



The Odyssey Epithets

An epithet is an adjective or a brief descriptive phrase used to express a characteristic of a person or thing. Like other poets, Homer uses epithets to fill out the lines of the poem to create the appropriate meter. The epithets also have a practical usage: They provide an opportunity to quickly and simply reinforce characters' physical and personality traits. Many of the key characters have numerous epithets that Homer uses interchangeably.

Consult the following worksheet as you read *The Odyssey*. The chart pairs characters with one of their most common epithets. As you determine how the epithet contributes to the character's development, jot down your ideas on the chart. You may encounter the epithet several times before you are ready to fill in the chart. Also use the chart to track additional epithets you come across as you read.

Character	Epithet	Contribution to Character Development
Odysseus	man of twists and turns	
Zeus	who marshals the thunderheads	
Calypso	lustrous goddess	
Poseidon	Sea-lord	

Hermes	giant-killer	
Athena	sparkling-eyed / bright-eyed	<i>This epithet tells me that Athena is smart and alert.</i>
Dawn	rose-red fingers / rosy-fingered	
Penelope	queen of cunning	
Telemachus	thoughtful	
Menelaus	master of the war-cry	

Circe	skilled in spells	
Nausicaa	white-armed	

RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

L.9-10.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.