

Odyssey Oracle

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

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Have you visited the website yet?

www.odyssey.wisc.edu

Patrick Henry Responses

Patrick Henry said, "Give me liberty, or give me death!" What do Odyssey students say they are willing to die for?

First of all is my faith. I am Christian, and I cannot imagine being in the place where I cannot worship God or I will be killed! My son comes after my God, and I believe he is my gift above all gifts. He is priceless. I can die for him and my family.—**Lily Komino**

Like most people asked this question, I would naturally say that I would die for my children, my daughters and their daughters. This is true but I feel too simplistic a response. My life has been heavily influenced by being a woman of African ancestry. I consciously carry the memories of those Africans who lost their lives on the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. . . . I am connected to them eternally and would put my life on the line to protect their memories.—**Oroki Rice**

Back in the early 2000s . . . I was being violently abused and, no matter what, I was not going to give in because my very life

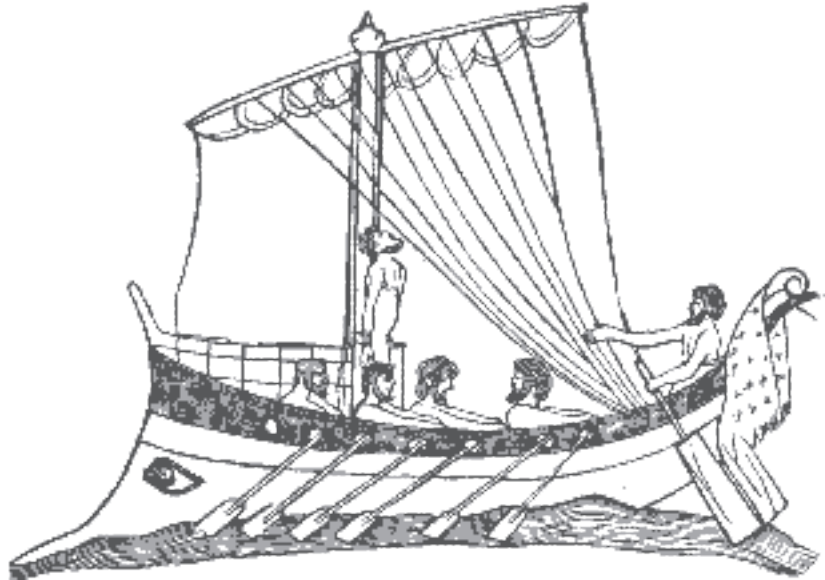
depended on standing firmly for my right to change. . . . As a result of not backing down I had to replace eight windows in my home. But the message was received loud and clear—that I was willing to die for me.—**Yasmin Horton**

I would die for family, honor, respect, and equality. I would die for anything that I believe in. If it can capture my heart and soul, then I'm willing to put my life on the line. I feel just like Patrick Henry in some respects. I cannot think of any right that I have now that I would be willing to give up without a fight.—**Dwayne Bland**

I would die for my and others' rights to reach their full potential. I would die for the wellbeing of my children and their mothers. I would gladly accept death to preserve my dignity and basic human rights. I believe at the moment I would sacrifice my life for most children and the folks I hold dear.—**Brian Benford**

Why do you think this course is called the Odyssey Project, and how might the class be an odyssey for you?

odyssey: *an extended adventurous wandering; named after Odyssey, the second epic of Homer, a Greek poet of the 8th or 8th century B.C. Homer's long poem recounts the ten-year wanderings and adventures of Odysseus, who returns home changed by his journey.*



Education acts as a compass that gives us direction in our journey, no longer wandering aimlessly without hope or purpose. The Odyssey Project represents to me a “beacon of hope,” a guide to the

shore, a shore not of safety but solid ground, a solid foundation, a starting point to stand and learn how to navigate the sometimes treacherous waters of life and the pursuit of higher education.—**Anne Meyer**

extended journey to pursue what I should have had years ago.—**Sonia Spencer**

For sure this class is an odyssey for me because when I first found the information at the library, I said to myself, “I will give it a try.” Even though I was not sure if I was going to be accepted, at that moment I started my odyssey. To me it is an odyssey because English is not my first language and it is the first time I’m in a class where everyone speaks only English. I have to say I’m very happy to be in this class, and I’m open to learn everything that the teachers are going to teach. I will do my best to win this odyssey.—**Sandra Ramirez**

It’s called Odyssey Project because this is a long journey for most of the people who were not in school for some time. It’s a journey which doesn’t end after graduation. If someone wants to pursue more education, staff will continue to help. For me, Odyssey is a new era. Some of my dreams were fading slowly. It will be a long journey with success hopefully.—**Lily Komino**

I think it is called the odyssey project because it will lead us to a series of adventures, like Homer returning home to get what belongs to him. I think the class is an odyssey for me because I’m able to come back and take what was lost to me. I’m ready to embark on an

All of us have had a break in our academic journey, an extended journey that began when we started pre-school or kindergarten and has yet to be concluded. This is an

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Writer Spotlight: *Julia Alvarez*

Julia Alvarez uses her own life experiences to create her poems and novels.

Even as a child, she always told stories. (Her tias—aunts—called it “lying.”) She knew she wanted to be a writer from an early age.

She was born in New York City, March 27, 1950, but moved when she was three months old with her parents to the Dominican Republic, where she was raised. (One of her book bios says she was born in the Dominican Republic, but this is wrong.) Her parents were both native to the Dominican Republic. Her father, a doctor, was involved in the underground, an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Trujillo dictatorship. He had to flee the country with his family in 1960, just before the so-called Las Mariposas (“The Butterflies”), the three Mirabal sisters, founders of the resistance movement, were murdered.

Julia Alvarez had learned “classroom English” in school but knew nothing of street English. She remembers her classmates calling her “Spic!” (Her Mami told her they were saying, “Speak.”) She had to pay close attention to every word in school to understand; she later called this good training for a writer.

She went to boarding schools from age 13 and then to college, graduating from Middlebury College Summa Cum Laude in 1971 and taking a Masters in creative writing from Syracuse University in 1975.

She says she “fell into teaching,” becoming a sort of “migrant writer/teacher,” teaching high school and then college. She became a professor and writer-in-residence at Middlebury College in 1988.

She published her first novel, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, in 1991. In it, she uses shifting point of view to depict the lives of the four Garcia de la Torre sisters, who flew the Dominican Republic with their parents in 1960 (as Alvarez herself had done). Alvarez begins the novel in 1989, with one of the sisters returning to the Island 29 years after the family originally left. She then works



backwards in time to some of the girls' earliest memories.

Many more novels followed, most recently *Saving the World*, along with children's books, essays, and poetry. She now lives in Vermont with her “companero,” Bill Eichner, on an 11-acre farm.

Sources:

<http://www.alvarezjulia.com/>

<http://www.lasmujeres.com/juliaalvarez/profile.shtml>

Alvarez, Julia, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*

Alvarez, Julia, *Saving the World*

Excerpt From “*Saving the World*,” by Julia Alvarez

Alma's faith is in short supply as she wings her way down to the island to try to bargain for her hostage husband. Everywhere she looks, she feels implicated by the dozens upon dozens of little perks and privileges her life is built upon.

It's ridiculous where this guilt first seizes her, in the airport bathroom in Vermont. She enters the bright, cleanser-smelling room with its banks of mirrors, its stalls with backup rolls that drop into place to offer more paper when the bottom one is used up, the extra hand towels held together by a brown band and stacked atop the too-full dispenser. She tries to imagine them, the kidnappers, the way they would see this room; there is so much here, and more where that came from, and this is a public place. Not a rich man's home, not a dictator's palace, not a swanky suite for state functions but a small airport in a rural state with its own pockets of poverty.

She hates looking at her life this way, through grievance. How can this pettiness be good for anyone? Counting the petals wasted on a rose as if the distribution were suddenly her fault. But that is precisely the way she is imagining the kidnappers seeing her world. It's as if they're an infection inside her, and she can't get rid of them.

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extended journey for me and will be completed when I walk across the stage and get my bachelor's degree. —**Molinda Henry**

I think the class will be an odyssey for me because I'll be learning new things with new people, and that's basically a journey all on its own. —**Erica Garcia**

I am just starting my journey into bettering my life and also for my kids. I am trying to be the best example for them. By getting into this class and completing my journey, I will show them a lot about how when someone wants something so much, they can achieve it.—**Katy Farrens**

It will allow me to extend the journey of my mind, with my thoughts, my creativity, and with the pain and pressure of learning new things.—**Kathleen Brown**

We are all on an epic journey through life. This class has the potential to allow for an educational, spiritual, and emotional journey for me.—**Brian Benford**

It's called the Odyssey Project because most of the students are already into their life's missions, and this course offers us an opportunity to veer off the beaten path and onto another area unknown. For me this is definitely another leg of the journey that is my life. I am looking forward to where this odyssey leads.—**Yasmin Horton**

This course is called Odyssey

because its objective is to guide the class on an intellectual journey of the major literary works of the humanities. This will be an Odyssey for me because I am unfamiliar with the Western classics, so I expect to deepen my understanding about philosophy and literature and improve my academic skills. —**Tillman Morris**

I'm ready to embark on an extended journey to pursue what I should have had years ago.
Sonia Spencer

The Odyssey Project is a journey where one can experience his or her dream of higher education even though he or she has economic barriers. The Odyssey Project will be a once in a lifetime journey for me to experience the thrill of going to college.—**Juanita Wilson**

This to a lot of people is a beginning of a long journey that needs to be done. It shows that it is never too late to start a long journey, no matter how old you are or how young you are. This might be an Odyssey for me because this journey will take me where I want to go and want to be.—**Nou Yang**

I think this class is called the Odyssey Project because this is a journey for all participants whether it be returning to school or just wanting to learn new things. For me it's a journey to get back to a place where I feel I can still be successful in life by graduating

from the program and moving forward.—**Curtis Williams**

It's a mark of a new beginning for me recounting long marks to better myself. It will help me so I will not have to wonder which way I will be going, and it will keep me focused on the next step I would like to do.—**Angie Williams**

I believe it's called the Odyssey Project because of its vast knowledge of truth about history, arts, and writing. It will shine real light on different eras of history and culture as we perceive differently from our own experiences. For me it will give me truth about history that I've never known before and the expressions of artistic value through literature and the arts.—**Troy Terry**

The course will take students on a journey that will change their lives forever. As my life unfolds, the teachings will change my life course.—**Mary Wells**

It's an odyssey for me because I'm starting a journey to a wonderful life of education so I can achieve my goal in life. That is to become a nurse and phlebotomist. I've watched my friend [Tiffany Smith '04] grow from this program and thought this could be for me.—**Lakeitha Sanyang**

I think that this class is called the Odyssey because it's like a journey that none of us would've embarked on otherwise without the financial means.—**Stanley Sallay**

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William Blake's "The School Boy" Strikes a Chord

*. . . But to go to school
in a summer morn,
O! it drives all joy
away;
Under a cruel eye
outworn,
The little ones spend
the day
In sighing and
dismay. . .*

From *Songs of Innocence* one of the poems that I connected with was "School Boy," mainly because as an adolescent many times I played hooky from school induced by the same kind of morning beauty of a summer day. I can imagine and identify with how he must've felt on days like this when he had to surrender himself to a closed-in schoolroom and submit to the rigid school structure and/or cruel schoolmarm. At the time I skipped school, I never thought about the crippling and stultifying effects of the school environment. I was just following my rebellious inclinations. This is an anti-authoritarian poem.—**Tillman Morris**

The one Blake poem that I really enjoyed came from "The School Boy" from *Songs of Innocence*. The poem itself is first of all a reminder of how Blake felt growing up, and it also tells us to take time out to enjoy the little things that we take for granted. The poem tells us that this young boy would much rather be outside than sitting in a stuffy desk and writing. Blake is clearly trying to get us to see the meaning of summer through a kid's eyes. He wants us to go back to when we were kids and remember what it was like to enjoy summer.—**Sonia Spencer**

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I believe the Project was designed to take us on a journey, a quest through life. I've always loved school. The first day of class left me excited, thirsty to be a more active participant in life. I can say with no reservations, everything I have experienced in my personal wanderings through life seems to have led to this adventure. I swear you must have had me personally in mind when you designed the Project. . . . I'm a sister on an odyssey!—**Oroki Rice**

This will be a journey through education through a deeper sense of character, not to mention that in the Trojan War, Odysseus conquered his enemy with his own imaginative ideas.—**Corey Reece**

It's going to be an odyssey for me because with any odyssey there are mental challenges that help determine your faith. It's going to be an odyssey as I try to overcome them.—**Melissa Plasky**

Even though I was not sure if I was going to be accepted, at that moment I started my odyssey.
Sandra Ramirez

This class is a challenge for me to achieve a goal by wandering without failing to become a leader in my own right, to conquer and get over my fears of achieving a degree, to follow this class from start to finish. Wow, that is my Odyssey.—**Roslyn Phillips**

I believe this course is called the Odyssey Project because this project is a journey down "new avenues" of learning. It's a journey to a new beginning. The class is an odyssey to me in that this is the start of my journey to higher learning; my start of a brighter future that will open doors for me. In turn I can give back to someone to show them the path to their own "odyssey."—**Angela McAlister**

It's a long hard journey that we are taking. This class is going to help me continue my journey to success. It may take awhile, but I'll get there.—**Lorena Lovejoy**

This would be a journey for me because all of the subjects that we're covering are my weak spots which will take time for me to get through.—**Angel Lightfoot**

Is History Really a Mosaic?

When Professor Werner calls history a mosaic, he creates a **metaphor**, comparing an abstract, "history," to something tangible, a form of art. (If he had said "history is *like* a mosaic," he would have been using a **simile**: same thing, only using the word "like" or "as.")

A metaphor works if it seems appropriate and it sheds new light on the subject.

Apparently this metaphor really works for you!

Here are a few of your insights from last week's in-class writing.

Different colored pieces represent different races of people.

Juanita Wilson

It takes many pieces to create a "whole picture."

Angela McAlister

I suppose he meant that history

is a compilation of different perspectives that collectively has brought us to the concept that we have today.

Corey Reece



The pieces don't have to be uniform or the same color. There is

also no pattern unless the artist creates one or the person who is looking at it sees one.

Molinda Henry

You have to use your imagination when you are looking at a picture. ...It would be up to you to imagine the picture to see what you get out of it.

Angie Williams

[H]istory all falls together and makes a bigger picture once you take a step back and look at it.

Cameron Daniels

Mosaic is a pretty good metaphor to explain and interpret history. I say "pretty good" because in my mind a mosaic is fixed and frozen, whereas history is a living reality in constant ebb and flow.

Tillman Morris

Comments from Alumni

"I had a very hectic year having to chase around a 21-month-old toddler while holding a 4-month-old infant, sometimes both crying at the same time, trying to get homework done along with fixing dinner, yet I would not change a thing. I encourage anyone to take

this Odyssey as a stepping stone to a brighter future, and don't let anybody or anything stop you from finishing. This program, whether you believe it or not, will mark how seriously you take your life."--Camille Soward '05

visit with old friends, meet new friends, and discover pages and pages of people that came to life. For any of you that are interested in fulfilling the dream of becoming an Odyssey graduate, it is a journey well worth the travels."--Daphne Daniels '05



"Odysseus, you see, ain't got nothing on me. . . . Despite the health challenges I've had to endure, I had perfect attendance because I made a personal commitment not to miss class. Now I've got the 'I'll miss my Wednesday blues.' You see, the Odyssey Project was my personal escape. It allowed me to

