In Ancient Greece, women had very few rights and were expected to simply be house wives. They were to have no mind of their own and follow and do whatever their husband wished them to do. Although Circe, Penelope, and Antigone contradict this typecast. All three women demonstrated strength and quick-witted behavior throughout their stories.

Circe, being one a strong woman in Greek mythology, was powerful through her magic. She was a sorceress who tricked men into doing things she wanted. Her deceitful and deceptive character is most known for her encounter with Odysseus and his men in *The Odyssey.* Circe turns Odysseus’s men into pigs but when she tries to use mind tricks on him, they do not work, “never has any other man withstood my potion.” Homer included this quote in order to display how powerful she is: no man has ever not been affected by her magic. This not only shows how powerful she is, but in return shows that man, Odysseus, is still more powerful. *The Odyssey* was written by Homer, a man, who’s attempt is to explain what women were like during that time. Despite it being a myth, Homer conveys some truth in his plot line about what he really thinks of women.

Playing into *The Odyssey* as well, Penelope, Odysseus wife who stayed loyal to him for all twenty years he was gone, displays a different type of strength. Like Circe, Penelope is clever: she had promised the men in her house that as soon as she had finished her tapestry, she would choose a man to make her husband. However, “by day she would weave her great and growing web by night, … she would unravel all she had done,” (The Odyssey). By doing so, she was able to keep the men at bay in her home. Homer’s incorporation of this scene was to show how strong in faithfulness she was. Her will-power to have faith in Odysseus shows incredible emotional and mental strength. Later on, she then is influenced by Athena to hold a competition for her hand in marriage as a prize to the man who can string and shoot Odysseus’s bow, knowing full well that no man, other than Odysseus, can string the bow. Homer creates this allusion that Penelope is a clever woman on the surface, but in actuality, he is essentially saying women are like puppets. Penelope does not come up with the idea of the competition herself, she is subliminally influenced to do so, therefor she does not act for on her own in this scene. In addition, Athena is the goddess of spinning and weaving, much like Penelope was so fantastic at when she was first introduced. While Homer conveys Penelope as a strong woman who thinks quickly on her feet and is loyal to her husband, he infers that women do not think for themselves.

Antigone, a strong-willed woman, who fights for what she believes in, dies with her morals intact. She tries to bury her dead brother when Creon forbids all not to. She is sentenced to death. After other events, Creon sentences his own son (Antigone’s fiancé) to death. Shortly after he is warned of being too harsh, Creon goes down to the cave to release Antigone and his son only to find Antigone has hung herself. Not too shortly after his son and wife kill themselves as well. Antigone forced the hand and domino effect of suicides in retaliation to Creon’s irrational orders. This shows that despite being a woman in times where they are seen as weak, she compromises Creon and all his power. “Alone and unaided she unravels the state,” (Classical Myth, Powell). The tragedy of Antigone is different than both Penelope and Circe. While both those women appear to be strong on the outside, Homer makes sure to include their weaknesses as well. But for Antigone, Sophocles makes it clear that she is a small, weak woman and everyone knows so. She kills herself in grief and anger, unable to carry the burdens, some would view this as weak as well. On the contrary, Antigone’s suicide brings down Creon and everything he stands for. Can a weak woman bring down someone of such power and strength? Sophocles puts across that women are not as weak and useless as they were seen at this time.

Greek men thought that a strong woman would stay faithful and loyal to their husbands. They were obedient and listened to their husbands. Penelope, out of the three women, showed these characteristics when she waited for Odysseus and stayed loyal to him despite everyone telling her he was dead. Even when Odysseus was gone, she still performed the tasks of a proper house wife. Ischomachus said that women were to know how to do chores and follow what the man says before she comes into the marriage. They should always “remain indoors than to go outside” and not do too strenuous activities for they were weak (Xenophon). Circe, Penelope, and Antigone did not fit into this ideal woman Ischomachus was talking about. Penelope and Antigone were the closest to these characteristics nevertheless, they still fought for what they wanted and had minds of their own.