



Discussion Questions: *Circe*

“Words, Words, Words” Book Club—May 2021

1. What are your first impressions of the novel? Were there any passages that stuck out to you?
2. Did you recognize any characters included in this novel from another context? Were any of their portrayals surprising to you? Who do you wish would have shown up in the book?
3. Madeline Miller made the choice to explore a feminist retelling of the goddess’ story. How did you see that play out in the novel? What do you think she was trying to say? What other feminist rewrites would you like to see?
4. What did you think of Circe as a narrator? How would you describe her personality? Why do you think she was she so universally disliked and bullied by the other gods and goddesses?
5. What did you think about how the gods and goddesses were portrayed? What statement may Miller have been making?
6. A significant moment in the novel is Circe’s brief interaction with Prometheus. In what way does this shape her understanding of the world? Why do you think she was so curious about mortals?
7. Discuss the appearance of witchcraft in the novel. How did the powers displayed by four children of Helios manifest differently? What did they have in common? If you’ve joined us for Book Club in the past, we’ve now seen several examples of witchcraft that has focused on herbalism—how does *Circe* compare?
8. Despite being sent there as punishment, Circe (and, later, Penelope) finds great solace and autonomy on Aiaia. How did you respond to Miller’s description of the island?
9. Circe has a few significant romantic relationships with mortals throughout the novel (Glaucos, Daedalus, Odysseus, Telemachus). What did you think of them? Do these men share any common traits? Why is Telemachus the man she ultimately trades her mortality for?
10. How does Circe’s experience of motherhood compare to others in the book (her own mother, Pasiphaë, Penelope)? What did you think of her relationship with Telegonous?
11. From the moment Circe hears about Penelope, she is curiously drawn to her. What did you think of the relationship formed by these two women? How was her attitude towards Penelope different than that of Scylla, her other romantic rival?
12. Circe’s gift is transformation, and at the end of the novel we see her turning it towards herself. Do you think she succeeds? What did you think of this conclusion?