey will be longer and more drawn out

Tests, allies, enemies

- Mulan improves her skills and becomes even better at being male
- Mulan has only vague “montage-y” tests, allies, enemies in the form of training, while Odysseus has real obstacles to overcome

- Odysseus is thwarted with many tests as he travels back to Ithaca:
 - Polyphemus
 - Circones
 - Lotus Eaters
 - Lastrygonians
 - Sirens
 - Scylla & Charybdis
 - Cattle of the Sun God

Comparison

- Mulan
 - Implied that Mulan's journey will be soft and easy
- Odyssey
 - Odysseus's journey has real life-or-death scenarios, and maybe a sad ending

Approach to the innermost cave

- Army goes to a village the Huns decimated after being tricked by Mushu into going to war

- Odysseus nearly makes it home, but his crew opens a bag that had been given to Odysseus by Aeolus, god of the winds. When the bag is opened, it releases a wind that blows them far away from Ithaca.

Comparison

- Mulan
 - The Approach is much more subdued in Mulan, and feels “set” and “official”
- Odyssey
 - Approach in the Odyssey more spontaneous, integrating surprise
 - It is more dangerous, setting the tone for the Supreme Ordeal

Supreme ordeal

Mulan

- Army is ambushed by the Huns who are hiding behind the summit of the mountain
- All hope is lost
- Mulan saves everyone by firing a rocket into an overhang of snow, causing an avalanche
- She kills almost everyone, but some of the army survive (hmm... I wonder why only the main characters survive..)
- Mulan was wounded, and after being undressed to tend to her wound, the rest of the army realises she is female

- Odysseus is sent to the underworld seeking information to guide him home. This quest brings him to the verge of death.

Comparison

- Mulan
 - Mulan sustains little damage
- Odyssey
 - Odysseus sustains comparatively *huge* personal damage
- In general much more extreme storyline in the Odyssey

Reward

Mulan

- Instead of the reward going to the hero, it goes to the others in the army after they realise Mulan is female
- The reward consists of beating the Huns and not perishing
- Mulan is left to perish in the snow with Mushu, the cricket and her horse

- The King of Phaeacia gives Odysseus passage home.

Comparison

- Mulan
 - Reward is vague
 - Cannot really be classified as reward
- Odyssey
 - Powerful kings of faraway lands lead the classic hero home: I like it!
 - More epic in general

The road back

Mulan

- Mulan realises most of the Huns did *not* die in the avalanche after all, and decides to make her way towards the Imperial Palace
- She decides that she is obligated to save China, instead of just going home
- Mulan arrives at the Imperial palace and attempts to convince the others that the Huns are in fact *not* dead, and that they are there, trying to murder the Emperor

- Unlike other heroes, Odysseus was not in search of treasure. Instead, he was desperately trying to reach his home. Once he returns, he finds out that his house has been overrun with suitors trying to steal his wife and palace.

Comparison

- Mulan
 - In this case, Mulan's story is much more dramatic and heroic
 - Trying to save China!
- Odyssey
 - Much more noble
 - Not as dramatic
 - Lower stakes

Resurrection

Mulan

- No one believes her, because they believe that Mulan cannot be trusted as she had already lied to them before
- The Huns reveal themselves, and the remaining members of the army, directed by the captain, attempt to ram the Imperial Palace's doors open, to no avail
- Mulan eventually convinces all members of the army to join her in her plan to disguise themselves as women
- Mulan's plan succeeds, and she is rewarded by the Emperor by being offered a seat on the Imperial Council, which she declines

- Instead of rushing in and killing the suitors, Odysseus is patient. He wishes to learn if his wife has been faithful. With the help of his son and a loyal swineherd, he devises a plan. Athena disguises him as an old beggar so that he can enter his house undetected. Telemachus steals all the suitors' weapons, and a final test is proposed. Penelope will marry the man who strings Odysseus' bow and shoots an arrow through a line of small circles; a seemingly impossible task.

Comparison

- Mulan
 - Much more dramatic
 - Not very patient or mature
- Odyssey
 - Very mature way to handle situation
 - Cunning
- Implies that Odysseus is mature and clever, while Mulan's plan is just brute force with a bit of disguising

Return with the elixir

- Instead, the Emperor hands Mulan a sword and a necklace
- Mulan returns home with the captain in tow to the delight of her family
- Mulan's family is also impressed with the gifts Mulan received

- Odysseus, still dressed as a beggar, completes the task and is restored to his original state. He and his son expel the suitors from their home by force. Penelope, seeing how Odysseus has changed, tests him to make sure it is actually him. She tells him she moved their bed. He replies, correctly, that this would have been impossible, and all is returned to normal.

Comparison

- Both noble and dramatic
- Odyssey slightly more dramatic IMHO
- Mulan scenario very unrealistic
- Assuming all mystical creatures are real, Odyssey scenario quite realistic

Archetypes

The Shadow

- Odyssey has Poseidon, etc
- The Shadow in Mulan is Shang Yu

The Hero(ine)

- The hero in Odyssey is Odysseus
- The hero in Mulan is Mulan

The Hermit/ Helper/ Mentor

- The helper in Odyssey is Goddess, Athena
- The helper in Mulan is Mushu

The Dream Woman/Man

- The dream person in Odyssey is Penelope
- The dream person in Mulan is the Captain

The Threshold Guardian

- The threshold guardian in *Odyssey* are the Lotus Eaters
- The threshold guardian in *Mulan* are the ancestors

The Trickers

- The tricker in Odyssey is Poseidon
- The trickers in Mulan is Mushu

- The herald in Odyssey is the starting of the war in Troy
- The herald in Mulan is Mushu and the consul of the Emperor