

Odyssey Oracle

Year 9 #2 September 14, 2011

ARE YOU A WRITER?

Odyssey Students Answer

Yes, No, and Maybe

Are You a Writer?.....1

Odyssey
by Stephanie Pamperin '11.....7

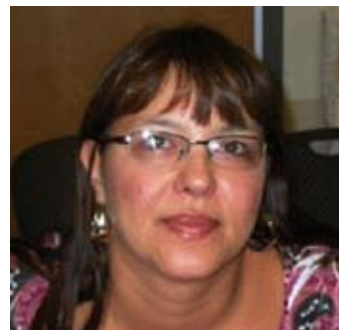
Don't Quit!
by Joe Robinson '04.....8

Dreams
by E. Oroki Rice '07.....9

Never Too Late to Learn
by Pam Holmes '04.....10

Adjectives
Capture the Mood.....11

*"I have always wanted
to be a writer. I have
not always allowed
myself to be one."*—
Hedi Rudd



*"I want to learn who
I am as a writer."*—
Nkechi Johnson

Editors/Contributing Writers:

Kegan Carter

Odyssey 2004 Graduate, Designer
kegancarter@wisc.edu
608-443-8637

Emily Auerbach

Project Director
eauerbach@dcs.wisc.edu
608-262-3733/ 712-6321

odyssey.wisc.edu

*"My goal for my
writing is to have the
willingness to dream
and to acquire the
courage and skills to
share that dream."*—
Michele Withers



I do consider myself a writer; however, I don't spell well.
(Phyllis Anderson)



I write inspirational poems, and my goal is to publish my book.
(Yolanda Cunningham)



I like writing. . . . It's frustrating to hear, "I don't understand your writing." What does that mean—my sloppy handwriting or the text? My goal is to be a better writer.
(Run Barlow)

I'm not a writer but wish to be one. There are so many things that I want to put from pen to paper, but I was told that I ramble on and should get to the point. I have so many things in my head that I want you to understand. When I read a good book and am drawn into that world, nothing else matters. The goal that I have for myself as a writer is to draw you in so you want to read further down the line to see what happens.
(Samantha East)



When it comes to writing, I get kind of excited because I feel it opens people up to who you are and your outlook on different things.
(Bradley Barner)



There are thoughts that flow in my mind that if I would put them down I would have written a book. I love to write, but because of the negatives that I have gotten from others I have become a very weak writer. The goal that I have for myself is to gain that confidence again to be able to write.
(Tatenda Bivindi)



No, I'm not a writer because I don't believe that I know exactly how to put things in words. When I do have to write, I get confused. What I want to say is not always what I end up putting on paper. I'm not sure of how to put words together. I want to be able to write like some of the former students that you had. I have read some of their writings, and they are awesome. I remember telling myself wow, that's how I want to sound. I want to sound intelligent and speak with wisdom.
(Lorraine Garrett)

I consider myself a writer more than a reader because of my ideas in my head. Writing in school helped my vocabulary and my thirst for knowledge.

(Jesse Hamilton)



Where should I use a comma? Could I have used a better word? So I have kept writing to a minimum and my words bottled up too. I would like to gain confidence in my writing. I'd like to gain writing skills. I'd like to lose the fear that my words will cause me harm or punishment. I look forward to this challenge.

(Yetta Harris)



I consider myself a writer. I've been writing poems since I was ten years young. I published a poem book in Feb. 2010 entitled "Cia's Poems." It is a collection of

Christian based poems. . . . I would like to write a novel before I die. I would like to continue my education in the Journalism field. I can see myself as an editor for a newspaper or a journalist. I would also like to quit my job as a bus driver and have a career in writing. I love to write!

(Marcia Hampton)

I do not consider myself a writer, not because I see writing as a bad thing but because I have held on to my words for so long, fearful of saying the wrong thing, measuring

the tone of every word, and wondering how it will be accepted, how it will be viewed, and what will be the consequences. In school until eighth grade because of my beautiful handwriting I could get away with anything, and I would throw in a few big words.

"Genius," my teachers would say. I find writing rather difficult. Where does the period go?



I really love to write. I love expressing my feelings and thoughts on paper. Whenever I write about something I truly like, I explode with creativity and energy. I was taught you should be honest

when writing and let your mind relax and be free. . . . I want to be more precise in thought. When others read my writing, I want them to understand and feel what I'm saying.

(Terry Hart)

I do consider myself a writer. I enjoy the freedom a pen gives an individual. While writing, I can escape the world for brief moments and enter whatever world or fantasy I wish.

When I write, I am able to clearly express my innermost feelings and beliefs. Writing gives people a chance to reflect on their thoughts prior to expressing them, which can be beneficial in certain situations.

(Keith Johnson)



No, I don't consider myself a writer because nothing comes to mind for me to write about. Negative experiences have been going on with me all my life. I was told "you won't be nothing" and "you won't learn nothing" in

school. . . . One goal is for me to believe that in this class I'll become a writer.
(**Marilyn Johnson**)



and criticism, I no longer hide what I write.
(**Billie Kelsey**)



I used to love writing short stories and poems. I used to consider myself a writer because I would write all the time. . . . When I have to write, sometimes I find it hard to write

down what I'm feeling or thinking because I may be thinking too fast or too much and can't keep up with writing it down, or I can't spell a word or know its meaning. I want to learn who I am as a writer.

(**Nkechi Johnson**)

If I'm able to write about something I enjoy, I can write all day and even add my own little twist to it. I'm not sure when to end my sentences or where to put my commas. I'm trying to learn more and bigger words so I can sound as educated as I am.

(**Shaquida Johnson**)



My feelings about writing are complicated. I do a fair amount of journaling, but I have a lot of feelings about people reading what I have written, not because it's personal but more because of a fear of criticism of me personally. This fear stems from my little sister finding my diary. . . . While I still have fear of discovery

Writing is hard for me because English is my second language, but I will do my best in my class. I will put a lot of time and effort in to try to become a better writer. I will write and read more to become more confident in my thoughts.

(**Beatriz Mairena-Kellman**)



I enjoy writing and always loved putting my ideas on paper. I would judge my skills in writing as fair. I do struggle with grammar and punctuation sometimes, but it

never killed my appreciation for writing and the written word.

(**Brandon McCarey**)

Writing has not been a strong area for me because of my spelling and lack of vocabulary words. In the past, I just shy away from reading and writing. I have four children to raise alone, so my goal is to become a strong reader who can assist them in their writing and



reading. When given writing assignments, I tend to wait to the last minute to complete them because they make me panic. I want to learn how to become an effective reader and writer so I can help others.

(Kenya Moses)



I have been writing for quite some time since my youth. I do have a passion for it, so much that I wish to publish someday. I do have one completed book that I could actually use some

help editing. If this is possible, please do point me in the right direction.

(Juba Moten)

I do consider myself a writer. I have written poems, essays, etc. throughout my life, and I love the feeling of accomplishment at the end of every assignment. When teachers corrected



my homework and I got certain things wrong, I used it as motivation to do better the next time. This year I want to try new things and grow in my writing. **(TaiKiah Phillips)**



All experiences with writing have been positive; speaking, on the other hand, has been a different matter. . . . I feel I have to write fast in order to catch my thought before it

escapes.

(Katie Pruitt)

I don't consider myself a writer but I'd love to become one. Why am I not a writer? It's not because I don't want to be one; it's because of my spelling.

(Elvira Rodriguez)



My imagination is full because I am an active dreamer. My dreams are full of visions that play out during the night. My night is filled with stories that need to be sought out on paper,

but I fall short of vocabulary. My day has no writing in it. . . . You may laugh, but I have a Facebook page. I come up with encouraging sayings, but I find I have no words to write. . . . My goal for myself in this class is to take full advantage of the blessing that has been set before me—researching, digging deeper for the correct spelling, pronunciations, and meanings of words that I want to express in my writing.

(Arnella Royal)

I have always wanted to be a writer. I have not always allowed myself to be one. I have recently found my way and am counting on Odyssey to help me find my “home” as a writer.



. . . I hope to end this journey and embark on the most important one of my life, as I feel it is our responsibility as human beings to leave our stories behind for others to learn from. It is the only way in my mind to leave our mark—or for others to know we were here. Without

those stories, we risk dying without anyone remembering our time on this planet.

(Hedi Rudd)



I don't know if I am a writer. I haven't done a lot of it, but I am looking forward to finding out the answer to that question over the next year. I am willing and not afraid of hard work, and I

love a challenge. So feel free to put me to the test.

(Eugene Smalls)

Writing is OK, but I have to get used to it, plus I would like to write my papers or poems in the correct way. No, I am not a writer, but I think everyone has something to write

about. I think I'm not a writer because I don't have the format for writing things down. In the 11th grade I had to hand in an essay five times in six weeks. The rest of the class was moving on, and I felt broken. The format is hard, and spelling slows me down. The goal I have is to write a book of poems.

(Donta Starr)



I don't consider myself a writer because I have bad grammar, and I have such a hard time trying to make sense in my writing. When I'm at work I sometimes have trouble understanding big words, and I am afraid

that whatever I say others may think I'm stupid. What I find hard when I have to write is how to start. My goal as a writer this year in this class is to improve my writing and think positively about myself.

(Linda Thao)

No, I don't think I'm a writer because of my lack of English grammar skills and because most of the things I would like to write about are subjects that cause many people to turn a dead ear, like poverty and its causes, justice, and equality. In school, writing was troublesome due to my lack of grammar. I became withdrawn and didn't give much of an effort, although I had many things I could have written about. One that sticks out is sitting in a Black Panther Breakfast house before school. I have many things to write about, but my lack of the skilled use of English makes me feel powerless. In our class my goal is to learn to write with skill, to transfer that to speaking, and to someday work in a meaningful capacity helping people.

(Abraham Thomas)



Do I consider myself a writer? Not really. Do I enjoy writing? Sometimes, depending on the time and place and my thoughts and moods. I prefer writing poetry way before a thesis or term paper of some sort. I find it

easier to write when I have a strong feeling on that topic. Does that mean I'm comfortable with my writings being read? Not usually. My main goal is confidence. My goal for my writing is to have the willingness to dream and to acquire the courage and skills to share that dream.

(Michele Withers)

Odyssey by Stephanie Pamperin '11

Today I found the challenge I crave.
Today I stayed locked in the moment.
Today I saw Jesus and for the first time left it all; feeling free.
I entered the place where inquisitiveness is currency
Today I gave myself permission to enjoy this Odyssey

I am shedding the skin of abuse
I am accepting the power of my pen
Pledging never to be a victim again

I am remembering my comfort zone
Understanding that those in this class
Can appreciate both my wit and sass

I am an individual revolution
Taking the time to tame my tongue
Relishing the fact that my song has not been sung

I am eating the honey of words
I am drinking from the fountain of Life
I am rising, continuously....

So I thank you for letting me discover the treasures within this Odyssey.



Don't Quit! By Joe Robinson '04

My advice to the new Odyssey class is don't quit. No matter how hard it gets, don't quit.

When you get off work at 5:30, and you only have 30 minutes to get the kids situated and get to class, don't quit.

When you get stuck in the middle of writing a paper or doing a project, don't quit.

When you find out that your father has cancer and has to have surgery and treatment, don't quit.

When you have circumstances that occur that make you miss a class and you get behind on your work, don't quit.

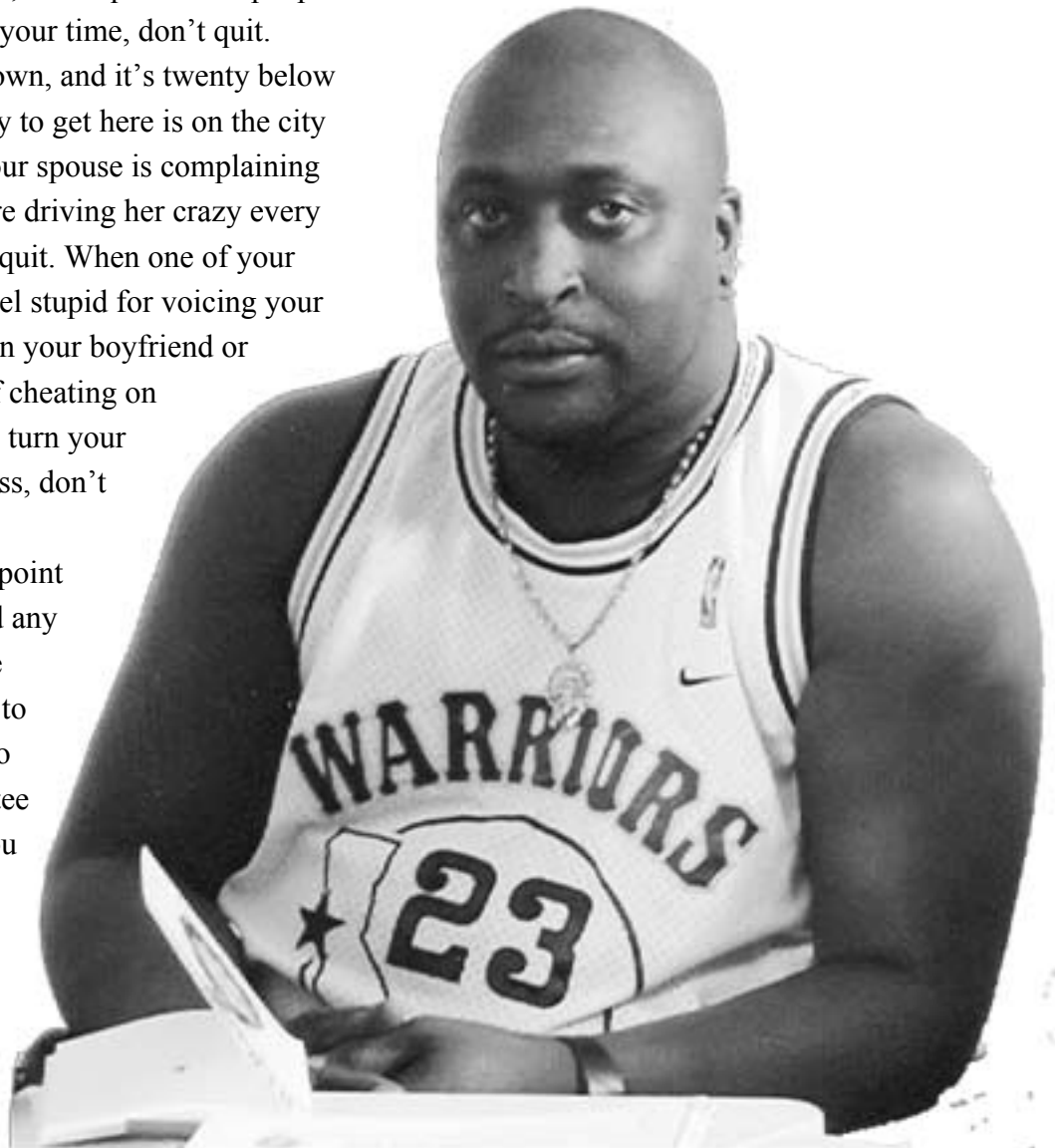
When you feel as if you're not getting anything out of a particular subject, don't quit. When people tell you you are wasting your time, don't quit. When your car breaks down, and it's twenty below outside, and the only way to get here is on the city bus, don't quit. When your spouse is complaining that your five children are driving her crazy every Wednesday night, don't quit. When one of your classmates makes you feel stupid for voicing your opinion, don't quit. When your boyfriend or girlfriend accuses you of cheating on them because you had to turn your cell phone off during class, don't quit.

And if you get to the point where you just can't find any more motivation to force yourself to keep coming to this class, my advice is to call Emily, and I guarantee you that she won't let you quit! There were many times that I wanted to just give up, but Emily would not let me. She believed in us more than some of

us believed in ourselves.

Finally, I would like to say that, the first couple of weeks, I was in class trying to figure out, what is the catch? Why are these people offering us this course for free? There must be a catch. I found out what the catch was. Each one of the teachers was trying to trick us into believing that our lives would somehow be better if we completed this Odyssey class and then go on to graduate from college. I guess I must be a little naïve, because I fell for it, hook, line, and sinker.

Joe Robinson is a graduate of the 2003-2004 Odyssey Project.



Dreams by E. Oroki Rice '07

When I was a little girl I dreamed of being a ballerina.
But that was in the 1950s.
As far as I knew, colored girls could not be real ballerinas.
Oh, my cousin Val took ballet lessons,
but I'd never seen a grown-up colored ballerina.
So I decided I would never be a ballerina.
I would never be an astronaut.
I would never be a cowgirl.
I would never be a Mickey Mouse Musketeer.

But I read books.
I read more books, and more books, and more books.
I pretended I was those little white girls in those books I read.
I was exposed to the worlds they traveled.
It wasn't that I wanted to be white.
I just wanted the privileges that those cute, smart,
brave girls I read about had.

Today I am not afraid to dream.
In fact, you'd better not tell me what I can't do.
If I want to create a one-woman production
called Inappropriate Laughter,
I'll do it.
I'll dream of having my own talk show, kinda like Oprah.
Maybe I'll be a guest on Oprah's show.
Maybe Oprah will be a guest on my show.
If I want to write wonderful stories I'll do it.
I'll dream of others benefiting from my dreams.
I'll get my finances in order and have an abundance of wealth
To donate to good causes
Like the Odyssey Project.
I'll buy a big house with a big porch.
I'll sit on that porch, chill out in the evenings,
Dreaming under the pitch black sky
As it bursts with wild stars.
I'll dream.
I'll dream.
I'll dream.



Pamela Holmes '04: It's Never Too Late to Learn

Hello, new Odyssey students. When I first started the Odyssey program, I got a really warm feeling from the new professors and students. It seems like in about two weeks I had been coming to class for a month. I was out of school for about twelve years before I came here, and things were a bit rusty for me. I needed improvement in some areas. I had a hard time writing a paper because I didn't know how to properly use pronouns and adverbs and punctuation. At times I felt like I was out of place, being the second oldest person in class. I thought I wasn't going to keep up with the young kids, but it's never too late to learn.

The professors gave us confidence. Emily gave us her cell phone number if we were having any trouble with our homework. The library tutors they provided were also very helpful.

I would say to the new students- stay positive and focused and try to make it to all your classes. You will get a lot of new knowledge and skills and even a new sense of being yourself when you are done with this project. Good luck to all of the new students and welcome!

Pamela Holmes is a graduate of the 2003-04 Odyssey class.



“EXCITED AND YET NERVOUS”: Adjectives Capture the Mood

adjective: a word used to describe or modify a person or thing, as in the
short teacher or the delicious pizza

On September 7, 2011, Odyssey Class of 2012 students described how they felt when they learned they had been accepted into the UW Odyssey Project. *Excited, nervous, and happy* were the top choices. Other adjectives chosen were *elated, thrilled, glad, overjoyed, enthusiastic, great, honored, blessed, passionate, confident, thankful, grateful, proud, relieved, good, numb, shocked, stoked, scared, fearful, and hopeful*.

See below for excerpts from every student.

I felt . . .

excited by the idea of learning, meeting new people, and making my brain grow. (**Phyllis Anderson**)

a controlled excitement. I was passionate about getting in the class but am holding myself to doing well. (**Run Barlow**)

excited to get accepted, thankful to get a chance to better myself, and just stoked to get started on my new path. (**Bradley Barner**)

excited and nervous (**Tatenda Bvindi**)

shocked and numb for days, confident (**Yolanda Cunningham**)

open to new things and feeling good about learning more (**Samantha East**)

I cried. I never thought that I would even graduate [with a G.E.D.], and to be chosen for this program is an honor and a blessing. (**Lorraine Garrett**)

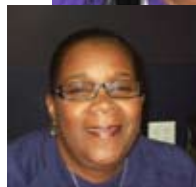
I was excited and happy to be chosen to be a part of this program. (**Jesse Hamilton**)

elated (**Marcia Hampton**)

I was thrilled and felt as though it was meant to be. (**Yetta Harris**)

Excited to be a part of something that's going to change my life forever! (**Terry Hart**)

I was extremely pleased and relieved that I had been honored with the opportunity to learn and participate in such a worthy project. The phone call



telling me that I was now able to be a part of this was the happiest time I can recall recently. (**Keith Johnson**)

I feel great. I hope I get a lot out of this class as well as with classmates. (**Marilyn Johnson**)

I was scared, excited and nervous, and very happy. (**Nkechi Johnson**)

glad and ready to shine (**Shaquida Johnson**)

I cried. (**Billie Kelsey**)

I was very grateful and excited. (**Tai’Kiah Phillips**)

I felt very lucky to be accepted in the Odyssey class. Thank you. (**Beatriz Mairena-Kellman**)

Excited! (**Brandon McCarey**)

Super-excited, and I couldn’t wait to start. (**Kenya Moses**)

Excited (**Juba Moten**)

So so happy! (**Elvira Rodriguez**)

Excited, nervous, fearful of the unknown (**Katie Pruitt**)

Very excited, and I recognized a fellow classmate when I started. (**Arnella Royal**)

Very excited and hopeful. I feel this is the perfect opportunity at the perfect moment in my life. (**Hedi Rudd**)

Overjoyed, enthusiastic, anticipatory, bullgoose looney (**Eugene Smalls**)

Great! (**Donta Starr**)

Excited, nervous (**Linda Thao**)

Grateful and thankful! (**Abraham Thomas**)

Excited and yet nervous. Excited as it’s time for me to succeed. Nervous as procrastination and hesitation are my middle names. (**Michele Withers**)

