

Epic

2 An epic is a ¹ long story told in ² elevated language (usually poetry), which relates the great deeds of a ³ larger-than-life hero who embodies the ⁴ values of a particular society

The Epic: Other Characteristics

- obstacles to overcome
- supernatural forces at work
- vast setting (involves exotic lands or several nations)
- archetypes: characters, situations, and images that are recognizable in many times and cultures; e.g. temptress, loyal servant, treasure, contests
- quest/journey for something of value
- glorification of hero at end
- rooted in specific culture and society

The Epic: Other Characteristics

- **episodic structure**
- **in medias res**
(in MED-ee-uhs RAYS)
story begins “in the middle of things”
- **invocation**: a prayer of entreaty that is usually a call for a divine presence—offered at the beginning of a meeting or service of worship

The Epic: Other Characteristics

- **epithets**

brief descriptive phrases used to characterize a particular person or thing; e.g. “the gray-eyed goddess, Athena” or “the wine-dark sea”

- **allusions**

especially references to other myths outside the *Odyssey* itself

- **Homeric Similes** (also Heroic or Epic Similes)

compare heroic or epic events to simple and easily understandable everyday events—events the audience would recognize

Homeric Similes

Example:

**A gull patrolling
between the wave crests of the desolate sea
will dip to catch a fish, and douse his wings;
no higher above the whitecaps Hermes flew
until the distant island lay ahead**