

The Homeric Epithet:

this is a compound, hyphenated adjective Homer would attach to a noun to emphasize a characteristic, quality, or attribute of that noun

Example: wine-dark sea
rank-smashing Achilles

The Homeric Simile:

this is a comparison Homer made in his stories of two events or feelings or objects so that readers could understand or picture the unfamiliar by relating it to something with which they would have been familiar

Note: these can be rather lengthy and confuse the story if you don't recognize them

How to spot a Homeric simile:

it will begin with the word "like" or "as" (just like a regular simile)--this is where Homer introduces the comparison image **Note: sometimes with "Now when"

and continue with the words "even so" or "so did"--this is where Homer asks you to transfer the known to the unknown.

Example: Book VI, p. 97

“Now whenever Artemis the archer descends
The high ridges of Mount Taygetus or Mount Erymanthus
To joy in the chase of wild boars and the nimble deer,
The heart of her mother Leto is filled with delight,
For the rural nymphs, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus,
Join in the sport, and, although all are lovely,
Artemis stands a head taller than any of the others
And is easily known. Even so, that virgin Princess
Shone among her ladies.”

Compared: Princess Nausicaa and Artemis

Comparison: Both are beautiful above their peers

Homeric Similes Identification

Directions: Read the following Homeric similes found in The Odyssey. Underline the opening and concluding simile phrases (as per your notes); next, write a sentence or two identifying what two objects, events, sights, or feelings are being compared and finally, explain how.

1. p. 88, Book V: Calypso and Odysseus

He sprang through the waves and caught her, then crouched amidships,
Avoiding sure death, while a great wave bobbed the boat
This way and that with the current. As when in autumn
the North Wind blows close-clinging balls of thistles
About the fields, even so the winds were driving
That boat of his this way and that on the sea.

What two things are being compared? _____

Explain the comparison: _____

2. p. 90, Book V: Calypso and Odysseus

But when with fair-haired Dawn the third day came,
The wind died down to a calm, and he, from the top
Of a wave, looked hard ahead and caught sight of the shore
Near by. And then as a dying man's children are glad
When the demon disease is broken and their father, who pined
In pain for so long, is released from suffering and death
By grace of the gods, even so Odysseus rejoiced
At the sight of land and trees and swam on, more than eager
To set foot on that shore

What two things are being compared? _____

Explain the comparison: _____

3. p. 93, Book V: Calypso and Odysseus

Odysseus, having suffered so much,
Could hardly help gloating as he looked at that bed, and then
He lay down in the middle and covered himself with dry leaves.
As when a man on an outlying farm, a man
With no neighbors, heaps ashes upon a live coal, that he
May keep it alive and not have to go elsewhere for fire,
Even so Odysseus covered himself with dry leaves.
And Athena shed sleep upon him, that he might close
Weary eyes and be free at last from all that toil.

What are two things being compared? _____

Explain the comparison: _____

4. p. 98, Book VI: Nausicaa

So saying, the good Odysseus crept out from beneath
The bushes and with his great hand reached into the thicket
And broke off a leafy branch to hide his nakedness.
Then on he went like a bold lion of the mountains
who goes through wind and rain with his eyes of fire
In search of cattle, sheep, or wild deer, and when
His belly bids him right into the close-barred fold
To attack the flocks therein. Even such was the need
Of Odysseus as he went in his nakedness to approach that party
Of girls with hair so beautifully braided.

What are two things being compared? _____

Explain the comparison: _____

Homeric Epithet Identification

1. Find at least 4 Homeric epithets used by Homer in The Odyssey and decipher its implication.

Example #1: _____

What do you think Homer is trying to say about this person or thing? _____

Example #2: _____

What do you think Homer is trying to say about this person or thing? _____

Example #3: _____

What do you think Homer is trying to say about this person or thing? _____

Example #4: _____

What do you think Homer is trying to say about this person or thing? _____

2. Come up with an epithet that describes you or some object with which you are intimately familiar. Remember, the epithet should be hyphenated, and it should be poetic (stated creatively and with a flair for language). You MAY NOT use “blah” adjectives like “nice,” “good,” “tall,” etc. Make “tall” be “tree-bounding” or something. Creative + Novel = Good; Generic + Mundane = Bad.

My example: _____

What I’m saying about me/it: _____