

The Odyssey Unit Overview

This unit comprises an unit studying Homer's epic *The Odyssey* with 9th grade student, focusing on how it is still relevant today. Many students view *The Odyssey* as an outdated, boring, irrelevant story about some guy who battles fake monsters. However, the epic is one of the most popular literary forms and is still used in modern tales like *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, and *Harry Potter*. I want to make *The Odyssey* relevant and engaging for my students. To do so, I designed authentic tasks where students not analyze the literary elements of an epic, but also the relevancy of *The Odyssey* and why it is still studied today.

To begin, students will bring the characters into the 21st century by creating a Facebook page for one of the main characters and then complete a written analysis comparing that character to a modern celebrity, athlete, or person from the student's life. Then, to analyze the epic as a relevant literary form, students are going to identify the characteristics of an epic by comparing *The Odyssey* to a modern epic; using this information, students will choose the 3 most defining characteristics of an epic and create a booklet/brochure in order to teach the concept of an epic to middle schoolers.

In terms of building skills, this unit focuses on honing students' ability to discuss ideas in a respectful manner. To do this, students will engage in a variety of discussion activities, such as think-pair-share, snowball discussion, and a practice fishbowl. These formative assessments will lead to a Socratic seminar, where students will put all of their practice to use and have a whole class discussion.

Another skill this unit develops is the creation of a set of personal guiding principles/values. Since this unit is designed for 9th graders, who are beginning to develop their own views and opinions, this is particularly relevant. This skill will be developed by having students create a list of what's important to them, design a personal coat of arms, and create a personal motto. This personal motto will then be presented in a creative way, such as a scrapbook page, comic book, video, or collage.