Pages Across Time

Compare how two literary works reflect the worlds that shaped them.

10.RL.3.C "Analyze the similarities and differences represented in the literature of different cultures and eras."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details about the Greek epic and circle details about the Japanese court prose work. Write 1 beside each similarity and 2 beside each difference so you can compare how the works represent their cultures and eras.

An Exhibit of Two Books

1. At the library's evening exhibit, Nia opened a display copy of The Odyssey, an ancient Greek epic. The page described Odysseus watching the sea, eager to return to Ithaca after war and years of travel. Although he is resourceful, gods can help or block him, and his household waits for his return. Nia noticed that the poem treats a safe home, loyalty, and honor as public concerns. A leader's choices affect servants, family members, and guests. The vast sea feels dangerous, yet it also tests whether Odysseus deserves to resume his place.

2. On the next table, Nia read selections from The Pillow Book, written by Sei Shonagon at the Japanese imperial court around the year 1000. Instead of following one hero through danger, the work gathers brief observations, lists, and scenes from court life. Shonagon notices the color of robes, a letter's appearance, and the pleasure of snow or blossoms. Her sharp judgments show that taste and quick wit can matter in a crowded social world. Like the Greek epic, this book connects a person's standing to other people. Yet its tension often rises from manners and attention, not battles or storms.

3. Nia wrote two notes for the exhibit label. Both works show that people live under expectations larger than themselves, whether those expectations come from a household, a court, or divine power. However, their forms shape what readers notice. The epic stretches across a hero's journey and uses peril to explore duty, while the court prose work moves through small moments and uses precise observation to reveal social rules. Nia concluded that neither work is a simple record of its culture. Each is a crafted literary view, but each lets readers see what its era admired, feared, and watched closely.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What similar idea about a person's place in society appears in both works?

2. How does the source of tension differ between The Odyssey and The Pillow Book?

3. Compare how the forms of the two works shape what readers notice.

4. What does each work suggest its culture or era valued? Give one value for the Greek epic and one value for the Japanese court prose work.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a literary work from a culture or era different from ancient Greece and Heian Japan. In exactly three sentences, compare it with either The Odyssey or The Pillow Book by identifying one similarity, one difference, and what those features reveal about the works' cultures or eras.

ANSWER KEY

Pages Across Time

GRADE 10 · 10.RL.3.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details about the Greek epic and circle details about the Japanese court prose work. Write 1 beside each similarity and 2 beside each difference so you can compare how the works represent their cultures and eras. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What similar idea about a person's place in society appears in both works?	**Both works show that a person's standing is connected to other people and to social expectations.**
2	How does the source of tension differ between The Odyssey and The Pillow Book?	**The Odyssey creates tension through travel, danger, battles, storms, and divine interference. The Pillow Book creates tension through manners, attention, and social judgment at court.**
3	Compare how the forms of the two works shape what readers notice.	**The epic follows a long hero's journey, using peril to examine duty. The Pillow Book uses brief observations and small moments to reveal court social rules.**
4	What does each work suggest its culture or era valued? Give one value for the Greek epic and one value for the Japanese court prose work.	**The Greek epic values homecoming, loyalty, and honor. The Japanese court prose work values taste, quick wit, careful manners, and attention to beauty.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Chinua Achebe's 1958 novel Things Fall Apart, set in an Igbo community in Nigeria before and during early British colonial rule, can be compared with The Odyssey. Like the Greek epic, it shows how a person's reputation affects family and community, but Okonkwo's struggle centers on changing colonial power rather than a voyage home shaped by gods. Together, these differences reveal that both works value social standing, while each represents the distinct pressures of its culture and era.

Accept equivalent comparisons that accurately connect form, conflict, or values to cultural and historical context. For the open task, require a clear similarity, a clear difference, and an explanation rather than a plot summary.