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ODYSSEY



ORACLE

SONGS OF OURSELVES



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SONG OF THE ODYSSEY CLASS OF 2024

This class poem and the Songs of Ourselves were inspired by Walt Whitman's democratic, all-inclusive "Song of Myself."

We have worked as a telemarketer, special education assistant, bus aide, cook, steel factory worker, snake charmer, CNA, loan advisor, dental assistant, cashier, construction worker, optician, bartender, barber, baker, chef, chocolatier, prison officer, bank teller, forklift driver, artisan, hotelier, bookkeeper, waitress, tutor, personal care technician, housekeeper, caregiver, youth restitution counselor, phlebotomist; holding jobs at Hy-Vee, Woodman's, Clean Power Landscaping, April Aire, McDonald's, Chipotle, IHOP, Nordstrom, Cheesecake Factory, Madison Children's Museum, Exact Sciences, and nursing homes.

We hail from Madison, Wisconsin; Chicago, Illinois; Minneapolis, MN; Cleveland, Ohio; Myrtle Beach, Florida; Seattle, Washington; Bar Harbor, Maine; and from Mexico, Burkina Faso, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Laos,

With ancestors coming from Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Georgia, Arkansas, Missouri, California, Louisiana, Texas, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, Haiti, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Greece, England, Ecuador, Laos, and "somewhere in Africa,"

Speaking Spanish, English, American Sign Language, French, German, Laotian, Mooré, Kichwa, Castilian, Patois, and Slang,

Worshipping as Baptist, Catholic, Jehovah's Witness, Pentecostal, Apostolic, Muslim, Lutheran, Cosmovision, Buddhist, nondenominational, and spiritual.

We call ourselves productive, driven, educated, tired, fuzzy, warm, hyper, quiet, passionate, happy, funny, shy, gentle, brave, strong-willed, beautiful, intentional, focused, direct, introverted, sweet, old, nice, kind, upright, caring, outgoing, courageous, reliable, curly, weird, busy, outspoken, charismatic, classy, free-spirited, fearless, short, fragile, crazy, inquisitive, graceful, loving, handsome, mysterious, unsure, unbalanced, smart, ambitious, loyal, dedicated, loud, honest, sensitive, and fun.

We are the Odyssey Class of 2024!



SONGS OF OURSELVES



SONG OF DONTAEVA

I am Dontaeva the Great.
Or that's at least what my mom calls me.
I am the future, the chosen one.
I am the change I seek to see.
I am human, the color of my skin won't define me.
I am a spiritual soul having a human experience.
I am one with the moon and the sun.
I am Dontaeva the Greatest! **(Dontaeva Acklin)**

SONG OF CARISSA

I am Carissa.
The daughter of a Latina mother and Jamaican father.
I am the eldest of five children naturally being a leader and second mom.
I am wise beyond my years because I chose to grow from my experiences rather than let them hinder me.
Five feet ten inches tall, petite
so I'm looked at as small still, with the heart of a lion.
I am Carissa, the toughest warrior and ultimate fighter.
There's nothing in life I can't do or overcome.
I am Carissa. Karter's mother. I am Carissa.
A woman who has seen the depths of the darkest pits,
yet pulled herself out to see the views from the mountain top as well. **(Carissa Andrews)**



SONG OF LUCAS

I am Lucas of the red stone river lands.
Lu-cuss; lu-kiss.
Born of masters - born of slaves.
Mother's family of the pale potato people - father's family from the continent of our creation...stories lost to the triangle trade.
Whipping myself into shape -
the spew of the ocean aerated with exhale; bathed in blue fire.
As sweet and light as a merengue. As heavy and dark as a hole in the heavens.
Aged three tens and six years - crawling like an infant towards the light - hobbling on three legs towards the night. Middle-aged.
Middle-west. Center of my creation.
After all this time, why does it feel like greeting a stranger?
Because we are made anew in every moment and in every moment,
churned back into the fecund dark.
Every face a mask - every mask a reflection - every reflection
a ripple of Narcissus' fall.
Singing myself into existence.
A bard of my beings.
The warden of my heart.
Dear heart, quicken my passion and dislodge the orb of sentiment
so that I might pass this feeling into being.
Sanctify the sentiment and press it into stone. **(Lucas Benford)**





SONG OF JASMINE

I am Jasmine, my mom's third oldest out of seven girls,
yet she calls me her only son.
I have been loved at times, even a bully,
felt alone in rooms full of friends.
Those that say they love me have hurt me over and over again.
I am Jasmine, pain is temporary someone once told me.
Thank God, no matter what is what my grandmother showed me
Nobody owes you but Jasmine, definitely words to live by.
I'd be lying if I said it makes it easy for me to say goodbye.
Because, for Jasmine, it wasn't always the case.
I used to think everyone had a right to my space.
I am Jasmine, my mom's third oldest you see,
And I can do all things through God who strengthens me.
(Jasmine Benson)

SONG OF DANIKA

I am Danika
Daughter of Marie and Julian
I am the second oldest of six on my dad's side
Middle child of three on my mama's side
Birth mother to Da'Mari, Tre'Nique, and Tre'den
Motherly to many more
I am strong, beautiful, patient, and nurturing
I bring the table and the food on it
I am a student now, educating myself to be the best me.
(Danika Bethel-Johnson)



SONG OF MIA

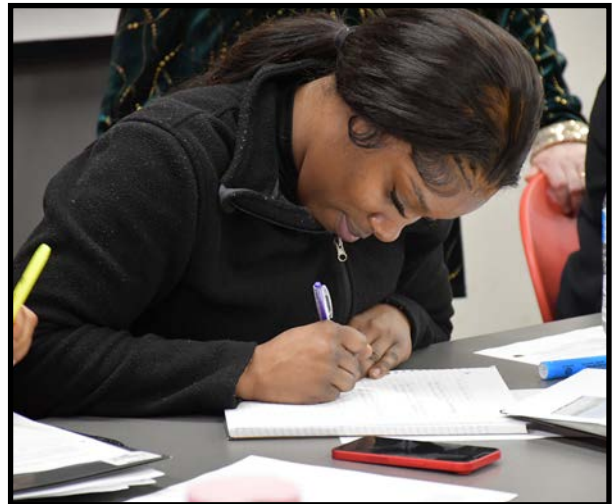
I am Mia
I am the daughter of a
black queen
I am brown and proud
I am a mother
a work of art
and God's child
I am Mia
(Mia Cannon)

**SONG OF VERNELL**

I am a branch of the vine of the Great I Am.
 Born of dirt but reborn in spirit
 Groomed from Hate but healed by Love
 Art flows through me like blood in my veins
 To be creative is to be alive is my motto
 No Dad or Granddad model to follow
 Now a dad to my kids,
 a granddad to my granddaughter
 I am a curse breaker
 I am free
 I am loved
 I will forever flourish...
(Vernell Cauley)

SONG OF TAESHIA

I am Taeshia
 I am unapologetically me.
 I am browned skin, but I am labeled black!
 Whatever the label is, I am me.
 Beliefs similar to Whitman,
 "Born here of parents born here from parents the same,
 And their parents the same"
 Black, yellow, green, whatever the color may be,
 It's a label, I'm more than that.
 It will never be able to define ME!
(Taeshia Clark)

**SONG OF MEKICIA**

I am Mekicia
 I am brave in ways that call for no weapon
 I am brilliant in any setting
 I am a mother, daughter, sister, and friend
 I am one of one, but I don't always win
 I am lost, found, and above all else content
 I am the one who's hard to forget
 I am Mekicia.
(Mekicia Davis)

**SONG OF ANDREA**

I am Andrea
 A mother of five
 Strong and can take on anything if I
 put my mind to it
 I'm not perfect but I try my best
 I am enough
 I am beautiful
 I am learning to believe in myself
 I am unstoppable
 I am blessed
 I am humble
 I am different
 I am the second oldest daughter
 of Keesha
 I am a nurse in the making
(Andrea Evans)

SONG OF ALEESHA

I am Aleesha
 I am a mother to seven beautiful souls.
 I am a nurturer at heart and love to care for others
 I am what I didn't get or have growing up.
 I am patient, loving, and present.
 I am kind, fierce, and curious.
 I am an always booked up barber still crafting my work to
 always get better.
 I am a motivated and dedicated woman of color
 I am a rocket ready for take off
 I am going all the way up until I reach the stars.
(Aleesha Flowers)

**SONG OF ANDREYA**

I am Andreyia.
 I am a mother.
 I am a twin.
 I am fearless, yet God fearing.
 I am Andreyia, to love me is to understand me.
 I am Andreyia, if I cook for you on my personal time, that means
 I like you.
 I am Andreyia, I have a beauty that can't be copied, but admired.
 I am Andreyia, I move to the beat of my own drum;
 For if the world chose to go left, I would have my own reason to
 go right.
(Andreyia Gavins)

SONG OF SHANIGEL

I am Shanigel
 I am a lover of the oven, baking goods like no other,
 I am an entrepreneur, my own boss,
 I am a mother, with a love like no other,
 I am a fast learner, no challenge can put me under.
 I am intelligent, I am driven,
 I am determined,
 I am loved, by those seen and unseen,
 I am the daughter of a queen.
 I am a college student, always improving,
 I am important, I am essential, persistent,
 I am a lover, with a heart so consistent,
 I am fun, I am outgoing.
 I am a traveler, journeying near and far,
 I am a fast thinker, shining like a star,
 I am the life of the party, no matter where we are,
 I am me, and I'll keep raising the bar.
 Yes, I am all these things and more,
 With every day, I find new doors,
 I am a testament of strength and grace (**Shanigel Goodwan**)

**SONG OF MIKAYLAH**

I am Mikaylah
 Born the oldest
 To a 17-year-old parent
 Growing up together
 Grown to be a sweet, loving young lady
 A loving mother
 A nurturer
 A listener
 A fixer
 I am Mikaylah
 (**Mikaylah Harris**)

SONG OF SYNQUAR

I am Synquar.
 1 of 1.
 I am full of passion and pain.
 The ruler and creator of my path.
 I am Synquar.
 I am strong when I want to be weak.
 I am full of insecurities I'll never show.
 (**Synquar Harston**)





SONG OF CIERRA

I am Cierra
 A name that echoes in the breeze.
 A soul as vibrant as the trees.
 In my veins, the rivers of passion flow.
 A spirit as wild as the mountains glow.
 With eyes that hold the secrets of the stars,
 I wander through life with many scars.
 Each step I take, a melody in the wind,
 A symphony of strength and grace within.
 In the quilt of life, I weave my tale,
 A warrior heart that will never fail.
 With courage as my compass, I walk my path,
 Embracing challenges with a fearless laugh.
 I am Cierra, a force of nature untamed.
 A fierce spirit that cannot be tamed.
 In every breath, in every stride,
 I am the essence of strength and pride. **(Cierra Jackson)**

SONG OF BLANCA

I am Blanca
 I was forced to adopt a Spanish name,
 But my blood and essence are from indigenous South America.
 I am a protector, defender of Mother Earth. Why?
 Because Mother Earth provides enough to satisfy my needs.
 I am short and shy, but with an infinity smile
 I am Blanca
 I am the only one in my own way
 I am authentic, special, and unique in my own way
 I am Blanca. **(Blanca Laine)**



SONG OF ROSANNA

I am Rosanna
 I am a daughter of an immigrant and a custodian
 I am Mexican American
 I am American
 I am a mother
 I am the mother of Julio and Rozlynn
 I am quiet
 I am loud sometimes
 I am sad
 I am happy
Soy una guerrera
 I am a warrior **(Rosanna Lopez)**

SONG OF GIANA

I am Giana Gabrielle.
 And I could put my father's surname down
 but it would wear the former like a gaudy crown.
 For this is the impact of absent love.
 Why I am perpetually doe-eyed, a paternal yearn I
 can't get rid of.
 I am Giana Gabrielle.
 I don't identify with my last name or the first man in
 my life.
 So now that we've been introduced
 I can tell my anxiety to leave the room.
 She insists she ought to stick around, barks,
 and keeps me chained and bound.
 I deeply fear the human race, asking for help, a
 healthy embrace.
 I saw too much when I was ripe and since those
 days
 I've been running from life.
 Hi, my name is Giana Gabrielle
 And I am an alcoholic.
 I've since gotten over the foreignness of that title sitting alongside my identity.
 The whole disease crept up like a thief in the night, and a part of me blames bad boyfriends.
 Life goes on, the coffee strong, and I stand up Friday nights in church basements.
 I peacock my chest and get dressed as I look in the mirror before leaving.
 I am Giana Gabrielle.
 I do everything with meaning. **(Giana Mason)**

**SONG OF TANISHA**

I am Tanisha
 I am a mother to three
 The soon to be wife
 I am the Queen of my castle
 I am a vibrant woman
 I am bold
 I am beautiful
 I am a friend
 I am not always consistent
 But most importantly I am me
 Tanisha **(Tanisha Milligan)**



SONG OF SOULEYMANE

Souleymane is my name
 I am from Burkina Faso,
 A land where integrity is taught and praised by its people
 Souleymane is my name
 Attentive and sympathetic, I am
 By working to develop my potential, I grow
 Towards a brilliant future, I march
 To be an artisan for a wider betterment of the world, I strive
 To the Lord who created me, I pray
 Souleymane is my name
 I dream of peace, justice, and equity for all, all over the world.
 I am optimistic about "Unity in Diversity" for future generations.
 Souleymane is my name. **(Souleymane Nikiema)**

SONG OF TERENCE

I am Terance with no parents.
 I don't feel seen with no appearance.
 I have a soul, but not the spirit.
 I am Terance when I perish,
 But who is Terance? **(Terance Nix)**

SONG OF SALLY

Born of the creation of Almighty God.
 I am a unique me Sally.
 A pillar of strength. I never ask for much,
 all I want is a simple life, happy
 Life full of love and contentment.
 I am a unique me Sally.
 Who isn't afraid to work hard,



especially for the important people in my life.

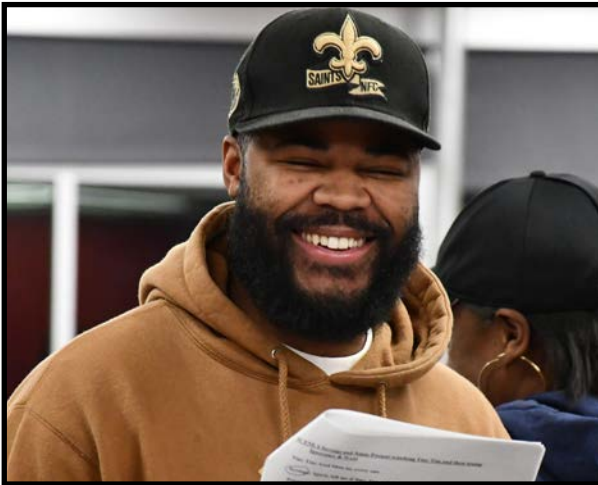
I am a unique me Sally.
 My weakness is that I hide my stress
 behind the smile, and never
 Complain.
 I am unique me Sally.
 I am unique me Sally,
 best I can be is unique me Sally.

I am Sally.
 I am Lily and Orchid among many other flowers of the wild field
 of many kinds of fragrance.
 I am kind and gentle,
 it would be foolish for others to underestimate me.
 I am stronger than I look, and it takes a lot to bring me down.
 I may be quiet, but I leave a lasting impression on everyone I meet.
 I am Sally, I am Lily and Orchid. **(Sally Phelps)**

SONG OF ISIAH

I am Isiah.
 I am the son of an angel, a brother of 12 siblings.
 I am a brother that has never been in the same room
 with all my siblings together ever.
 I am a product of a system that failed me.
 I am a survivor of damaged love that didn't break me.
 I am a father of four who give me purpose.
 I am a man of many thoughts, few words, but powerful.
 I am passionate, I am unapologetically me.
 I am serene with a roar.
 I am still but gleaming.
 I am highly seasoned, yet glacial.
 I am untrusting in others, I am my own trust.
 I am Isiah, I am broken in a shattered box we call life.
 I am a shadow in a reflection of my path.
 I am finally Isiah, I am finding my way.
 I am rebuilding my life, my soul, my spirit.
 I am me.

(Isiah Pickett)

**SONG OF RODNEY**

I am Rodney.
 I am family oriented.
 I am a father.
 I am God fearing.
 Someone who is cool as a fan once I show vulnerability.
 But also someone that keeps their guard up.
 I am someone who loves to smile and goof around.
 I am ambitious.
 I am a Poe.

(Rodney Poe)

SONG OF KIMBERLY

I am proud. I am black and proud.
 I am me and if I can't be Kim I can't be no one.
 I am beautiful, I am love, I am a wonderful human being.
 I am someone's daughter, I am someone's mother,
 I am someone's sibling, I am someone's caregiver.
 I am a child of God.

(Kimberly Rodgers)



SONG OF MARCY

I am Marcy
 Daughter of Jacqueline and Chris
 Strong and beautiful
 Haitian descent
 Patient but fast
 Quiet but loud
 Brilliant and proud
 I am Marcy
 Funny, shy, kind-hearted, and caring.
 I am evasive and sometimes daring.
 I am Marcy
 I love hard but don't care to let go
 I follow my heart, mind, body, and soul
 I am Marcy
 The person everyone fears to be
 I live on the edge so please don't follow me
 I am Marcy, smart and sassy
 And with Odyssey I somehow became classy
 I am Marcy, unique as can be
 If you want to learn about me, learn from within me
 I am Marcy **(Marcy Tibbs)**

**SONG OF AMANDA**

I am Amanda
 I am Debbie's only daughter
 I am Mark's second daughter
 I am Anijah
 Dre'Jean
 Dae'Vion
 True
 Rae'Sel
 Sincere
 And A'Nadiyah's mom
 I am shy yet personable,
 Sad yet happy
 Discouraged yet ambitious
 Sour yet sweet
 Beautiful Queen
 Black Queen
 Gemini Queen
 Passionate lover
 Sweet sinner
 Food enthusiast
 But most importantly and my favorite of all,
 A mother to my sweetest gifts on earth
 I am Amanda. **(Amanda Von Behren)**

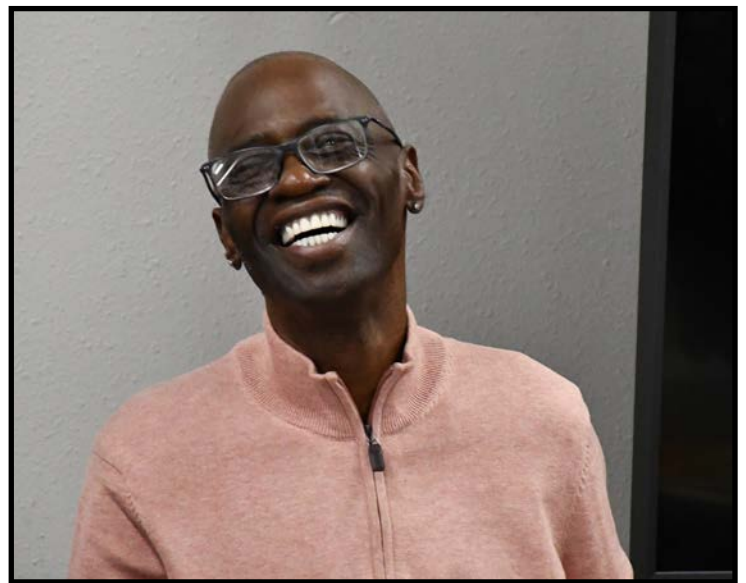


SONG OF ENDIA

I am Endia
 A beautiful loving soul I have
 A heart of gold I hold.
 Desire to be a good mother and friend
 A hopeless romantic that falls hard and fast
 Not a pushover, I say what I mean and mean what I say
 Intelligent and hardworking always helping others
 To know me is to love me and if you don't that's fine too
 I am Endia, beautiful inside and out.
 (Endia Walls)

SONG OF RONALD

Ronald is Alive
 I am Ronald.
 Ronald is resilience because he survived thirty
 years in the wilderness.
 Ronald is a fighter, he has overcome more battles
 with the serpent than he cares to mention.
 Ronald is funny, goofy, and enjoys the simple
 things of life.
 Ronald believes in himself and you.
 Ronald is a husband, father, brother, all around
 solid person.
 Ronald was dead,
 Ronald is alive.
 (Ronald Watson)



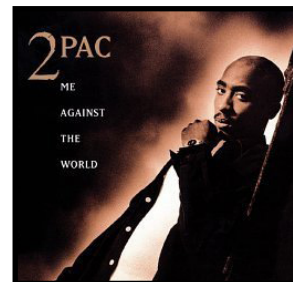
WALK-ON SONGS

A walk-on song (also known as entrance music or an entry theme) is a musical piece or song played for athletes, entertainers, or politicians when they first appear in front of an audience before a performance. While music played in our classroom (David and Bob Auerbach) last month, each Odyssey student chose a walk-on song and explained the selection.

Thanks to Erin Celello, Odyssey writing instructor and director of Odyssey Beyond Wars, for creating a playlist of the walk-on songs for the Class of 2024. Scan the QR code to listen!



My walk-on song right now that I'd choose for my entrance would be **Let's Go by Key Glock**. I chose this song because it's hyped and currently one of my fav workout songs that gets me pumped. (Dontae Acklin)



Me Against the World by 2Pac. When I was young and life would get hard, there was one artist that made me feel. 2Pac made me feel heard, understood, and the last verse of Me Against the World still

completes me. (Jasmine Benson)



The Soundtrack to My Life by Kid Cudi. I chose this song because of the chorus, "I've got some issues that nobody can see, and all of these emotions are pouring out of me; I bring them

to the light and it's only right this is the soundtrack to my life." I have issues in life just like everyone else, and I am a very emotional person. The song represents having your issues, being who you are, but standing tall in all of that. (Carissa Andrews)

My walk-on song is **Superwoman by Alicia Keys**. This is my walk-on song as I feel like I am a superwoman. I know that through the trials in life I have endured so far that I am strong, courageous, and dedicated. Even with all of the stress that life brings, I still stand tall. I am powerful and I know that I can take on anything life brings my way. (Danika Bethel-Johnson)



Entry of the Gladiators by Fucik. This is the song most commonly associated with clowns and the circus. I appreciate the humorous irony of walking out to a song associated with the comic and silly. I'm a clown at heart and feel this song would disarm the audience. (Lucas Benford)

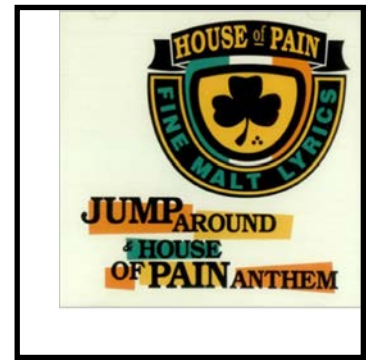


My walk-on song is **Winning by Pastor Mike Jr**. The song to me sets the tone of a winning attitude. The first line says "I'm gone win, you gone win, everybody around me winning." To win is to accomplish whatever your heart desires. You have to first think it, see it, and last but not least believe it. That is me! That is my heart! That is my mind! (Vernell Cauley)

Ain't No Mountain High Enough. I chose this selection because no matter what I have going on in my life, everything revolves around my children. I try my hardest to show them that whether out of survival or love I want them to know there's nothing or no one that can stop or keep me away from them or caring for them for whatever reason it may be when they need me. (Taeshia Clark)



My walk-on song would be ***Jump Around by House of Pain.*** This song gets myself and everyone else in an upbeat happy mood. This has always been my favorite because you definitely will be moving some part of your body if you're not "jumping around!" (Aleesha Flowers)



My walk on song would be ***My Life by Mary J Blige.*** It is literally the strength I need to keep going. And it really just hits my soul and makes me emotional. (Mekicia Davis)

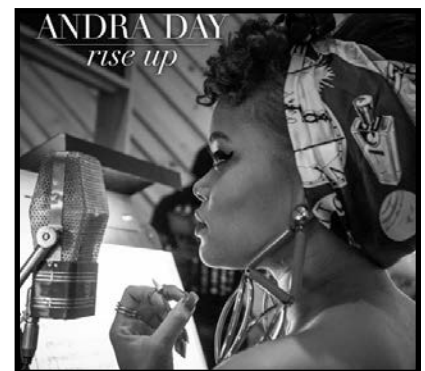


Float by Janelle Monae. I chose this because I breeze through my days feeling rejuvenated, unbothered, and happy, confident in my whole being. (Andreya Gavins)

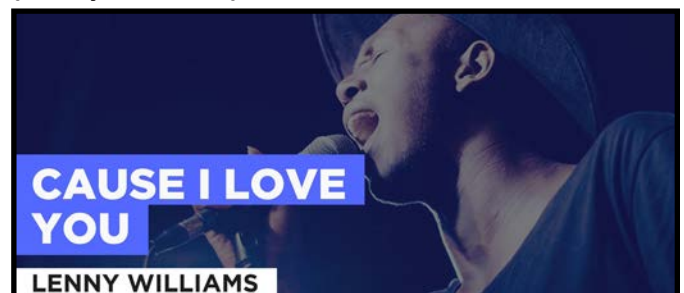
The song I chose was ***W.A.Y.S by Jhene Aiko.*** I picked this song because for me these past couple months life has been life-ing. Most nights I can't sleep because I can't sleep or I am up crying questioning some things going on in my life. Sometimes I wonder if I am failing my children, if I am going to be able to do nursing school, be a full-time student. I am scared, I don't want to fail, and I know that it is not going to be easy. I know I have to have faith and be ready to spread my wings. Transforming into something beautiful is going to take hard work and faith. I can't be afraid of change because at the end it's such a beautiful thing. Keep moving forward despite life's struggles. When we face hard times, we must keep going and shake off negative thoughts. When listening to the song it's a reminder to find strength even in challenging times. (Andrea Evans)

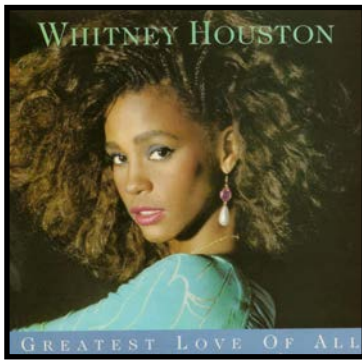


I'll Rise Up by Andra Day This is my walk-on song because no matter what obstacles come my way I will rise up and overcome them. No matter how many times I fall, I will rise again like I never fell. (Shanigel Goodwan)



Because I Love You by Lenny Williams. I love older music, and this is a song I really love. A special person introduced me to this song. (Mikaylah Harris)





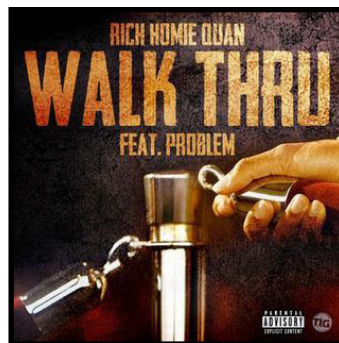
Greatest Love of All by Whitney Houston.

I believe it represents what we should be as people. The idea is that we should pour into our following generations because they're the ones who are going to make a

difference. I wish I was poured more into at times. I hate I was forced to emotionally raise myself because life sucks. **(Synquar Harston)**

Walk Thru by Rich

Homie Quan. This song just says so much about making it. When I finish/graduate Odyssey, I'm going to be so happy and proud. The way the song says "watch me, watch me walk thru"—I can't wait for all eyes to be on me when I finally make it. So many people count me out and doubt that I can do this. **(Cierra Jackson)**



Mouimiento Indígena by Charijayac. I chose this song because it represents a song of resistance and to go further, stronger than ever. **(Blanca Laine)**

Everyday Hustlin by Rick Ross and Unstoppable by Sia. They both make me feel like I can do anything, especially when I put my mind to it. **(Rosanna Lopez)**



Moonlight Serenade by Glenn Miller. This song is timeless, and it encapsulates my soul at any age. If I was to get married, this would be a lovely first dance tune. If I was making stroganoff

on a Saturday night, I would gladly turn this on. And if I was to walk on a stage, of course, it would be very me. **(Giana Mason)**

Love by Keyshia Cole.

I chose this song because I didn't know what I was missing until I found people that love me for me and would do anything for me like I would do for them. Once I had kids was really when I felt love. **(Tanisha Milligan)**



I choose a song called Zenabo by Issouf Compaoré. It is a song of a singer from Burkina Faso and is in Mooré, my mother tongue. This song talks about marriage, true love, and the values of our culture. It could be played at

weddings and parties. This song reminds me of our values and where I am from. It also inspires me to be true and see the good in others. When I was a teenager, we used to listen to that song because it's full of advice that is still relevant. I still listen to that song whenever I feel low. As this walk-on song plays, I imagine hearing this introduction: "Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you Souleymane. This is Souleymane. He is from Burkina-Faso, a country located in West Africa. From Burkina-Faso to the United States, he came to make his way in this life. This is Souleymane. Husband and father. Attentive and open-minded. This is Souleymane. He is eager to learn and he is committed to the betterment of the world." **(Souleymane Nikiema)**



The wedding march Here Comes the Bride. I was a bride once. (Sally Phelps)

My song would be **Go Get It by T.I.** I picked this song because it's telling me to keep going and don't stop. (Terance Nix)



Fire and Desire by Rick James and Teena Marie. It makes me think of the love my parents and grandparents have for each other. (Marcy Tibbs)



My walk-on song is **No Option by Kevin Gates** because it makes out that I had no option. If you had walked in the shoes I walked in to make it out, I had no option. And **Dark Shades by Rich Homie Quan.** I chose

this song because I keep shades on to keep people out of my face and my business. (Isiah Pickett)



Bae by Skilla Baby. This song just puts me in a mood. Put it on and it will boost you up—from starting your day and listening before you go out. Turning it on before you go to work or even before you go to

a party, it gets you ready. Bae, you know you fine! (Amanda Von Behren)

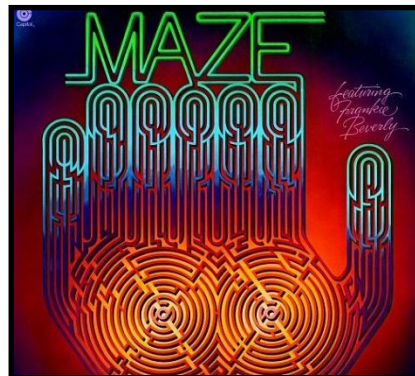
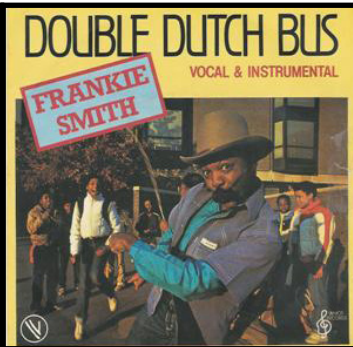
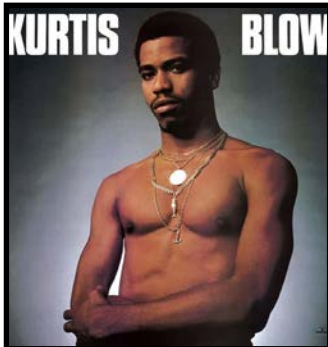
Rise and Shine by J. Cole. I picked this song because it's always been my hype up or get locked in song. Basically, it is telling you to get up and go get it. My mother used to wake me up saying "Rise and Shine!" meaning to me wake up and conquer the day. (Rodney Poe)



Be Happy by Mary J. Blige. I know my worth and I love myself, and in order to give and love correctly, I have to be happy in and out. The key to my happiness is being happy myself, and I love that for me. (Endia Walls)



Take Me Out to the Ballgame, My by Kuris Blow and The Double Dutch Bus. (Kimberly Rodgers)



Happy Feelin's by Maze. The reason I chose that is most of time I am like a kid. I love to see others laugh and enjoy life! (Ron Watson)

MUSIC MEMORIES

Odyssey students were asked to choose one song or piece with special meaning to them because of a memory associated with it—a lullaby, a song played at a wedding, memorial service, or high school dance, a song associated with a specific time in their youth, etc.

“Loyalty” by Kendrick Lamar featuring Rihanna is a song that holds a special spot in my heart, because when my baby cousin died this song kept playing over and over again. Now when I hear this song, I think of her.
#anisascott **(Dontaeva Acklin)**



Alanis Morissette – Ironie. This song reminds me of my childhood because it was a song my mom loved in the 90s; and I grew up finding my own admiration for it over the last 20 years. **(Carissa Andrews)**



Gladys Knight “You’re the Best Thing.” Before her breakdown, my mom would play this song when cooking. She explained that this song reminded her of us when she was strung out or in rehab.
(Jasmine Benson)



It’s that Chopin piece that has that recognizable dum da da da da – like a hopeful fall– one of the nocturnes. I remember being at Memorial Union with one of my good friends, and we were listening to someone work through this piece. It was so beautiful to see someone joyously struggle to learn to play their song, as the song contains a moment of beautiful struggle. It was one of those magical moments where art and life align. **(Lucas Benford)**

Missing You by Brandy, Gladys Knight, Chaka Khan, and Tamia. This song is near to my heart as it was the song played at my high school dance teacher’s funeral. She was a big influence in the community and had taken a chance on me and the team. Shortly after accepting me to the team and only a few short practices later, she passed away. **(Danika Bethel-Johnson)**

Angel by Anita Baker. It's one of my favorite songs. Most people my age know nothing about it. But when it comes on it sings to my soul and I sing it from my soul. It is a song I sing with my mom and also a song that I sing with my seven-year-old daughter, and she knows every word. **(Mia Cannon)**



My music memory song would have to be "As We Lay" by Shirley Murdock. This song was released in 1986, the year my father passed away. I was seven years old. I would hear this song often blasting through the speakers of my home. It was dear to my mother and now every time I hear it, it reminds me of the sadness of that year. **(Vernell Cauley)**

When I Think About the Lord. I chose this song because growing up I was forced to go to church every Sunday! I was in the church way before I knew what a church was. And when I learned it was from the choir, I learned best about the lord and what he's capable of not only through the lyrics but the rhythm, the feeling, the joy, and the tears. **(Taeshia Clark)**



Share My World – Mary J or On the Ocean – K'jon, but my favorite of all time is Orbit. It just grounds me and makes me happy/sad and comforted all within one song. I remember where I was the first time that I heard it and what it made my heart feel. **(Mekicia Davis)**



Miss you, Aaliyah. The day I heard that Aaliyah died, I was too young at the time to have an emotional reaction to a death. This was actually the first song I heard of hers shortly after, and I remember back in elementary school everyone was singing it. Particularly I remember my sister and I would run to the swings and sing word for word. She would sing the first verse, and I would sing the second or vice versa, and then we would sing the chorus in harmony. Fun times. **(Andrea Evans)**

A Song for Mama by Boys to Men. I picked this song for my mother's memorial service.

(Aleesha Flowers)

Debarge – "I Like It." It reminds me of when my twin brother was alive. We used to sing this song when I would listen to old school music in my home. He loved singing this song in particular.

(Andreya Gavins)



R Kelly "You Saved Me" because my grandmother used to play that song all the time. Listening to it makes me sad because I miss her so much. She was my world.

(Mikaylah Harris)



Angel by Amanda Perez. I lost a lot of people I love at a young age, and I never really knew how to cope with it, but this song right here helped me get through what I felt like during my worst days growing up. Rest in paradise to all the people I lost too soon.

(Shanigel Goodwan)



Any Toni Braxton song. I remember when I first start expressing myself, and her songs would just make me break—to really stop and think of how I treat others, and how I allow them to control my emotions.

(Synquar Harston)



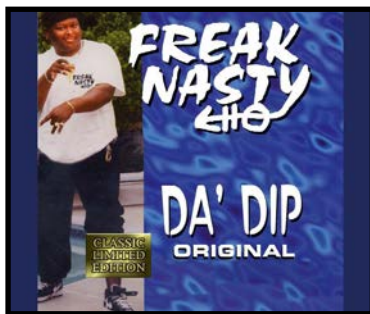
Tamela Mann – Take Me to the King. My sister sang this song as they carried my grandma's body out of the church to get buried. I'll never forget it. The memory never gets dull or seems to fade away. Every time I hear that song, that scene plays in my head.

(Cierra Jackson)





I remember I used to love to listen to “El Condor pascu” song with my mother. The song used to denote to us the spirit of freedom even when we are in our hardest moments. **(Blanca Laine)**



Da’ Dip from my eighth-grade graduation. It was the best graduation party, and the dance was so fun! **(Rosanna Lopez)**

The first time I ever experienced full body chills from a song was at 16 years old. It was a beautiful summer afternoon and my mom had taken me along with her for a joy ride in the car her father had left to her. She had fixed it up finally and the vintage feel of his '69 Cyclone had us giddy as we tested it out. I felt my back stick and unpeel to the white leather seats, but I didn’t care about the discomfort. Once she turned the radio on, a song began to crackle through like a serenade. If you’ve ever heard “Teenage Wasteland” by the The Who, you know how penetrating those chords are in the beginning. My mom turned it up, and I remember rolling down the hand-cranked windows to feel the wind in my curls to fully capitalize on this magic moment. **(Giana Mason)**



Best Part, H.E.R. **(Tanisha Milligan)**



I chose the song “Martyr” of Faso Kombat featuring Alif Naaba. This song about martyrs honors those

who gave their lives for the betterment of the world. The sacrifice of a few for the well-being of everyone moves me. We should never forget their sacrifice and we should forever honor the memories. This song gives me the energy and the courage to keep fighting for my family and others. **(Souleymane Nikiema)**

I pick Forever Mine by The OJ's. The reason I picked this song is because my mom would sing this to me when I was young. **(Terance Nix)**

This Moment by Shania Twain. This was the song that was picked for my first dance at my wedding. **(Sally Phelps)**



My music memory is MO3 "All Love I Had." I choose this song because it describes me. I'm a lover and I want everybody including me to win. **(Isiah Pickett)**



My mother used to sing the "I Love You" song from Barney. One day she thought she was singing me to sleep, but I ended up singing her to sleep. When she woke up, she couldn't find me. I took everything out of the fridge and hid in there until she found me almost an hour later, and I thought it was so funny. **(Rodney Poe)**

The Carpenters, We've Only Just Begun. "We've only just begun, white lace and promises, a kiss for luck and we're on our way." This was my elementary school graduation song. It also reminds me of a song I would play at a wedding. **(Kimberly Rodgers)**



Lullaby my mother used to sing to us before bed: "Sing me a lullaby, sing me a song, voices like angels, because you are number one." When I hear it now, it takes me back to the memories of my mother singing it. **(Marcy Tibbs)**



Oh Happy Day – From the Sister Act movie. I was in the Beta Club in middle school and we went to a conference in Springfield every year to represent our school. One year we had to perform this song, and we got a standing ovation. **(Endia Walls)**



"A Change is Going to Come" – I knew my life was a destructive path. The song is inspiration. It motivated me to give my all when reconstructing my life! **(Ron Watson)**



Title: Anniversary, Artist: Tony! Toni! Tone! This song will always remind me of my parents. It instantly takes me back to my living room. When I was younger, I can remember my parents dancing and singing for hours. But every time this song would come, they would slow it down and come together. I can remember them looking at each other with what I thought was so much love for each other. I would always join in. I loved when we all spent time together. **(Amanda Von Behren)**

MUSIC METAPHORS

I am a violin. When my strings are gently plucked, the reaction (music) is loving and gentle. When too much pressure is applied or my strings are too tight, the music can be chaotic or too up-tempo. **(Carissa Andrews)**

I am a violin soft and sweet. I am a cello voiceful and unique. I am a windchime calm and neat. **(Marcy Tibbs)**

I am a violin. Soft, intricate, and beautiful. Like a conductor with a story to tell. My life has its ups and downs, showing all of the smiles and frowns. **(Danika Bethel-Johnson)**

I am a violin with a sweet soul. My notes are expressions of happiness, joy that comes from my heart. **(Blanca Laine)**

Violin | R&B | Gospel. Older R&B has more meaning, love was talked about more. The violin is a beautiful sound, like me. Angelic, also. Deep and serene. **(Andreya Gavins)**



I am a piano loud or quiet, makes you happy and sad, different kinds. **(Shanigel Goodwan)**

I would compare myself to a piano; each key has its own strong sound. Every layer of myself creates a me just like every key makes a beautiful song. **(Mia Cannon)**



I am a piano. I can be soft, smooth, in harmony. I can be anxious, angry, aggravated. I can be calm and content. **(Sally Phelps)**

Piano or drums. I say those two because I feel like they fit my personality based on my mood. Drums can be loud, aggressive, forceful, and energetic. Piano can be smooth and quiet but also switch up the tempo and be energetic. **(Rodney Poe)**

I am a drum. I can be loud, I can be quiet. Such tough exterior. Can take hit after hit. Blow after blow, yet still the outcome will always be beautiful. **(Amanda Von Behren)**

I am an 808 drum. Its deep bass reminds me of how deep my mind can wander while also how deep my love can be for someone. **(Vernell Cauley)**

I am a drum. The background beat of the mood/rhythm. My sound and energy are determined off feeling and emotion. **(Taeshia Clark)**

I am a drum. No matter how banged up I may get, I still seem to wow the crowd. **(Mikaylah Harris)**

I am a drum because I walk to my own beat. I am my own person and I'm not going to allow what I don't want in my space around. **(Ron Watson)**

I am a drum. Sometimes I beat loudly and sometimes I am a soft beat. You know when I am beating loudly because that is when I'm mad or frustrated. My drum beat softly when I am at peace and low vibration. **(Tanisha Milligan)**

I am a guitar. You are the sound you want out of it – it just depends on how you play, what sound you want. Low, high, soft, terrible. But the main purpose of a musical instrument is to be used to make melodies and make people happy – make people feel good and motivated. **(Souleymane Nikiema)**

I'm a guitar, a flying guitar with strings that bring the party! **(Rosanna Lopez)**



I am old school R&B. I love music that's about love or heartache or fighting to give or prove your love and apologizing for the wrong you've done and making things work. I love true love. **(Endia Walls)**

I am R&B. I'm mixed with all types. I love my slow R&B, my upbeat R&B, and especially love my 90s R&B because that decade had some of the best music. **(Aleesha Flowers)**

I am R&B soul. I am R&B soul the way I carry myself. I am calm, loving, and relaxing. **(Dontaeve Acklin)**



I am a row of water glasses—water allocated in varied amounts. An orderly row of glasses set upon a table covered with a checkered tablecloth. Touch a gently moistened finger to the perimeter of the vessel and circle the rim with intention to elicit a celestial voice. Each glass a different moment to circumnavigate. Each journey a song. **(Lucas Benford)**



Odyssey is jazz, the swaying of the bass. The piano is all of us, the trumpet and sax are our lessons and professors, Ms. Emily is the director, and I am thankful. **(Jasmine Benson)**

Odyssey is a piano. We can be loud or quiet. Our moods and emotions can be happy or sad, but we work together beautifully. **(Cierra Jackson)**

I am a song where you can feel the melody in your soul, the sound of the instruments that make you dance or tap your feet. The way you can relate to the words fills your heart with sorrow or joy. The tempo can be upbeat or soft and mellow. I am a song that can have you in tears or ready to go to war. **(Endia Walls)**

Odyssey is a symphony, instruments in unison. Odyssey is a box of chocolates, a delightful sampler of rich goodies of wisdom. Odyssey is a painting, every person a beautiful brush stroke helping to comprise a powerful work of art. **(Lucas Benford)**

Odyssey is music, a lot of different pieces. **(Rosanna Lopez)**



BECOMING A METAPHOR

I am a lotus flower. Lately I have been feeling like the silence in the night, at peace with my surroundings and life. I am a lotus flower, overcoming adversity and life's challenges. **(Dontae Acklin)**



I am a poem. I am an emotion without cause, I am a decision without thought. I am a poem. I am a book of 28 different emotions. I am a sonnet without a rhyme scheme. I am a poem. I am a map without directions, and I am a wind without a final destination. **(Synquar Harston)**



I am a kaleidoscope, an ever-changing clash and mesh of color and pattern. Every time a different aspect – a beautiful mess – a perfect jumble.

I invite you to glimpse inside for a surprise.

Turn me towards the light and take a look – the glory of the universe collapsing and reforming endlessly.

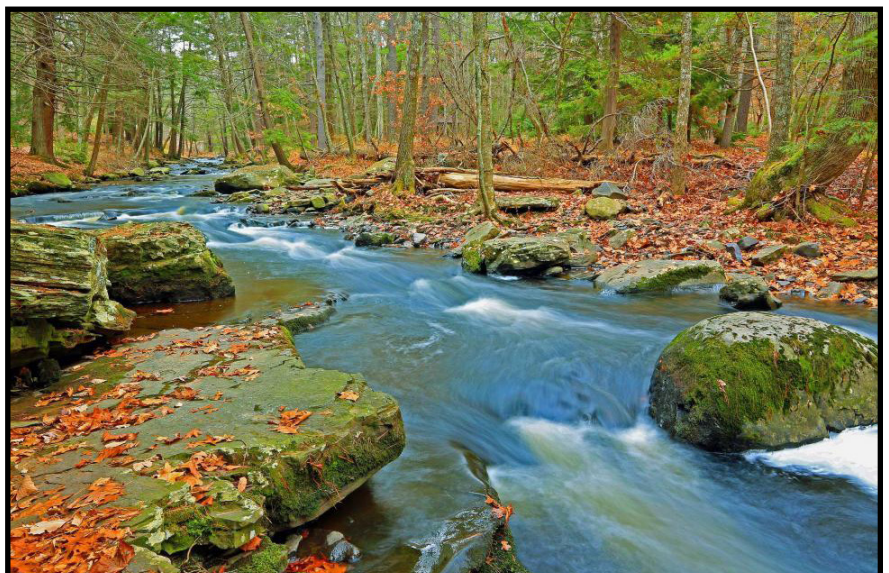
(Lucas Benford)



I am smoke that rises to the sky, to my ancestors.

(Rosanna Lopez)

I am a brook, free-flowing, going where nature provides but is most needed. I give nutrients and support my surroundings, while being as loud or as quiet as my environment requires. **(Jasmine Benson)**



I am a river
I flow different paths
I cut my obstacles
No sea can stop me.
(Blanca Laine)

I am a river, everchanging.
I evolve in ripples,
Who I was yesterday. **(Giana Mason)**



I am a flower blooming in the dark night wind. I am that flower whose light never dims. I grow as the night falls. **(Andrea Evans)**

I used to be no one,
But now I am someone,
Resilience and resistance.
Now no one will stop me forever. **(Blanca Laine)**

I am a rose in a field with soft petals. My thorns can handle through the storms. You can pick on me, but be careful of my thorns. **(Sally Phelps)**

I am a rose,
Covered in thorns and so carefully handled.
I am the dirt that nurtures my growth,
I am the beauty that hides the pain,
I am the one who some can't let go.
They take my pieces from my being
And hope they can mimic what I once was.
They have no guidance to create what I am
Because a rose is what I was. **(Mekicia Davis)**



I am light, shining bright on everything, bringing happiness and joy to everyone I see, trying to be a beacon of hope, trying to light the way and shine a light to a better way, and I'm always trying to keep people safe. I'm just a light of hope and love. I'm just a light shining bright, just being me. **(Isiah Pickett)**

I am a kind-hearted warrior who is, and always will be, against injustice anywhere. I am reasonable, obsessed with well-being and happiness. I am always looking and working towards goals that can improve my life and others' lives as well – such as going back to school with the Odyssey Project – a program that gives a second chance to bounce back in life. **(Souleymane Nikiema)**

I am a shell, sheltered by other shells that surround the sea. The only thing is, they can't be me. I try to venture off when the waves hit the reef, only to be picked up by people who once admired me, but somehow, they throw me back into the sea. **(Marcy Tibbs)**





I am an octopus,
Flowing through the depths
of the ocean.

I have many obstacles,
But I will persevere. (**Danika
Bethel-Johnson**)

I am a Rubik's cube, twisted and
sometimes confused. One minute I
think I have life figured out, then I
realize I need to make more moves.
(**Fataeshia Clark**)



I am a flower, blooming in the summer sun.
I am a flower, gentle and soft, growing into more than one,
Blooming in the hot summer in fields of bright red roses.

I used to be a tiny seed waiting for the bright sun and fresh water.
Now I am a colorful and fragrant flower full of power.

I am a flower that has grown and continues to bloom.
(**Aleesha Flowers**)



I am a rainbow,
Colorful and vibrant.
I shine brighter
Whether on a rainy day
Or sunny.

I am a rainbow,
Colorful and vibrant.
I shine bright,
Whether cloudy or dreary,
My colors will show. (**Andrey Gavins**)



I am a cup of coffee
Sweet, aromatic, and
bold. I make everyone's
day better. (**Amanda von
Behren**)

I am a chameleon,
changing to protect myself
from the voices inside of
me, or being done with
ones who don't have my
best interests at heart.
(**Ronald Watson**)





I am a caterpillar, soon to become a butterfly. I am still young and learning, but as time advances and I continue to gain more knowledge, I am becoming an even more beautiful version of myself.

(Mia Cannon)

I used to be a caterpillar, dull and low,
But now I'm a colorful butterfly,
Delicate, beautiful, and rare.
Out of my cocoon,
Spreading my wings,
Transforming into something
That's worth changing for.
I am a butterfly.

(Mikaylah Harris)

I used to be a caterpillar,
Conflicted in things I believed were normal,
Unwavering, unsure, unsteady.
Unsure of what is waiting,
And,
Unsteady of the pace I'm moving.

But now I am a butterfly,
Filled with purpose, determination, and hope,
Trying to find my way,
Moving swiftly with determination in hopes I fulfill
my purpose.

What made the change?
The realization that being comfortable with the bare
minimum

Is hindering the possibilities of my potential.

(Synquar Harston)



I am a beautiful butterfly,
I was dull and colorless
Until I found my true self,
And my true colors started to show.

I used to be a caterpillar,
Until I found myself.
My many colors showed up,
As I found my true calling.
Now I am a beautiful butterfly,
Navigating through life.

(Tanisha Milligan)

I used to be a cub
Young, wild, and free
But now I am a lioness
Raising my wild young. **(Amanda Von Behren)**



I used to be a timid cub,
Uncertain and cautious in the face of challenges.
But now I am a lioness,
Fierce and protective.
Just like the strong mothers that fearlessly defend
their pride. **(Cierra Jackson)**

I used to be a mouse,
Quiet, alone, and lingering in the shadows,
Afraid to be seen.
Now I am a lion,
Ferocious, loud, strong, and proud,
Unable to be attacked, and followed by a pack. **(Danika Bethel-Johnson)**



I used to be a gem hiding beneath the scenes in between the curves of
every girl's dreams. Now I'm a diamond being shown off and seen. They
even have me on standby just to become every woman's dreams. **(Marcy Tibbs)**

I used to be a princess, but
now I am a queen. I am a loving
mother, grandmother, auntie,
sister, niece, and friend. The
family queen. I am reliable, loyal
to you all, just as good as the king. When my people call, I join
them at the castle, providing them all with love, respect, and
kindness. **(Kimberly Rodgers)**



I used to be a Tasmanian devil trapped in the forest. In the
struggle to find inner peace, I terrorized all those around me.
Now I am a gentle bird, flying with purpose to feed my nest, with
a tunnel vision for success. Every flap of my wings I give my best.
(Vernell Cauley)

I used to be a
cupcake, but now
I am a cake. I have
layers, multiple
flavors, and I can be
made into any shape. I change my style like a cake changes
once it's baked. I can be soft and sweet, but also hot and
fresh, just like a cake. I can be stacked tall or made small.
(Shanigel Goodwan)



METAPHORS ABOUT ODYSSEY

Odyssey is the journey of seas I'm taking to the creative sides of my mind, only to not be blinded by salty waters and pirates that lie ashore. I'm taking this sea journey. I have to go now, the beginning is near, please don't wait for me, I have found no lack of fear. **(Marcy Tibbs)**

Odyssey is the journey that I never knew I needed. The missing piece for me to go further in life and do what I needed to get back on the path of greatness. **(Tanisha Milligan)**

Odyssey is a bookmark, where others stop, others start. **(Mekicia Davis)**



Odyssey is a dove. Taking this class helps you feel pure and allows you to spread your wings and fly. **(Mikaylah Harris)**

Odyssey is a path to long-term success. It leads me to a broadness of possibilities. **(Andreya Gavins)**

Odyssey is a grocery store full with aisles of joy! Everyone brings their own flavor to class. **(Shanigel Goodwan)**

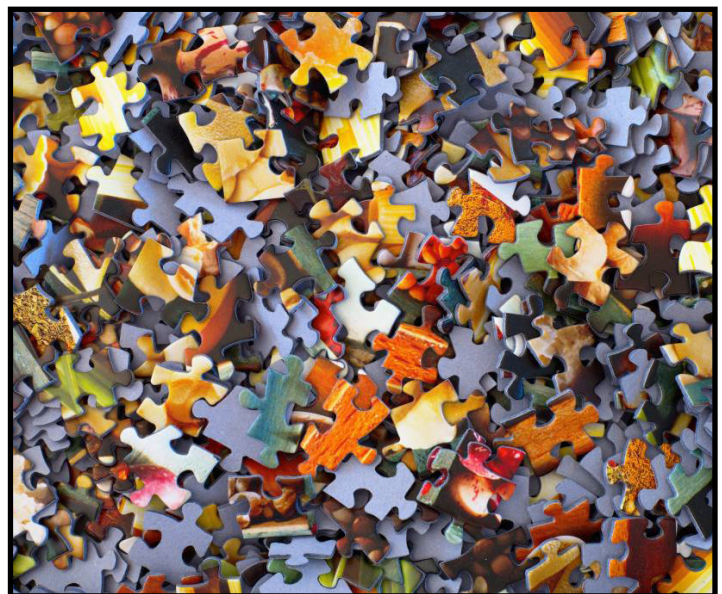
Odyssey is a lantern. **(Giana Mason)**

Odyssey is a puzzle. It takes more than one piece to create the full picture. Everyone showing up every day is what makes the experience so impactful. **(Mia Cannon)**

Odyssey is a jigsaw puzzle,
Many different pieces,
All being put together over time. **(Danika Bethel-Johnson)**

Odyssey is a sky
With lots of stars shining bright.
So close, yet so far,
Lots of different weather conditions,
Rain, hail, and snow. **(Amanda Von Behren)**

Odyssey lights up my life.
Odyssey is a sun full of brightness.
Odyssey is a miracle that changes people's lives.
Odyssey is a book made of student chapters.
Odyssey is a race. Who keeps in the program until the end wins. **(Blanca Laine)**



EPIPHANIES

*We all have “light bulb moments” in our lives—times when we suddenly see ourselves or other people and parts of our lives in a new way. In preparation for Bill Banfield’s return visit to Odyssey and his discussion of his new symphony, “Revelation,” Odyssey students took a few minutes in class to read the definition of **epiphany** and **revelation** and then write about one of those light bulb moments in their lives.*



Being accepted into Odyssey: My light bulb moment was definitely getting that acceptance call from Ms. Emily. I was at a point in my life where I was just exhausted and ready to give up. I had literally given God an ultimatum. He was to either show me I had a purpose in life or I was out; I was throwing the towel in. I had been trying to get into Odyssey for two years. When I got that call, I think I caught the whole Woodman’s by surprise the way I yelled in disbelief. I just couldn’t believe it. I cried, I yelled, and apologized to Emily a thousand times for my emotions. It was a start to a new journey I can’t wait to see the end results from. **(Cierra Jackson)**



When I thought I would spend the rest of my life with this person and I didn’t see all the flaws and discrepancies that were right in my face because I was blinded by love, I then had an epiphany. All that glitters isn’t gold. He wasn’t the man for me, and I didn’t have to settle for his bull**** and lies. My worth and self didn’t deserve that type of treatment. As I saw the revelation, I learned to love myself more and patiently wait for someone to love me unconditionally the way I should be. **(Endia Walls)**



I worked for an environmental nonprofit in Seattle, WA. One of our projects was removing invasive Himalayan blackberry from a tract of federal land. This day was particularly challenging – imagine a plant with stems as thick as your wrist, ten feet tall, and armed with needle sharp thorns a few inches in length. It poured all day and we were soaked to the bone – freezing and exhausted from the intense work. This was probably one of the

most uncomfortable moments in my life – cold, wet, tired, and multiple thorns lodged in my skin. Towards the end of the day, the rain broke and we were greeted by brilliant sunshine. In that moment I was struck by how strong I had become and how much I could endure. That moment revealed to me how much pain and suffering is just an illusion.

(Lucas Benford)



Getting indicted by the USA: It was at that moment that I knew I no longer wanted to live the life I was living. The after process was another moment of light as well. The whole process was enlightening and made me aware of self and gave me clarity on who I was and where I wanted to go from that point.

(Carissa Andrews)



I was in prison in 2013 at Dodge. One night when I prayed, I asked God why the devil likes to get in the middle of things. God took me into a pasture with Jesus there in a white robe and someone in a black robe. God kept asking me who I see in the black robe. I kept saying I couldn’t see the face. Once I realized it was my face, I was transferred into a white robe and given the promise that I will receive the gift of eternal life.

(Ron Watson)



One day, I decided to give myself a birthday gift by purchasing a car on my own for the first time in my life. It was the biggest decision I ever made. It made me feel all grown up because I made that decision on my own to pick out the car that I was able to purchase for myself and the color of it. I still have that car to this day and it’s all paid off. **(Sally Phelps)**



My lightbulb moment was when my brother passed away this summer. You really never know when it is your time to go. I always hear about people dying, but you really never think that it will happen close to

you. My family has always been close, but now I feel like it's important to keep in contact with family more. Appreciate people in your corner and just love people daily that you love. Give them flowers when due. To me, family is everything. Long live #2.

(Amanda Von Behren)



My lightbulb moment came right after I had my son and was going to go back to work. I realized that I now have a precious child I now have to provide for, and I now could not settle at this job where I have been

comfortable with for the last seven years making just a little over minimal wage. It was time for me to start my odyssey and look for better. The more I applied, the more I realized that I had to further my education to find something better. I enrolled at MATC and started Odyssey to make a change in my life, not only for me but for my son. I currently left my job, something I was very scared to do, but I now make more than what I was, waiting for something at a place that didn't value me.

(Mikaylah Harris)



I was nineteen years old, facing many challenges in life. I had two kids with another on the way. I was homeless, living in a foreign land, fresh with a new job and looking for shelter. A friend of mine was

nice enough to give me a place to stay. During this stay, he spoke very personally about a man named Jesus. He expressed stories on how he came to the world and died so that I could have life. The more he spoke, the more curious I became. My emotions became heavy for some reason. Every word began to strike me like a cut to my heart. But yet soothing and fresh. As he mentioned how I could receive Him as my lord and savior, I instantly opened my heart and accepted Him. This moment was my epiphany and changed the rest of my life. **(Vernell Cauley)**



An epiphany for me was that I am not the number on the scale.

Physical health has been a huge struggle for me. After making a life-changing decision, I became mentally stronger and came to the

realization that the scale does not determine who I am. **(Danika Bethel-Johnson)**



My epiphany or lightbulb moment would be when I got shot. I realized that my son wouldn't have had me in his life. I realized that I wasn't moving the way I should have been or hanging around the right people. I

could've easily lost my life, and I took that as a sign from God that I needed to change my life and lock in. He showed me that if I didn't change, my life could be taken in a heartbeat and I wouldn't have been able to be here for my son.

(Rodney Poe Jr.)



I had a revelation when COVID hit us all. It really made me become a germaphobe. Viruses and deadly germs have always been around, but COVID made me more cautious.

I have never been a dirty person haha, but my caution with germs that others and myself spread is at an all time high. My hands are ALWAYS dry because I am constantly touching them. I don't like sharing anything. When people cough or yawn, I hold my breath. I've become a tiny bit of a hypochondriac, but it really made me cautious and less trusting. COVID is like the flu, Ebola, measles, etc.... but it was a huge wake up call for me.

(Mia Cannon)



I had an epiphany/light bulb moment in the summer of 2023. This is when I woke up and became conscious. I learned to do my own studying and follow my heart and soul. **(Dontaeva Acklin)**



My revelation I'm familiar with is losing my twin brother, who was the closest to me. Tomorrow isn't a promise. Love and cherish your family while they are still here. **(Andreyra Gavins)**



I had my epiphany moment when I first had my son. I wasn't working at the time. I had just decided to go back to work two months after I had my son. I didn't feel ready but I knew I needed to make money for me and my son. So I went to work for three months, then I started asking God to show me what I was here for. Then he told me baking. So that's what I've been doing since 2018 and it's finally paying off. **(Shanigel Goodwan)**



My first time being in jail really made me realize my biggest flaw at that time. I've always felt it was okay to put my hands on people who crossed that line, no matter who it was or where I was. I sat there with no rescue for my sh***y way of expressing my emotions to somebody I valued. I was embarrassed, weak, and overall resentful that I was in this place. I sat there and forced myself to ridicule my actions, and how I gave my freedom up so easily based on someone else's actions that I couldn't control. It made me fully realize that I have control over all of me, and that situation made me realize that I have to express my feelings in a way that provides positivity and clarification. **(Synquar Harston)**



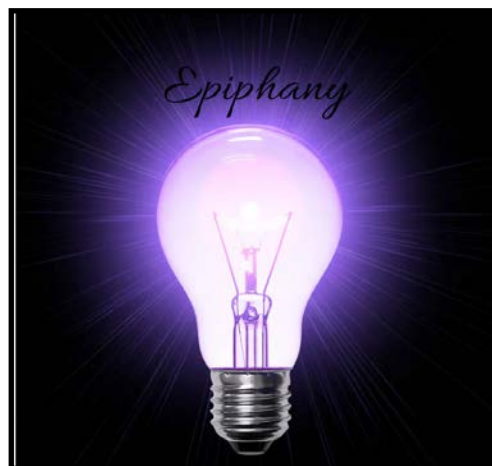
My revelation lightbulb moment would be that now I feel more comfortable when I talk with people. I proudly say I am indigenous, I have my own customs, practices, and identity, something that years ago was really hard to reveal due to many fears and traumas in my childhood. **(Blanca Laine)**



When I decided to go back to school, it was a light-bulb moment. I'm still not sure if I want to continue, and this process has been very stressful. But I felt better after meeting with Christine Cina (Odyssey Navigator). I felt super excited about the idea of finally being certified one day and able to work in an actual clinic setting. **(Rosanna Lopez)**



A powerful epiphany I have experienced by the grace of God has been related to the disease of addiction. For those of us who live with it, a debilitating part of recovery from drugs and alcohol are the cravings. They are all-consuming like gargantuan waves and in the moment, your brain is rationalizing, playing mental gymnastics to convince you it's totally okay to pick up the substance all over again. What I realized was this: each time I continued to use, the more I risked the chances of death. If I lost my life, I lost my opportunity to help someone else. In a greater sense, I began to understand that as horrible as these cravings would get, as bad as I would be compelled to go back out there and escape with that drug, doing so would prevent me from meeting my destiny. This chapter of my life is my testimony. It is a substantial part of my life purpose. I firmly believe God has pardoned my life for a reason and my epiphany came when I walked away from the Russian Roulette table and stopped gambling with my future. **(Giana Mason)**





I had always wanted to be a daycare teacher. I was supposed to go to school for it when I was younger but that never happened. Fast forward to a couple years ago, one of my coworkers said, “You would be a great social worker. You love the kids and you pretty much are doing the work anyway.” I never thought about it until I got into Odyssey to really think like, I can do this. Maybe this is what I am really destined to be. I then looked at the bigger picture, and I’m here for the bigger picture. **(Tanisha Milligan)**



I used to be in a boy scout movement when I was young. As you might guess, this movement teaches many life techniques, including survival techniques and courage. One day I was supposed to go on a raid with a group of young people. But for some reason I do not recall, I was left behind and decided to go all by myself anyway. I was then in the dark night of a raid and anxious. I managed to make it, but that experience taught me that our fears sometimes only come from us – and that we need to stop limiting ourselves with our own fears. **(Souleymane Nikiema)**



I had a lightbulb moment when my ex-girlfriend bust my windows for the fourth time and broke in my house and stole everything I owned. Everything, all the way to my hand soap to my hats and the covers of my bed. She wanted me to be mad, musty, and cold. That day I woke up. **(Terance Nix)**



A lightbulb moment is the reality that all of my children are adults. My youngest child will be eighteen years old in less than a month. I am used to being with my family. My children helped me grow to be the best mother that I have been. I have invested a lot of my time to help them grow and become the best that they can be. I want for them what I want for myself, and the beauty of it all is we can’t do anything without God. My lightbulb has allowed me

to realize that this is my time to do all of the things that I need to do for me. Do all the things that I have always wanted to do when my parenthood had to come first. I am excited, I am grateful, I give gratitude to God to continue to keep me healthy so that I can do and be all I can and continue to grow with my family and be the best mom ever. **(Kimberly Rodgers)**



I was naive to the point where I didn’t want to believe that a family member was on heroin, messing up her life, but also the people around her life. I realized she was the gateway for other family members. I just found out about her using even though people have been saying it for years. I just didn’t want to believe it. It really broke my heart but it all has been life changing for me and those who love her. It has been a struggle and challenge to get her the help she needs. **(Marcy Tibbs)**



Epiphany – not everyone will like or understand each other, but be willing to have the hard conversations respectfully, honestly, and open-mindedly. Once I realized I must be who I want to see in the world, that includes acceptance of all people and things, not at the expense of me but for the reciprocity and understanding I want in my life.

Happiness is a choice. It takes work, effort, and consistency. Like anything you work for, it can’t be given to you. Like love, it starts with you.

Revelation – I realized that my happiness is my responsibility. No one gives me my happiness, and I deserve to be happy. It didn’t seem so far away. It didn’t seem like that is someone else’s reality.

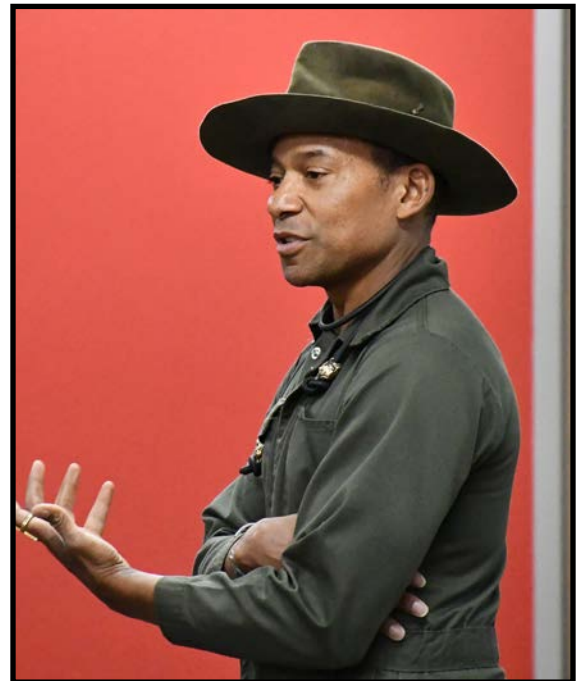
Lightbulb moment – it’s okay not to be happy every day but to start being solution-oriented. I can’t always control how people decide to treat me. But I can always decide how I react or let things affect me. My own happiness starts and ends with how I decide to process life and its challenges. **(Jasmine Benson)**

FOUR-WORD MESSAGES GOING FORWARD

Artist-in-residence Marlon Hall visited our class on March 6 and shared his film “Dear Black Future” looking at his work using art to help Tulsa, Oklahoma, move beyond its traumatic past to a more hopeful future. In class, Marlon Hall asked Odyssey students to create their own four-word messages to the future following a verb-noun-preposition-noun pattern. They also tried a variation of that in their homework (because Emily made a mistake in copying Marlon’s pattern) using a noun-verb-preposition-noun pattern. Emily says in a noun-verb-preposition-noun comment of her own, “Mistakes transform into triumphs.” See in the examples below how much can be said in just four words, whatever the order!

Four-Word Messages with Verb-Noun-Preposition-Noun

Prepare children for racism. (**Danika Bethel-Johnson**)
 Free yourself from fear. (**Souleymane Nikiema**)
 Kill them with kindness. (**Sally Phelps**)
 Teach youth with love. (**Mikaylah Harris**)
 Keep striving beyond surviving. (**Andreya Gavins**)
 Build bridges above clouds. (**Vernell Cauley**)
 Celebrate kids upon success. (**Amanda von Behren**)
 Share testimony despite pain. (**Giana Mason**)
 Set goals in life. (**Aleesha Flowers**)
 Kill hate with love. (**Danika Bethel-Johnson**)
 Love one love all. (**Sally Phelps**)
 Appreciate growth over knowledge. (**Tanisha Milligan**)
 Love everyone near you. (**Amanda von Behren**)
 Choose peace on earth. (**Dontaeva Acklin**)
 Embrace peace over hate. (**Andreya Gavins**)
 Preach love on earth. (**Aleesha Flowers**)
 Push yourself before surrender (**Blanca Laine**)



Four-Word Messages with Noun-Verb-Preposition-Noun

Paradise lives inside minds. (**Lucas Benford**)
 Time heals all wounds. (**Danika Bethel-Johnson**)
 Odyssey is with future! (**Taeshia Clark**)
 Doves fly away beautifully. (**Andreya Gavins**)
 Peace prevails before war. (**Blanca Laine**)
 Hate appears in eyes (**Dontaeva Acklin**)
 Perfection robs from authenticity (**Giana Mason**)
 Fear stems from harm. (**Danika Bethel-Johnson**)
 Friendship brings out personality (**Tanisha Milligan**)
 Time heals for real. (**Souleymane Nikiema**)
 Odyssey builds towards futures. (**Aleesha Flowers**)
 Hope, trust, through faith (**Sally Phelps**)
 Dreams soar beyond stars. (**Shanigel Goodwan**)
 Passion bounces from souls. (**Blanca Laine**)
 Children fight for education (**Kimberly Rodgers**)
 Sadness relieves through happiness. (**Blanca Laine**)

Loyalty comes with respect (**Endia Walls**)
 God watches over you. (**Mikaylah Harris**)
 Love conquers all obstacles. (**Shanigel Goodwan**)



POEMS THAT PACK A PUNCH

Langston Hughes in "A Little Lyric of Great Importance" created a poem with just seven words: "I wish the rent / was heaven sent." Class of 2024 Odyssey students wrote their own seven-word poems that pack a punch.

Seven words ain't hard, replied the bard. **(Lucas Benford)**

Men Lie, Women Lie, Numbers Do Not! **(Endia Walls)**

Through all strife, my kids are life. **(Danika Bethel-Johnson)**

Be your own cheerleader. Jump high every day! **(Aleesha Flowers)**

The apple don't fall far from the tree. **(Andreya Gavins)**

In silence, life's most profound truths echo. **(Shanigel Goodwan)**

If you lack principles, you won't understand me. **(Dontaeva Acklin)**

Jack of all Trades, master of none **(Ron Watson)**

Time put in will determine my success **(Mikaylah Harris)**

I wish life were an eternal spring. **(Blanca Laine)**

Powerful playful sad angry mad glad content. **(Rosanna Lopez)**

Super 8 Last goodbye Metallic Tragic Regret **(Giana Mason)**



My Kids Are My Reason for Living **(Tanisha Milligan)**

Child birth pain comes with overjoyed tears. **(Sally Phelps)**

Great Gratitude Gives Me the Best Attitudes. **(Kimberly Rodgers)**

In her eyes, galaxies found their home. **(Shanigel Goodwan)**

God sent me to be an angel. **(Marcy Tibbs)**

Being happy should be important to you. **(Amanda Von Behren)**

Death's the only determination of unfinished business. **(Taeshia Clark)**

Please stop being childish you have children. **(Kimberly Rodgers)**

The wind briskly whispers secrets of enemies. **(Aleesha Flowers)**

If only everyone could access true happiness. **(Souleymane Nikiema)**

The pain stops when you let go. **(Vernell Cauley)**