


Module 7: The Epic - *The Odyssey*

Topic 1 Content: Characteristics of Epics Notes

Introduction

Characteristics of Epics

Introduction



No matter the culture or age, epics usually share several characteristics. In this interactivity, click on each of the bars in the "accordion" to discover the elements included in epics.

Image: The Temple of Apollo at Delphi

- Epic Style
- In Media Res
- Narration
- Epic Hero
- Epic Quest
- Outside Intervention

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Topic 1 Content: Characteristics of Epics Notes

Epic Style

Characteristics of Epics

Epic Style



Epics reflect the importance of their content by employing a serious, formal diction and tone. The style of language is lofty and conveys a sense of gravity, or grandeur. Exaggeration is common in epics, as are lengthy speeches and extensive lists of such things as battles and treasures won. Much of an epic's story is presented on a grand scale meant to overwhelm and awe the listener or reader.

Image: A manuscript of The Odyssey from the 15th century

In Media Res

Narration

Epic Hero

Epic Quest

Outside Intervention

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Topic 1 Content: Characteristics of Epics Notes


In Media Res

Characteristics of Epics

Epic Style

In Media Res

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Epics usually begin *in medias res*, which is Latin for "in the middle of things." This means that they usually begin in the middle of the story, with the setting and exposition established through flashbacks.

Image: Greek stamp circa 1983 depicting a scene from The Odyssey with the sirens

Narration

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Narration

Characteristics of Epics

Epic Style	In Media Res	Narration	<h4>Narration</h4>  <p>The narrator of an epic is omniscient, which means he or she is all knowing and all seeing. The narrator is able to present all perspectives and points of view.</p> <p><i>Image: Homer, the author of The Odyssey, with Calliope, the muse of epic poetry; Roman mosaic in Luxembourg; circa 240 AD</i></p>	Epic Hero	Epic Quest	Outside Intervention
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Epic Hero

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Epic Style

In Media Res

Narration

Epic Hero

Epic Hero



Epics tell the story of a hero who often possesses supernatural abilities or qualities. In ancient epics, like *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, the hero is part god or protected by god. Also, an epic hero has some major, or tragic flaw. For instance, the hero may be flawed by pride or anger. During the epic, the hero will complete tasks of incredible strength, bravery, or cunning which no real human could actually do. This is often demonstrated as he or she encounters supernatural or other-worldly forces such as gods,

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Image: A marble head of Odysseus from the 1st century AD

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Epic Quest

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Epic Quest



In order to accomplish his or her mission, the epic hero typically embarks on a quest, which is a long dangerous journey or expedition. The events that take place during the quest feature the struggle between good and evil, demonstrate the hero's valor, and often involve supernatural forces. The quest usually uses important historical or mythological events as a backdrop for the epic. Epic heroes are brought to faraway lands, or across time and space. Sometimes, heroes may go to the

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Image: An urn featuring Odysseus and the Sirens from 480-470 BC

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Outside Intervention

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Outside Intervention



Although the epic hero may seem invincible, he or she usually receives assistance from a god, supernatural force, or other source of help before or while undertaking the quest. This help may come in the form of advice, special tools or weapons, or an ally that comes to the hero's aid. Likewise, outside or supernatural forces, such as evil gods, demons, or monsters, may also intervene in the mission of the hero.

Image: A plaque of the god Poseidon from 550-525 BC

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