

Retelling the Return

Compare an ancient epic with a modern adaptation.

8.T.PM.1.a "Read and compare and contrast myths and stories (fictional or historical) that modern writers have adapted into their own works. (I)"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that both *The Odyssey* and *The Penelopiad* share. Circle details Atwood changes or adds, then write 1 beside the sentence that explains why the change matters.

Penelope's Different Story

- ① Many readers know Penelope from Homer's ancient Greek epic, *The Odyssey*. While her husband, Odysseus, spends years trying to return from the Trojan War, Penelope remains in Ithaca. Suitors crowd her home and pressure her to choose a new husband. She delays them by saying she must finish weaving a burial cloth, then secretly unweaves it at night. In the epic, this clever trick shows her loyalty to Odysseus and helps preserve his household until he returns.
- ② In Margaret Atwood's 2005 novel *The Penelopiad*, the old story is adapted from Penelope's point of view. Penelope narrates much of the book after death, looking back at events in Ithaca. Atwood also gives a chorus-like voice to twelve maids. In *The Odyssey*, these maids are executed after Odysseus returns because they are said to have supported the suitors. Atwood's maids question that judgment and describe their fear, making readers consider power and fairness closely.
- ③ Both works keep important people and events from the ancient myth: Penelope waits in Ithaca, the suitors threaten her home, and Odysseus eventually returns. Yet Atwood changes the focus. Homer's epic mainly follows Odysseus's dangerous journey and presents Penelope as a faithful wife. *The Penelopiad* lets Penelope explain her own choices and lets the maids speak for themselves. By shifting the narrator, Atwood does not simply repeat the myth. She invites readers to notice voices that the earlier epic gives little space.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 What three important details do *The Odyssey* and *The Penelopiad* keep from the ancient story?

2 How does the main point of view in *The Penelopiad* differ from the focus of Homer's epic?

3 Compare the role of the twelve maids in the two works. What does Atwood add to their portrayal?

4 How does changing the narrator affect the message of Atwood's adaptation? Use one detail from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Choose a myth or older story and a modern adaptation you know. In three sentences, name one element the adaptation keeps, name one it changes, and explain how the change affects the adaptation's focus.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details that both *The Odyssey* and *The Penelopiad* share. Circle details Atwood changes or adds, then write 1 beside the sentence that explains why the change matters. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What three important details do <i>The Odyssey</i> and <i>The Penelopiad</i> keep from the ancient story?	Penelope waits in Ithaca, the suitors threaten her home, and Odysseus returns.
2	How does the main point of view in <i>The Penelopiad</i> differ from the focus of Homer's epic?	The <i>Penelopiad</i> is largely narrated by Penelope, while Homer's epic mainly follows Odysseus's journey.
3	Compare the role of the twelve maids in the two works. What does Atwood add to their portrayal?	In <i>The Odyssey</i>, the maids are executed after being accused of supporting the suitors. Atwood gives them a voice, and they question the judgment and describe their fear.
4	How does changing the narrator affect the message of Atwood's adaptation? Use one detail from the passage.	It draws attention to voices given little space in the earlier epic, such as Penelope's choices and the maids' experiences.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is adapted in the modern musical *West Side Story*. Both works center on young people from rival groups whose love faces strong opposition. *West Side Story* changes the setting to mid-20th-century New York City and uses rival street gangs, which shifts attention toward prejudice and conflict in that city.

Accept accurate comparisons that identify a retained element, a changed element, and a reasonable explanation of the change's effect. Students may use a different myth or older story and adaptation if their details are accurate.