

# A Hero's Quest

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MSC

Ordinary world

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# Mulan

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

# Odyssey

- King Odysseus is at home in Ithaca
- With his wife, Penelope
- With 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

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# 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

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

## Refusal of the call

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# Mulan

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

# Odyssey

- He does not want to leave his family and sail to Troy
- 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

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

# Odyssey

- 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
- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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

# Odyssey

- Odysseus nearly makes it home
- 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

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# 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

# Odyssey

- 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

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# 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

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# 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

# Odyssey

- 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

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# 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

# Odyssey

- 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

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- 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

# Odyssey

- 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

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# The Shadow

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

# Similarities

- Both of the characters, in each movie and book are villains
- In the Odyssey, Poseidon isn't the main threat to Odysseus - the main problem is the war - but causes trouble throughout the journey
- Poseidon is more cunning and mischievous in comparison to a big, more traditional villain like Shang Yu

# The Hero(ine)

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

## Similarities

- Mulan is introduced as a free-spirited outcast, clumsy, and unable to follow rules, regulations, or traditions. Nevertheless, she has a warm heart and wants nothing more than to uphold her family honor, while keeping true to herself
- Odysseus has two major flaws, his arrogance and his pride. In comparison, Mulan is very selfless and puts others before her.

## The Hermit/ Helper/ Mentor

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

# Similarities

- The characters in each movie and book help the protagonist.
- In the movie Mulan, Mushu helps her by cheering her spirit and gives her confidence
- In comparison, Athena in the movie Odyssey, sends him divine aid and help



## The Dream Woman/Man

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

## Similarities

- In comparison, Odysseus is married to Penelope whereas Mulan and the Captain aren't

# The Threshold Guardian

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

# Similarities

- In Mulan, the threshold guardians want to bring her back to not fight for the war
- In comparison, the lotus eaters are native to their land and help the Odyssey crew with the 'lotus' fruits

# The Trickers

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

# Similarities

- In Mulan, Mushu tricks the consul to go to war
- Mushu doesn't harm Mulan in any way
- In comparison, Poseidon tricks Odysseus many times getting him into frustrating situations

# The Herald

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

# Similarities

- In Mulan, Mushu lied about going to war; the news was fake
- In Odyssey, the starting of the war warned everyone to stay alert