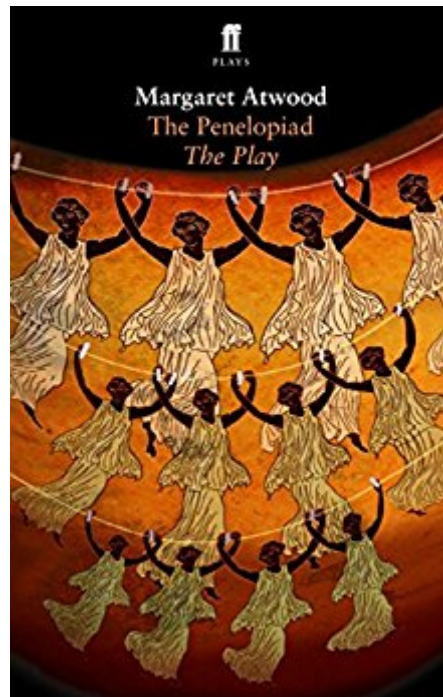


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The Penelopiad



Synopsis

As portrayed in Homer's *Odyssey*, Penelope - wife of Odysseus and cousin of the beautiful Helen of Troy - has become a symbol of wifely duty and devotion, enduring twenty years of waiting when her husband goes to fight in the Trojan War. As she fends off the attentions of a hundred greedy suitors, travelling minstrels regale her with news of Odysseus' epic adventures around the Mediterranean - slaying monsters and grappling with amorous goddesses. When Odysseus finally comes home, he kills her suitors and then, in an act that served as little more than a footnote in Homer's original story, inexplicably hangs Penelope's twelve maids. Now, Penelope and her chorus of wronged maids tell their side of the story in a new stage version by Margaret Atwood, adapted from her own wry, witty and wise novel. The *Penelopiad* premiered with the Royal Shakespeare Company in association with Canada's National Arts Centre at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, in July 2007.

Book Information

File Size: 969 KB

Print Length: 112 pages

Publisher: Faber & Faber; Main edition (October 23, 2014)

Publication Date: October 23, 2014

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00PISEAR8

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #188,589 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #11

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Arts & Photography > Theater > Playwriting #39 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Drama & Plays > Greek & Roman #42 in Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Play & Scriptwriting

Customer Reviews

Many readers find that Atwood's writings have too much edge or are just too dark and raw. The same cannot be said about this new feature. Yes, Atwood is the Queen in the Canadian Publishing

Industry, and yes she is a good writer, but her stories for many are just not entertaining. I myself am not normally a fan of Margaret Atwood's writings. Yet this book will rock your socks. It is funny, satirical, and a laugh-out-loud tale. This is a story that most of us know, the story of Odysseus and Penelope. Yet unlike most tellings of this tale, it is told from Penelope's perspective and she has a great vantage point on the whole 'Helen' affair. However our story is told from outside of time. There is an old saying that "dead men don't tell tales" and that may be true, but in this inventive retelling, a dead woman and her chorus of dead girls do just that. Turning this myth on its head by telling it through women's eyes, Atwood has given us a unique view. Maybe she will challenge us to look at our world and our situations through different lenses from time to time. How do a dead woman and her twelve maids tell a story with a great deal of jest and a smattering of dark humor? How else could a tale be told by 13 dead women from across the river Styx? Penelope gives us some biographical information about herself seldom included in this tale, and it helps us to understand some of her decisions, and her mistakes. Yet the main focus remains Odysseus' long absence during the war against Troy, and his brutal behavior upon his return. The story is written as a morality play, or in the format of a Greek Tragedy, however it is done with the humor and temperament of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

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