



The Odyssey Narrative Techniques of Epic Poetry

In *The Odyssey*, Homer employs many narrative techniques typically found in epic poetry. *The Odyssey* begins ***in medias res***, or right in the middle of the narrative. Homer employs ***deus ex machina***, which is when a god appears to solve a seemingly hopeless problem. Finally, Homer tells much of the story, particularly Odysseus's journey homeward, using **flashback**, which means that events that happened in the past are told in the present-day, chronological structure of the poem.

Begin by writing an initial answer to each of the three questions in the chart in the "Initial Answer" column. Then, as you read *The Odyssey*, record examples of each technique from the text in the next column. Finally, after you have completed *The Odyssey*, read the examples you noted and review your initial answer. Write a final answer to each question in the last column. Make the final answer specific to your reading of *The Odyssey*.

Here's an example of each technique to help you get started:

in media res: Book 1, lines 13–18 (from "By now . . ." to ". . . for a husband.")

deus ex machina: Book 5, lines 421–427 (from "But Zeus's daughter Athena . . ." to ". . . escape his death at last.")

flashback: Book 3, lines 113–228 (from "Nestor the noble charioteer . . ." to ". . . will sing your praises down the years.")

Question	Initial Answer	Text Examples and My Ideas	Final Answer
What impact does using <i>in medias res</i> have on the audience?			

Why would an author use <i>deus ex machina</i> ?			
Why are flashbacks useful in narratives?			

RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.