

# The Epic

## A Heroic Tale

# Modern Epics

*The Incredible Journey*

The Lord of the Rings Trilogy

*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*

*Star Wars*

*The Wizard of Oz*

*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

# What Is an Epic?

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

- Epics often include elements of myth, legend, folk tale, and history.



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# How Were Epics Told?

- Epics were told orally.
  - They followed basic story lines and incorporated formulaic descriptions.
  - Most of the words were improvised to fit a particular rhythm or meter.
- Poets traveled from community to community, singing their stories.
  - Longer stories, such as the *Odyssey*, were probably told over a period of several days.

# Homer's Epics

- Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the best-known epics in Western civilization.
- All epic poems in the Western world owe something to the basic patterns established in these two epics.
  - The *Iliad* is the primary model for the epic of war.
  - The *Odyssey* is the model for the epic of the long journey.



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# Characteristics of Epics

Epics usually include

- a physically impressive hero of national or historical importance
  - Odysseus is a war hero.
- a vast setting involving much of the known physical world and sometimes the land of the dead as well
  - During his journey home, Odysseus travels to several locations and even visits the underworld.

# Characteristics of Epics

Epics usually include

- action such as a quest or journey taken in search of something of value
  - Odysseus is trying to return home to his wife and son.
- evidence of supernatural forces at work
  - Greek gods, goddesses, monsters, and other characters from Greek mythology play an important role in the *Odyssey*.

# Characteristics of Epics

Epics usually include

- glorification of the hero at the end
  - Odysseus restores order to his house and is welcomed home by his wife and family.
- rootedness in a specific culture and society
  - The *Odyssey* reflects the beliefs and values of the culture of ancient Greece.



# What Have You Learned?

1. Epics were told orally.

a. true

b. false

2. The *Odyssey* is the model for the epic of

a. war

c. the long journey

b. romance

d. the battle between good and evil

3. Epics relate the great deeds of

a. a larger-than-life hero

c. a god or goddess

b. an ordinary person

d. a traveling storyteller

**The End**