

Odyssey Oracle

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Beginning an Odyssey

Odyssey '09 students were asked the first night, "How did you feel when you learned you'd been accepted into this class?"

Here's what they said:



I feel like Ulysses when . . . he finally gets to go home. I have a second chance to make a first impression on my life!
(Robert Garel)



My heart felt like weight had been lifted from it. One more worry was gone, and my grin turned more into a smile.
(Dominique Christian)



I felt great because this could be the leading path of my success.
(Sammy Bester)



I felt like I had gotten one of my wings for heaven.
(Roberta James)



I was so overwhelmed, humbled, and excited! I know that this class will give me the jumpstart I need to

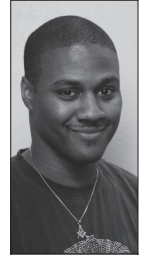
receive a degree.
(Rhonda Johnson)



I felt it was a really special gift that would help me further my education.
(Tiffany Harston)



The opportunity and challenge is a blessing and will add to my personal growth.
(Edwin Shumpert)



I was overjoyed. I almost cried—actually I did because it seems as if some doors of opportunity are opening.
(Cameron Travis)



I cried. I felt that a prayer was answered. I felt fortunate to be given an opportunity at an education.
(Felicia Jones)



My heart was jumping and I called my mom and sisters and friends.
(Jaunté Willis)

Don't Quit! By Joe Robinson, Class of '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

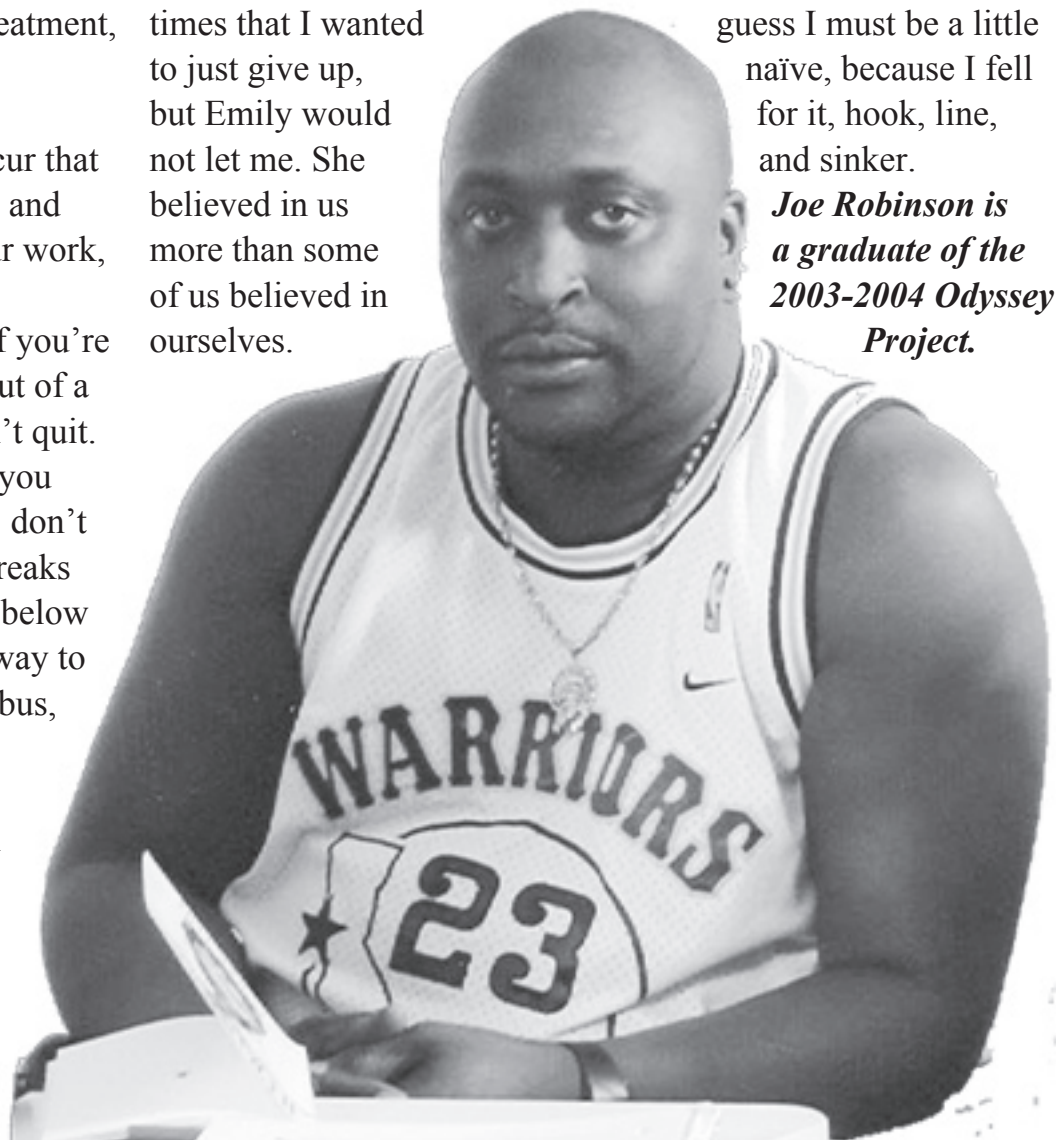
voicing your opinion, don't quit. When your boyfriend or girlfriend accuses you of cheating on them because you had to turn your cell phone off during class, don't quit.

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, w h a t 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.



Members of the class of 2009

have hopes, plans, and goals. For their first in-class writing last week, many of them wrote about their aspirations for the future.

Here are a few of their thoughts:

"I have a million things that I want to be. That's why it's taking me so long to get there. So I've decided to do them a few at a time rather than all at once."

Lea White



"I want to live and experience places, events, people and things in my mind even if doing it physically isn't a true possibility. I want to be able to really believe that there is room for growth and happiness. I want my daughter to watch me go to school, do homework, and read just to read as a hobby."

Sherice Lewis



"I believe that my higher power wants nothing but the very best for me, but it's not being handed down on a silver platter. It's to be earned!"

Dennis Cotton



"Maybe I won't be able to change the world, but I can make the most out of mine."

Betsy Pelto



"My main cause is ignorance, the most destructive and contagious virus known to man!"

James Horton



"Education serves so many purposes. The most important is an enriched mind. You can make a lot of money and still not have that. I want to see my boys exercise that freedom. Learn, think, grow, be enriched."

Wynetta Taylor



"I rarely finish what I start for whatever reason. When I finish Odyssey then I'll know I'm on my way."

Mary Moore



Are you writers? Well, yes and no

Last week Odyssey students stated whether or not they considered themselves to be writers.

The “votes” split evenly, 13 “yes,” 13 “no,” and four “maybe.”

Some of them defined ‘writer’ in terms of skill level, others by desire to write, and still others by whether or not writing comes easily.



Otis Harris expressed mixed feelings about the whole thing: “I think I’m a writer. I hate it, though.”

Here are more of your other thoughts on the subject:

“I do consider myself to be a writer because I have always loved expressing myself through words.” **Lea White**

“English is my second language, but I have the energy and hunger to learn, so I hope to be able to write about my experience (bad and good) in those two wonderful

cultures that I know.”
Erika Rosales Serate

“I like to write. I believe I could be whatever I choose to be, and that includes creative writing. There now are no limits to what I can do.” **Dennis Cotton**

“I do consider myself to be a writer. It’s been awhile, but I do believe Odyssey will bring writing back to the surface for me. I can already feel the wheels turning in my mind.” **Betsy Pelto**

“Yes. As a child I used to write short stories and poems. ...I plan to write an autobiography about my life.” **Tiffany Harston**

“I do consider myself to be a writer. I believe I am always striving to improve my skills. In addition, my story is one that should be told.”

Rhonda Johnson

“It’s different looking at the world through the eyes of a writer (artist) because you have to be able to consume and then redistribute information to your desired audience in a way that evokes the desired emotions.”

James Horton

“I’ve been told that I can write, but it takes a lot for me to do that (write).” **Debra Scott**

“No, I don’t consider myself to be a writer, but I know that I do have a story to tell that can and will help and influence others.”

Felicia Jones



“I’ve always liked to write, especially when I was young, but, just like drawing, somewhere I just lost the desire.”
Charles Sallay

“No, but I have the vision and ideas and potential.”

Edwin Shumpert

“No. To be a writer, I believe that you have to paint a picture for others to be able to read. I feel that it needs to be detailed, somewhat organized, and expressive.”

Antoinetta Hayes

“No, I do not consider myself a writer. I have a lot of thoughts but find it difficult to express them when I write.”

Alice McDaniel

“I would very much like to be considered a writer sometime in my near future.” **Roberta James**

“I don’t consider myself to be a writer because I know I am not competitive enough right now, although in time that will change.” **Felicia Anderson**

“I wish I could consider myself a writer. If I could write I would have had my book in process. I have so much to say but don’t know how to say it.”
Jaunté Willis



Exciting Adjectives

An adjective describes a person, place, or thing (noun). For example, in the sentence, “The Odyssey Project director is *short*,” short (adjective) describes the director (noun).

Some of the adjectives students used to describe their feelings about being accepted into the Odyssey Project include *very good* . . . *quite special to be chosen* (**Dennis Cotton**), *elated* (**Lea White**), *wonderful*, *anxious*, *worried*, *scared*, and *glad* (**Debra Scott**), *slightly apprehensive but real good* (**Charles Sallay**), *relaxed and relieved* (**Otis Harris**), *really good because I’d waited two years to get in* (**Charles Tucker**), and *very anxious, super-excited, honored, and relieved* (**Nicole Barnett**).

The winner for Most Used Adjective was excited: *very excited* (**Betsy Peltó**), *very excited and grateful* (**Wynetta Taylor**), *excited and anxious* (**James Horton**), *excited, anxious, and proud* (**Mary Moore**), *relieved but excited for myself* (**Emily Robinson**), *excited, successful, and more determined* (**Felicia Anderson**), and *very excited—unbelievable* (**Antoinetta Hayes**).

The runner-up for Most Used Adjective was happy: *very happy!* (**Lavern Brown**), *so happy . . . God is good* (**Shanita Lawrence**), *very happy and proud* (**Shannon Lawrence**), *happy but also scared* (**Sherice Lewis**), *really happy to be here today* (**Erika Rosales Serate**), and *happy, relieved, anxious* (**Stephen Taylor**).

Two students used both adjectives: *happy, excited, nervous* (**Ricky Barners**) and *very excited and happy to get the good news* (**Alice McDaniel**).



Search Engines By Molinda Henry, Class of '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.

With encouragement from the Odyssey Project, Molinda Henry successfully applied for reentry to the UW-Madison. Now a full-time student, Molinda has succeeded in her classes and won both a P.E.O. national continuing education scholarship and a UW Osher Returning Adult Student Award.

