

Admire

To admire is to look up to, respect as of unusually high quality. I may admire a person, a work of art, a moral trait, as when a person achieves some significant self-discipline or generosity. Admiration is usually of human achievements, not of inanimate conditions. By a stretch we can say we admire a beautiful bed of flowers or a range of forested mountains, but it is more comfortable to confine our usage to states of affairs that reflect human decision or ability.

1

I have certain heroes, people I admire. One of my heroes is Simone Weil. I don't know much about her. It seems she was a self-sacrificing opponent of the War Machine in the Second World War, that she devoted much of her life to an austere and impoverished life style, in solidarity with others, and that she wrote wire-tight intense commentaries on her experience of a suffering world. Am I right about all that? I don't know. I don't even want to Google her, and find out. Maybe she had secret lovers. Maybe she was irascible. Who cares? I need the Simone Weil I have.

2

Like many of us, I admire the little guy who wins out in the end. Odysseus is a world favorite for this reason. The cards are against him—his companions, on the return home from Troy, are blockheads, while his hosts are either dangerous seductresses, vile monsters, or bland second raters, like the Phaeacians. But he has invaluable assets: he is a master of lying, he knows how to kill, and he can play ball with a witch like Circe, who wants to make a pig out of him. I admire Odysseus because he can deal with the hardest fate of all, his wife's refusal to take him at face value, upon his return. He can deal with not being loved, because he lives in a world where winning is the only game in town.