

Odyssey Oracle

Created for and by the students of the UW-Madison Odyssey Project

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Happy Birthday!

Angel Lightfoot... September 27th
Curtis Williams...September 30th
Cameron Daniels...October 11th
Stanley Sallay...October 14th

The Odyssey Web site compels
you!

www.odyssey.wisc.edu

America is Like...

Coach asked for metaphors or similes to describe America. Here are a few of your best similes:

“America is like...”

- “a full meal” (Anne Meyer)
- “a box of crayons” (Angel Lightfoot)
- “a box of chocolates” (Lorena Lovejoy)
- “a toilet” (Molinda Henry)
- “a runaway train with madmen at the controls” (Tillman Morris)
- “Bologna in the middle of a sandwich, with the bread being different countries trying to make mincemeat out of us” (Roslyn Phillips)
- “a boxing ring” (Cameron Daniels)
- “the Great Barrier Reef” (Tiffani Puccio)
- “a rain forest” (Lakeitha Sanyang)

•“an untitled book” (Stanley Sallay)

•“the starry night sky” (Katy Farrens)

•“a bowl of calico bean soup” (Angela McAlister)

•“America is like a postcard. It’s beautiful on the front, but on the back it’s blank, and it’s up to you to write in what you have to say.” (Kathleen Brown)

•“America is like a garden. All types of plants grow there, beautiful flowers as well as weeds—uncontrolled. Each plant is necessary for its quality. Some plants will provide nourishment; others will kill you if you digest without proper information. America is like a garden that needs water, air and sunshine in order to keep growing.” (E. Oroki Rice)

•“America is like a zoo, a beautiful place to visit with lots of different kinds of animals that should be free but are in cages.” (Latoya Robinson)



Odyssey Students Respond to Art Works

Asked to pick one ancient Greek or Roman art work in the Western Humanities book that stood out for them, Odyssey students chose objects ranging from Roman buildings to Greek statues. Here are a few of the choices:

Boy Struggling with a Goose

To me it shows that this little boy is one day going to be a man. It represents strength and confidence, but at the same time it also represents a child playing with an animal. **Lorena Lovejoy**

I just love this cute art. The boy looks brave to struggle with the goose. It looks so real, showing even how he chuckles at the poor goose. I like the detail, from his hair to his body, and how it seems like the goose is choked. **Lily Komino**



I just thought that this was one of the cuter or more fun pictures/sculptures that was among the many pages that we looked at. My daughter is about the same size, and it reminded me of her, with the chubby legs and face. **Katy Farrens**

I haven't seen many child-like sculptures. It's delicate yet amusing to me. **Kathleen Brown**

Nike of Samothrace

I like it because it flows. It's like the freedom of the human spirit. **Derrick Washington**

I like angels, and this work of art looks like an angel without a head. **Sandra Ramirez**

Nike, sportswear: The two have become synonymous in



U.S. culture. I pride myself in thinking for myself, not being easily influenced by pop culture. In contrast, I have to admit to becoming swayed by propaganda and advertising regarding this

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Writer Spotlight: *Richard Wright*

Richard Wright had to fight for the right to read books!

He was born outside of Natchez, Mississippi on September 4, 1908 (some sources list 1904) and traveled around the South with his family a lot as a boy. His father, Nathaniel, an illiterate sharecropper, left the family for another woman. His mother, Ella Wilson, a well-educated school teacher, had to work as a cook to support the family.

They moved to Memphis when Wright was six years old. When his mother became ill, they moved to Jackson, Mississippi to live with her mother.

Wright was mostly self-taught and never attended school after age 15. He spent a lot of time in libraries, especially when he lived in Memphis, Tennessee. Since the library had a policy against lending books to blacks, he forged a note asking to be allowed to check out books and signed the name of his white employer. (See excerpt)

He eventually traveled north to Chicago and became an activist in the Communist Party in the 1930's. As part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Federal Writer's Project (to give writers employment and income during the Depression), he began writing short stories and ultimately novels.

His best-known work is the novel *Native Son*, the story

of Bigger Thomas, a petty thief who is hired as a chauffeur by a rich white man. Thomas kills the man's daughter, then his own girlfriend, and is arrested, tried, and condemned. Thomas's lawyer argues that he can't be held responsible for his crimes because a society that won't accept him as a full human being drove him to kill.

Wright left America, not long after *Native Son* came out, and settled in Paris where he published novels, short stories, plays, essays, poems, and memoirs until his death in 1960.

Sources

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http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/english/ms-writers/dir/wright_richard/

Keillor, Garrison,
The Writer's Almanac for September 4.

Wright, Richard,
Black Boy

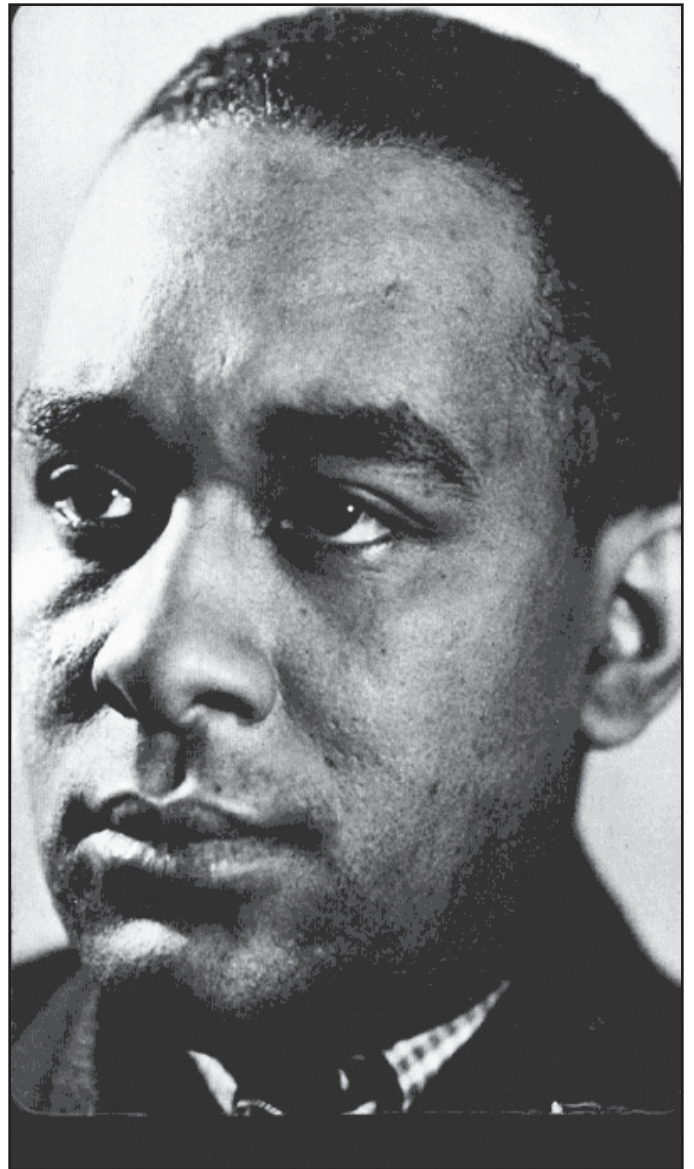
Wright, Richard,
Native Son

Here's a scene from Richard Wright's autobiography, Black Boy, in which he seeks

access to the public library. Notice how he uses dialogue to render the scene vividly, rather than simply telling you what happened.

That afternoon I addressed myself to forging a note. Now, what were the names of books written by H.L. Mencken? I did not know any of them. I finally wrote what I thought would be a foolproof note: Dear Madam:

Continued on page 4





This Is What I Think

By Kathleen Brown

There comes a time
and a place
where everyone has to be
Wednesday nights
where their Odyssey program
meets
I will admit
that some of these people if I'd
seen
them on the street
I would not even bother to
speak
But through this program
I found out everyone is unique
Molinda's outspoken
Tillman knows his history
Tiffani loves art
And I like to write
no matter if my words aren't
spelled

right
Derrick likes to read
Roslyn wants her own book
Troy says what's on his mind
and Yasmin always shines in her
time
Oroki has her view
and Mary has her point
but Curtis has the voice
to tell us what he wants
Angel is crazy
just like me
Erica, Dwayne, and Brian
have their own technique
this is as far as I have gotten
for this poem
but before it ends
every name will belong
this is what I think.

Wright, *continued from page 3*

Will you please let this nigger boy—I used the word “nigger” to make the librarian feel that I could not possibly be the author of the note—have some books by H.L.

Mencken? I forged the white man's name.

I entered the library as I had always done when on errands for whites, but I felt that I would

somehow slip up and betray myself. I doffed my hat, stood a respectful distance from the desk, looked as unbookish as possible, and waited for the white patrons to be taken care of. When the desk was clear of people, I still waited. The white librarian looked at me.

“What do you want, boy?”

As though I didn't possess the power of speech, I stepped forward and simply handed her the forged note, not parting my lips.

“What books by Mencken does he want?” she asked.

“I don't know, ma'am,” I said, avoiding her eyes.

“Who gave you this card?”

“Mr. Falk,” I said.

“Where is he?”

“He's at work, at the M—Optical Company,” I said. “I've been in here for him before.”

“I remember,” the woman said. “But he never wrote notes like this.”

Oh, God, she's suspicious. Perhaps she would not let me have the books? If she had turned her back at that moment, I would have ducked out the door and never gone back. Then I thought of a bold idea.

“You can call him up, ma'am,” I said, my heart pounding.

“You're not using these books, are you?” she asked pointedly.

“Oh, no, ma'am. I can't read.”

“I don't know what he wants by Mencken,” she said under her breath.

I knew now that I had won; she was thinking of other things and the race question had gone out of her mind. She went to the shelves. Once or twice she looked over her shoulder at me, as though she was still doubtful. Finally she came forward with two books in her hand.



Epilepsy

By Melissa Plasky

ep-i-lep-sy (ĕp'ə-lĕp'sē)
n., pl. -sies.

Any of various neurological disorders characterized by sudden recurring attacks of motor, sensory, or psychic malfunction with or without loss of consciousness or convulsive seizures.

[from Greek *epilēpsis*, to lay hold of; to seize.]

Why I Missed Odyssey Class on September 20

As I walked up to my boss, I knew it wasn't going to be good. My palms were all clammy, my stomach was in knots, and the inside of my body felt as if someone was stabbing me with

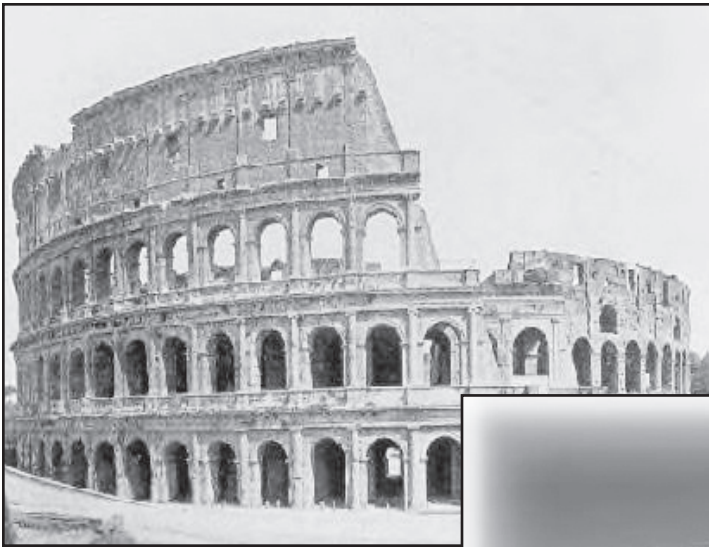
a thousand pins and needles. I approached her and said, 'I need to leave. There's something wrong.' I know what's wrong but I'm not saying anything.

As I was driving down the Beltline, my exit seemed to draw farther and farther away. I finally arrived home, changed clothes, and walked to my mom's house. I sat on her floor knowing it was coming. She looked at me and knew. Not even five minutes later, my body flew into full seizure activity. At this point, I'm aware of what's going on, but I'm not feeling like I'm there. I hear the EMS [Emergency Medical Services personnel] talking to me, but I can't respond. [A seizure] is nothing out of the ordinary.

I found out later that week I have epilepsy. It's incurable but controllable if I spend the rest of my life on medication. One of the worst things is I'm the first person on both sides of my family with this. Now I have the mental battle without answer of whether or not I passed it on to my daughter.

There are many types of seizures. Five percent of all Americans will have a seizure in their lifetime.

If you ever see someone having a seizure, it's better to get help right away and not to try to hold the person down or give them water. The best thing is to stay by them after you call for help. It's uncontrollable and unexpected, but don't be afraid.



them [to include slaves in art].

Molinda Henry

I liked the Black Youth Singing because not only is the work very detailed but it

also shows the existence of blacks in ancient Greece. **Yasmin Horton**

Roman Colosseum

It reminds me of the stadiums we have now. It also looks like the Coliseum [here in Madison].

Angela Williams

I have always admired the architecture of the Colosseum. I could only imagine seeing a play or even a battle at this place. The structure as well as the size is just amazing. I hope one day I will

be able to see it in front of me, instead of just looking at pictures. Considering how ancient it is, it shows that the ingenuity of the Romans truly stands the test of time. **Tiffani Puccio**

Athena Parthenos

This statue represents a female goddess and warrior. Athena was the goddess of wisdom and associated with war. She was the daughter of Zeus and an adulteress. This statue stood out because of all the work that was put into it. **Juanita Wilson**

Mithras Slaying the Bull

I picked this art work because it shows strength, life, and death. It depicts a man doing what he has to do to feed his family, while the animals also try to take the advantage of death, which is part of the circle of life. **Curtis Williams**



forgotten goddess. I'd overlooked the power of this woman. I learned about her many years ago, but I'd forgotten about her as well as many other women of history.

Despite her missing head and outstretched arms, she remains bold. These missing body parts give her a depiction of being supernatural. With her garments draped about her, her pose is one of ripping forward in a strong breeze.

As I read more about Nike, the goddess, I discovered she is used as a hood ornament on the elite Rolls-Royce. There she is referred to as the Spirit of Ecstasy. How fitting! As a womanist, I apologize to her for being guilty of not saluting her, not giving her proper honors. Nike, the goddess, represents much more than a winged symbol on a pair of gym shoes.

Oroki Rice

Black Youth Singing

I was shocked at the existence of black Africans (slaves) used as models. Mighty "civilized" of





Detail of Trajan's Victory Column

The fact that the piece is so large with an astounding amount of detail is amazing in itself. It's wrapped around the building, which gives it a feel of eternity because you don't know where it starts nor where it ends. Speaking as a well-talented artist myself, I'm still aware of the degree of difficulty of sculpting. Most artists tend to stray away from detail if doing something on a large scale, and this one is 645 feet. **Stanley Sallay**

The mystery of Santurce Jersey #21

During the September 13th Odyssey writing session, Coach challenged the class to discover the significance of a particular baseball jersey, #21 for “Santurce.” Brian Benford was first to take up the charge, did a great job, and won himself a \$30 gift certificate to the University Bookstore. By the next week’s class, Juanita Wilson, Anne Meyer, Troy Terry, Lily Komino, Derrick Washington, and Oroki Rice had also offered various solutions to the mystery.

Oroki, a self-admitted “information addict” and “avid reader,” came up with the most thorough answer, and we’ve printed a portion of it here.

Santurce #21

By E. Oroki Rice

I’d never even heard of Santurce.

Thanks to the Internet, I now know that Santurce is the head of San Juan, Puerto Rico’s commercial and cultural life. It represents city life at its richest. Travelers find it invigorating with an extraordinary museum, a performing arts center, fine restaurants and clubs.

Santurce was originally settled by native Tainos. The area later became home to a significant population of slaves of African ancestry, who arrived from the neighboring Danish Virgin Islands. Due to the abundance of crabs found in the area, the district became commonly known as “Cangrejos” (Spanish for “crabs”).

Throughout the centuries, the district continued to grow due to its location at the crossroads between San Juan and its southern suburbs.

Stay on track, Oroki. Remember, this is about the #21 jersey.

The Puerto Rican Baseball League started as a semi-pro circuit in

1938, luring Negro League greats like Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, and Leon Day. Santurce’s powerful teams of the 1950’s featured an outfield that included Willie Mays and Roberto Clemente, #21.

The Pittsburgh Pirates claimed Puerto Rican born, twenty-year-old Roberto Clemente from the Dodgers’ Montreal farm club for \$4,000 in the 1954 minor league draft. Clemente became one of baseball’s greatest players, but he still did not receive a great deal of national media attention until 1971 (the year I graduated from high school), when Pittsburgh met Baltimore in the World Series.

On New Year’s Day of 1972, Clemente boarded a DC-7 loaded with relief supplies for earthquake victims of Managua, Nicaragua. Shortly after takeoff, the plane crashed into the Atlantic Ocean, a mile off the Puerto Rican coast. There were no survivors. The five-year mandatory waiting period for Hall of Fame eligibility was waived, and Clemente was inducted in 1973. The Pirates retired his uniform #21.

Before today I knew that Clemente was a famous baseball player. I was pretty certain he was of Hispanic ancestry. There is a high school in my home town of Chicago that bears his name. I’ve gained more understanding about Clemente’s dedication to overcoming the odds to play professional baseball. Due to the racism of his time, there was no room for him. He and his contemporaries journeyed uncharted ground to clear a path for others.

I’ve only met a few of The Odyssey Project’s participants personally. I suspect that, like Clemente, most of us have had a few doors slammed in our faces for a

variety of reasons. Personally, I have committed to devote my time and energy to fulfill the requirements of The Project. I’m feeling good about myself for vowing to my Creator, myself, and the Odyssey Project family to finish. Like Clemente, we all can be victorious. We have the option to be the best at whatever we choose to do.

May the spirit of Roberto Clemente, #21, live on!

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BaseballLibrary.com
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Brian, Anne add to Clemente’s story

Are you implying that the Odyssey Project, like the Crabbers, will get us to the majors? I rather like that. ...As a child I was aware of the historical context that he played in (being a black Latino in the 50’s and 60’s). What escaped me was how much of a humanitarian he was and continues to be via his legacy.

Brian Benford

In an era of pampered, egocentric athletes who charge big bucks to little kids for autographs, the manner in which Clemente lived and died is all the more poignant and praiseworthy. As he once observed, “Any time you have an opportunity to make things better and you don’t, then you are wasting your time on this earth.”

Anne Meyer

A final challenge from the Coach

Who will be the first to go the Odyssey Web site (<http://www.odyssey.wisc.edu/>) to discover why the first Odyssey course was named after Roberto Clemente?