

Writing a Family *Odyssey*

**A Personal Writing Unit
for 9th Grade Classes Studying *The Odyssey***

Developed by Evan Mousseau

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW	3
COMMON CORE OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED	4
LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES	5
APPENDIX: UNIT RESOURCES	7
WORKS CITED	25

OVERVIEW

The Odyssey occupies an interesting place in my 9th grade curriculum. It is the longest text we read all year, arguably the most challenging, and easily the most far-removed from my students' lived experiences -- just about every other full class text we read in our year together centers on a protagonist who is roughly their age. And yet, every year I am energized by a group of students eager to flex their mythology knowledge at the start of the unit and validated by students' declarations of accomplishment upon returning their books at the unit's end. In many ways, it is our most "traditional" unit -- reading questions and quizzes, a character analysis paper, a culminating test... We discuss concepts of *kleos* and *nostos*, map the Hero's Journey, examine the homecoming of Agamemnon as foil to that of Odysseus.

None of that, though, is included in this unit, a personal writing unit that takes on *The Odyssey* as a mentor text and invites students to recreate a family story in the form of an epic poem. The unit is intended to be overlaid on top of a "traditional" approach to *The Odyssey*, thus lessons and assignments are included with recommendations as to which book of the text serves as a good point for introducing the next step of the writing process. In terms of my own curriculum, my goal with this assignment was one of relatability - to combat the personal distance between my students and Odysseus (by aligning them with Telemachus), to make the epic personal, and the ancient modern. At the heart of so many of the epic and mythic stories we read is the relatable drama of family members trying and struggling to understand each other, something my students (and indeed, I think, all of us) can understand.

Reading as writers, students figure out certain signature sentence structures that make (the Fagles translation of) *The Odyssey* challenging and develop their understanding of Homeric similes by crafting their own. Beyond the text and skills this unit teaches, I hope, too, that it brings students' families closer together, as students interview parents or guardians to gather stories to adapt.

Reflecting on his own father, Telemachus asks, "Who, on his own, / has ever really known who gave him life?" (1.250-251). I hope this assignment helps my students work toward answering that question.

COMMON CORE OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED

Grades 9–10 Reading Standards for Literature

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5**
Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.10**
Independently and proficiently read and comprehend literary texts representing a variety of genres, cultures, and perspectives and exhibiting complexity appropriate for the grade/course.

Grades 9–10 Writing Standards

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3**
Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4**
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5**
Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

Grades 9–10 Speaking and Listening Standards

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1.c**
Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES

Note: All organizers, worksheets, and assignments described here are included in the Appendix of this unit document.

1. Introducing the Assignment & Interview - Suggested after Book 4

After completing the Telemachy, students receive the big picture guidelines for the “Parental Narrative” assignment. These guidelines are presented in “Parental Narrative: The Interview.” We read these guidelines together, stressing the importance of discovering new stories about family members, even if they already have an idea of what story they want to write about. We also preview the types of questions students might ask their interview subjects by going through the “Conversational Interview Tips and Topics.”

Students are provided with at least a week to conduct interviews. When interviews are completed, students share stories they heard in groups and submit a single index card summary of the story they hope to use for their writing.

2. Invocations - Suggested after Book 12

After spending some time with Odysseus, we return to consider our own stories by looking at a big picture summary of his. Having completed books 8-12, we revisit the opening invocation, noticing how Homer previews/summarizes the story, uses epithets, and offers a starting place for the muse. We look at a more modern example of this story-opening structure at work, then students use a multi-step guided process to construct their own. This is provided on “The Parental Narrative: Homeric Similes.” This can be completed in class or for homework. Students submit these drafts for initial feedback.

3. Homeric Similes - An Introduction - Suggested after Book 16

Students will eventually write their own Homeric similes, but first need to understand the ingredients of these devices, how they differ from similes students are more familiar with, and what such an in-depth simile can add to a piece of writing.

To do this, students begin by exploring two similes from Book 9 (9.427-437, 9.438-441). They are instructed to read these similes and then attempt to craft a step-by-step guide to writing a Homeric simile. After providing time for exploration, students should generally arrive at something along the lines of “actual action in story + like/as + something action is being compared to + so + repetition of actual action in story.”

With this established, provide students with two pieces of helpful vocabulary: tenor & vehicle. The tenor is the subject that is being compared or described, while the vehicle refers to the comparison used to describe the subject or the image that carries the weight of the comparison. This yields a simpler “tenor+like/as+vehicle+so+tenor” formula that they can then identify in other similes. Together, we discuss the purpose of

these similes, looking at how the language of the vehicle adds depth to our understanding of the tenor, and how often the vehicle connects in clever ways to other parts of the story.

With this formula established, students use the “Homeric Simile Analysis” sheet to sketch and analyze similes in groups. Students are assigned similes from a variety of points in the text, including the following: 8.585-598, 9.427-437, 10.448-461, 12.264-280, 13.30-41, and 16.16-25.

4. Homeric Similes - Writing Our Own - Suggested after Book 16

After taking the time to analyze Homer’s similes, it is time for students to write their own. Using the “Parental Narrative: Homeric Similes” sheet as our guide, we refresh ourselves on the ingredients of a Homeric simile before marking up the components in some more modern examples. During this process, I have found it especially helpful to emphasize to students that these similes work best when actions are compared to actions. It is also critical to look at how the “so” is used not to define what happens next (as in, “I was hungry, so I ate a sandwich), but as the equivalent of an “in this way” phrase that returns us to the original tenor. As such, you want your vehicle to be long enough and richly detailed enough that your reader could use the reminder of what was going on in the story.

Using the sheet as their guide, students draft their own simile, either in class or as a homework assignment. These should then be collected for feedback prior to the final writing assignment so that students who may be heading in the wrong direction (generally in areas of vehicle length or misusing the “so” connector) can be redirected and supported.

5. Putting it All Together - Assigning the Writing - Suggested after Book 24

At this point, students have gathered a story to tell, drafted an invocation, worked on their own Homeric similes, and received general feedback on these parts of the process. Now, the time has come for them to draft their own, complete narratives in an epic, Homeric style. I find it helpful to complete this assignment after the text has been read in its entirety, as students will have been immersed in Homeric style for so long.

On the day of the assignment being given, we go over the assignment sheet together. I also provide students with samples of past narratives, the rubric that they will be graded with, and a revision checklist for the assignment itself. All of these are included in the Appendix. The due date is set at the teacher's discretion, though I advise providing multiple days for in class work and conferencing.

APPENDIX: UNIT RESOURCES

The following pages include the following documents for use during this unit overlay.

- Parental Narrative - The Interview
- Parental Narrative - The Invocation
- Homeric Simile - Analysis
- Parental Narrative - Homeric Similes
- Parental Narrative - The Poem
- Parental Narrative - Revision Checklist
- Parental Narrative Rubric
- Sample Narrative

PARENTAL NARRATIVE - THE INTERVIEW

BACKGROUND

As we continue our reading of *The Odyssey*, we'll finally get to meet Odysseus himself and hear his side of the story. After we hear about his adventures, we'll have a chance to judge his character in some analytical writing. However, we don't want to forget the story of Telemachus's search for stories of his father. There are structural reasons for this start to the epic, but we can also explore this beginning in a more personal way, through more personal writing.

In an early meeting with Athena, Telemachus talks about the idea of knowing his father, a man who has been at war for his entire life, remarking, "**Who, on his own, / has ever really known who gave him life?**" (1.250-251). Telemachus speaks not only for his own situation here, but for a more global parent-child connection. How much do you know about the lives of your parents?

TASK

Using Telemachus's question and his own search for stories of his father as a guide, our personal writing this quarter is going to take the form of retelling a story about our own parents. Our final product will be a retelling of one of your parents' stories, written in the style of Homer (or at least our translation), complete with an invocation, epithets, and Homeric similes. We'll be drafting pieces of these throughout the quarter. Our first step, though, is to gather our raw materials. Like Telemachus, **we must set off in search of stories about our parents.**

Specifically, I would like you to **hunt down a story about a parent/parental figure**, one that doesn't include you. Maybe it will be a story from before you were born. Maybe it will be an event you weren't present at. Either way, *you shouldn't be a character in the story.*

You can talk to a parent, a grandparent or other relative, a friend of a parent... You might even consider asking one parent to tell a story about another. But no matter who you talk to, you want to make sure that you end up with a specific event that you'll be able to write about in your story. (See the backside of this sheet for some questions you might use to guide your conversation.)

You will have all of February break to have this conversation. You may want to record your discussion (be sure to ask your conversation partner's permission first!), but at minimum you will take **written notes, which will be checked for a homework grade on Wednesday, February 27th**, the second class day after we get back from break.

These notes should cover the basics of the conversation and the stories you hear. Think of the who, what, where, when, why, and how of each story, and **fill at least the front and back of a handwritten page**. Like Telemachus, you'll want to gather a few different stories. This way you can pick the best one for your final piece. You should have enough details that you could use your notes to tell the story to partner or group.

Conversational Interview Tips & Topics

Start your conversation by telling your interviewee a bit about your assignment. Remember, if you're going to record your interview, be sure to ask your subject first!

You might not strike story gold on the first question. Ask a few questions and give yourself some options to work with!

Here are some ideas to get you started, but feel free to come up with your own.

If you're talking to a parent...

- Tell me about the most dangerous thing you've ever done.
- What's the hardest you've ever laughed?
- Tell me the story behind an important item in your life.
- What is your favorite memory from childhood.
- What's the most embarrassed you've ever been?
- Tell me about a time you felt like a hero.
- What's the biggest adventure you've ever been on?
- Do you have any memories from school that stand out to you?

If you're talking to one parent about the other...

- What's your first memory of them?
- How did you meet?
- Can you think of a story that really shows your favorite thing about them?
- What is your favorite memory together?

If you're talking to a grandparent...

- When were you most proud of [parent]?
- What's the worst thing [parent] ever did?
- What were some of your first impressions of [parent]? *(Use this one if you're interviewing a grandparent about their son- or daughter-in-law.)*

If you're talking to another relative or a parent's friend...

- How did you meet?
- What's the best time you ever had together?
- What's the scariest thing you did together?
- What's the most surprising thing [parent] ever did?

PARENTAL NARRATIVE - THE INVOCATION

An **invocation** is a convention of classical literature and of epics in particular, in which an appeal for aid (especially for inspiration) is made to a muse or deity, usually at or near the beginning of the work. The word is from the Latin *invocatio*, meaning “to summon” or “to call upon.” *The Odyssey*, for example, begins:

Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns
driven time and again off course, once he had plundered
the hallowed heights of Troy.
Many cities of men he saw and learned their minds,
many pains he suffered, heartsick on the open sea,
fighting to save his life and bring his comrades home.
But he could not save them from disaster, hard as he strove—
the recklessness of their own ways destroyed them all,
the blind fools, they devoured the cattle of the Sun
and the Sungod wiped from sight the day of their return.
Launch out on his story, Muse, daughter of Zeus,
Start from where you will—sing for our time too.

Some things to notice here:

1. **Epithets** - Yes, this is about Odysseus, but... Twelve lines in we still don't know his name. Your **invocation** should primarily use epithets to describe/refer to your main character.
2. **Big Picture Overview** - Even without mentioning Odysseus by name, we've gotten a big picture look at his story here. We get some key details presented vaguely here, things that we will see in more detail later on in the story.
3. **The Starting Point** - Here, Homer invites the muse to start from wherever she would like. For your piece, this works as a good way to set up the beginning, inviting the muse to start at a point that will lead into your story's events.

Example:

Play for me the one, Muse, the one of times gone by,
of that brash basketballer, whose mouth ran faster
than his feet upon the courts of the Northmen.
Though now his days on the court are past,
cut short by rolled ankles and a ruptured spleen,
recall for us a night cut similarly short,
not by injured body, but damaged pride,
and all as his great love's noble father sat and saw.
Put forth for us the story, Muse, of Richard's swift ejection,
but start before the game began, as Paul, Lynne's loving father,
set out to see his daughter's sweetheart's shots,
his first time seeing this young man play ball.

First, organize your thoughts.

In two sentences, who is your main character and what is your story about?

What epithets might you use to refer to this character? Come up with at least three right now to use throughout your piece. (Consider: What are they going to be doing *in the story*. My father no longer plays basketball, but since this story is about his play, I used the epithet, "brash basketballer.")

1.

2.

3.

Now, draft your invocation. *You may choose to write this on a separate sheet, but be sure it includes all of the elements in the organizer below.*

1. Call to the muse, asking her to aid you in telling the story of your main character, addressing the character by an epithet.

2. Fill out your invocation with a brief summary/preview of the story you're going to tell.

3. Provide a starting point for your muse, which will transition into the beginning of the story.

Homeric Simile Analysis

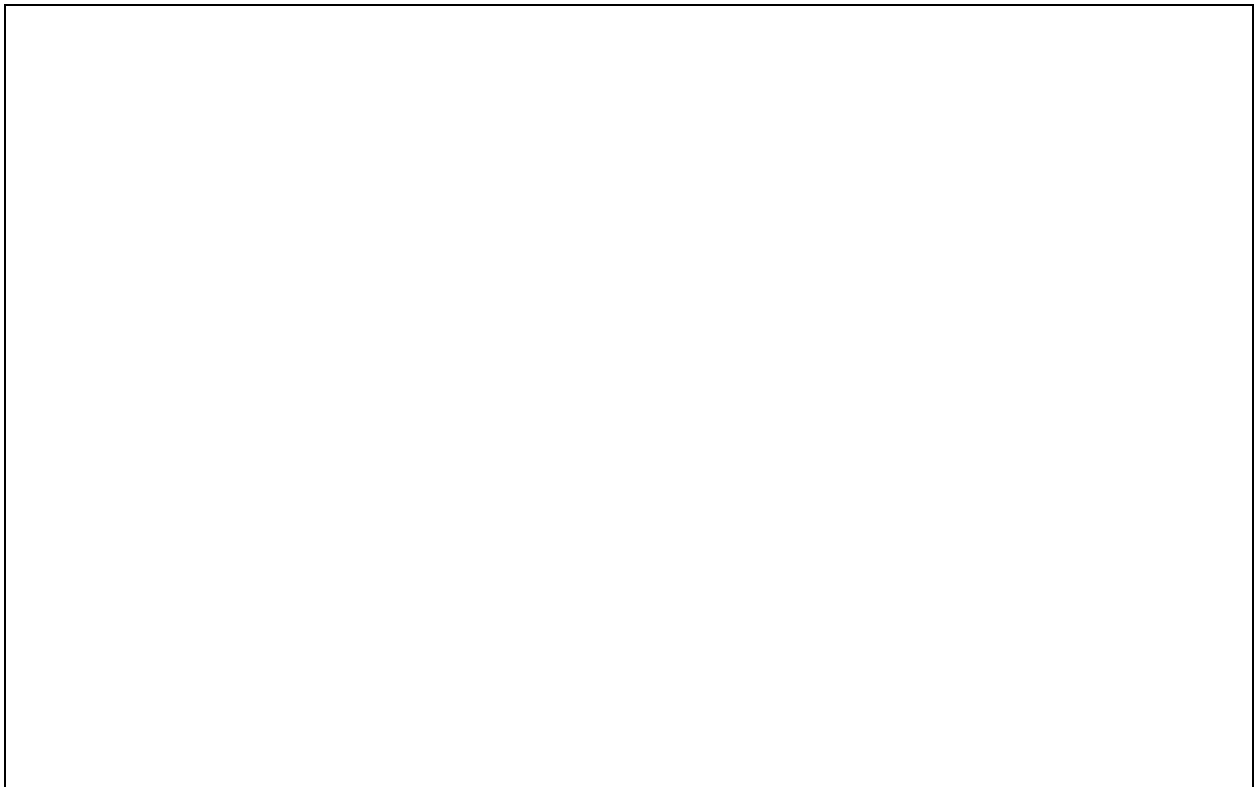
Now we've defined what is meant by the **tenor** and the **vehicle** of a Homeric Simile. Let's expand our work on this and move beyond simple identification and toward careful literary analysis. *What does the language of the vehicle help us understand about the tenor?*

Your Simile (Identify by Book & Line Numbers): _____

1. What is the tenor?

2. What is the vehicle?

3. Create a quick sketch of the vehicle below. (You don't have to be a great artist, but try to capture all of the details of the vehicle. Label parts with words if you feel you have to.)



Keep going, there's more on the back!

THE PARENTAL NARRATIVE: HOMERIC SIMILES

When we write our Parental Narratives, we will need to include at least two Homeric Similes as part of our work paying stylistic tribute to *The Odyssey*. To start on this process, let's practice writing one, maybe even one that you can use in your actual narrative.

STEP ONE: REMEMBER THE RECIPE

We developed a five step recipe for a Homeric Simile.

1. Tenor - _____
2. "as" or "like" (Usually "as")
3. _____ - the vivid description that carries the weight of comparison.
4. "So" = "In this way"
5. _____ again - Return to what is really happening in the story.

STEP TWO: CHECK OUT SOME SAMPLES

We've seen lots of examples in *The Odyssey*. Here are some more modern versions...

He leapt quickly into action and blew the shrilling whistle,
as a territorial bird will harshly shriek at any who dare infringe upon its space, a warning of trouble to come should this unwanted behavior continue
So the referee blew the whistle and stopped play.

They took in the information on the page, their eyes growing slowly wider,
as a sponge absorbing water expands to inconceivable volume, the pores taking on liquid that makes a small, brittle wedge into a stuffed, dripping cube,
so the students' eyes widened when they gazed upon their first homework assignment.

She rose to the top in her grammar school exercises with ease, that child of sharp intellect and haughty ambition, **as** a pop star's album sales send it spiking to the top of the charts, demolishing lesser competition,
So she established herself above her classmates in terms of skill and self-sufficiency.

The introvert reached for his new book and cracked it open,
as a pirate would open a chest, full of unimaginable treasure, which, of course, his fellow crewmembers were quite curious about,
so he began reading his titillating book.

He finally had the chance to be with his mother again, and ran towards her at top speed, the wind blowing behind him,
as a runner will race towards the finish line, with a singular goal of reaching the destination, nothing being more important in that instance.
So the boy ran to his mother, who held him as he wept tears of joy for he was finally safe again.

The jeeps rumbled along the road,
as the heaters in a house start up, drawing attention of the residents and making everything seem unstable.
So the jeeps full of authoritative figures zipped past our hero.

PARENTAL NARRATIVE - THE POEM

The Assignment

Remember, when we started on this, the plan was to produce a retelling of one of your parents' stories. Using our translation of *The Odyssey* as your mentor text, you are going to convert one of the stories you gathered into an "excerpt" from an epic poem. Yes, by now you are so familiar with the written style of *The Odyssey* that you'll be test-driving this writing style for yourself. Obviously we aren't writing a complete epic here (no *Iliad* or *Mommyssey*), but we will be including certain features of the text that we have come across in our reading together.

The Checklist

Specifically, your adaptation will include (and be graded on) the following:

- An opening invocation to a muse that sets up your story.
- Many **bolded epithets** (at least* five total!) for the various characters you present.
- At least* two underlined Homeric similes to lend rich description to your text.
- Lots of vivid, sensory details.
- A valiant effort toward the formal poetic tone and style.
- A strong command of grammar and mechanics.
- A word count at the end of the poem.
- A one paragraph reflection on your piece and process. (Not part of word count.)
- A creative title.
- Proper MLA formatting (Times, 12, double-spaced, proper title block and header)

(It's time to get serious about the last two items. We'll review the steps to formatting, titling, and headers all together. Yes, I care more about your ideas than your presentation, but your ideas should come "properly dressed" for the occasion. You wouldn't wear a t-shirt to a job interview!)

* Doing the least is not the pathway to getting an A. Check out the rubric for more on this.

The Word Count

700-1000 words of poetry. (Don't include your reflection in this!)

The Points

75 points in our Papers, Projects, Tests category.

The Due Date: _____

Paper copy, not stapled. I'm going to scan them in and create a pdf of them to take with me to Greece! Your stories are going overseas.

EPITHETS: A REMINDER

Epithets are those bynames, descriptive terms (words or phrases), accompanying or occurring in place of a name. We looked at three formats to these earlier in the quarter and tried our own:

- **The hyphenate:** The Earth-Shaker, the giant-killer, the grill-master, the plant-whisperer
- **The adjective & noun:** bewitching nymph, lustrous goddess, brilliant playwright, superior singer
- **_____ who _____s:** Odysseus who excels all men in wisdom, Steve who outscoops all in ice cream

Remember to **bold** these when you use them in your piece.

HOMERIC SIMILES

Remember our “recipe” for these:

1. Tenor - the action or thing in the story itself.
2. “as” or “like” (Usually “as”)
3. Vehicle - the vivid description that carries the weight of comparison.
4. “So” = “In this way”
5. Tenor again - Return to the tenor.

Examples:

He leapt quickly into action and blew the shrilling
whistle,
as a territorial bird will harshly shriek
at any who dare infringe upon its space,
a warning of trouble to come should this unwanted
behavior continue
So the referee blew the whistle and stopped play.

They took in the information on the page,
their eyes growing slowly wider,
as a sponge absorbing water expands
to inconceivable volume, the pores taking on liquid
that makes a small, brittle wedge into a stuffed,
dripping cube,
so the students' eyes widened when they gazed
upon their first homework assignment.

We practiced one of these together. In your final piece, **underline** your whole Homeric simile.

REFLECTION

Consider using the questions below to guide your reflection paragraph:

1. What are the strengths of this piece of writing? What are the weaknesses?
2. What was fun about this writing process? What was challenging?
3. Is there a line, image, or moment that you are particularly proud of?
4. Did you share it with your family member(s)? What did they think?

PARENTAL NARRATIVE REVISION CHECKLIST

REQUIRED HOMERIC INGREDIENTS:

- An opening invocation to a muse that sets up your story.
Begins with a call to the muse, offers a preview of things to come, then gives a specific starting point.
- Many **bolded epithets** (at least five total!) for the various characters you present.
Follow the formats that we worked with together: The hyphenate (earth-shaker); the adjective & noun (bewitching nymph), the ____ who ____s: (Odysseus who excels all men in wisdom)
- At least two underlined Homeric similes to lend rich description to your text.
Follow the tenor-as/like-vehicle-so-tenor formula!
Remember the so = "in this way"; don't move onto the next event until you've given the tenor again. This means the vehicle needs to be long -- three lines or more!

DETAIL & GRAMMAR:

- Lots of vivid, sensory details; use lists to enrich your narrative, Homer-style
- A valiant effort toward the formal poetic tone and style - Use line breaks, adding phrases to add complexity to your sentences
- A strong command of grammar and mechanics - Even though you've got line breaks, you're still following our comma rules around phrases and compound sentences! You also follow our work on capitalization, apostrophe use, and fragments.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS MET:

- A **creative title** at the start of your poem. Not bolded or underlined, just centered.
- Proper MLA formatting (Times, 12, double-spaced, proper title block and header)
Use the template on Canvas; especially helpful for your page number.
- A word count at the end of the poem.
Highlight the text of your poem, then go to Tools and pick Word Count.
- A one paragraph reflection on your piece and process. (Not part of word count.)
What are the strengths of this piece of writing? What are the weaknesses?
What was fun about this writing process? What was challenging?
Is there a line, image, or moment that you are particularly proud of?
Did you share it with your family member(s)? What did they think?

PARENTAL NARRATIVE RUBRIC

Criteria	A Range	B Range	C Range	D Range
Title	Your title is delightful, inspired, and fully grabs reader's attention.	Your title is appropriate to the topic.	Your title is flat or predictable.	Title is a restatement of the assignment, text title, or just a label.
Invocation	A wonderfully creative invocation with all ingredients (call to muse, intro to hero, overview of story, starting point).	Your invocation has all the ingredients and is detailed,	Incomplete invocation! You're missing some of the key ingredients.	No invocation! You have not asked the muse for help in telling the story at all! It's dangerous to go alone!
Epithets (Bolded)	Above and beyond! Your piece has many (more than five) creative bolded epithets.	You've met the requirement of five solid bolded epithets.	You're missing some epithets here, OR you forgot to bold your epithets.	Everyone is just referred to by their own names, epithet free.
Homeric Similes (Underlined)	Above and beyond! Your piece has three or more <u>underlined</u> Homeric similes that create a mood or emotion that enriches the story.	You've met the requirement of two <u>underlined</u> Homeric similes adding rich description, OR you've got more than two but one or more lacks richness/is too brief.	You don't meet the requirement of two <u>underlined</u> Homeric similes OR your similes lack richness/are too brief OR they miss the mark on the tenor-like-vehicle-so-tenor structure	You are Simile-free. Simile-less. It is your reader's simile-loss. (And your grade's.)
Vivid Sensory Details	Your story is alive with details! Your reader feels like they are living it!	There's a good amount of detail here, but you could paint an even richer picture.	There are some details, but they aren't specific or clear.	You give only the most general description of what is going on in your piece.
Poetic Tone and Style	You are channeling Homer! Your piece sings with poetic style and language!	You've made a valiant effort toward line breaks and incorporating epic poetic style and language.	You've attempted line breaks, but your piece lacks the epic poetic style and language.	No line breaks or attempts at epic poetic style. This is just a prose story.
Grammar & Mechanics	Paper has virtually no grammar, usage, punctuation, or spelling errors.	Paper has extremely few grammar, usage, punctuation, or spelling errors.	Paper has several grammar, usage, punctuation, and/or spelling errors but few impede clarity.	Paper has many grammar, usage, punctuation, and/or spelling errors which impede clarity.
Formatting	All MLA formatting requirements are met, including font, header, title block, and spacing.	Most MLA formatting requirements are met, but one isn't quite right.	Several formatting errors, but you're consistent.	Holy smokes, this is a formatting nightmare!
Word count	You include a word count.			You don't include a word count.
Reflection	Thoughtful, one paragraph reflection on the epic writing process and your piece's strengths and weaknesses.	Partial reflection on the epic writing process and your piece's strengths and weaknesses.	A few hastily assembled sentences on the epic writing process and your piece's strengths and weaknesses.	You're like a vampire looking in a mirror... No reflection.

Bolded categories weigh more heavily on overall grade.

Overall Grade:

Sample Narrative

The Intimidating Date (Location)

Dearest Muse, tell me the story of the day **the women who doesn't do dangerous things** mounted a majestic plane for two with her new boyfriend.

She who barely flew courageously trusted Owen to take her there and back safely.

The journey to Block Island was rough, but
the day spent would start a lasting love story.

But we must begin before all that happened. Start before
the plane's wheels took off.

When Owen tried to impress Erin.

It was a clear and beautiful day

the sun had long since streaked through the sky.

As a child smears finger paint across the paper.

Illuminating the blank canvas with a new and exciting hue.

the colours mix to create new and wonderful options.

each pink and purple more grand and swirling than the last.

So the sun danced across the sky to bring the beginning of a new day

Full of bright and exciting opportunities for all.

Both of **the quaking duo** were scared

Although for different reasons.

Owen the brave wanted nothing more to impress Erin,

while **she who must be impressed** was terrified to board that daunting plane.

Once before had she achieved such a feat,
However that was a school trip on a commercial flight.

This was another story,
and she had to hope that her boyfriend could fly like he said he could.

To overcome this, Erin had to completely trust Owen to take her on an adventure
and bring her home safe.

Erin was not used to this,
and she didn't know how she would fare.

They boarded the rented plane,
all sweaty palms and nervous blushes.

The stale air filled the cabin,
and Erin sucked in a breath,
hoping that it would not be her last.

The introverted one brought only himself,
and a handpacked picnic, hoping all hope to win the heart of Erin.

The terrified companion gripped the seat of the plane with white knuckles,
as a young baby grips her mother's finger,

hoping the pull of the finger will keep her safe from the fears in this world,
putting so much faith in the known,

trusting the being to keep her safe and secure,

Clutching the lifeline as the only things she can trust now

So Erin's hands turned white under the crush of her grasp as the plane began to prepare to depart.

Off they went,

an unlikely couple from opposite ends of the spectrum,

with the inauspicious departure.

But once they arrived at Block Island,

two sighs of relief were breathed.

The sun twinkled down from above in hope to tug out the children in them.

The sharp smell of a spring morning pinched their noses,

and the birds chirped their encouragements.

The duo rented bikes to cycle around the island,

and found themselves slowly relaxing.

They left behind the worries and fears of college,

and lived in the moment.

The air rushing through their hair,

as Block Island whizzed by,

the beach cottages a blur.

The couple finally stopped once their legs could pedal no more,

once exhaustion and hunger overcame them.

The adventurous one produced the basket of lunch,

as a student submits their essay,

Putting their heart on the line.

Giving their own writing to a teacher, a master of the craft,

hoping, praying, that the teacher will not pick apart the creation too much.

Hoping that all they have done will be enough to impress.

So, Owen took out the basket of lunch that he had packed for **the master chef**,

Hoping she would enjoy his cooking.

But Erin enjoyed the food,

mostly because of who had made it.

But then,

Came the time for the dreaded return to reality.

And so **the nervous duo** prepared to return home,

to return back to the reality that they had left behind.

For one afternoon they had gotten lost in the sun, the waves and the company.

Now was the time to return where they had began.

And so the pair boarded the plane with reluctance,

as a child goes to the doctor.

Dragging their feet in sadness,

it must be done, but that doesn't make it easier,

to leave the safety and security and warmth that has been found

to go back out into the scary world.

So, **the introverted one**, and the **terrified companion** climbed the steps to the plane,

and prepared for the bumpy departure.

But, it did not come.

Owen the brave glanced to his side and noticed the white knuckles no more.

The terrified companion, no longer fearful, trusted him.

While not quite relaxed, yet, she was much less afraid.

She was prepared to put in faith in him,

To bring her safety back to her home.

And she trusted,

That this would not be the end.

In fact, this was only the beginning.

This trip was only the departure of the journey of her lifetime.

She had met the man who would protect her for the rest of her life,

And in a way she knew that now, she knew something was different.

That was why she chose not to fear, and instead took a breath and leaned back.

Then they took off, the plane' wheels pushing away from the tarmac,

like a bird takes off from the nest for the first time.

Not quite sure what this new experience is,

but trusting that instinct will take over.

Learning to release the ground, and all that they have ever known,

and jump into the unknown,

and trust each other.

So the tiny aircraft became airborne, carrying two different people, acting as one.

WORKS CITED

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Translated by Robert Fagles, Penguin, 1996.