

The Odyssey
Terms, Conventions, and Poetics

Epic

- *Long narrative poem about the deeds of gods or heroes*
- *Originally told by word of mouth*



Epic Hero

- *Central hero of an epic with larger-than-life powers*
- *Not perfect*
- *Abundance of courage and fighting spirit*



Epithets

- ***Common epic elements which allow the reader to easily identify the character or object***
- ***One character has many epithets***
 - ***ex. Gray Eyed Athena***

Narrative Drift

- *When the author interrupts the narration to elaborate on an aspect of what he is talking about*
- *Homer never introduces a character without alluding to that character's roots*

Meter

- ***Dactylic hexameter***
 - ***Each line has 6 metrical feet***
- ***Most English translations don't follow this meter (even though the original was exact)***

Formal Speech

- *Characters make speeches rather than have conversations*
- *Parts of speech can be repeated word for word at another point in the poem*

Imagery

- *None of Homer's characters stay static for long*
 - *He tells a story behind everything*
- *His people are very lively and don't stay in one state for long*
- *Many descriptions of setting*
 - *Let us know what the world could have looked like then*
- *Homer also gives us sounds of the current scenes*

Figurative Language

- *Homer LOVES similes*
- *Epic Simile: Takes the comparison beyond one line and makes it into multiple paragraphs*

Personification

- *Giving objects human characteristics*
- *Occurs in almost every book (chapter) when “Dawn” arises with her “rose-red fingers”*

Metaphors

- *Not as common in the Odyssey as similes*
- *Often used as verbs*
 - *“Nine years we wove a web of disaster”*

Symbols

- ***Associated with the gods***

- ***Eagles= foreshadow Odysseus's return***
- ***Zeus= lightning bolt***
- ***Poseidon= scepter***

