

# ODYSSEY ORACLE

## INTRODUCING THE CLASS OF 2014



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as a student in this project.  
However, I feel scared."*

*"I feel like I can ask questions  
and speak up."*



*"It's like I have a future again."*

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*"I  
felt  
smart  
after  
all."*





*"Writing is a powerful tool that can transcend many boundaries including time and place."*



*"Writing to me is like a journey, the journey of pen and paper to explore my mind and thinking."*



*"I am a writer who longs to have more depth."*

*"As I write, my thoughts and emotions run free, going deep into who I truly am."*



*"Thank heavens for spell check!"*



*Photos by Gene Phillips and Hedi Rudd '12*

# BEGINNING FEELINGS

*Odyssey students in the Class of 2014 were asked, "How did you feel when you learned you'd been accepted into this class?" Some also wrote about how they felt about our first class on September 4. Here are excerpts:*

I feel comfortable in the class. I feel like I can ask questions and speak up.

**(Zeynab Ahmed)**

I was very excited. It felt like I was getting another great opportunity at my education.

**(Isis Bernard)**

I felt like I have done a big thing for me and my daughter, so I was proud of myself.

**(Christopher Bester)**

Overjoyed **(LaPrice Black)**

I was filled with joy and happiness—a step closer to my goals. **(Mallory Carter)**

Ecstatic **(Lucia Chikowero)**

joy, excitement, emotional, excited, ambitious . . . almost everything positive, like I just crossed the finish line in first place after a long race.

**(Kunga Chokten)**

I was excited and relieved, blessed. . . I was very impressed by the teachers and by the heart and love that all of you put into your teaching. To me it felt almost like ministry. You all have a calling and I feel truly blessed to be part of this wonderful journey. Thank you again for giving me a chance and kudos

on knowing everyone's names. That was amazing. **(Charllienne Cotto)**

Joyful and honored! **(Nafisa Davis)**

very excited but also incredibly nervous and anxious **(Tracker Dunn)**

I want to say I was overjoyed, but I don't even think that's the proper word for it. I FELT SMART AFTER ALL. **(Jackieta Fairley)**

I was happy. I really didn't know if I would get accepted, but I was super glad. **(Jaquan Fleming)**

Special **(Kelli Green)**

I felt accomplished to have made it into the class. I had strong feelings of excitement and pride to be moving forward in my education. **(Jamie Hanson)**

anxious and eager to begin a new chapter, and mostly encouraged by the professors. I've heard great things about this program. TRANSFORMATION! **(LaTrease Hibbler)**

I felt blessed. I really was excited that I had gotten my point across that I am really passionate about finally taking control of my life and empowering myself by education. **(Nyagoa Hoth)**



I felt great and also a sense of responsibility. I have to finish and continue my education because a degree represents my only form of acceptance by society. **(Robert James)**

I am very happy to be accepted as a student in this project. I think this is the only chance that can help me accomplish my goals. However, I feel scared. I am afraid I cannot catch up since my English is not good. **(Milli Yeung Oi Lau)**

I was very excited. I saw my future and have been reminding myself to take this as my first step. **(Simone Lawrence)**

I felt an amazing feeling of excitement and joy. I felt blessed to have such a great opportunity to learn and grow as a person. I'm very thankful to be part of the Odyssey Project. . . . Walking into the first day of class was a great experience filled with many different feelings of excitement. Listening to so many people with such wonderful hearts, ready to help us, made my eyes water. It is amazing to know that out there are so many people like you and many others in the Odyssey Project that are willing to devote their time, love, and care into helping others reach their goals and grow as individuals. I am so blessed and thrilled to have the opportunity to be an Odyssey student. I look forward to learn the most and give the best of me.

**(Vanessa Lopes Maia)**

I was very happy to find out that I was accepted. I told any and everybody that would listen. **(Michael Martin)**

I was excited because I am able to learn and refresh my memory from the last time I attended school. Also this is going to push me to further my education.

**(Amber McCarley)**

I felt relieved that I accomplished a goal I had set for myself. **(Derick McCray)**

I was happy and very excited and I still am. I changed plans I had so I could stay here to attend these classes. I plan to be successful! **(Starr Miles)**

I was nervous, frantic, scared, and worried. I really wanted to get into this project. I was excited and fluttered. **(Janet Shelton)**

excited **(Jeannine Shoemaker)**

I was really excited. I felt very blessed. **(Toshiana Northington)**

I was excited, nervous, afraid, challenged, and ecstatic. I felt I was really accomplishing goals others didn't think I would do. It's like I have a future again. **(Alisha Taylor)**

Upon being notified that I had been accepted into the class, the feeling I had was a little overwhelming. I felt a strong sense of pride knowing that I was selected. Along with that pride came pure motivation and determination to go through with it. **(Shiquille Ward)**

Happy and ready to start a new journey **(Latrice White)**

# ARE WE WRITERS?



I know I'm a writer. Instead of thinking it, I have a lot to say. The more I read, the more I can't stop thinking. So I write what I was thinking down. My mind will be all over the place thinking, so if I write it down, I

will have a lot to say. The more I write, the better I will get. Writing to me is like a journey, the journey of the pen and paper to explore my mind and thinking. **(Latrice White)**



I feel that I am able to comfortably put my ideas into words and express my point of view to the reader with very much attention to the overall objective of the reading as well as fine details. In school I

was always one for writing, but I often found myself reading comments from teachers about my organization skills. . . . With this class, I plan on becoming much more of an accomplished, polished writer. **(Shiquille Ward)**



Yes, I think anyone with thoughts, opinions, or views is a writer or potential writer. I think writing comes in many forms and variations. There's poetry, journalism, storytelling, memoirs, etc. I

don't write a lot down, but I think the most important part of being a writer is deeply thinking about things. I plan to get the knowledge and skill of transferring ideas to paper. **(Alisha Taylor)**

I like writing when I can sit down and clear my mind. I write with a lot of feeling. I also have a tendency to pick up on others' feelings also.



When I was younger, I used to be able to sit down late at night and write an exam paper and get an A+ on it. I don't think I could do that now, but I still think that I could write with a lot of feelings. I'm very

excited about writing in our program. . . . I look at life with more humor than I used to because if not it can bring you down. There is enough sadness going on in our world today. Also thank heavens for spell check! **(Jeannine Shoemaker)**



Writing normally comes easy to me. I usually find that the best time to write is when I am flooded with emotions. Just like any writer, I do have positives and strengths, with

one being that writing comes naturally to me. Along with the positives and strengths comes negatives and weaknesses in the form of occasional writer's block as well as editing. **(Janet Shelton)**



Yes, I consider myself a writer because I don't only like to write essays for class homework but I also love to write my own personal poems. The negative part about writing is I have always

had hard times with my punctuation. . . . My goal this year is I plan to be able to write an essay without a lot of red pen marked on it. **(Toshiana Northington)**

As a writer I feel I came to the right place to learn how to write better and express my thoughts and ideas and imagination. I have poor handwriting and difficulty with



punctuation and exact grammar. But I have many ideas and thoughts about writing about life experiences, fiction, and fantasy. I have even wanted to write a screen play . . . but I simply don't know where to begin. I know you have to be a good writer to even have a shot. I think I could write a book maybe one day if I could become a better writer. Grammar/punctuation is to me the one thing that I must improve on first. **(Starr Miles)**



Yes, I am a writer. I love to write poetry and express my feelings. My aunt, who was a teacher and is now a principal in Florida, taught me that the pen is mightier than the sword. When I put words on paper describing my feelings, I was never wrong. When writing, my frustration is mostly with punctuation. My goal for writing is to get better punctuation and better grammar. **(Derick McCray)**



Not all the time do I feel like I am a writer. Depending on the subject, I can be a great writer. If there was an article I had to read and later write about, I would have a somewhat hard time getting started. At times, I don't fully understand what I read. If there was a picture I had to write about, I would have no problem telling what I see in that picture. I hope that I can learn to understand things I am reading more clearly. **(Amber McCarley)**



I do not think I am a writer. I used to write short stories and poems when I was in grade school. I never thought I was or was going to be good at it. The biggest problem of writing to me

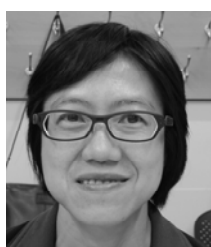
was my spelling and penmanship. I would love to start writing again. With your help, maybe I will. **(Michael Martin)**



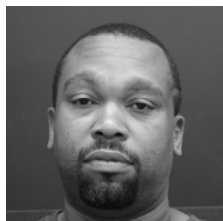
I am not sure if I should call myself a writer. However, I love to write. When I write, I am able to express my true feelings and thoughts with freedom. I enjoy writing because as I write my thoughts and emotions run free, going deep into who I truly am. Life can get so busy, where people don't have much time to listen to others or they just don't have the time to share their thoughts and feelings. Therefore, writing is a moment where thoughts, feelings, emotions, facts, and discoveries get recorded, and people have a chance to share, learn, and travel. I would love to improve my vocabulary as well as many other areas of writing. I am ready to learn and become the best I can be. **(Vanessa Lopes Maia)**



I am a good writer in terms of detail and telling my story. I do need help with my grammar and ways to make my voice clearer. I think that with help on punctuation I will be great at the art of writing. **(Simone Lawrence)**



I never thought I could write before I came to the U.S. I was so scared when I had to do my writing assignments at MATC. I had no idea how to write. I had a hard time knowing how to spell, to structure a sentence, and to transition from one paragraph to another. I had to talk with my instructor, do online research, and use a dictionary. However, I think I am a writer. . . . After this class, I hope I can have more ideas to write and reduce my use of the dictionary and research when I am doing my writing assignments. **(Milli Lau)**



I love to write. Probably all of my immediate family (five) would consider themselves writers. I have had mostly positive experiences concerning writing in my past. When I write, I sometimes find it hard to stay focused. I want to become good enough at writing to possibly write a newspaper article or screenplay/script. **(Robert James)**



Yes, I am a writer. I enjoy expressing myself, and writing is the easiest way of doing so. I kept a journal growing up, and it helped me keep myself together and deal with the difficulties of growing up. I also love the fact that you can make a record of things, be it thoughts or feelings or a story that needs to be told. You can write about it, and it can be read at a later time. You can tell your life story or your family's story, and it can be read one month, one year, or one hundred years from now. **(Nyagosa Hoth)**



... I consider myself a writer, but a very undeveloped writer. I often have sped ahead of myself, meaning I have a very clear and intuitive/visual sense for connecting my body with my mind. I am a tree, / I bloom freely. / Even my roots are branching off / to harvest many leaves. / True breath I breathe. / Righteousness I speak. / United! **(LaTrease Hibbler)**

I am certainly a writer. For me, it is my ultimate expression of what is inside my mind and my spirit. I write in my personal journal and often read it to guide me to the truth. These pages are recognizable to me instantly



for the way I scratched them down furiously and quickly . . . Last year during my birthday month I took the time to write about what I want to do over the following year. It was a way for me to think about and accomplish what I truly wanted and needed for my birthday—not a token from a shop I like or an evening out with friends but a gift of goals and being present with where my path is heading. My life has dramatically improved and I have grown immensely, thanks to writing. **(Jamie Hanson)**



I think I am a writer because that is my way of telling someone something in a comfortable way what I would like said if I'm not comfortable speaking. . . . It is also a way to relieve stress sometimes for me without yelling and screaming. When I am writing, I feel that my punctuation is out of place sometimes. I am so used to writing words wrong that I just do it without noticing. That is one thing I hope to get better at over the semesters. **(Kelli Green)**



I'm going to start with my goals. My first one is my penmanship. I feel my writing is not good. My second is to get more comfortable with it. When you ask if we're a writer, my first answer would be no. I have had bad experiences with writing. I believe there's a chance I would really like it. I love to read and have ideas of my own. I just never do anything with them, so my answer would be a no and a yes. I have a good imagination and it could go along with writing. I just need more work on writing. I'm willing to learn. **(Jaquan Fleming)**



I do consider myself somewhat of a writer. I write things down when I'm mad, sad, or happy. I used to have teachers that told me my writing was bad. I never took that to heart because I felt

as though I would always get better. When I do have to write, I get frustrated or brain freeze when I am told to write about something I do not know about. My goal for myself this year in class is to master the art of writing.

**(Jackieta Fairley)**



I absolutely consider myself a writer, but the type of writing I mostly do is very casual. One big instance of writing that I have done recently was as a contributor to an online Green

Bay Packers website. . . . Writing can take you and your audience to places that are only accessible through your imagination. I hope that through this process I will be able to hone my skill and impart an impression upon my audience. . . . I definitely feel that writing is a powerful tool that can transcend many boundaries including time and place.

Eventually I hope to leave a contribution that will reach farther than my hand ever could and last longer than any breath from my lips. I believe that writing is the means to achieve this goal. **(Tracker Dunn)**



No! I find putting my words on paper hard because I never feel I can express myself on paper!

My negative is proper usage of grammar. Positive is I can write small quotes. My goal is to

become a better writer and lose the fear of writing on a large scale! **(Nafisa Davis)**

I love to write at free will and at times. If given



a good topic, I will excel. It's hard for me to put words in a way that they make sense. I used to write poetry all the time as a teenager to express my stress. I still write songs all the time.

**(Charlienne Cotto)**



Yes. I would never have guessed it, but yes. In the last few years I've realized just how much I love writing and how much potential I have for it. In high school I skipped class a lot and

my essays were constructed last minute without much information. Since I didn't do well back then in English class, I hated it because it represented failure, and that was something I could never admit to being. When I did time in jail and had only myself to talk to, I started a journal on a piece of scratch paper. That piece of paper turned into a stack of papers to a notebook. Finally when I left jail I had four notebooks full of journal entries with me. . . . Today I still keep a journal full of thoughts, memories, struggles, plans, goals, and everything else that only words could express. So yes, I am a writer.

**(Kunga Chokten)**



Yes, I love writing and explaining myself. However, at times I feel I am not quite expressing myself to the extent of really making myself clear on the point I am trying to make. The reason I love

writing is I love to read. When I read what others have written, I also feel like I am lacking somehow. I would love to expand on that and bring in more meaning to what I have written. So in short, yes, I am a writer who longs to have more depth. **(Lucia Chikowero)**





Yes, I am a writer. I have so much still in me that needs to come out. I love the fact that I can give my paper to a teacher to proofread. They are helping me improve on my writing and speaking. . . . The

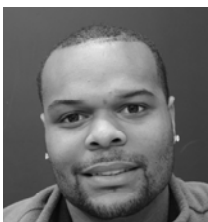
only thing that is frustrating is making sure it flows right and people understand what you are trying to say. I just have to remember to put myself in the reader's shoes. The goal I have is to learn new and big words, to expand my vocabulary and knowledge. Everything I learn and experience I want to share with someone else along down the line. **(Mallory Carter)**



No, I don't consider myself a writer. There is a fear that comes upon me when I have to write. I think it comes from when I was a teen and my friend went to the Army. I tried writing him letters, but I was stuck on this word—

remember. I couldn't spell it and was ashamed that I couldn't spell that word and probably other words, too. So I never really had a great interest in writing, but I'm looking forward to it now.

**(LaPrice Black)**



No, I don't consider myself a writer because I really don't write things down with a pen or pencil. I usually type things due to the fact that I don't have good handwriting. I spell things wrong

and am not the best with grammar. I usually try to replace a word that means the same thing as the word I could not spell. I would like to be comfortable with myself when I put things down.

**(Christopher Bester)**

I wouldn't really consider myself as much of a formal writer. I do have a very active imagination. However, I don't always know how to put on



paper what I am thinking in an organized matter. . . . My teachers would sometimes say that I didn't stick to my thesis statement and that I wasn't making much sense, but I do

enjoy writing poetry and sometimes other things. I am just not the best at it. **(Isis Bernard)**



Am I a writer? I would say both yes and no. It is easier for me to write about something I am passionate about—for example, politics. I am a very political person, and the way I usually

express my opinions is through writing. The reason I also answer no to the question is because I cannot write about something I have no emotional attachment to. . . . I grew up in a country where English wasn't the first language, so I have mostly bad experience with the whole language, from grammar to essay writing. Over time I was able to comprehend the language and accept it. One of the goals I have and probably the main reason I wanted to be in the program is to learn how to write about topics I am not emotionally attached to. **(Zeynab Ahmed)**



# MY ODYSSEY

BY DENISE MADDOX '04

My name is Denise Maddox, and I am one of twenty-four people who were the first graduates of the UW Odyssey Project, Class of 2003-2004. I would never have thought that classes in the humanities would change my life forever. I mean "forever" without exaggeration because Writing, Art History, American History, Literature, and Philosophy transported me into a new world, where written words came alive and made magic inside my heart. An odyssey is a life-altering journey of discovery. Like Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*, I too started out on a life-changing journey. The boat was our classroom at the Harambee Center in South Madison, and the reading materials (books by Shakespeare, Plato, Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison, and so many more) were the rough seas we had to travel through. In each and every port we landed were wonderful lessons to learn. The Odyssey crew consisted of the UW professors and staff members who gave us supplies to maintain this one-year exploration of learning. The teachers were the compasses that directed us through these rough seas and guided us safely to our destination.

The journey started in September with William Blake's poems from *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. We learned about a chimney sweeper who was a little child sold into slavery by his parents. As Professor Emily read the poem, tears rolled down my face. As an African American, I understand the bitterness of slavery. The poem went on to light a fire within my soul. I have been victorious in freedom. My freedom included wanting to better myself through education. This was the first time I realized how words can move you forever, even if the original writer is gone from this world.

WOW! The transformation had started, and there was no turning back from this course. I wasn't alone on this journey. Twenty-four minds started to look at the world with different perspectives. Indeed with each lesson taught, the fire of knowledge began to burn brighter and brighter. For example, my classmate Tiffany Smith said, "I always wanted and have the will to succeed. The Odyssey class pulled it all out of me, letting me know I could do it." Another classmate named Joseph Hurst said, "I was fortunate to have been

a part of the first Odyssey class. One of the great benefits of this class was studying the humanities. I have always loved history and knew about African-American philosophers, but through the Odyssey class I gained a great appreciation for the Greek philosophers, like Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates."

Jean Feraca of Wisconsin Public Radio had heard about a free humanities program for adults near the poverty level started by Earl Shorris in New York. She asked Emily Auerbach, Professor of English, to set up and direct a program here in Madison. During the first-ever Odyssey Project graduation in May 2004, Jean Feraca quoted a poem by James Wright called "Today I was so happy, so I made this poem": "An eagle rejoices in the oak trees of heaven, / Crying / This is what I wanted." The reason she quoted this poem was that the graduation was a confirmation and fulfillment of a dream: that courses in the Humanities offered to students who wanted to go to college and never had a chance could transform lives and lift them out of poverty. This was only the beginning. Our class laid the foundation for future Odyssey Project classes. Graduates of the UW Odyssey Project receive six credits in English.

Just months after starting their journey, members of the new Odyssey Class 2004-2005 showed signs that a transformation had started. Several students wrote about the emotional experiences they went through during the first weeks of the course. Terry Fox reported, "This class is thought-provoking. It increases your awareness of the history of man along with the origins of many current systems we use as well as language. This class teaches me to look farther, to read about and most importantly develop my own thoughts and opinions." James Robinson, whose brother Joe graduated from the Odyssey Class 2003-2004, said, "I feel different because I did not know that I would look forward to coming to class. I enjoy this time in class because it is an escape for me, an escape for a few hours that lets me explore my mind." Other classmates reported similarly enriching experiences.

Earl Shorris, who founded the original Clemente Course in the Humanities, a model for the Odyssey Project, explained in his book *Riches for the Poor*, "I like



watching people having a second birth.” His statement is true—I am one of the examples of his words. “Rebirth” is the perfect word to describe what happened to me. I was like a caterpillar eating everything in sight, yet I was never full until I found focused learning in the Odyssey Project. The

knowledge I received helped me finally transform into a multicolored butterfly. I spread my wings into the air to dry, and now I’m flying. I am pursuing a degree at MATC and I am on the Dean’s List. I hope eventually to transfer to the UW-Madison and earn a degree in writing and literature. The world might still see me as being poor, with little money and material wealth, but I am rich with knowledge and wisdom.



## SEARCH ENGINES

BY MOLINDA HENRY '07

I am traveling on this Odyssey, and every day since embarking I have changed. I have learned, I have grown, and I have writhed back and forth, side to side, like waves on the ocean, from growing pains.

Before this class I didn’t consider myself a reader, and now I can’t wait to get my hands on

the next book. I carry the dictionary we received on the first day of class everywhere I go.

There is no word created yet for the process that began the day I was accepted as a student in Odyssey. Someday, like Google, there will be a new

word added to our vocabulary that can describe the search engine that Emily and Gene and Jean and Craig and Marshall, Diane, and my most highly regarded classmates have helped me become.

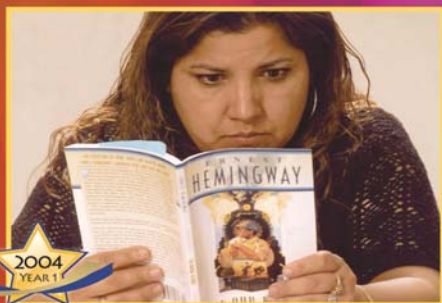
Search Engine. Yes.

That is what I said. I

have become a search engine, but from a different perspective. I am now the “little engine that could” search for knowledge, truth, and wisdom. And I endeavor to become a proficient search engine, objective, critical, and hungry for more. Thanks to this Odyssey with these Titans, I too have found my task: To Learn and Be Free.







2004  
YEAR 1



2009  
YEAR 6

## Celebrating 10 Years



2005  
YEAR 2



2010  
YEAR 7



2006  
YEAR 3



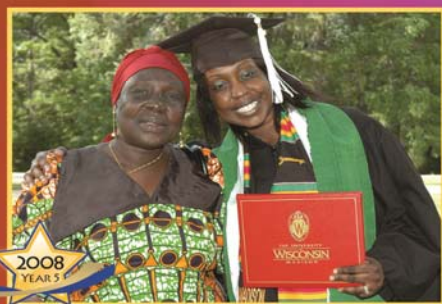
2011  
YEAR 8



2007  
YEAR 4



2012  
YEAR 9



2008  
YEAR 5



2013  
YEAR 10