

odyssey oracle

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Year 8 #15 April 20, 2011

Song of the Odyssey Class of 2011

Inspired by Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself"

We celebrate ourselves and sing ourselves. We are the
Odyssey Class of 2011.

We have lived on the south side of Chicago, the Lac Courte
Oreilles Ojibwe Reservation, Fort Wayne, Indiana,
Byhalia, Missouri, Beaumont, Texas, Ansbach,
Germany, Baltimore, Maryland, Canteno, Puerto
Rico, Charleston, South Carolina, Atlanta, Georgia,
and New Haven, Connecticut.

We have relatives from Mississippi, Alabama, California,
Texas, New Jersey, Colorado, Mexico, Ireland,
England, Puerto Rico, the Phillipines, Thailand, Laos,
and El Salvador,



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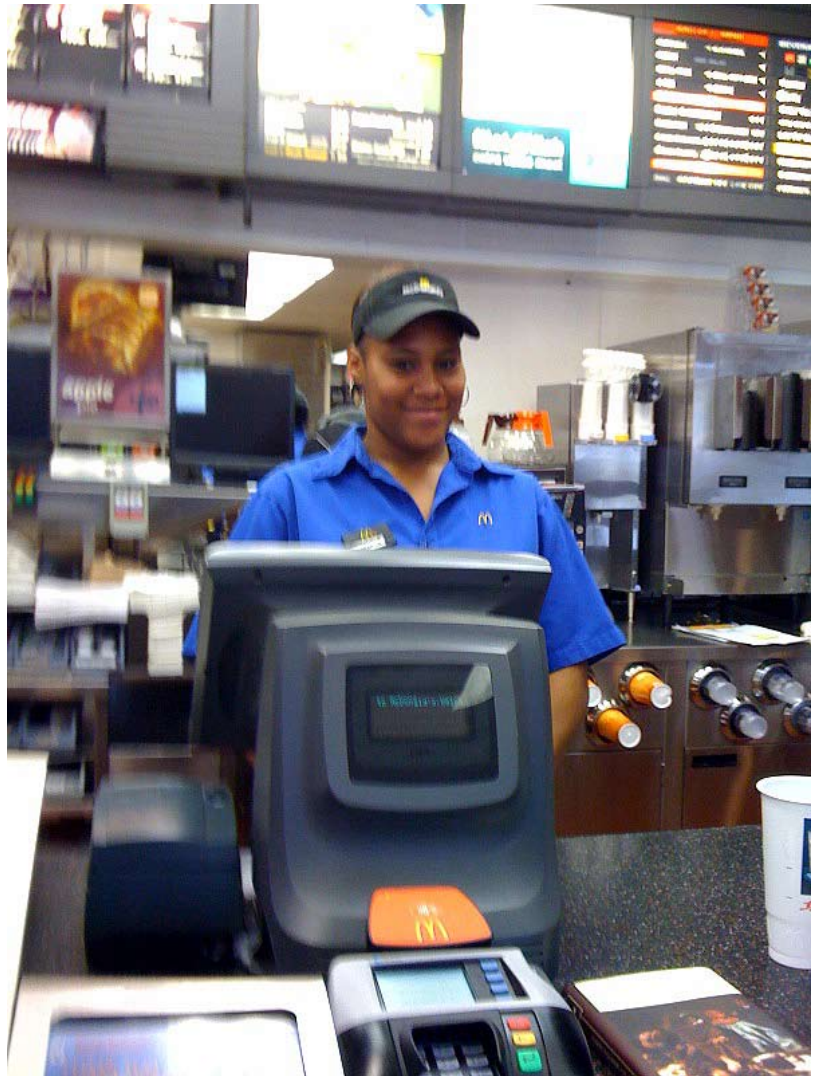
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who speak English, Spanish, German, Japanese, Hmong, Laotian, and Gullah-Geechee, and call themselves Baptist, Southern Baptist, AME, Catholic, Muslim, Pentecostal, Shamanistic, Evangelical, Sanctified, Church of God in Christ, Buddhist, Jewish, Atheist, and Native American spiritualists.

We have worked as a photographer, HIV/AIDS educator, bank teller, mother, poet, tutor, Equal Rights investigator, playground aide, cashier, soldier, housekeeper, CNA, LPN, jewelry maker's assistant, seasonal Post Office mail handler, summer camp counselor, cook, dishwasher, ice cream scooper, waitress, pizza maker, drywaller, janitor, meat packer, mover, paper girl, bag boy, mannequin dresser, and taxi cab dispenser,

employed by McDonald's, the YWCA, DWD, Donut Delights, St. Mary's Care Center, Culver's Frozen Custard, Burlington Coat Factory, Flat Top Grill, Hardee's, Burger King, Red Robin, Oscar Mayer, Old Country Buffet, Denny's, Potbelly's, Orange Julius, and the Yellow Cab Company.

We are tall, short, sweet, poetic, friendly, loving, busy, driven, talkative, knowledgeable, creative, resourceful, cheerful, lovable, loyal, hard working, strong, determined, worried, outgoing, nomadic, caring, open-hearted, excited, beautiful, kind, patient, powerful, passionate, free-spirited, fabulous, sexy, moral, awesome, individualistic, suave, spiritual, sober, stubborn, talkative, appreciative, holy, mellow, smart, calm, angry, empathetic, sympathetic, helpful, funny, shy, bossy, anxious, offbeat, witty, generous, wise, thoughtful, kind, lively, optimistic, gregarious, and tenacious.



We are the Odyssey Class of 2011.

Loving Langston Hughes

The Trumpet

The Negro

*With the trumpet at his lips
Has dark moons of weariness
Beneath his eyes
where the smoldering memory
of slave ships
Blazed to the crack of whips
about thighs*

The negro

*with the trumpet at his lips
has a head of vibrant hair
tamed down,
patent-leathered now
until it gleams
like jet—
were jet a crown*

the music

*from the trumpet at his lips
is honey
mixed with liquid fire*

the rhythm

*from the trumpet at his lips
is ecstasy
distilled from old desire—*

Desire

*that is longing for the moon
where the moonlight's but a spotlight
in his eyes,
desire
that is longing for the sea
where the sea's a bar-glass
sucker size*

The Negro

*with the trumpet at his lips
whose jacket
Has a fine one-button roll,
does not know
upon what riff the music slips*

Its hypodermic needle

*to his soul
but softly
as the tune comes from his throat
trouble
mellows to a golden note*



For me, reading Langston Hughes' work is like reading the Bible; I know I will always find a true reflection of myself within his words. Even when he writes of things that have no significance in my life at the time, there is always a nugget of universal truth available to those seeking it.

I came seeking truth when I curled up with *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*. I reached for the music of his contemporaries, Duke Ellington and John Coltrane, as I let my mind board the A-train.

...

[I stopped] for a visit with "Trumpet Player." The first stanza instantly recalls the memory of a photograph William Claxton took of Miles Davis in Los Angeles in 1956. It is a black and white photograph with Miles



alone. He is looking directly at Clax with a fierce scowl creasing his brow, and the long fingers of his left hand are allowing a cigarette to meet his lips. In his right hand rests his trumpet.

This image strengthens as I make my way through the third and fourth stanzas of the piece. My favorite line in the third stanza is “from the trumpet at his lips / is honey / mixed with liquid fire.” This line makes me envision a whole new way to use another one of my favorite poetic phrases, “eating the honey of words.” It also makes me jealous that I could not be there to witness the rise of Miles Davis and see him in his hey-day.

Whenever I read this piece, I imagine a smoky Harlem hole in the wall spot; The R&B Café. The place closes at 2 a.m., but the owner has a soft spot for musicians so she lets them hang out after hours. It is here that Miles and Langston meet in conversation. I really believe that because of the restrictions placed on Black men within American society at that time, they had no choice but to lean on each other. Perhaps Miles and Langston sat down to discuss how drugs were ravaging Harlem and Jazz. I can see “Trumpet Player” being birthed through such conversation.

The final stanza of this piece brings both delight and anguish because the trumpet player has reached the end of his set as “trouble mellows to a golden note.”

The refrain of that golden note remained as I

boarded the A-train for more stops with Langston Hughes. . . . (Stephanie Pamperin)

Still Here

*I've been scared and battered,
My hopes the winds down scattered
Snow has friz me, sun has baked me
Looks like between 'em
They done tried to make me
Stop laughin', stop lovin', stop livin'
But I don't care!
I'm still here.*

A lifetime of oppression has trampled him, but he came out of it victorious because of his determination and tenacity. He stayed the course and is still here. He did not give up but fought even harder to make it.

I can relate to this poem because I have been scared and beaten physically, verbally, and mentally. I have been thrown out to the elements in the cold and in the heat of the sun. I was stripped of my laughter and didn't know what it was like to be loved or to really live. But for the love of God, but by the grace of God, I am still here, still standing. I got knocked down, but I got right back up, saying “Still Here!” (Marie Hill)

I take this personally because of all the things I've been through: fighting, racial issues, running away, being a mother at a young age, being in an abusive relationship, drugs, bipolar, heart trouble. Hey, I'm still here. Yes! (Edwina Robinson)

This poem reminds me of Maya Angelou's “Still I Rise.” Regardless of how many obstacles you may face, don't let people get you down. Keep getting up! (Helen Montgomery)

Hughes is saying that even though he has been beaten and scared and people have tried to stop him from laughing, living, and loving, through it all he's still here.

This poem really speaks to me because I have been taken through so many twists and turns in life. I've had teachers and employers try and break me, but despite everything I'm “Still Here.” (Catina McAlister)

The Negro Mother

*Children, I come back today
 To tell you a story of the long dark way
 That I had to climb, that I had to know
 In order that the race might live and grow.
 Look at my face -- dark as the night --
 Yet shining like the sun with love's true light.
 I am the dark girl who crossed the red sea
 Carrying in my body the seed of the free.
 I am the woman who worked in the field
 Bringing the cotton and the corn to yield.
 I am the one who labored as a slave,
 Beaten and mistreated for the work that I gave --
 Children sold away from me, husband sold, too.
 No safety, no love, no respect was I due.*

*Three hundred years in the deepest South:
 But God put a song and a prayer in my mouth .
 God put a dream like steel in my soul.
 Now, through my children, I'm reaching the goal.*

*Now, through my children, young and free,
 I realized the blessings denied to me.
 I couldn't read then. I couldn't write.
 I had nothing, back there in the night.
 Sometimes, the valley was filled with tears,
 But I kept trudging on through the lonely years.
 Sometimes, the road was hot with the sun,
 But I had to keep on till my work was done:
 I had to keep on! No stopping for me --
 I was the seed of the coming Free.
 I nourished the dream that nothing could smother
 Deep in my breast -- the Negro mother.
 I had only hope then, but now through you,
 Dark ones of today, my dreams must come true:
 All you dark children in the world out there,
 Remember my sweat, my pain, my despair.
 Remember my years, heavy with sorrow --
 And make of those years a torch for tomorrow.
 Make of my past a road to the light
 Out of the darkness, the ignorance, the night.
 Lift high my banner out of the dust.
 Stand like free men supporting my trust.
 Believe in the right, let none push you back.
 Remember the whip and the slaver's track.
 Remember how the strong in struggle and strife
 Still bar you the way, and deny you life --
 But march ever forward, breaking down bars.*

*Look ever upward at the sun and the stars.
 Oh, my dark children, may my dreams and my
 prayers
 Impel you forever up the great stairs --
 For I will be with you till no white brother
 Dares keep down the children of the Negro
 Mother.*

She is explaining the history of my African ancestors from the woman's perspective. This poem is very powerful. She tells the future generations where they came from and what life was like for the female African slaves coming from Africa to America. She encourages the future generations to change the future from the past—to make the future better and to remember where they came from.

OMG! This poem spoke to my heart and my spirit. The image I get is the belly of a pregnant African mother with a picture of the world in it. She spoke volumes. If the descendants of slaves read this poem and took it to heart like I did, we could change the world for the better.

This poem made me feel no longer endangered but encouraged, empowered, and energized to embark upon my higher educational journey with great expectations for my future.
 (Bonita Greer)

The Ring

*Love is the master of the ring
 And life a circus tent.
 What is this silly song you sing?
 Love is the master of the ring.*

*I am afraid!
 Afraid of Love
 And of Love's bitter whip!
 Afraid,
 Afraid of Love
 And Love's sharp, stinging whip.*

*What is this silly song you sing?
 Love is the master of the ring.*

He is saying that love is the way of the world. Even though love might be the way of life, he is afraid of what it brings. Mr. Hughes is afraid of everything that comes with the love because even

though love can bring happiness, it also brings pain. Once you've been burned, it's hard to forget the sting.

I feel the same way when it comes to love. I'm so afraid of opening my heart up to someone because I've been burned so many times. I also really want to be in love and feel accepted as well as included in a partnership. At this moment, love seems too unreal and just silly! (**Leah LaBarre**)

Danse Africaine

*The low beating of the tom-toms,
The slow beating of the tom-toms,*

Low... slow

Slow... low -

Stirs your blood.

Dance!

A night-veiled girl

Whirls softly into a

Circle of light.

Whirls softly... slowly,

Like a wisp of smoke around the fire -

And the tom-toms beat,

And the tom-toms beat,

And the low beating of the tom-toms

Stirs your blood.

In this poem Hughes describes how the beating of the tom-toms makes you feel so alive; it makes you feel like dancing from its rhythmic and magical beats.

This poem makes me want to move my body. I love to dance! One of my favorite sounds is the sound of drums. There is nothing like that sound, with its powerful beats. Langston Hughes was dead-on when he said it "stirs your blood."

(**Catina McAlister**)

Wisdom

I stand most humbly

Before man's wisdom,

Knowing we are not

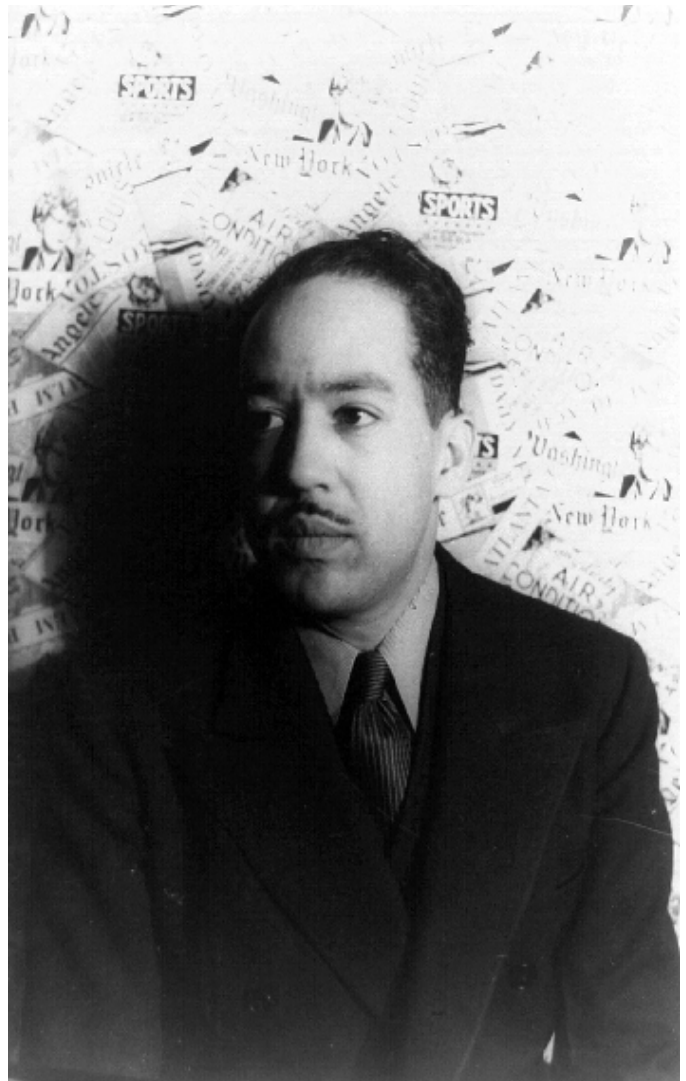
Really wise:

If we were

We'd open up the kingdom

And make earth happy

As the dreamed of skies.



This poem is not very long, but I believe it conveys the most important message. So often we put our belief in humans that don't give us wise guidance and end up leading us astray. Sometimes it can be parents, friends, or other well-meaning people, but we must follow our own inner sense.

I chose this short poem because I feel it is so powerful. I love how he speaks so truly of man's limitations and the pain of life. Then he goes on to give us hope of a better existence—a way they might be combined as one.

(**Danielle Rosales**)

Men are not at all wise, for they defy the laws of nature and science with their unrealistic ideas. Wisdom is infinite, given only to man from God. God created the stars in the sky, not man.

(**Helen Montgomery**)

My People

*The night is beautiful,
So the faces of my people.*

*The stars are beautiful,
So the eyes of my people.*

*Beautiful, also, is the sun.
Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people.*

This poem is about the love he has for his people. He uses different images [night, stars, sun] to describe the beauty of our people.

I really love how this poem is written so elegantly. It's deep, and I am fond of how the words flow and jump out at you. My favorite lines were "Beautiful, also, is the sun. / Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people." (Marseills McKenzie)

History

*The past has been a mint
Of blood and sorrow.
That must not be
True of tomorrow.*

The poem is saying that the past was full of pain and hurt, but that doesn't mean that the future is the same. I like this poem because there is truth to this. The past is the past. Let it be and look forward to the future because you can change that. (Diance Lor)

Too Blue

*I got those sad old weary blues.
I don't know where to turn.
I don't know where to go.
Nobody cares about you
When you sink so low.*

*What shall I do?
What shall I say?
Shall I take a gun
And put myself away?*

*I wonder if
One bullet would do?
As hard as my head is,
It would probably take two.*

*But I ain't got
Neither bullet nor gun—
And I'm too blue
To look for one.*

Langston Hughes, much like myself, experimented with blending poetry and music. He tried to make poetry sing the blues and beat with the jazz bass—simply using words. This poem accomplished bringing the blues to the page. It sings of a lonely soul, thinking about ending it all by shooting himself. He wonders if it will take one bullet or two. He thinks that no one cares, and he in turn doesn't care. The poem ends with him concluding he's too blue even to look for the bullet and gun to do the deed. (Takeyla Benton)

Spirituals

*Rocks and the firm roots of trees.
The rising shafts of mountains.
Something strong to put my hands on.*

*Sing, O Lord Jesus!
Song is a strong thing.
I heard my mother singing
When life hurt her:
Gonna ride in my chariot some day!*

*The branches rise
From the firm roots of trees.
The mountains rise
From the solid lap of earth.
The waves rise
From the dead weight of sea.*

*Sing, O black mother!
Song is a strong thing.*

Negro spirituals are what got colored folks through hard times. They sang to God for strength.

It reminds me of my grandmother, who was a very strong black woman. She often spoke of singing these songs and was very religious. Slaves were not allowed to read, so they sang praises to God! (Helen Montgomery)

Beale Street Blues***Love***

*Is a brown man's fist
With hard knuckles
Crushing the lips,
Blackening the eyes,--
Hit me again,
Says Clorinda.*

In this poem, Langston Hughes describes love as pain, hurt, and abuse in the eyes of Clorinda. He writes, "Love is a brown man's fist."

I think that the way he wrote this poem is clever. It's short and to the point. The girl thinks that love is when her black ("brown") man's fist is punching her lips and blackening her eyes. Most people would say it's an abusive relationship, and she needs to get out of it. (**Kiara Hill**)

Freedom

*Some folks think
By burning churches
They burn*

Freedom.

*Some folks think
By imprisoning me
They imprison
Freedom.
Some folks think
By killing a man
They kill
Freedom.
But Freedom
Stands up and laughs
In their faces
And says,
No—
Not so!
No!*

No matter what a person does from burning churches to killing a man, no one can kill freedom.

I really enjoyed this poem because it informs you that freedom is within. No man can steal that from you. (**Tracy Cunnigan**)



Poems about the Odyssey Class

Takeyla Benton

Like an unexpected poem I pieced together
from pieces of paper from different years
stained with different tears
and pasted with various hues of pain,
Odyssey is the beginning stanza
for the poem of our lives.

I've inherited inspiration from each individual,
made friends I like more than a little,
realized my dreams can come to life,
as long as I fight, cry a little,
lean on someone a little,
but continue to fight,
and never be afraid to write.

Michelle Bozeman

Odyssey
We are Odyssey
Odyssey of the world, our world
The world that we thought we knew.
We started this Odyssey
We are finishing it
We have molded it, embraced it,
And now we are carrying it like a torch,
A lit torch, and we will not put it down.
Don't touch our Odyssey!
It's ours. Just be there to
congratulate us when we cross the
finish line.

Morgan Chichester

I came to class nervous and uncertain
I wasn't sure what to expect.
Through Socrates, Macbeth, and Langston Hughes

I found my voice.
I was finally able to speak from my heart.
My classmates started out as strangers
But now they are my family.
I am so glad I said yes and started
on my Odyssey.

Tracy Cunnigan

A ball of joy!
A depression smile!
A few laughs
A few cries
A lot of reading and dissecting
A lot of role playing
A shy "hi" becomes a yell "hello!"
This is my class of Odyssey.

Kian Cunningham

This class is amazing!
There is always laughter in the class!
The vibe is awesome!
Edwina's laughter is always
a joy to my ear.
Odyssey is a positive place to be!
There is so much love in this class!

Bonita Greer

As we read, learning, learning,
Broadening our horizons
The words are always with us
Forever burning, burning
The imprint of knowledge in our brains.
Freedom, freedom, Education is freedom!

My Odyssey is like heaven



A journey to Paradise
 My Odyssey is like a vacation
 A trip to travel
 Then I realize it is
 All in my mind.
 The knowledge all will find.

Kiara Hill

My Odyssey is fun
 It's brand new, like when you
 Open a bag of chips
 My Odyssey is like old-fashioned lemonade,
 Sweet with kindness and sour with attitude.
 My Odyssey is an adrenaline rush,
 Amazing.

Marie Hill

Strugglers and overcomers, survivors,
 Diverse, co-ed, young and middle aged, seniors,
 Tall, short, average height, thick and small,
 Shy, bold, talkative, quiet, childful and childless
 Common goal to sail continually
 on this Odyssey journey
 taking our education on to the next level
 taking the tools we learned in Odyssey with us
 to help us as we continue to gain momentum.
 I'd like to say Hats Off to all those in Odyssey
 2010-2011
 with this admirable honorable mention:
 Keep going to the finish line with much ambition.

Ray Migizi Hopp

Our Class, 2011 Odyssey

The beautiful bountiful diversity
 of our patchwork Odyssey quilt.
 We all come together every week,
 on the hump,
 to loquaciously learn

seemingly soaking up years of wise knowledge
 from the intellectualism
 of our past philosophical predecessors.
 We are short and tall
 from young to mature to seniority,
 big or small,
 we are all flowers
 of unique universal undying personalities.
 We are mixed colors from radiant rainbows,
 and all of us are also the gigantic gold pieces
 found at the beginning of the precious prisms of
 life.
 We are friends, we are family, we are individuals.
 We are Odyssey! School year of 2011 ends with
 sending us to the stars and heavens,
 and we have each other.
 Thank you, higher power!
 We have an attitude of gratitude
 for all the Odyssey Project's Blessings.
 Thank you!

Odyssey Journey

I spread my wings to take a flight
 on this everlasting journey in education.
 Our professors are the wind beneath our wings.
 We all become heroes when we get our certificates
 at our 2011 Class graduation.
 Eagles, we fly high into the wondrous sky
 toward the heavens and stars.
 We got this chance to prove that yes
 we too are intellectual and worthy
 of our haloes.
 Many thanks to our alumni
 who have given us much inspiration
 to excel and to achieve our life odyssey's
 preparatory flight of freedom
 Our Odyssey journey has made us
 more than who we once were



and now we are better beings
 to help heal this world in which
 we all as brothers and sisters
 with all living things can grow and change.
 Life is changing, changing is life.
 Journey well.
 Much love, much respect,
 and many blessings for you all.
 Journey well.

Trendell Jones

The Transition

I know someone who is cool and mellow.
 I know someone who is true and won't lie to a fellow.
 I can recall a sunny afternoon, dressed up, crisp cut,
 My tie on looking smooth. I walked into an office,
 Met a woman five feet, you see.
 We engaged in a conversation about Odyssey.
 I reached out for a helping hand. Not a word,
 But her firm handshake said here's your chance.
 My personal life turned for the worse, chaotic,
 The high I had the first night of class, I dropped it.
 I felt in my life I was failing and it showed in my work.
 But the five foot woman said you're not alone.
 Right here we start first.
 I started to do better with my life and relationships.
 I met a group of people who are sharp and intelligent.
 The class has been a blast due to the uniqueness you all brought to it.
 Thank you, teachers, for your time and educating.
 This Odyssey has been a blessing, and today we celebrate it.

Leah LaBarre

Scared to try, afraid to be alive
 Always ten steps behind.
 Alone, tired, and full of regret
 My heart felt like it was
 beginning to rip.

Then I took my first trip
 and was given a magnificent gift.
 My class, The Odyssey.

Now ten steps ahead and
 never looking back,
 I feel like I have found
 my family . . .
 My Odyssey!

Pamela Lee

We came, we saw, we conquered.
 We loved coming, seeing, and conquering.
 Look out, world!
 Odyssey Class of 2010-2011 is comin' at ya!

Diance Lor

Before I applied I was a zero
 When I started Odyssey
 I was slowly coming to life
 Now it's coming close to its end
 I'm feeling full of life
 I can now say I am my own hero.

Michael Lozano

All types of exciting feelings come up
 when coming to Odyssey.
 Knowing this is my first step to success
 I'll try my very best.



Catina McAlister

My Odyssey has been a roller coaster
 Bumpy, up and down, with twists and turns.
 In the beginning I felt as if I was way up
 on an emotional and educational high.
 Throughout this ride I have been down,
 ready to quit and get off this bumpy roller coaster.
 I decided to stay on with all its twists and turns
 because I've come too far to get off now.

Nikyra McCann

Different people
 Headed in different directions
 With one opportunity to succeed
 One wonderful lady
 Giving her all
 To help you to succeed
 What could be better?

Helen Montgomery

Fantastic voyage—
 That great 80's song
 That we all used to
 Dance to.
 Where the lyrics say "Come along let's take a ride,
 There's a party over here that ain't no jive"
 Reminds me of the Odyssey Project.
 We're at times offbeat, but we
 All remained in stride.

Edwina Robinson

The Odyssey class.

We are so bright and smart
 and so full of life

We all had things

that tried to hold us back.
 They said we wouldn't make it.
 They said we wouldn't be here today.
 They said we'd never amount to anything.

But I beg to differ.
 I am glad to say we are on our way,
 growing more and more each day.

Our Odyssey class.
 So many of us have come out of our caves
 and developed beautiful words,
 expression,
 and love for each other.
 So much caring and sharing.

We are proud to be
 the beautiful Class of 2011.
 Hey!

Danielle Rosales

I did not have to buy a ticket,
 but I have spent the last nine months
 on a fantastic journey.
 Through the minds of great thinkers,
 through the pain of amazingly courageous souls,
 to acquire knowledge that no one can take away,
 that I can share if you wish to stay.
 Smiling faces have greeted me each week
 and these friendships are mine to keep.
 Now it saddens me that this weekly
 Odyssey journey has come to an end.
 What will I do with this extra time to spend?
 But I know this is truly only the beginning,
 and I am well on my way to a lifetime of
 questioning
 and gaining new knowledge each day.



Insight out of Darkness: A Visit from Matthew Weed

It's impressive enough to have earned a Ph.D., and even more impressive to have a background of degrees from Yale, Harvard, and Princeton. When you discover the individual who accomplished this is a blind diabetic who now holds the position of Associate Director at the Wisconsin Institute of Discovery at UW-Madison, you are amazed and inspired.

Matthew Weed, born in Colorado in 1970, spoke about life being an ever evolving puzzle he has to figure out.

"Basic issues, like how to get around, don't always have an easy fix." He struggled with daily things like getting around on campus, grocery shopping, and school tasks.

"I had to carry around a huge backpack... I typed my papers; then had to have a special instructor translate what I wrote to hand in."

Weed didn't let things like this stop him. He pushed through six difficult years after gaining his Ph.D. in Genetics. He roller blades and travels overseas. He even pushed to gain employment on Capitol Hill.

"Giving up would have meant death," he said. "When I was very young my mother told me I would have to do everything twice as hard just to get where everyone else gets normally."



The Class of 2011 Odyssey sat amazed and eager to ask questions.

One student, Bonita Greer, commented, "After listening to him, now we have no excuse for failure."

Matthew Weed is truly a testament that inner strength and unwavering determination along with a strong support network can help anyone willing to achieve the unbelievable. (**Takeyla Benton**)

Matthew Weed makes my heart smile. His Odyssey through the Ivy League as a blind man is both inspiring and harrowing.

There are the highs of graduation from Yale, Princeton, and Harvard and the lows of learning to lean on others amid the stubborn refusal of the League to bend so he could fit in.

Matthew is continually, beautifully, and constantly rising. He is an inspiration to me that whatever obstacles I face as a young person with Cerebral Palsy, I mustn't grow weary.

I know Matthew has his reasons for not taking solace in Western religion, and I can respect that. He isn't someone to shove his accomplishments in others' faces. I am glad he did not get run over at Harvard. His words about giving up will stay with me forever: "Giving up would have meant death." (**Stephanie Pamperin**)

He has struggled and worked very hard, but he has never given up hope. His story is motivating me not to quit! (**Kian Cunningham**)

Something I will take away from Matthew Weed's visit is that anyone can make it. Matthew made me feel so good inside because I know I have no excuse for not finishing school. The next time I see someone that is blind I will offer a hand, even if it turns out they don't need it. (**Kiara Hill**)

He gets help for his meds, glucose testing, and getting around from various volunteers and students. He said he is not an atheist but is also not Jewish, Muslim, or Christian either. When he was seven, he asked several times if God made us in His own image, then why can't he see? He

said he never got a satisfactory answer. . . . It was definitely inspirational to hear how he persevered and was determined to make it, and how his mother was determined her son was going to make it and worked hard to make sure he got help and the resources he needed. If Matthew can make it with all the challenges he has faced, we can make it. **(Marie Hill)**

We here in Madison are fortunate to have Mr. Weed work on our UW campus. He is employed at the new state-of-the-art Wisconsin Institute for Discovery building with the former UW Chancellor John Wiley. He has competed in the 1998 Roller Blade Marathon. He loves the big challenges and goes for them. . . . We as humans love our independence, but we shouldn't be afraid to receive help either. Always continue on in life, no matter the road blocks and obstacles. With believing that we can do it, we will! **(Ray Migizi Hopp)**

I received inspiration from Matthew Weed. Listening to his life story is truly a heartfelt testimony. He made it to the goal he set for himself

with much help all of the time. I have no excuse for my life. I can do anything I please to do. If I don't give up and keep on fighting forward, I will get there one day at a time. **(Trendell Johnson)**

Personally I want to have all his confidence and motivation to use for myself. I want to be able to push through all of life's ups and downs with an attitude like Matthew Weed's. **(Leah LaBarre)**

I was very, very impressed with Matthew. I know a lot of people who can see that have not accomplished an eighth of what he has. He is a prime example of "You can do anything" and "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." **(Pamela Lee)**

I loved his response to the question of whether he ever felt like giving up. His response was, "Giving up would have meant death." That is exactly how I feel. I will take away his hunger of learning and not giving up; not letting things get in the way of achieving what he wanted. **(Catina McAlister)**



Matthew to me is a non-believer. He seemed OK until he answered my question about God. I understand why he would think that, but God loves him. It's nice that he has a Ph.D., but the Bible states, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and to lose his soul?" (**Nikyra McCann**)

Throughout all the adversity he faced, he remained positive, continued his education, and followed his dreams. (**Marseills McKenzie**)

What impresses me most is the fact that he is quite possibly the only blind diabetic rollerblading marathoner, which is pretty rad. On a serious note, Matthew is truly an inspirational person. His experiences and the humility he's learned through them will definitely not be forgotten. (**Dalonte Nobles**)

Never give up and be grateful because someone else has been through worse. Have an attitude of gratitude. (**Edwina Robinson**)

Matthew Weed is a perfect example of going against all odds, a true underdog. . . . People have been very helpful to him, from faculty and co-workers, to family members and students. At the end of the day, "no one does it alone," he remarks. "We all needed someone else to help us to get to where we are." His story reminds us all that there is absolutely no barrier if the will is there. If there are barriers, they are self-imposed. Let us remember that we're always surrounded by an infinite amount of help, and there's always a way around an obstacle if our inner strength surpasses all. Thank you, Mr. Matthew Weed, for providing us with the inspiration to move forward. (**Eric Rodgers**)

It was inspirational to listen to Matthew talk about his educational journey. I can't even imagine the amount of work it has taken him to accomplish what he has. I think what I took away was that everyone needs help. You can't get where you're going without it. (**Danielle Rosales**)





THE ODYSSEY PROJECT

CLASS OF 2010-2011 GRADUATION CEREMONY

Great Hall, Memorial Union
800 Langdon Street, UW-Madison Campus



WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 6:30-8 PM

Reception Following

You are cordially invited to attend the graduation ceremony for students of the UW-Madison Odyssey Project Class of 2010-2011. Project Director Emily Auerbach and Writing Coach Marshall Cook will present certificates attesting to students' successful completion of six introductory UW credits in English. Wisconsin's former First Lady Jessica Doyle will make congratulatory remarks.

From September to May, students in this rigorous humanities course have discussed great works of literature, American history, philosophy, and art history while developing skills in critical thinking and persuasive writing. The evening will include brief remarks or performances by each graduating student; recognition of supplemental teachers Jean Feraca, Gene Phillips, and Craig Werner; acknowledgment of Odyssey Project donors and supporters; and music and refreshments.

Web site: www.odyssey.wisc.edu