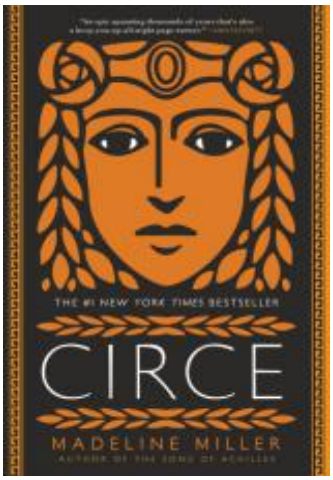
ReadingGroupGuides
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Circe

by Madeline Miller



About the Book

"A bold and subversive retelling of the goddess's story," this #1 *New York Times* bestseller is "both epic and intimate in its scope, recasting the most infamous female figure from the *Odyssey* as a hero in her own right" (Alexandra Alter, *The New York Times*).

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.

With unforgettably vivid characters, mesmerizing language and page-turning suspense, CIRCE is a triumph of storytelling --- an intoxicating epic of family rivalry, palace intrigue, love and loss, as well as a celebration of indomitable female strength in a man's world.

Discussion Guide

1. Circe struggles to find a place for herself as a woman in a man?s world. What parts of her experience resonate with modern-day challenges that women face?

2. A central theme of Homer?s *Odyssey* is a longing for ?nostos? --- homecoming. In what way does that theme resonate with Circe?s story?

3. How does Circe?s encounter with Prometheus change her? How does it continue to affect her actions?

4. Throughout the novel, Circe draws distinctions between gods and mortals. How does Glaucus change when he becomes a god?

5. Circe wonders if parents can ever see their children clearly. She notes that so often when looking at our children ?we see only the mirror of our own faults.? What parts of herself does she see when she looks at Telegonus? What are her strengths and weaknesses as a parent to him?

6. Circe?s sister, Pasiphaë, begins the novel as a major antagonist. How does our perspective of her change after Circe?s visit to Crete?

7. How does her time with Daedalus affect Circe?

8. Circe begins the novel feeling very close to her brother, Aeëtes. Why do their paths diverge so wildly? Why do you think he makes the choices he does?

9. Circe tells us that she recognizes parts of herself in Medea. In what ways are the two women similar? In what ways are they different?

10. Circe says to Telemachus, ?Do not try to take my regret from me.? What does she mean by that? What role does regret play in the novel?

11. Circe says that when she first meets Odysseus he seems ?nearly familiar? to her. Why does she say that? Who, if anyone, does he remind her of?

12. What is the significance of Circe?s meeting with Trygon? How does it impact her emotional journey?

13. There are numerous references to crafts in the novel, including weaving, carpentry and metal-working. What role does craft play in Circe?s story?

14. Circe is interested in Penelope from the moment she hears about her from Odysseus. What draws her to Penelope? Does this change over time?

15. Were you surprised when Telemachus refused Athena? Why or why not?

16. Circe encounters several famous figures from Greek myth. Were any of their portrayals surprising?

17. How does Circe?s relationship with her father change over the course of the book? What do you make of their final

conversation?

18. We see numerous powerful characters abusing their positions throughout the story. Are power and abuse necessarily connected? Are there any models for power without cruelty in the novel?

19. Circe?s gift is transformation. How does she transform from the beginning of the novel to the end? Why does she ultimately choose the path she does?

Author Bio

Madeline Miller is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of the novels THE SONG OF ACHILLES and CIRCE, and the short stories GALATEA and MESTRA. Her books have been translated into 40 languages. Miller studied in the Dramaturgy department at Yale School of Drama, where she focused on the adaptation of classical texts to modern forms, and has an MA in Classics from Brown University.

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