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Survival Through a Close Study of Text

Ordinary world

Mulan

Honor is vital in Mulan. As Mulan dishonours her family, she does not fit into the traditional female values that all must adhere to. Mulan is also clumsy and embarrasses herself, which also both go against the values.

Odyssey

King Odysseus is at home in Ithaca, with his wife, Penelope, and newborn son, Telemachus. The King is well-liked and respected, which give him pride and happiness.

Comparison

While Odysseus is full of pride and honor, and is respected by his people, Mulan is clumsy and is not respected by her her family. These are polar opposites already.

Call to adventure

Mulan

- Witnesses her father being conscripted
- Knows he will die in war
- Decides to disguise herself as a male to save her father

Odyssey

- Odysseus sets out for the war in Troy.

Comparison

- Odyssey
 - Motivation is to save his people

- Mulan
 - 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

Odyssey

- He does not want to leave his family and sail to Troy
- Knows it will be a long trip
- Is worried that something bad could occur during his absence

Comparison

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

Meeting with the mentor

Mulan

- Mulan meets with the captain
- Is inspired by his ridiculing of the soldiers to improve her battle skills

Odyssey

- Athena, the goddess of wisdom, crafts, and battle is Odysseus' guide
- Wants to help Odysseus, though she has been instructed not to
- 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

Mulan

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

Odyssey

- 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
 - Does not have a real threshold to cross
- Mulan
 - Mulan does
- Implying that Odysseus' journey will be longer and more drawn out

Tests, allies, enemies

Mulan

- Mulan improves her skills and becomes even better at being male

Odyssey

- Odysseus is faced 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
 - Only vague "montage-y" tests, allies, enemies in the form of lert-training
- Odyssey
 - Journey has real life-or-death scenarios, and is more lertserious than Mulan

Approach to the innermost cave

Mulan

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

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” due to the government involvement in the whole situation
- 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
- The rest of the army realises that Mulan is female after undressing her to tend to a wound she had sustained

Odyssey

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

Comparison

- Mulan
 - Sustains little damage
- Odyssey
 - 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 die in the snow with Mushu, the cricket and her horse

Odyssey

- 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
- Decides to make her way towards the Imperial Palace
- 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 lertmurder 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

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

Mulan

- 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

The Shadow

- Odyssey has Poseidon
 - Poseidon conforms to his archetype as he always creates trouble to Odysseus
- The Shadow in Mulan is Shang Yu
 - Shang Yu conforms to his archetype as he is the leader of the Huns

Similarities

- Both of the characters are villains
- In the Odyssey, Poseidon isn't the main threat to Odysseus
- The main problem is the war
 - But Poseidon still 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 main saver of the story
- The heroine in Mulan is Mulan
 - Mulan conforms to her archetype by saving the whole of China

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:
 - Arrogance
 - Pride
- In comparison, Mulan is very selfless and puts others before her

The Hermit/ Helper/ Mentor

- The helper in Odyssey is Goddess Athena
 - She conforms to her archetype by helping through the journey
- The helper in Mulan is Mushu
 - Mushu conforms to his archetype as he guides her and convinces her to not give up

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 Odyssey, sends him divine aid and help

The Dream Person

- The dream person in Odyssey is Penelope
 - She conforms to the archetype as she is married to Odysseus
- The dream person in Mulan is the Captain
 - He conforms to the archetype as Mulan and the Captain like each other

Similarities

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

The Threshold Guardian(s)

- The threshold guardians in Odyssey are the Lotus Eaters
 - They test Odysseus' strength and ability to problem solve by making his men forget about home.
- The threshold guardians in Mulan are the ancestors
 - They conform to the archetype as they are not real people and guide Mushu to help Mulan

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 Tricker

- The tricker in Odyssey is Poseidon
 - Poseidon conforms to the archetype by tricking Odysseus through the adventure
- The tricker in Mulan is Mushu
 - Mushu conforms to the archetype by lying to the consul

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 by getting him into frustrating situations

The Herald

- The herald in the Odyssey is the starting of the war in Troy
 - This conforms to the archetype because it tells Odysseus to go to war
- The herald in Mulan is Mushu and the Consul of the Emperor
 - He conforms to the archetype by telling the “news” to the Captain

Similarities

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