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ODYSSEY ORACLE

THE COURAGE TO LEARN



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COURAGEOUS WOMEN WRITERS

Women who were told to be silent or who faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles found the courage to become powerful writers. Odyssey students responded to works by Alice Walker, Emily Dickinson, and Nila NorthSun (row 1), Lorna Dee Cervantes, Jane Austen, and Maya Angelou (row 2), and the Brontë sisters and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (row 3).



Emily Dickinson chose to spend much of her adult life shut inside one room. She lived in the world of her own imagination, watching birds out her window and writing verse. She became one of America's greatest poets. . . .

I'm writing a response to "Emily Dickinson, Poems from a Room" [Highlights article by Emily Auerbach]. I read that Emily Dickinson [1830-1886] chose a life of isolation. She did not desire the life of the woman in that era. She wanted the freedom to think for herself and to read and write. She lived through books and experienced life through her imagination. She wrote nearly 1,800 poems in her life and died more than a hundred years ago. Yet she still lives in her words today.

What I personally take from the article is that Emily Dickinson reminds me of myself. I prefer solitude at times. It's a peaceful place, and I am more able to find my creativity to write. I am proud of women who have resisted society's plan and were courageous enough to leave their story for us to read. I plan on being impactful, and I need inspiration from history. I can also relate to the power of words. Writing can relate real feelings and affect others in a positive way. I know at times things that I have read have triggered thoughts and feelings that changed my life. I hope to use my words and my story to motivate others one day. Great article! (Jessi Hodges)

Emily Auerbach's article on Emily Dickinson's works and poetry brings the poet's views and gives us an insight on nature, her peculiar way of writing, choice of wardrobe, her passion and dedication to writing, and her brilliant imagination.

I was very intrigued with Emily Dickinson's poetry. Now I can't wait to check out some books, and I personally think it will be a

challenge to understand some of her poems. I find her very ethereal and magical, thanks to Emily Auerbach's article. I cannot wait to read more of her work. (Sahira Rocillo Ramírez)

*. . . teniendo por mayor en mis verdades
consumer vanidades de la vida
que consumer la vida en vanidades
[For I prize more to consume
The vanities of life with my truths
Than to have my life consumed by vanity.]*

In my opinion, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1641-1691) wrote this poem on how women were being treated very poorly and put down as if they were inferior to the men of their society. Also she describes her quest for an inner beauty that she desires to obtain—not a look, but knowledge and intelligence. She is not accustomed to the vanity of materialistic things, money, or anything lavish that life has to offer. She only seeks that she is treated as a woman and respected as a human being.

I chose this poem because in a way it means a lot to me. I once was victim to desire of vanity and having things just so that others could see that I have these possessions, and now I feel as Sor Juana. I care not for any of these material things as of now. I'm more concerned with knowledge and enriching my mind. So much of what she says can transfer over to my life. Being that her life was so long ago, it's ironic how this poem touches so much of my life. (Christopher Villalpando)



*They were women then
My mamma's generation . . .
How they led
Armies . . .
To discover books
Desks
A place for us
How they knew what we
Must know
Without knowing a page
Of it
Themselves.*

Alice Walker's "Women" is about women in the past who worked really hard to make a better future for their children. They could do both men's jobs and women's jobs. Also she is saying that they knew we needed education so that we would not have to work as hard or struggle so much.

I think it's a beautiful poem because it is saying the truth about women. I like when she said that women were strong like men and

also gentle like women, and all the comparisons with men. Another thing that I like is that women always think of how to improve their children's lives. (**Veronica Tinajero**)

What did it mean for a black woman to be an artist in our grandmothers' time? In our great-grandmothers' day? It is a question with an answer cruel enough to stop the blood. . . . How was the creativity of the black woman kept alive, year after year and century after century, when for most of the years black people have been in America, it was a punishable crime for a black person to read or write? . . .

After reading a short essay called "In Search of My Mother's Garden," I could relate to Alice Walker's vision of her mother. My mother is the brightest woman I know. We too have not



had the best houses, but what matters is on the inside of the home and how you and your family make it comfortable. My mother did the best she could with what she had. The sectional piece gave us a comfortable, fortunate feeling, and the big TVs really brought out the big picture in the different shows I watched. The little green plants gave me the feeling of my grandmother's house. (**Prodajaé Huntley**)

In “I Rise,” Maya Angelou is writing about herself and also her ancestors. She talks about how people want others to be and the fears that they have of her. She lets them know that she will rise up past them and do even more. She also points out she rises up and lets all the dreams of her ancestors come true.

The meaning I get from this poem within my own life is that I can do what I want and that nobody or anything will stand in my way. Everybody around me thought that I would never succeed as a single mother of four. Now I know I can do anything within my odyssey. **(Nissa Uriostegui)**

In Maya Angelou’s “I Rise,” she writes about finding strength through any obstacle. No matter what happens, she has it built in her to always get back up despite the world’s effort to pull her down. It’s like she’s untouchable and can conquer anything thrown at her.

I love the poem—how it’s written and the message behind it. I can relate to it. Being an African American alone comes with so many stereotypes attached at birth, and society really doesn’t accept us. We on a daily basis have to deal with judgment and discrimination. We are considered inferior, and there are traps in this society to try to keep us tied down and not growing. Many of us fight back and never let that keep us down, but use it as motivation.

What I take from it is that there will always be people that won’t be too fond of you and will go out of their way to try and knock you down, but you shall rise above it. Carry yourself with confidence and know that you’re priceless.
(Lakoyé Buford)



*. . . You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I’ll rise. . . .*

I think Maya Angelou’s “I Rise” is amazing! I love the poem “I Rise”—the way she can take simple words and put them in a poem that you can completely understand what she is talking about and apply it to your life. My mom used to read this to me when I was little. She would change her voice when reading different parts.

This poem is so much like my life—how people tell lies about me but know nothing about me, how they want to see me fail in life for no reason at all. When I’m walking around still doing me and not worrying about what people say about me, they can’t stand it! No matter what people say about me, I’m going to continue to live my life. . . . No matter what people say, she still rises.
(Brandi Whitlock)

Maya Angelou speaks not only of suffering but also slave times. She speaks of the past and her present time. She speaks of the strength we hold as we rise about the put-downs of being a strong, capable woman. She speaks of what we endure and will overcome—the prejudices of men and even some women who are content with being misplaced.

I find myself having to still rise because of the past. Women still have to endure gender prejudice because some would still believe this is a man’s world. But I see every day the strengths of different women and our struggle to be recognized as equal individuals.
(Patricia McKnight)

*but gramma
you told your daughters
marry white men . . .
gramma your daughters did
they couldn't speak Indian anymore . .
.
there are no rabbits to skin
in the city . . .*



What I got from Nila NorthSun's "the way and the way things are" is that gramma is teaching the grandchildren to survive. She's informing them as to how easy life would be if the granddaughters would marry white men. They would receive the stability of a nice house, fancy cars, pretty clothes, and life in the city. But the

granddaughter responds that if we move on to the city life and reproduce with the white men, our traditions will fade away. The next generation will not know how to skin a rabbit, which is a metaphor. (**Dorothy Katana**)

I picked Nila Northsun's "The way and the way things are." This poem is about a grandmother making her granddaughters believe they should marry white men to live better lives. She is telling them the good things that would come from marrying white men. But they are thinking that marrying out of our culture might stop our traditions and origins being passed down.

I take from this that the grandmother wanted the best/better for them. She was willing to sacrifice culture and traditions for them to live well. I understand where she comes from. I think I would have taken heed and followed her directions. It would be sad to see over time our traditions would be lost, but life would be better from now on with Grandma's advice. (**Janina White**)

In the early 1800s, when Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë were born, girls . . . were usually expected to be quiet, delicate, and pretty rather than clever or creative. Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë rebelled. They fought back not with weapons but with books. They became famous writers. . . .

This article on the Brontës [*Highlights* article by Emily Auerbach] talks about the life of a family in the early 1800s in England. Three sisters were born in a society that did not take seriously the power of women. They knew they were talented and wanted to show it. This would not be easy but was not impossible. The Brontës published their poems and novels under a man's name and anonymously because only this way could they be taken seriously.

I chose this article because I love to read stories about people who work really hard to get a better life. I admire their courage to write their feelings out and express their feelings.

How hard it was for those girls to live in a society that back then did not allow women to write. They did not give up and continued following their dream. (**Natalia Rodríguez Miramontes**)



“Men have had every advantage of us is telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree: the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books [insulting women] to prove anything.”—Anne Elliot in Jane Austen’s Persuasion

I chose Jane Austen (1775-1817) because upon reading her short passage, I was humbled by the heartfelt reason she stated about men. Then I began to try and think about women who have really felt betrayed, hurt, misled, and let down by men. I couldn’t imagine their pain. I just will begin to try and make sure I’m not in that category of hated/disliked men. The meaning I took from this passage was that I as a man must continue to become understanding, caring, trustworthy to my future wife, also to the female friends that are in my life. I continue to learn the inner hurts and pains of women that as men we ignore quite often. I see and hear from women firsthand after years and years of their feeling unequal to a man, simply just wanting to be felt, heard, appreciated, and loved. (**Derek Dodd**)

Jane Austen spoken on men belittling women in every aspect: in education and biographies, and in writing the plans, directions, and outcomes of women’s lives since forever. By Jane Austen shedding light on this, she is saying we as women have a right to write our own stories, our own truth. No man will dictate how it is written. I was raised around strong women who taught me to have a voice. When reading this, I thought about the control and power men have had over us in what we are capable or incapable in doing, saying, or having. I feel in being willing to be submissive to them, they took that as we cannot manage without them. This isn’t true. I write the story to my life, and no ego-tripping man can ever hold the pen that tells my story. I grew up around strong men, but they had a weakness that makes me pity them more than trust in them. I believe when writing the story to your life, it should be self-written.

My father and uncle are both drug addicts, yet they always want to feel like they are in control of making decisions for the family. But to me, you can’t make clear decisions for your own life, let alone anyone else’s, when your mind and heart are built and controlled off substances. I also feel like women hold the keys (knowledge)

to keeping a home in order. For a man to downplay a woman’s role and mind frame tells a lot about a man. Most men who downplay women are married, and if they felt/feel their wives are incompetent, why marry them? Why trust a woman to make sure the home and children are grounded if she’s so “stupid”? Wouldn’t that make him stupid as well? (**Shaneika Sanders**)

*. . . I’m orphaned from my Spanish name. . .
I feel I am a captive
Aboard the refugee ship.
The ship that will never dock.
El barco que nunca atraca.*

Lorna Dee Cervantes’ “Refugee Ship” is good but, like any other poetry, is hard to understand. She uses a lot of rhymes. In this, she is talking about her experience of growing up as a Latina woman but not really being taught what the culture is about.

I believe that her grandmother did not teach her about the culture because she wanted her to become more American. That way it would be easier for her to survive. (**Heydy Pichardo Reyes**)



DELVING INTO EMILY DICKINSON

*If I can stop one Heart from breaking
I shall not live in vain . . .*



I love this poem. I live my life based on helping someone else besides me. Life to me is all about helping someone who's in need. When we get out of ourselves and help others, we feel God's grace and mercy. Helping others takes away selfishness and allows you to care for other people in the world. This poem to me is so deep.

(Derek Dodd)

*Some keep the Sabbath going to church
I keep it staying at home . . .
So instead of going to heaven at last
I'm going all along.*



In this poem, Emily Dickinson talks about how people go to church to look for and hear the Word, but that she doesn't have to go to church to look for or hear the Word. Some people believe that in order to go to heaven you have to go to church, but to her, she's already there.

I can relate to this poem in many ways. I, too, believe that you don't have to go to church in order to get into heaven. . . . I don't have to go to church to have God in my heart!

(Melissa Dominguez)

*To die—takes just a little while—
They say it doesn't hurt—
It's only fainter—by degrees—
And then—it's out of sight-- . . .*

This poem is about death and how it consumes



you. It takes you to heaven, where the angels are, and all the love that you have once known is left behind for a new journey of the afterlife. The absent, mystic creature she writes about is symbolic of God. He is absent and very mysterious.

. . . It made me feel like when God calls me home, it will only be a few short moments of pain and suffering. For my loved ones, I'll be missed, but at the end of the tunnel I'll be standing with the greatest of all greats. (

Myisha Ellis)

*There is no Frigate like a Book
To take us Lands away . . .*



The poem compares books to various modes of transportation. The poem states there is no frigate (ship), courser (horse), or chariot more powerful than a book. The string of comparisons reminds me of the joy in reading and the fact that reading allows me to travel far and wide within my imagination, without paying a penny. I believe the poem is attempting to say that the path of the human soul is free and found in books. Some believe the "book" could also refer to the Bible. **(Jessi Hodges)**

*It was not Death, for I stood up,
And all the Dead, lie down—*

I feel she was at her own funeral, picturing herself dead, going through the whole service with the flowers, her family grieving, and watching them cry and mourn for her. She also felt herself being buried ("as if my life was



shaven and fitted to a frame”) and pictured time stopping. She was in the actual ground and being left alone without a sound.

I can relate to this poem because when I was going through cancer, I had a chance to fight but I was selfish. Going to the funeral of a person I knew who also battled cancer opened my eyes and gave me life and hope because it could have been me. It made me more grateful and reminded me that when man says “no,” God has the ability to say “yes.” (**Mikiea Price**)

*Pain—has an Element of Blank—
It cannot recollect
When it began—or if there were
A time when it was not—. . .*



I feel very connected to this poem in particular. Even when life seems to be uneventful, there is not a single day where one feels completely free from pain. It’s just a matter of a memory triggered by an image or facing the reality of the world.

I personally feel the ever-presence of pain. I have learned to live with it, like a roommate, like a friend. It’s always there, reminding me that life is worth living. . . . Sweet pain keeps me alive. It’s like a second skin. . . . I don’t hate the feeling too much. I notice that I write (or am most creative) during periods of pain. (**Sahira Rocillo Ramirez**)

*I’m Nobody! Who are you?
Are you—Nobody—Too? . . .
How dreary—to be—Somebody!
How public—like a frog—
To tell one’s name the livelong June—
To an admiring Bog!*



In this poem, she is showing the importance of privacy. She is saying that it is better to be a humble nobody rather than a proud somebody. The reason is because you always have to tell the people how great you are.

I think that this poem is telling the truth because I know some people that always want to have all the attention. They think they are popular, but really they are boring and depressing. . . . (**Veronica Tinajero**)

*“Hope” is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the Soul— . . .*



In this poem Emily Dickinson is comparing hope to a bird. She says that hope sits on your heart like a sweet melody. Hope never leaves us, regardless of the storm. It helps you get through the worst of the worst and asks for nothing in return.

Ever since I started the Odyssey program, I have discovered the meaning of hope in a whole new light. No longer do I let my fears run my life. Instead, I’m living by the hope of all my dreams coming true—dreams that are within arm’s reach yet stretch from here to the moon and back. My odyssey is the hope of what is yet to come. (**Nissa Uriostegui**)



In the first stanza she speaks about hope that can just take off in the wind. It holds steady inside you and sings a tune inside your head. It’s always there.

The second and third stanzas emphasize how important our hope is and how we can find hope anywhere. It will always be there for us, no matter what!

This poem applies to me in many ways because I do keep hope in the back of my heart and mind all the time. It's my rock and foundation that I breathe from in my everyday life to strive to be better. I hold hope dear to my heart. It will always be hope that keeps me going.

(Christopher Villalpando)

*A word is dead
When it is said,
Some say.
I say it just
Begins to live
That day.*



What I think Emily Dickinson meant by "A word is dead" is how back in the 1800s men wouldn't listen to women. They thought they didn't have the right to speak up. Whatever the women would say or feel, it would never be heard. But later women started fighting for their rights, so that's what she meant by "begins to live that day." Now she's spoken and made others listen to her.

I feel connected to this poem because there are times where I have great ideas about doing things

with my plan for my future, but they will not be heard until I speak up. **(Brenda Juarez Cruz)**

*God is indeed a jealous God—
He cannot bear to see
That we had rather not with Him
But with each other play*



I think Emily Dickinson is saying that God is jealous and hates to see us going against him by following someone else. God wants us to do great things in life and not to follow people going down the wrong path. It just burns him up to see us doing

something bad or being impatient with life instead of trusting God and what he can do.

(Brandi Whitlock)

*He ate and drank the precious Words—
His Spirit grew robust—
He knew no more that he was poor,
Nor that his frame was Dust— . . .*



Emily Dickinson wrote this poem to show us how powerful reading can be. She gives the example of a poor man that realizes reading can take him to experience new levels of reality. A book can be our spiritual

food. It can expand and improve our mind and, very importantly, give us freedom.

I chose this poem because I love its meaning. Reading can take me to unimaginable places. It helps me to go away from problems even for a moment. Also reading has helped me to understand so many topics in class that were hard for me to understand. A book has given me knowledge and made me realize how important it is to get information. I read to my daughter in Spanish. This way she can learn to process information in both languages.

(Natalia Rodríguez Miramontes)



STUDYING SOCRATES



Socrates refused Crito's offer for multiple reasons. He felt he should not consider what the people in general would say. He should only be concerned with the truth and whether or not it's just to escape. Two wrongs do not make a right. He believed leaving

would be morally wrong. He also felt allegiance to his state was more important than an escape to save his life. He agreed with the laws. That's why he stayed in Athens 70 years. By escaping, he would be abandoning his message and taking the value away from all his years of life. His destiny, in his eyes, was death.

I believe Socrates made the right decision. Based on his life and the way he lived it, I really don't think any other decision would give him peace. Socrates was internally motivated to fulfill his life plan. Escape didn't fit in.

If I were in Socrates' position and lived the way he chose to live, I definitely would have made the same decision. I have always had a controversial agreement with suicide bombers. I don't agree with their message or their means, but I definitely believe if there is something in this world that is deadly to me and my children, I will go out with it if we can't take it out alone. I believe more people need to take a strong stance in what they believe and not be so easily persuaded by consequence. There shouldn't be any amount of money and fear that can be inflicted on me to get me to sacrifice my character. Sometimes your message is more impactful and does a greater good in death.

(Jessi Hodges)

Socrates refuses the offer for several reasons. For one, he fears the consequences his friends may face if caught helping him escape. Secondly, he



doesn't want anyone to question his principles. Thirdly, he may not be accepted anywhere else, and if he was it would just be a life, not a good one. Fourthly, it's the will of God for him to die. Lastly, he believes in the law and that he owes them his life because

without them he wouldn't be who he is.

I do think he made the right decision in his situation. He died for what he believed in even when facing death, which speaks volumes about his character. At the end, he did what was best and what he thought was for his children by showing them to stand true to themselves and never back down out of fear.

If facing the same situation as Socrates, I go back and forth as to whether or not I would have done the same thing. To be honest, I still haven't decided. I do believe in staying true to your beliefs, but I don't feel I owe the law enforcers anything. I couldn't imagine leaving my kids, and I don't believe in another human being deciding when I should die. I'm leaning more to not taking the death penalty. **(Lakoyé Buford)**



I think Socrates doesn't want to escape because it would be the coward's way. He thinks if this is God's will for him to die, then let it be. I think Socrates knows in his heart the right decision to make, to which I think he's spiritually led.

I would hope and pray and trust that God would lead me to the truth. I would trust him and make the right decision based on faith that it is God's will. I would stand and live for truth and justice, God's will. **(Derek Dodd)**



Socrates believed everything happens for a reason. He also believed there was a reason God wanted him put to death, and whatever that reason was, he was prepared for it and believed it was best. He had principles

which he honored. Escaping would be dishonorable to everything he believed in and was born to do. This man had morals and a dream, a vision of change. Martin Luther King did not stop. Rosa Parks did not stop. So I do feel Socrates made the right decision.

Even though I have children I live for, I also have dreams and I protect them. If I did not have a purpose or a reason to do what I was put on this earth to do, then my hard work, my striving, my strength, and my family would not have a reason or a purpose to live. **(Prodajaé Huntley)**



From reading "Crito," I think that the reason why Socrates refused to escape is because he thought that was a bad idea. Socrates felt that escaping from jail was doing evil. I am not sure if he made the right decision. I say that because he was sentenced to death being

innocent.

I am not sure what I would do if I found myself being in that position. I try my best to stay out of trouble so I am not faced with a decision like that. But I would not escape jail if I found myself in that situation because people might think I am guilty. **(Heydy Pichardo Reyes)**



I believe he made the right decision based on his strong beliefs. I commend Socrates for refusing the offer of being rescued out of his execution. He respected his view so rich that he would never go against it.

In my case, I would think just of my daughter first. I know that my moral compass would be challenged. I would follow my heart and know that it would be hardship for our lives, but my daughter would have a mother.

I would never disagree with Socrates' decision. He's following his heart as well.

(Dorothy Katana)



He refuses to escape because he wants to be a man of honor and live up to his principles. He doesn't believe in vengeance, or in disobeying the laws of the place that birthed him, and he does not want to leave his children behind and have the

city feel certain retaliation toward his children, brethren, and friends.

I don't know if I'd be able to be as brave as he was, had I been in his position. I believe he made the right decision given what he stands for. If he were to back down from his philosophies, he would not only be injuring himself but also the society that brought him up, the society and conscience he wanted to build around him, and the teachings that he wanted to leave behind. If Socrates were to run away now, he would be turning his own back on himself.

I mean, leaving my son behind solely to defend the principles I believe in is what makes me waver. In contrast, I think that I'd be injuring my son, family, friends, and students if I did decide to escape. Would I be teaching my son to be a man of integrity by running away and wanting to defy the laws and the social "contract" that I have with my country as a citizen just because the laws aren't benefiting him now?

Besides, I think I must leave a legacy behind for those I teach, for my son, my friends, and for the future. **(Sahira Rocillo Ramirez)**



Socrates refused to escape because he respected the laws, he loves the city, and he has been following the rules and accepting them for 70 years. Socrates doesn't want to break the laws. It goes against his principles. If he escapes, it will show that his self-defense at trial was not true, and his argument had no meaning. Why, after 70 years accepting and following laws, would he suddenly break them for personal reasons? It would destroy everything he has worked for. That's why he maintains his word. Also, Socrates believes that bad deeds should not be paid back with another bad deed. He knows he will be doing intentionally something wrong. I think he made the right decision because he showed us how important it is to believe in ourselves, sustain our beliefs and our principles in life. Socrates had so much courage to accept his misfortune. He knew people's acts were not correct.

me, it was bigger than man. If God allowed death to come to him, then that must have been His will. In the mind frame I'm in now, I believe I would've broken out of jail or let my rich friend bail me out because I am a rebel. I would have felt that by me taking my freedom, I am teaching the world to not fall victim to injustice. But after reading this, it got me feeling like if injustice comes to me for speaking and following truth, then so be it. **(Shanieka Sanders)**



It is hard for me to think what would happen if I were in Socrates' shoes. I think I would escape because I have a five-year-old daughter that needs me for her welfare. I'm sure even if I know I'm right and the people are wrong, I would run away. **(Natalia Rodriguez Miramontes)**



Socrates refused the offer because he did not want to break the law and he didn't want to be a bad example for his community. He thought that if he accepted the offer, he would then suffer evil.



He believes if they want to punish him for saying or doing what is right, so be it. He won't fight wrong with wrong. He is guided only by reason, and unless there is an honorable reason for going against the grain, Socrates will

follow the law.

I can't say for sure what I would do. Maybe if I were where Socrates is mentally and spiritually, I would. I believe he trusted God with his fate. To

I think he made the right decision because that made him feel better about himself. He stood up for his beliefs.

I don't think I would have made the same decision that he made because I would be afraid of dying in prison. I have children and a family that need me and that I need. I want to enjoy them as much as I can and take care of them, too. In addition to these three reasons, I am not sure there is an afterlife, so I want to stay in this life as long as possible. **(Veronica Tinajero)**



Socrates refused his friend's offer to escape due to the fact that he didn't believe that two wrongs made a right. He believed if he did the evil of running away after the state did the evil of sentencing a man that they feared, he would then be proving them right.

I believe that Socrates made the right decision to face his sentence and not leave. If he were to leave, he would prove society was right and that he was wrong about everything he had stated and had taught.

I would have made the same decision as Socrates. What is the point of living if you have no beliefs? I could not imagine living a life on the run and knowing everything I believed and fought for is humor for my state. Also, I would know that I would never be able to go home, the place where I grew up, where I learned and started my own family. Most importantly, I cannot live my life knowing I didn't stand up for what I believed in. It is my beliefs that keep me going day in and day out. **(Nissa Uriostegui)**



Socrates refuses the offer because he doesn't think that you should worry about other people's opinions (people will look down on Crito for not helping him). He would make himself an outlaw and would not be able to live in another state

for the rest of his life. He didn't want to leave what he believes in. Why not stand up for what you think is right? I would have made the same decision because what I think is right is right. I wouldn't change for anybody. **(Brandi Whitlock)**

I believe Socrates has a respect for the laws and the rules of the land. He also states that he wants to do what is right by the people and the



law. He says finally, "Then let me follow the intimations of the will of God." He believes in his teachings but believes also he has violated the laws and wants to do what is right by the law, the people, and God. He believes he broke the law but believes in his teachings also. Let God's will be done. **(Patricia McKnight)**



Socrates refused the chance to escape because he sees that no matter what he says or thinks, if it's not what they want to hear they're going to see him as crazy or put him in prison. He only wants to help and be honest. By being the way others want him to

be, he will never be happy in how he is living his life. I feel he made the right decision because no matter what, he still was going to feel like a prisoner. I would have made the right decision like him because when you can't be yourself, then that's not called life. **(Brenda Juarez Cruz)**



Socrates refused Crito's offer to escape for a number of reasons, but the one that really stuck out to me was that he was on a time restraint. He was a 70-year-old man, and he had spent his whole life in Athens. Even if he left, he would only have a few

years left. Yes, he would live, but would it be a good living? He would have to leave his family and everyone he loved behind.

Personally I think he made the right decision for him, but it wouldn't work for me. With me being so young, I would've left with Crito. Yes, I would miss my family and all, but I would try my hardest to get them there. Then we would all be able to start over together and would have time to do that. **(DeAngelo Hood)**



He owes the state for his parents being married, his education, and the contract. He doesn't want anyone questioning his principles. I think that he made the right decision for himself. Everyone

has a choice. He stood up for what he believes in. If I was in his situation, I would probably have done the same thing because you have to stand up for what you believe in.

(Melissa Dominguez)



Socrates turned down the offer because he wanted to do God's will, even if that means he has to die. I think that he made the right decision because escaping from jail isn't the right thing to do. I'm

thinking more of wrong and right more than the religious way Socrates is thinking about it. I personally would have escaped because I'm scared of dying, and I am definitely not ready. So, no, I wouldn't have done the same thing as Socrates. **(Janina White)**

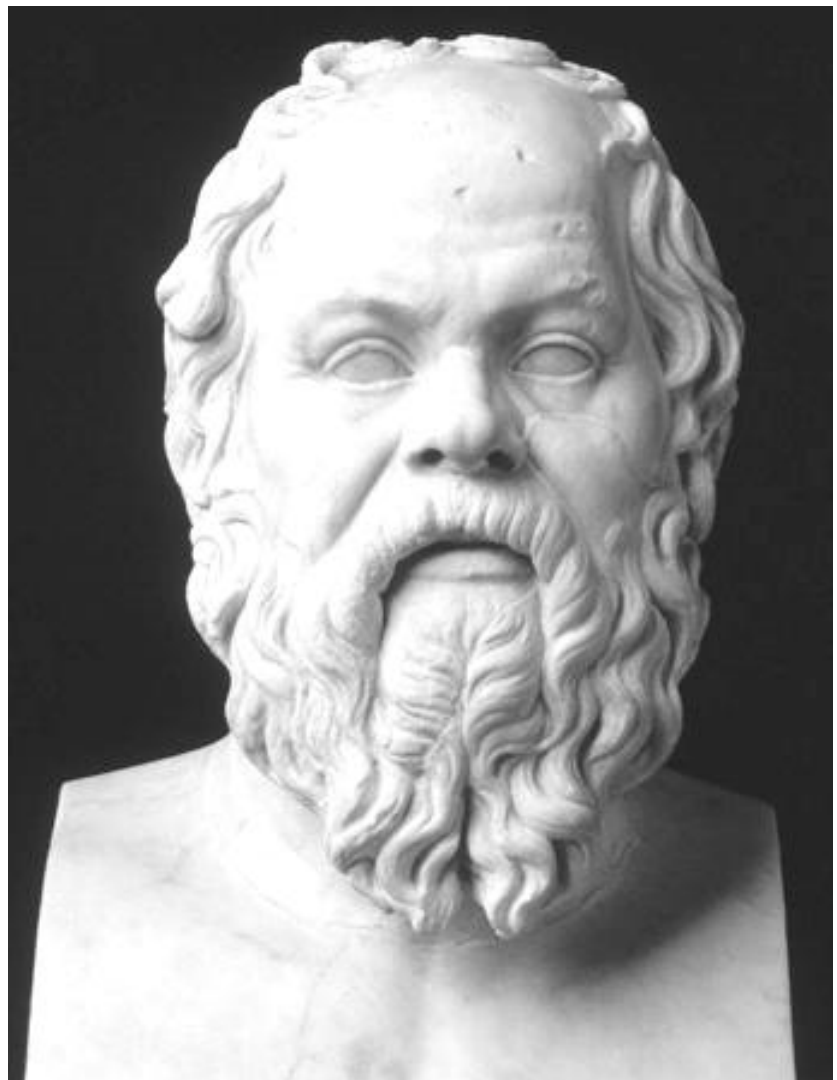


Socrates refuses to leave and break out of prison for quite a few reasons. He was concerned about the ones that wanted to help him and escape prison.

Also, he did not want to leave the prison because he didn't want to look as if he was guilty by escaping from prison. Moreover, he loved his city. His loyalty to his city wouldn't allow him to leave in such a way and live somewhere else because he had so much love for his country, for when he was down they, the people, helped him out and his family.

I myself am torn apart by his decision because I understand his loyalty and his pride not to leave or escape. I personally would not have made the same decision as him. I have been in prison before, so I know how hard it is to be there and wake up every day to a life like that.

(Christopher Villalpando)



MUSIC TO SOOTHE YOUR SOUL: A MADISON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA REVIEW

BY NISSA URIOSTEGUI

The Madison Symphony Orchestra draws all ages into the Overture Center. From the young to the old, you start to see them filling in the seats. There were young couples and old couples. There were parents with their children and grandparents with their grandchildren, all getting ready to enjoy the show. As I looked down and watched the musicians get into their places and start their first piece, it looked like a piece of art that was beautifully handcrafted one statue at a time. When they started to play, it looked like synchronized swimming as their bows moved in a harmonic pattern. Shortly after the show began, a young beautiful lady stepped on to the stage.



Sarah Chang brings a new light to the stereotype that the symphony is just for old people. Chang started playing the violin professionally at the age of eight, and in 2011 was named an official Artistic Ambassador by the United States Embassy. She brings more to her performance than just another violinist: she brings strength and passion to the stage, leaving her audience on the tip of their toes. Sarah Chang is the vision of the future of music.

The best part about going to the Madison Symphony Orchestra was the experience of how it touched my soul. People began to enter the theatre in their best attire—some formal and others informal—, making me feel a little out of place in my sweatshirt and jeans. However, when people around me started pulling out their opera glasses, it made me feel like I was somebody important that was in the company of an elite crowd. As I started watching Sarah Chang walk on the stage with her green and

black gown, she looked like a goddess there on the stage, telling her life story of love and war. The conductor was like a king standing at his throne, giving orders to his knights. All of them responded in unison to the king's orders.

I think everybody should go to the Madison Symphony Orchestra at least once, since it will give you a whole new outlook on classical music. What we once thought to be our grandparents' music has now found a new generation. The music will connect with you and soothe your soul. Thanks to donor Carroll Heideman for the tickets.



A NIGHT TO REMEMBER: A REVIEW OF A UW MEN'S BASKETBALL GAME

BY CHRISTOPHER VILLALPANDO

Being able to take my daughter, Trinity, to her first game like this was so exciting in itself because I still to this day remember the first time I went and who I went with. Being able to go to the UW men's basketball game (November 14, 2014, Badgers vs. Northern Kentucky) was something that will always be with me, no matter what, so before I go on with this review I would like to thank the donors from the College of Letters & Science so much for the tickets. They were not just tickets—they were a memory that will never be forgotten, I can assure you!!!!



Running to the game because it was so cold out was even fun, and to see all that red representing our school was the best. I could see it in my daughter's eyes once we walked into the stadium. Seeing its mass just amazed her, and it took her from under her feet. Everything about it was fun, other than there was not much competition and we swept Kentucky, LOL. Other than that, when they shot people in the crowd with the camera, I think seeing her and the kids who showed on the big screen was super exciting. It was so fun that I'm sure we will go again soon. It's been so long since I've been that I had forgotten how much fun it was.

Thank you again so much. The memory will never be forgotten.

Yours truly,
Chris and Trinity

THE BALTIMORE WALTZ

A REVIEW BY LENORA RODIN



I attended the theatrical play called “The Baltimore Waltz” on October 19, 2014, at the Strollers Theatre located at 113 E. Mifflin. The play was written by Paula Vogel and directed by John Cooper and Scott Albert Bennett. This play was arranged by the Dramatist Play Services of New York and was intended for a mature audience.

The theatre was small and very intimate, with exactly 72 seats (very cozy).

The cast consisted of three people: Erin Bael, John Jajewski, and Sean Langenecker. The show was an hour and a half long with no intermissions. There was even a talk-back after the show.

The scenes took place mainly in Europe. The play addressed the issues that surround AIDS and why this is not given high priority, but it was called A.T.D.:

Acquired Toilet Disease. This play addressed a very serious issue but in a comical way. It was very amusing, funny, and thought provoking. This play implied that it takes—or, should I say, took—someone famous to contract this virus in order for it to be noticed. It also addressed the fact that this is an illness, not a crime, and that we should not be ashamed of it.

They addressed the different stages of death: 1. Denial; 2. Anger; 3. Bargaining; 4. Depression; 5. Acceptance; 6. Hope; and finally Death.

This play was powerful, funny, and enlightening, and I really enjoyed it.



REMEMBERING A LOST COUSIN

BY MELISSA DOMINGUEZ

I recently had a death in the family. His name was Luis Angel, and he was a distant cousin on my mother's side of the family.

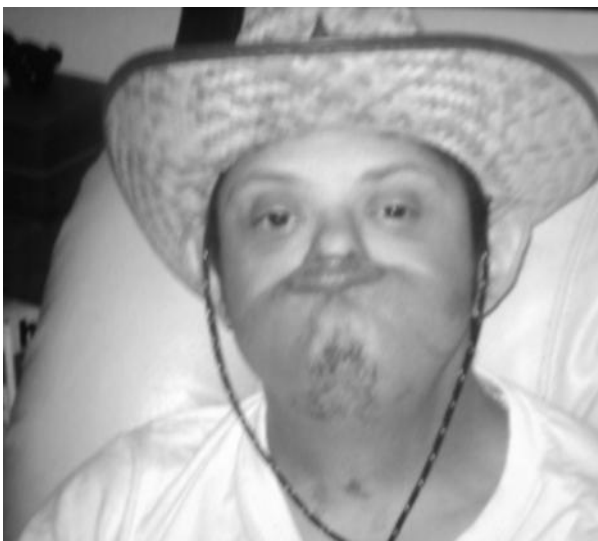
Luis Angel was born with Down Syndrome, a congenital disorder arising from a chromosomal defect, causing intellectual impairment and physical abnormalities. The doctors told his mother that he would not be able to learn how to talk, walk, or feed himself, that he would be severely retarded, and that he would not live past the age of 17.

Luis Angel defeated all those obstacles placed before him. He was able to do all those things the doctors said he would never do.



He loved music, playing games, going out for walks, and watching TV. God blessed Luis Angel to live past his forties. He developed a clot that didn't allow his brain to receive oxygen, and he died peacefully in his sleep in the hospital.

I remember when I was little playing with Luis Angel. He was one of the most loving and caring persons. It saddens my heart to know that he is gone, but I believe that he is at peace and in a better place. R.I.P, my cousin. You are in God's hands now!



MEET OUR WRITING TUTORS

BECKY MAY



I am so happy to be part, however small, of the Odyssey Project. There are so few opportunities for adults who have not been able to finish college, but who want to get started on a path to finishing a degree. This path, the Odyssey Project, is one that respects life experiences and encourages learning for learning's sake. I think that whatever happens after finishing the program, students will be empowered by knowing that they have wrestled with some of the most difficult college material and made important discoveries along the way. The discussions in class and the writing so far put the value of students' experience on full display. You have so much to offer college classrooms.

As far as my experience, I am a copy editor, with training from the University of Chicago, and a freelance writer. Don't let that scare you away, though! I make plenty of mistakes myself and only on editing my own writing can I usually get it right. I spend most of my time making the writing of non-native speakers sound fluent, so that their intended meaning can come across. I also have a master of arts in social work from the University of Chicago, and I have worked for more than 30 years providing direct services and advocating for policies to fight poverty and unfair criminal justice practices. I have, for example, investigated child support policies in Wisconsin that put low-income fathers in jail and keep families from benefitting from a father's employment or child support payments.

I have also had many years of personal experience guiding my own children and their friends with their writing assignments. I enjoy brainstorming that can trigger great thoughts and get someone going with writing what they already know, but just haven't found a way to express. I am a devoted reader of all things, from news to fiction to history.

As for my own family, I have three daughters, ages 19 to 23. My husband teaches geography at UW Madison. He has focused on West Africa (Mali and Niger) for over 30 years. We lived in a small, remote village in Mali for two years and have returned there several times, once with our parents and once with our daughters. We also lived in Niger with our oldest daughter and adopted our middle daughter there in 1992.

CAROL POORE

I am the first person in my family to graduate from college, and this is one of the reasons I wanted to be involved with the Odyssey Project. I completed my Ph.D. in German literature from UW-Madison in 1979 and taught German at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island for thirty years. After retiring and moving back to Madison in 2012, I became an Odyssey tutor and have loved working with such an amazing group of students. I enjoy playing music (violin, recorder), quilting, cooking, reading, and spending time with friends.



MEET OUR WRITING TUTORS

SAGASHUS LEVINGSTON

I am the mother of six children...and a Ph.D. student. I struggle with balancing these sometimes incompatible responsibilities. Once, a friend of mine looked at my effort and, quoting Talib Kweli, called it “a beautiful struggle.” That’s what it is. All of my experiences have prepared me for where I am now: the failed relationships, the pregnancies, the boarding-school education, the poverty, the violence, the drug-infested neighborhood,



the Catholic school education, the street-smart father...the persistent mother. Both my personal and professional experiences have set me up to be a scholar of literature who focuses on black love and family, motherhood and rhetoric. If you knew, I mean really knew, how reading and writing literally save my life, then you’d know that it just makes sense for me to be a reading and writing teacher. I bet all of your experiences have prepared you for where you are now. You have a right to be here, and you have something to say. So say it!

One night, while brooding about “my woes,” I started listening to T.D. Jakes. In his sermon, he said that “success don’t feel like success.” And while I do not remember his explanation for this, allow me to insert my own. I think that success does not always feel like success because, at least in my own case, success means new types of work. It means a different brand of struggles: struggling to write new papers, to articulate new ideas. It means adventures to new conferences, meeting new kinds of people. It means leaving my community and family behind and venturing out to some place strange to me. It means modifying old traditions, and establishing new ones so that my children will not be left with the burden of having to do so. It means creating habits that are consistent with my life’s goals. Like all of you, I am on my own Odyssey, call it a “hero’s quest.” Along the way, while balancing babies and books--and sometimes bullets--I have managed to pick up some reading and writing skills, some abilities to manage family and work. And if you allow me to share some of my talents with you, you will be one more reason why this journey has been worth it. In return, I look forward to what you have to share with me. Hero to hero, let’s explore together.



FROM "ANOTHER WORD": A UW WRITING CENTER BLOG BY MACKENZIE MCDERMIT AND KEVIN MULLEN



We asked this year's class to write about three topics: the effect that collaboration has had on their writing, their responses to the Oracle (as both readers and authors), and the aspects of writing they find to be either frustrating or exciting. Their responses offer powerful suggestions about the ways in which collaboration and visibility can help students navigate the difficult balance between personal expression and the expectations of a discourse community, and they should be of special interest to instructors working with adult learners, literacy, bridge programs, and writing centers that are connecting with communities that reside beyond the boundaries of campus. We have organized their ideas around recurring themes, but we have left the entirety of each answer intact.

Visibility and Voice

"Having the ability to be creative and not being judged is a beautiful thing. Everyone in our Odyssey class is different and brings something new to the table and each week we respond to the same questions on our homework, which is published through the Oracle. You get to see how each personality is different and everyone has a story and a past of their own, just by the way they answer a question. We have moments in class where we get to free write about what we love, like music, and it's a wonderful thing that people listen to how we feel and our purpose for why we love what we love. We are able to see how even though everyone is different, we share the same struggles, we are all works in progress and it's okay to feel and be who we are. The Odyssey Project gives us that chance to explore ourselves, our thoughts, our dreams, and more through our writing." (Prodajae)

"The things I read [in the Oracle] make me feel like I'm reading stuff from professional authors and I got front row seats. I get to see these authors and get to know them on a personal level and that's a great feeling. I also get to see myself as a writer. Seeing my heartfelt writings being published in a book is a tremendous feeling. From the class I get responses like, 'You write really well,' or 'You're a deep individual and we should work together,' and people trust me to read about certain topics because they see who I am and how I think through my writings." (Shaneika)



"Both as a reader and as an author I feel the Oracle is wonderful. I feel you get a sense of who a person is through their writing and you can put yourself in their shoes. The Oracle is also a place to connect with my classmates." (Lakoyé)

"I think that the Oracle is a really cool newsletter that tells many interesting stories of people's achievements. When my story or response to an article is published I think that people enjoy reading my point of view. Sometimes it can be very touching, whether it's powerful or funny and brightens up your day! I have shared the Oracle with my family and friends and they love that we are so engaged as a class.

They really appreciate how involved the instructors are in helping you succeed. Since they have become familiar with what the Odyssey offers, they are planning to apply for the class of 2016!” (Michelle)

Collaboration and the Writing Process

“These past two months that I’ve been working in Odyssey I have grown as a reader, writer, and definitely as a thinker. My classmates here in the class are fun and overall give me the courage to share my ideas that, otherwise, I wouldn’t share. Then I have my wonderful teachers. One teacher in particular really helped me to release all the color, beauty, and sass in my writing. If it were not for this person I would probably still be close-minded. The reason I say this is because my teacher is so positive and encouraging that I was persuaded to share my inner most thoughts and secrets, which is something I have never been able to do.” (Tia)



“Since I’ve been in Odyssey, writing has gotten a little better for me. I have a lot to say and at first I didn’t want to because I would think about spelling and grammar. I still struggle with these things, but now I get my ideas out, and then I work on spelling, grammar, etc.” (Kelly)

“I met with [my tutor] to touch up my writing about my children. He made me look at writing more creatively and detailed. He made me dig deeper even though I thought I was already doing my best. From that moment forward with everything I write I think, is there any way I can make my writing better or give more details?” (Janina)

“Working with [the tutor] and my classmates on my reading, writing, and thinking process has been a challenge for me. Writing, in my life, was a learned skill—all about format, structure, and content. So when I turned in my first project to [my tutor] and he told me that it seemed too compact, I got it. He was right. I was so worried about format that I lost important facts. I understood that my focus on format and fear of sharing what’s considered personal would stand in the way of my writing success. I am now opening up more and not so focused on the old school format.” (Jessi)

“My writing process has changed in a positive way. When we work together, with the help of teachers or classmates, it is easier to come up with ideas of what to write. Listening to other people’s ideas helps me because it helps me search for ideas to add on to the conversation and it helps me realize that I have ideas on what to write—it is just a matter of searching for them.” (Heydy)

“Over the last two months, working in Odyssey with both my classmates and teachers to progress as a reader, writer, and thinker has made me question everything that I do. What’s my purpose? Why am I misunderstood? Better yet, I have a story to tell and if I write down what I feel on paper, it helps me see things a little clearer. When asked to write a story describing myself, or an essay, I learned that using small words tends to describe more and it is also easier for the next person to read. Then, when the teacher or student reads what was written and gives feedback, I begin to see what grammar, punctuation, and better proper word usage will create better sentence structure.

My writing has improved tremendously! When I'm asked to write a paper, I no longer choke up or become stressed out. I just use the techniques I was taught! I will jot down my ideas, anything that comes to mind, and come back 15 minutes later and my brain is HOT and ready to ROLL!" (Michelle)

"The collaboration within the Odyssey program has played a big role in my progress. Without it I would never have been able to understand the readings or never would have had the enjoyment of seeing other points of view. My writing process has changed since this collaboration, more than I could have imagined. I have seen more description and feeling in my work." (Nissa)

Personal Expression and Audience Expectations

"Everything frustrates me about writing—not knowing how to spell, grammar, etc. What excites me about my own writing is that I learn about my self. I hope that one day I can consider myself a good writer." (Margarita)

"Sometimes I still have reservations about writing because I know my spelling and punctuation skills aren't that strong. However, my writing excites me because it takes me out of my body and I can freely be me in it." (DeAngelo)

"I am not excited about writing. I wish I was a better speller and I wish I didn't struggle so hard. But hard work pays off and I don't mind working hard." (Kelly)

"It frustrates me when I am not sure about the spelling of words, or sometimes the grammar or punctuation. It frustrates me to not be able to recognize where to place a comma, or where to close a sentence with a period. It excites me that I discover I am way more strongly opinionated than I thought. What I learn about me, and to feel that I am a good writer when I write something, shows my strengths as a writer. I like feeling talented, and confident, about it." (Sahira)



"The thing that still frustrates me about writing is the whole writing process. Even though I can see my writing getting better with each draft, it still seems like too much work for such a simple task. The other thing that frustrates me is my lack of knowledge in grammar. This has been a life long issue for me and even though I'm getting better, it seems like I'll never master this.

Whenever I see the finished product of my writing, I get so excited. I have come to see what an amazing writer I am capable of being. I love to see my heart and soul flooded onto the paper. The ink in my pen is the blood in my veins and brings to life everything that I write." (Nissa)

*Read the full article at: writing.wisc.edu/blog
Thanks to Haloren Mellendorf for photos in this article.*

JOURNEYING HOME

After hearing about Homer's Odysseus and his long journey home to Ithaca past numerous obstacles, Odyssey students wrote about their own challenging journeys to somewhere that feels like "home."



I am journeying toward providing a better life for my two children and myself. I am tunneling through education in order to become financially stable and become someone who benefits society. The

obstacles that are blocking my way are poverty, being a single mom, being a minority, but most of all myself. I am the biggest barrier I need to cross in order to reach my destination. I have to conquer my fears and self-doubt to fully give my journey all I've got and to make it worth it. "Home" is a place filled with happiness and supportive family and friends. It's welcoming and warm, but also protective. It is where I can truly be myself. **(Lakoyé Buford)**



My personal goal is to achieve a higher education. My odyssey will have obstacles, roads, and situations such as finding the career I want to put my money on, getting money to start it, getting help

with my son (I refuse to put him in daycare!), getting support from my family, being able to get a job (something that I like—no McDonald's again), and to start saving. I would put that job money away for school instead of having to spend the majority of it on bills. Most of all, I would get my partner to believe in me. . . . I feel I'm getting old, and that I need to accomplish at least half of my education (my Associates) by the time I turn 30. **(Sahira Rocillo Ramírez)**



My journey now is to get a better education. The obstacle I have is myself not working hard enough. My mother being sick was one of the biggest obstacles, but now that I don't have her I want to

better myself and make her proud. Home would look like me getting my degree or my diploma with my kids. **(Margarita Cid Luna)**



I am on an odyssey that I don't want to get off. I feel like all my dreams are falling down at my feet. I'm in this program, and I can't get enough. I am fixing all my debts so that I can go back to school to get my

bachelor's degree in social work and one day get into ministry.

There are still a couple of things that are standing in my way. First of all is my fear of talking to big crowds. I get terrible anxiety the night before. However, once I hit that stage I do amazing things. Secondly is finding time to make all my dreams come true. Being a single mother, I feel every free moment I have is worth a lifetime. So to balance my time between school and the kids is always a challenge.

When I finally reach "home," I will be at peace and will fulfill my lifelong dream of helping people. **(Nissa Uriostegui)**



I'm journeying toward a nursing degree. Childcare needs and low income are blocking me. Also my student loan is in default. My boyfriend will get in the way because he is so demanding. Laziness will get in the way. I need to learn self-discipline to actually study. Home will look like working in a hospital taking care of mothers in labor. I can't wait! **(Janina White)**



The odyssey that I am on is an odyssey of enlightenment. What I mean by this is that I am trying to find out my place in life for the rest of my life. Drugs, insecurities, fears, self-doubt, and people have all been obstacles in my life. I try on a daily basis not to let people, places, and things disrupt my journey.

When I reach a place that feels like home, it will be a very peaceful place inside of me. **(Lenora Rodin)**



I am journeying towards a happy, stable, and successful life. I have come across many obstacles trying to get to this point in my life. First it was being on my own at the age of 16. Then it was not being able to afford an education after high school. Later it was keeping a roof over my head and having a child unexpectedly. Through it all, I have not lost faith that I can accomplish all things. Sometimes I just need an extra push and motivation. I must say doing the writing in this class is allowing me to open up to people and share struggles I never thought I would with anyone. **(Latesha Jackson)**



My odyssey is long. I started my journey five years ago when I was released from prison. I am traveling from a place of insecurity and bad decision-making in hopes of reaching success. My biggest obstacle is my past. All of the choices I made brought me here, and I know in order to reach success I'll have to work hard and make better choices consistently. When I reach success, it will feel warm. I will be able to rest. The worry that burdens me will be gone. I will know that if God blesses me with another day, I will be free to enjoy it. **(Jessi Hodges)**



Something I'm journeying towards is my education and trying to get myself together. I've been trying to finish my CNA by doing the state test, but I can't make it because I have to wait for my friend to have her baby this December. It's hard for me because I need to get a job with something I like and get paid well, too, but I can't until I do the state test.

My journey starting the adult life has been really hard. I'm trying to help my mother with bills but also stay in school. It sounds easy but is not. I cannot always pay some bills for my mom because I don't have enough, and sometimes it's hard to do homework because my family always wants me to do them a favor. It's like I'm dragging through the sand just to get where I finally feel like home and have gotten myself together. **(Brenda Juarez Cruz)**

I'm currently getting a divorce and I'm trying to find a connection in my life that is beneficial. I'm on an odyssey to get over my husband. The feelings and emotions are still very raw and



tender. I'm trying to move past the crying, and I'm trying to accept the loss. I'm trying to get to a better place within myself so that I will be able to laugh, love, and cherish another again.

The obstacles that have blocked me are past experiences and emotions and not being able to trust anyone or be secure with myself. I've built a wall around myself to feel secure, but I'm lonely and wanting to be loved. I'm terrified to move forward. I haven't had the closure that I deserve from my husband, and I feel like it's holding me back. When I reach a place that feels like home, I will have a sense of security, love, achievement, honesty, respect, and confidence for myself and my family. **(Myisha Ellis)**



The odyssey that I am on now is an odyssey of knowledge. I am on an up-hill journey pressing towards my ideal life that is at the top of the hill. Over the years, a lot of things have slowed me down. Even to

this day, people try to tear me down just to slow me down. However, I'm letting people and all of their negativity roll off my back like water. No longer am I letting others' opinions of me stop me.

After I finish this journey, I feel that so many doors will open up for me, with furthering my education and employment. I honestly don't know what the future holds for me, but

whatever it is I'm ready for it. At least now I'll have the knowledge to face whatever comes my way. **(DeAngelo Hood)**



I am journeying toward a better life, a better way of life at that. I've changed a lot in the past eight years, but there is, like for all, still room for improvement and much to learn about as well. I still find myself in the midst of a

struggle that I try to steer away from. At times I lose in the fight within me, and other times I win. For the most part, I am on the up and up, so it's definitely not an uphill battle. In my eyes and my opinion, my education is the only key to my freedom and a way to get to that place that I call home. At the end, that place looks like me somewhere more than comfortable and taking care of my family, with only the worries of everyday things and no more struggle with financial means.

(Christopher Villalpando)

I'm on an odyssey dealing with the Department of Corrections of Wisconsin,





which is a very unrighteous department—more like the Department of Corruption. I am journeying toward what is right, not to be forced to live a certain way by an ungodly system designed to destroy

black men. The obstacles have blocked me from doing what I love the most. When I reach a place like home, it's my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and my family. That's all I have for now. **(Derek Dodd)**



I am journeying towards a better life, a better education. I have many things standing in my way, including my health issues, having back surgery, not being able to walk for two months, and now my ankle. I

was always told by my brothers that I would never get anywhere, but I have made it this far in life. I took the negatives from them and tried to do better. I didn't finish high school, but I got my G.E.D. I didn't go to college, but I'm in the Odyssey Project trying to better myself—if not for me than for my children. They deserve the best that I can give them. My parents splitting up when I was a child, leaving everything I knew behind to move to Puerto Rico, being raised by a mother that didn't have her mind right, being poor, and everything else that has happened to me have made me a stronger person.

There are many obstacles in my way, but I struggle to get through them every day. My kids are my inspiration. They make me want to be a better person and mother. Hopefully when I graduate from the Odyssey Project, I can hold my head up high and know that I can do it—and I did do it. I want to make my kids proud. That's all that matters to me—that my

kids can see my struggles and want to do better. **(Melissa Dominguez)**



The odyssey I am on is not very clear to me. I do know that I am journeying towards something positive and away from anything negative. Being kindhearted and compassionate has always

stood in my way. I'm the kind of person that would go without just to see someone else make it.

When I reach a place that feels like "home," that will look and feel like happiness. I don't care about material things or appearances just as long as I'm happy. The one thing I deserve and that I have wished for on my birthday ever since I could talk is to be happy. **(Nitia Johnson)**



I am on an odyssey because getting to where I want to be is a journey. I am journeying towards a better education and a better future. The only obstacle blocking my way is the stress of not having a job.

My place where it feels like home is me having a job and working towards my college degree. **(Heydy Pichardo Reyes)**



My journey is to focus on my beliefs and how to accomplish my goals, which is to have my own firm in social psychology and my own business. Some obstacles I came upon are wrong decisions and bad behavior, also choosing the

wrong friends. When I find that place to call home, it will feel like freedom. No, more than freedom it will feel like living at my mother's

house. Better yet, I'm still in the womb, in warm comfort, relaxing and feeling free from all problems. (**Joseph Lentz**)



The odyssey that I am currently going through . . . has been because of my criminal past. Any time there's a warrant for the arrest of my daughter's father for not paying child support, he manages for me to have police contact and that violates my probation. Now I'm almost done with probation. By the end of January, I will no longer fear him using the police against me. . . . The law will finally see that he's the perpetrator. I'm saddened by this life that I know I've gotten myself into, but I know for all the struggles I've endured, things will be good for me and my daughter. (**Dorothy Katana**)



I'm on a journey of bettering myself. I found out without a degree I will never make the type of money to support the life I want for me and my son. I have dreams of buying a house, moving down south, getting a car without miles, and having my son in private school, but most of all I want to go on a vacation once a year every year.

My obstacles are putting people before myself, being too nice, and falling in love too quickly and looking for love. (**Kelly Hayes**)



I'm journeying toward freedom, fighting against my inner demons and dragons around me attempting to block me from ME. I'm journeying to a place of love and peace. I want to be a paid songwriter and perhaps a life coach who travels the world learning and teaching others how to be themselves on their journeys. I'm aiming for a peace of mind where my thoughts are pure and clear. My journey is about finding ways to be a better me so I can receive my mansion and robe in Heaven.

I suffer from laziness, procrastination, and self-doubt. I'm afraid that next time I fall I might not get up because of how hard it was to get up this time.

Home—I'm not sure yet, but it's a place where every good soul around me is free. (**Shaneika Sanders**)





The odyssey I am now on is my education. I am trying to get my degree as a midwife. Right now I'm working on it slowly because my children are little and I can only do so much. I need to be a good student but most importantly I need to be a good mother and wife. When my little girl goes to school full time, I will go to school full time as well so I can reach my dream. When I reach my goal, it will be wonderful. I will be able to have the job that I want, I will be able to provide for my kids, and I will be my kids' role model. **(Veronica Tinajero)**



I'm journeying toward getting my degree in arts. What is getting in my way is myself. I'm scared that things (school) will get too hard for me and I will want to quit. I really never liked school, but I liked the idea of being in school and making it seem like I had my stuff

together. I will use excuse after excuse about why I can't do it. I have two jobs, or I have to do this or do that. In reality, I don't believe in myself.

I have a learning disability, so that makes it extra hard for me. But this still is no excuse. It just means that I have to work harder and get some help. I have to stop being so lazy and stick with it. I find myself slowly going backwards, getting lazy with homework, not going to study groups or getting

help like I need to.

When I will get my degree, I will be so happy and proud because I worked my ass off! Nobody put in the work but me. I will thank my husband who gives me encouragement every day that I can do this—if I really want it. That's what my home will look like. ☺ **(Brandi Whitlock)**

My journey is being here in the USA, working to help my family in Mexico, missing them every day. My obstacle is that I am not a permanent resident.

I am not able to travel to Mexico. I need to stay in the USA to give my daughter a better life and a much better education.

I will reach my happy place the day the laws for migrants change—the day all migrants have the legal right to work.



My journey to go to college has been hard to accomplish. My obstacles are money and that I don't have enough support at home. I will reach my goal, and I will succeed.

(Natalia Rodríguez Miramontes)



Right now I am facing so many obstacles on my journey, especially with my 11 kids. I'm trying to stay strong and have faith. I'm trying to move to the next level. I'm happy that I am in school.

(Tenishia Bland)





