

from the Odyssey, Part I by Homer
Writing About the Big Question



Do heroes have responsibilities?

Big Question Vocabulary

character	choices	hero	honesty	identify
imitate	intentions	involvement	justice	morality
obligation	responsibility	serve	standard	wisdom

A. Use one or more words from the list above to complete each sentence.

1. The _____ made by a(n) _____ in a literary work often determine the outcome of the plot.
2. A(n) _____ is usually someone who embodies the values of an entire culture or society.
3. _____ and _____ are two values that a(n) _____ typically upholds.
4. By any measure, Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey* lives up to a heroic _____.
5. It is usually easy to _____ the hero of an epic poem.

B. Follow the directions in responding to each of the items below.

1. List two different times when you became aware of a **responsibility**.

2. Write two sentences to explain one of these experiences, and describe how it made you feel. Use at least two of the Big Question vocabulary words.

C. Complete the sentences below. Then, write a short paragraph in which you connect the sentences to the Big Question.

A **hero** has an **obligation** to _____. The **choices** he or she makes must _____.

from the Odyssey, Part 1 by Homer
Literary Analysis: Epic Hero

An **epic hero** is the larger-than-life central character in an epic—a long narrative poem about important events in the history or folklore of a nation or culture. Through adventurous deeds, the epic hero demonstrates traits—such as loyalty, honor, and resourcefulness—that are valued by the society in which the epic originates.

Many epics begin *in medias res* (“in the middle of things”), meaning that much of the important action in the story occurred before the point at which the poem begins. Therefore, an epic hero’s adventures are often recounted in a **flashback**, a scene that interrupts the sequence of events in a narrative to relate earlier events. Flashbacks also allow the poet to provide a more complete portrait of the epic hero’s character.

DIRECTIONS: Consider the adventures shown in the left column of the following chart. Then, determine what evidence is contained in each adventure to support the position that Odysseus has the superior physical and mental prowess to be an epic hero. Write your answers in the chart.

Adventure	Evidence of Mental Prowess	Evidence of Physical Prowess
1. The Lotus-Eaters		
2. The Cyclops		
3. The Sirens		
4. Scylla and Charybdis		

from the Odyssey, Part 1 by Homer

Vocabulary Builder

Word List

ardor assuage bereft dispatched insidious plundered

A. DIRECTIONS: *In each of the following items, think about the meaning of the italicized word and then answer the question.*

1. If you regard someone as *insidious*, do you like or dislike that person? Why?

2. Historically, when do people tend to *plunder*—during wartime or peacetime?

3. If Maria *dispatched* her assignment, did it take her a long time or a short time to finish?

4. Would you use gentle words or provocative words to *assuage* someone's anger or demands? Explain.

5. If you were *bereft* of sleep, would you feel fatigued or well-rested?

B. WORD STUDY: *The Old English prefix be-, meaning "around," "make," or "covered with," can sometimes be added to a noun or an adjective to create a transitive verb. Examples include beheld and begone. Match the word in Column A with its meaning in Column B by writing the correct letter on the line provided.*

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| ___ 1. bemoan | A. be on one's guard |
| ___ 2. bewilder | B. lament |
| ___ 3. beware | C. signify |
| ___ 4. betoken | D. confuse |
| ___ 5. bereft | E. deprived |

Name _____ Date _____

from the Odyssey, Part 1 by Homer
**Integrated Language Skills:
Support for Writing an Everyday Epic**

Use a chart like the one below to jot down notes for your everyday epic.

Everyday Event: _____ _____
Epic Dimensions (adventure, bravery, life-and-death challenges): _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Multiple Points of View: _____ _____ _____
Supernatural/Fantastic Elements: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Ideas for Performance/Recitation: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

from the Odyssey, Part 2 by Homer
Literary Analysis: Epic Simile

An **epic simile** is an elaborate comparison that may extend for several lines. Epic similes may use the words *like*, *as*, *just as*, or *so* to make the comparison. Unlike a normal simile, which draws a comparison to a single, distinct image, an epic simile is longer and more involved. It might recall an entire place or story. Epic similes are sometimes called Homeric similes.

DIRECTIONS: Read the epic similes that follow. Then, circle the letter of the answer that best completes each sentence.

A. But the man skilled in all ways of contending,
satisfied by the great bow's look and heft,
like a musician, like a harper, when
with quiet hand upon his instrument
he draws between his thumb and forefinger
a sweet new string upon a peg: so effortlessly
Odysseus in one motion strung the bow.

1. In the passage, what extended comparison does Homer use to complete this analogy:
archer : bow ::

- A. composer : instrument. C. musician : harp.
B. peg : string. D. hand : forefinger.

2. The comparison suggests that, like the musician, Odysseus

- A. is nervous before he begins.
B. works with a stringed instrument.
C. is proficient in music.
D. knows his instrument and where to get good strings.

B. Think of a catch that fishermen haul in to a half-moon bay
in a fine-meshed net from the whitecaps of the sea:
how all are poured out on the sand, in throes for the salt sea,
twitching their cold lives away in Helios' fiery air:
so lay the suitors heaped on one another.

1. In the passage, what comparison does Homer use to complete this analogy: *Odysseus : suitors ::*

- A. big fish : little fish. C. Odysseus : enemies.
B. hunter : catch. D. fisherman : fish.

2. The comparison suggests that

- A. Odysseus was also a good fisherman.
B. the suitors had as much chance against Odysseus as fish have when they are caught in a net.
C. something fishy was going on in Ithaca, and Odysseus had to correct it.
D. the setting of much of the epic is the Greek isles, where fishing is an important industry.

from the Odyssey, Part 2 by Homer
Vocabulary Builder

Word List

bemusing contempt dissemble equity incredulity maudlin

A. DIRECTIONS: *In each of the following items, think about the meaning of the italicized word and then answer the question.*

1. From whom would you reasonably expect *equity*—a judge or a thief?

2. Would you treat someone whom you admire with *contempt*? Why or why not?

3. Does being *maudlin* involve your intelligence or your emotions? Explain your answer.

4. Are the intentions of people who *dissemble* likely to be good or bad?

5. What kind of story or report would inspire *incredulity* in you? Explain.

6. Would you react to a long, *bemusing* lecture with enthusiasm or with annoyance?

B. DIRECTIONS: *Use the context of the sentences and what you know about the Latin prefix dis- to explain your answer to each question.*

1. If one high school football team *displaces* another in the league rankings, what happens?

2. If you *disentangle* a complex problem, what have you done: solved it, or made it worse?

3. If two plays or novels are *dissimilar*, are they more notable for their likenesses or their differences?

from the Odyssey, Part 2 by Homer

Integrated Language Skills: Support for Writing a Biography

Use a chart like the one shown to make notes for your biography of Odysseus.

Events That Reveal Odysseus' Character

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Quotations From the Epic

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____
