



# *Epic Poem Unit*

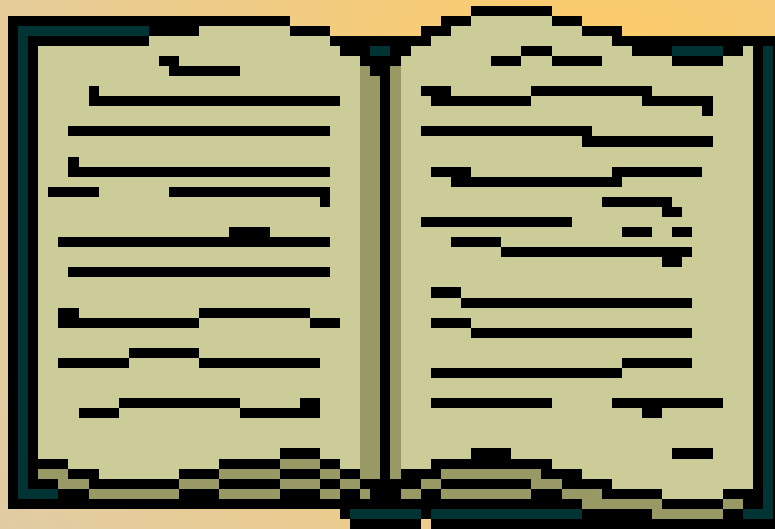
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## Homer's *The Odyssey*



# *What is an Epic?*

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- ★ A long narrative poem about a national or legendary hero.



# *What is an Epic Hero?*



- ★ Larger than life.
- ★ Male, noble or legendary birth.
- ★ Journey of struggles and hardships.
- ★ Reflects values and ideals of a society.



## *Background and History:*

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- ★ **Epics** incorporate myth, legend, folk tales, and history.
- ★ Reflects the values of the society from which it originates. (ex. Code of Hospitality)
- ★ Performance given by a **Rhapsode**, traveling poet, for live audiences.
- ★ 2 types of Epic: **Primary** and **Secondary**



# *Primary vs. Secondary Epics:*

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★ **Primary Epics** – Epics that are passed orally from generation to generation, later written down.

– Ex. *Iliad* and *Odyssey*




★ **Secondary Epics** – Epics that are written down.

– Ex. *Aeneid* by Virgil, Dante's *Divine Comedia*



# *Trojan War (1200 b.c.): Fact vs. Fiction*

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★ Fact: The cause of the Trojan War is thought to be economic in reason. Troy controlled the entrance to the Black Sea markets, Greece wanted access. Fight begins.

★ Fiction: Helen, wife of Menelaus (King of Sparta), kidnapped by Trojan Prince Paris. Spartans and Greeks unite, sail to Troy, and fight for her return. (Legend)





# *Homer's Iliad and Odyssey:*

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★ *Iliad's* subject based on the ten year battle of the Trojan War.



★ Odysseus devises plan during truce that ultimately results in victory.



★ Troy's patron gods angered at Odysseus, decide to punish him.

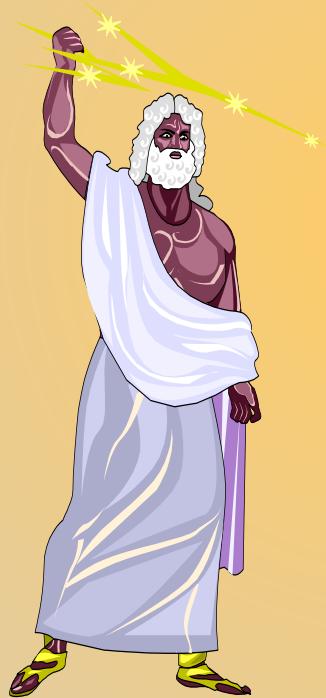
★ *Odyssey's* subject is struggles faced by Odysseus on the ten year journey home.

★ Encounters monsters, supernatural beings, conflicts with nature, and interaction with gods/goddesses.

[Both written sometime between 600 – 800 b.c.]



# *Intervention of gods/goddesses:*



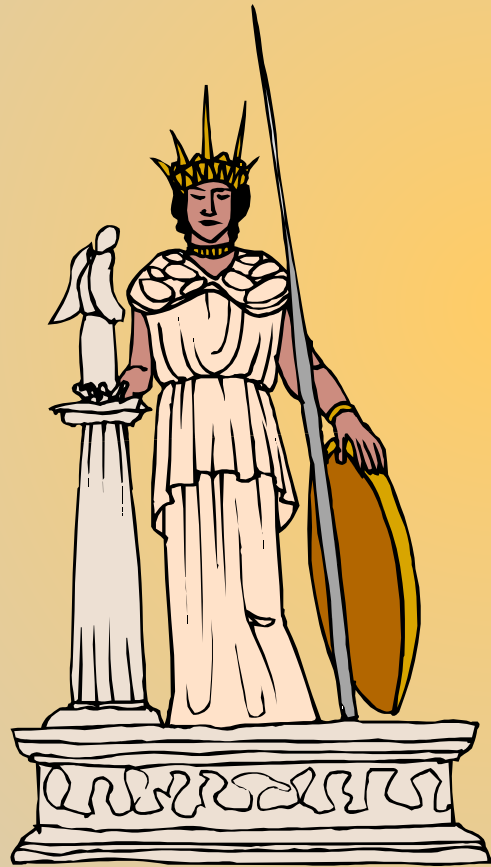
- ★ Interact with one another like humans; interfere with human life.
- ★ Favor people and places.
- ★ **Theme:** Respect for the gods is essential for survival.





# *Odysseus's Patron goddess:*

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- ★ Athena – the goddess of war and practical wisdom.
- ★ Favors the Greek cause in the Trojan War.
- ★ Aids Odysseus in his travels.



# *Gods against Odysseus:*

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- ★ Poseidon – god of the seas. Angered because Odysseus injures his son.
- ★ Ares, Apollo, Artemis, and Aphrodite. The patron gods of Troy and supporters of Paris.



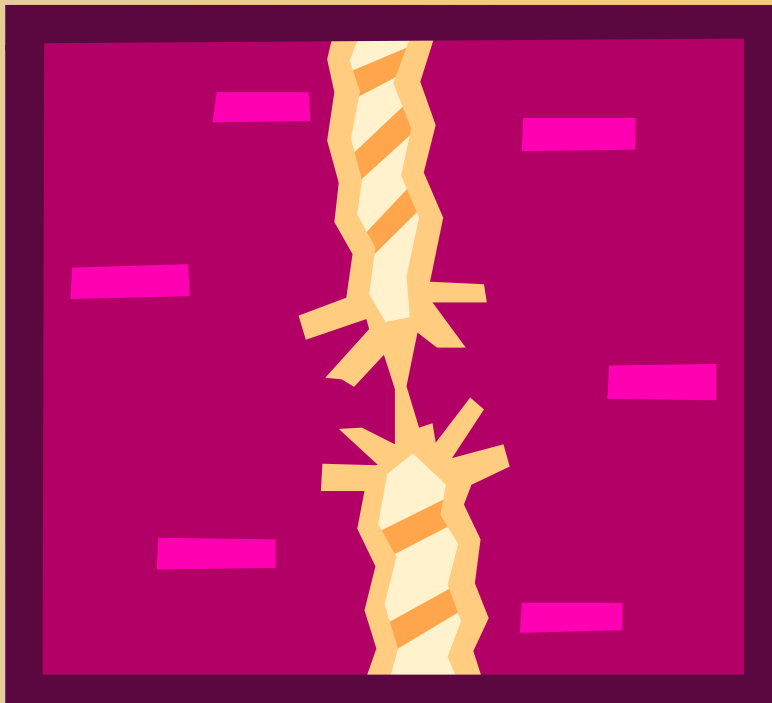
# *What is the Setting?*



Melissa Diggs 2010



# *What is a Plot strand?*



- ★ An essential part of the plot, these strands combine to create a bigger plot.
- ★ Action happens simultaneously.
- ★ Without one another the plot would be incomplete.



# *The Odyssey's 1<sup>st</sup> Plot Strand:*

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- ★ The story of Odysseus's wife, Penelope, and their son, Telemachus, left at home for 20 years.



# *Odyssey's 2<sup>nd</sup> Plot Strand:*

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- ★ The tale of Odysseus's wanderings and struggles to return home 10 years after the Trojan War.





# *Odyssey's 3<sup>rd</sup> Plot Strand:*



- ★ The binding tale of Odysseus's return and the unified fight against the suitors, those there to take his wife and kingdom.





# *What is an Epic Simile?*

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- ★ An elaborate and descriptive comparison between 2 things using like, as, or than.
- ★ It is more involved than a regular simile.
- ★ Also called a *Homeric simile*.

*“And Odysseus let the bright molten tears run down his cheeks, weeping [like] the way a wife mourns for her lord on the lost field where he has gone down fighting the day of wrath that came upon his children.”*



# *What is an Epithet?*

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- ★ Brief descriptive phrases that help to characterize a person, place, or thing.
- ★ Similar to a nickname.

*“Son of Laertes and the gods of old, Odysseus, master mariner and soldier, you shall not stay here against your will...”*



# *The Craft of the Odyssey:*

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- ★ The *Odyssey* is a form of **Oral Poetry**, spoken and passed, recited to the music of a **lyre** by a **bard** (a musical poet).
- ★ Contains **figurative language** such as **symbolism**, **similes**, **metaphors**, **personification**, **epic similes**, and **epithets**.
- ★ Written down in form of a **poem** (a type of literature in which words are chosen and arranged to create a certain effect).



# *In Media Res*



- ★ *In media res* means “in the middle of things.”
- ★ The *Odyssey* begins in the middle of the action. Odysseus has landed in Phaecia after his travels; he relates his story and is given leave to home where he will fight the suitors and claim his wife.



## *Invocation to the Muse:*

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- ★ A **muse** is one of nine goddesses that are called upon by poets for inspiration.
- ★ The **Invocation to the Muse** begins the opening of the *Odyssey*. Homer requests help from the goddess of the arts.

“Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story of that man skilled in all ways of contending, the wanderer, harried for years on end, after he plundered the stronghold on the proud height of Troy.”





# Literary Terms:

Epic  Conflict Myth

Epic Hero  Monologue Protagonist

Epic Simile  Metaphor Antagonist

Metaphor Imagery Primary 

Simile Flashback Secondary 

Personification Narrative Poem Epithet 

Foreshadowing Situational Irony Suspense 

In Media Res  Dramatic Irony



# Metaphor



- ★ A comparison of two things that does not use like, as, or than.
- ★ Says one thing is another.
- ★ Ex. “Harvey was a bear in business.”



# *Simile*



- ★ A comparison of two different things using like, as, or than.
- ★ Ex. “Odysseus’ men were as savage as wolves.”



# *Personification*

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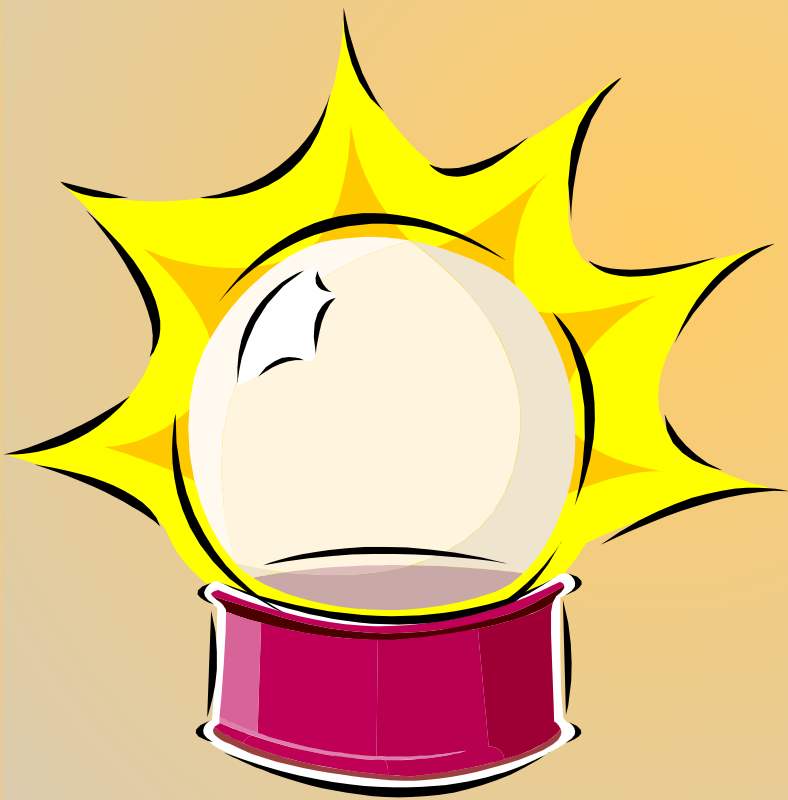


- ★ Giving human qualities to something nonhuman.
- ★ Ex. “The sun’s fingertips crept over the horizon.”



# *Foreshadowing*

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- ★ Hints or clues that suggest the outcome.



# *Suspense*

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- ★ High emotion or tension from the unknown that keeps the reader interested.





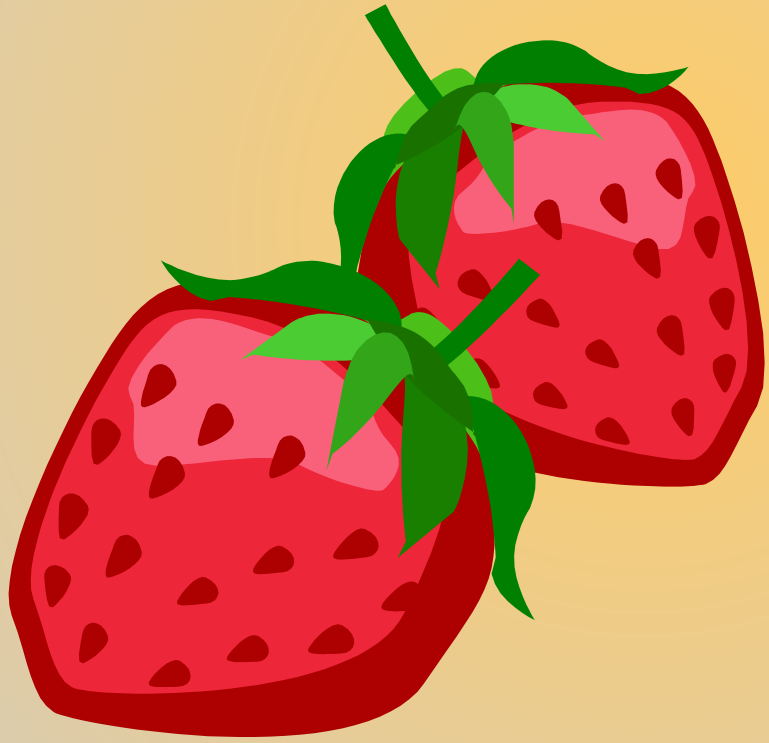
# *Conflict*



- ★ Struggle between opposing forces.
- ★ External: Man v. Man, Nature, Supernatural, and Society.
- ★ Internal: Man v. Himself.



# Imagery



- ★ Words that appeal to the five senses of sight, touch, taste, smell, and hearing.
- ★ Ex. “The ripe-red juicy strawberries were cool to the tongue.”



# *Flashback*

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- ★ A pause in present action so that the character may visit the past.



# *Monologue*



- ★ A long speech given in the company of other characters.



# *Extended Metaphor*

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- ★ An extended or more involved comparison of two things not using like, as, or than.
- ★ *Odysseus' men were snails, doomed by the gods to crawl toward their goals slowly and with great effort.*



# *Narrative Poem*

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- ★ A poem that tells a story. Written in verse and may rhyme.
- ★ Typically contains characters and setting with elements of plot.





# *Situational Irony*



- ★ When what you expect to happen does not, and the opposite usually does.



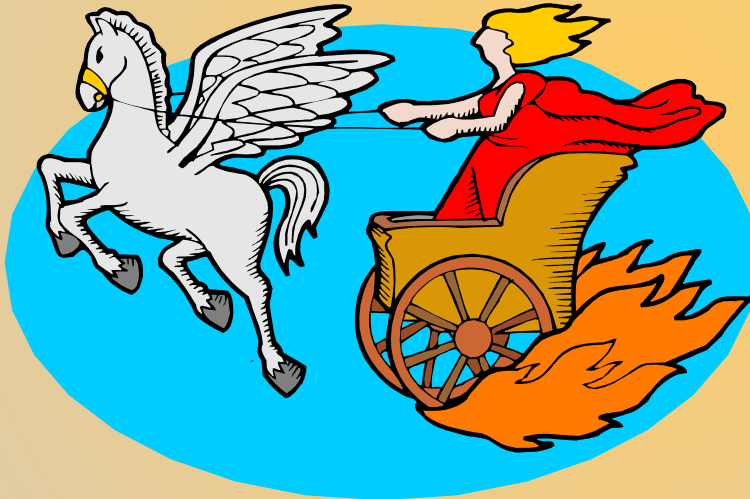
# *Dramatic Irony*



- ★ When the reader or audience knows something that a character does not.
- ★ Adds suspense.
- ★ What's behind the door?



# Myth



★ Oral stories that man created to explain the world and natural phenomena around him.

★ Reflects the ideals and religion of the society.



# *Protagonist*

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- ★ The main character or hero.
- ★ In epics, the hero usually embodies the ideals of the society.



# *Antagonist*

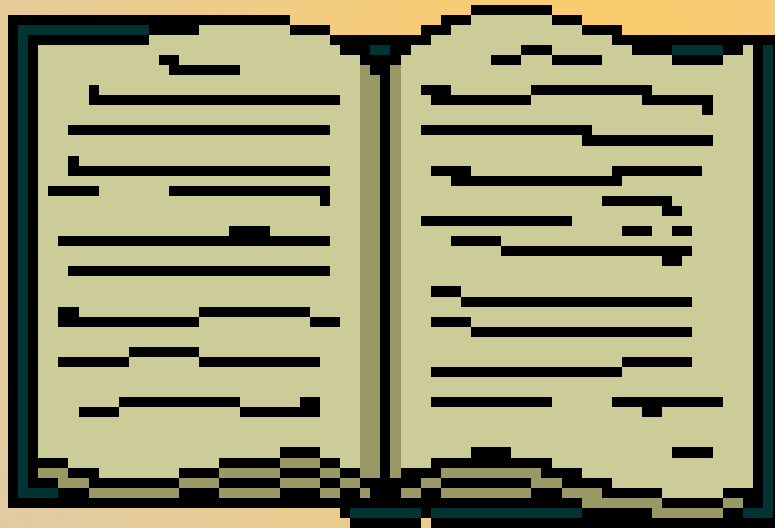
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- ★ The anti-hero or force that works against the hero.
- ★ Sometimes referred to as the villain.



*Epic*



- ★ A long narrative poem about a national or legendary hero.





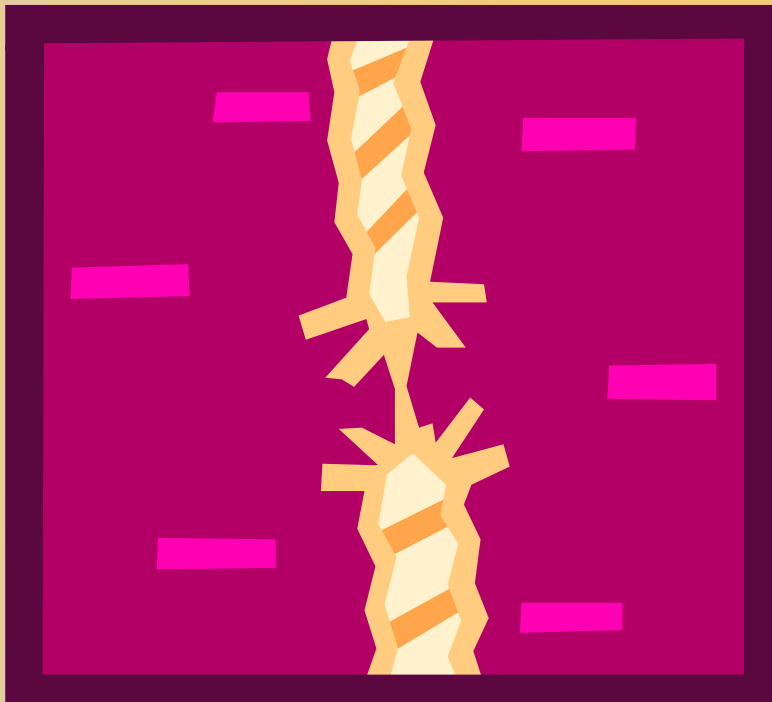
# *Epic Hero*



- ★ A larger than life main character of an epic that is male, and of noble or legendary birth.
- ★ He encounters struggles and hardships on his journey.
- ★ He reflects the values and ideals of a society.



# *Plot strand*



- ★ One piece of a bigger plot. The action in all the plots happens simultaneously to create one larger plot.



# *Epic Simile*



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# Epithet



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*“Son of Laertes and the gods of old, Odysseus, master mariner and soldier, you shall not stay here against your will...”*



# *In Media Res*



- ★ Literally translated it means “in the middle of things.”
- ★ A story whose action begins in the middle and flashes back to the beginning.