

Further Reading

The Penelopiad
Margaret Atwood (2005)
ATWOOD

Presents the cycle of stories about Penelope, wife of Odysseus, through the eyes of the twelve maids hanged for disloyalty to Odysseus in his absence.

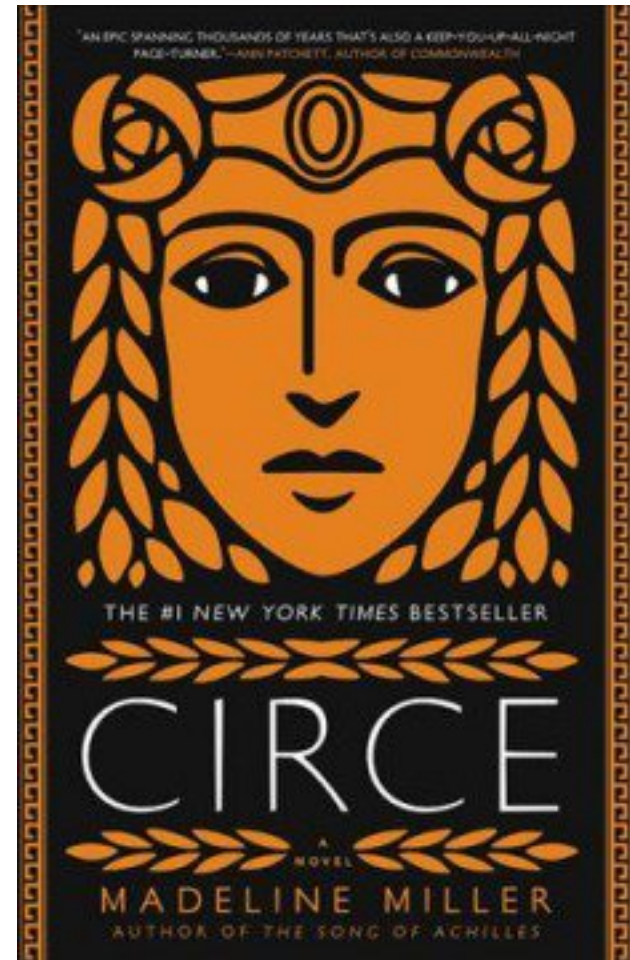
House of Names
Colm Toibin (2017)
TOIBIN

A retelling of the Greek myth Agamemnon, in which Clytemnestra and her children become involved in revenge schemes because of Agamemnon's actions.

The Children of Jocasta
Natalie Haynes (2018)
HAYNES

This novel is based on Oedipus Tyrannus and Antigone, two of Classical Greece's most compelling tragedies. Told in intersecting narratives, this feminist reimagining of Sophocles' classic plays brings life and voice to the women who were too often forced to the background of their own stories.

Book Discussion Guide





About the Book

In the house of Helios, god of the sun and mightiest of the Titans, a daughter is born. But Circe is a strange child—not powerful, like her father, nor viciously alluring like her mother. Turning to the world of mortals for companionship, she discovers that she does possess power—the power of witchcraft, which can transform rivals into monsters and menace the gods themselves. Threatened, Zeus banishes her to a deserted island, where she hones her occult craft, tames wild beasts and crosses paths with many of the most famous figures in all of mythology, including the Minotaur, Daedalus and his doomed son Icarus, the murderous Medea, and, of course, wily Odysseus. But there is danger, too, for a woman who stands alone, and Circe unwittingly draws the wrath of both men and gods, ultimately finding herself pitted against one of the most terrifying and vengeful of the Olympians. To protect what she loves most, Circe must summon all her strength and choose, once and for all, whether she belongs with the gods she is born from, or the mortals she has come to love.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe Circe's personality? Why is she so roundly dismissed, bullied, and belittled by her fellow immortals? Talk about the ways in which this treatment shapes her character. Despite her ancient, mythological roots, do you relate to Circe?
2. In what way is Circe's desire for vengeance at odds with her inherent compassion?

3. How does the ancient Greek society, at least in the realm of the deities, view and treat women.

4. Circe tells us: *It is a common saying that women are delicate creatures—flowers, eggs, anything that may be crushed in a moment's carelessness. If I had ever believed it, I no longer did.*

How does Circe disprove the widespread view of women as fragile?

5. Talk about Circe's attitude toward motherhood: as she says, despite all her military style preparations, it was "not enough." What does she mean, and what kind of a mother does Circe end up becoming?

6. What does Circe mean when she says, "All my life had been murk and depths, but I was not a part of that dark water. I was a creature within it"?

7. How does the author portray the love affair between Circe and Odysseus? If you are familiar with *The Odyssey*, how does the novel differ from Homer's telling (or does it)?

8. How does Miller depict many of the legendary characters of Greek mythology, including Odysseus, Daedalus, Hermes, among others? In other words, how does she flesh out their "human" traits as distinct from their godlike or heroic ones?

9. What did you know of Greek mythology before reading Circe? If you had some prior familiarity with the mythical figures and their stories, has Miller's novel added to or changed your understanding or appreciation of them?

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