

UNIT 5 Pass It On
Folk Literature Connections

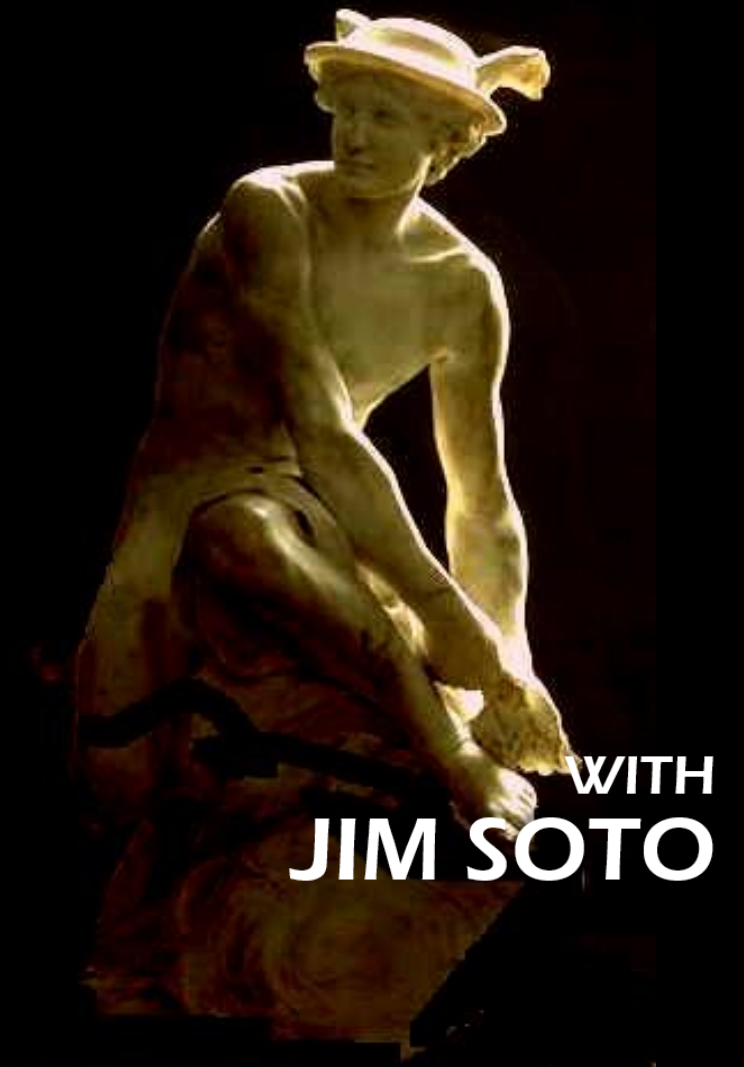
A STEM school

FROEBEL
BILINGUAL SCHOOL

Home of the Space Generation



THE
EPIC



WITH
JIM SOTO

THE EPIC



If we are fortunate, if the gods and the muses are smiling, about every generation someone comes along to inspire the imagination for the journey each of us must take.

- Bill Moyers

EPIC ?



Some synonyms for the adjective/adverb “epic” include: grandiose, exceedingly large, pompous, extravagant, cosmic; in other words, it is used to express the largest degree in scale and intensity.



Like other civilizations, the Ancient Greeks had many gods. These Olympian gods resembled the Greeks' grandiosity. Because these gods mirrored the Greeks, they were heavily flawed. They were jealous, unforgiving, vengeful, spiteful, and sinful deities to the max. Since the Greeks focused on being grandiose, their gods were portrayed as unimaginably strong, beautiful and intelligent. They were...epic!

AN EPIC IS...

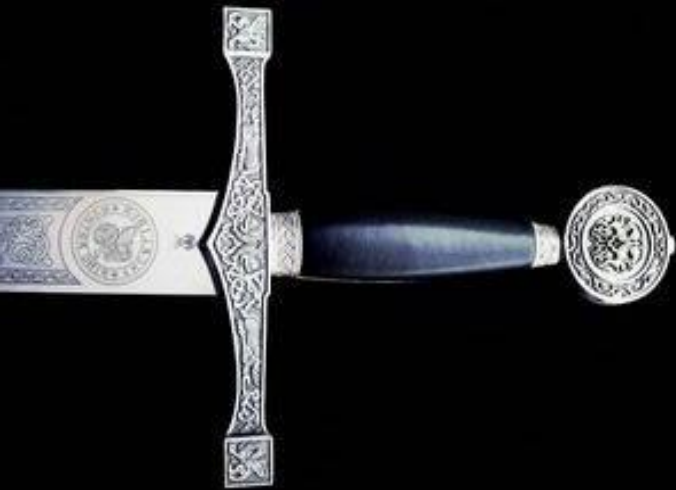


In literature, it refers to long, narrative poem in an elevated style that celebrates heroic achievement and treats themes of historical, national, religious, or legendary significance.



The term: “saga”, that comes from an Old Norse word, originally used to describe Icelandic prose narratives involving heroic deeds, composed in the 12th and 13th centuries, is very much used interchangeably with “epic” nowadays.

MYTHIC STRUCTURE



If you look at all the Ancient myths they have things in common. Characters go on a journey, change, then either return home a changed person or find a new home. In comparative mythology, the **MONOMYTH**, or the hero's journey, is the common template of a broad category of tales that involves a hero who goes on an adventure, and in a decisive crisis wins a victory, to come home transformed.



The word comes from the Greek words: **Mono**, meaning “one,” and **mythos**, or “story.” So combining both, it means “one story.” The connotation being that there is ONE underlying structure to ALL stories. This structure defined by Joseph Campbell in his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

FAMOUS EPICS

Famous epics from around the world include...



- The Iliad
- The Odyssey
- The Aeneid
- The Rāmāyaṇa
- The Mahābhārata
- Jangar
- Beowulf
- El Cantar del Mio Cid
- The Divine Comedy
- Le Morte d'Arthur
- Der Ring des Nibelungen

FAMOUS CHARACTERS



Odysseus



Achilles

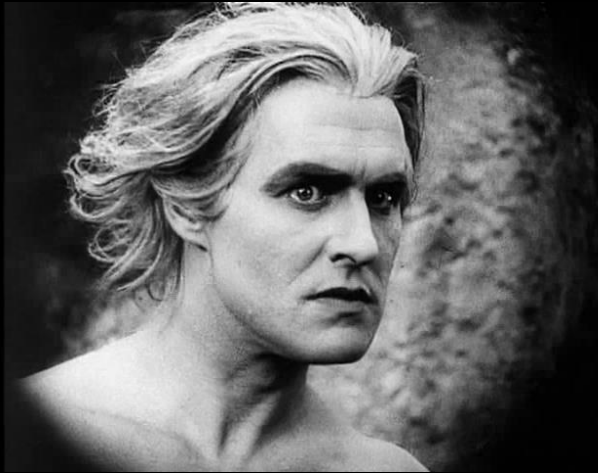


Aeneas



Rama & Sita

Siegfried



King Arthur



Beowulf



Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar (El Cid)

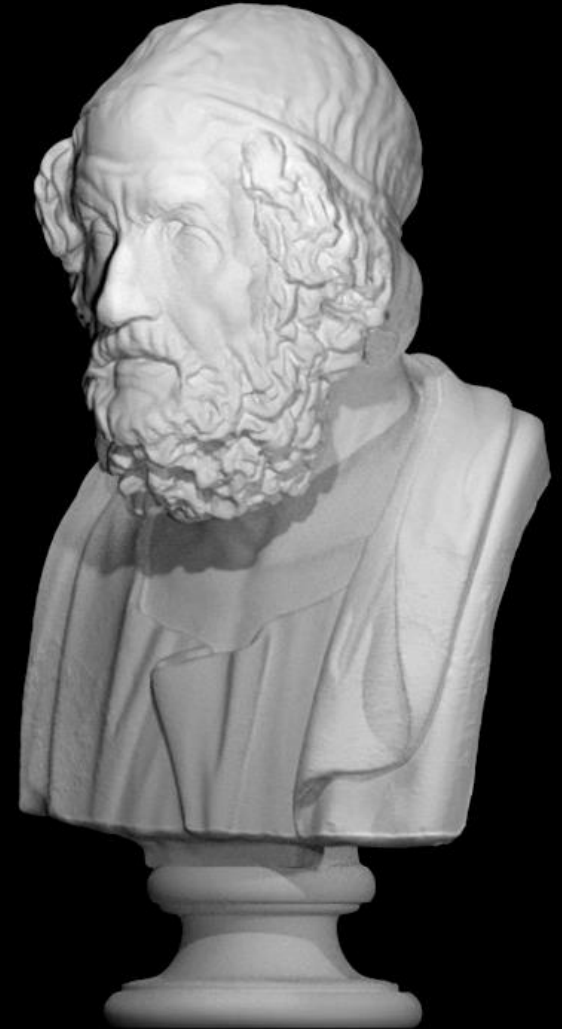
EPIC SOURCES ARE...

- Primary (or original) epics are shaped from the legends and traditions of a heroic age and are part of oral tradition.
- Secondary (or literary) epics are written down from the beginning, and their poets adapt or imitate conventions and aspects of traditional epics.



THE EPIC

Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are usually regarded as the first important epic poems and are considered to have been defining the form in the Western World for the last 3 thousand years.



CONVENTIONS

The conventions of epics include:

- the centrality of a hero (sometimes semi divine)
- an extensive, perhaps cosmic, setting
- heroic battles
- extended journeying
- and the involvement of supernatural beings.



SUBJECT MATTER



The subject-matter of epics includes myth, legend, and history. It is usually set in a heroic age of the past and embodies its country's early history and celebrates its collective values.



Battles and perilous journeys play a large part, as do gods, the supernatural, and magic; scenes are often set in some Underworld or heavenly realm.

FORMAL FEATURES

Certain formal features are noticeable:

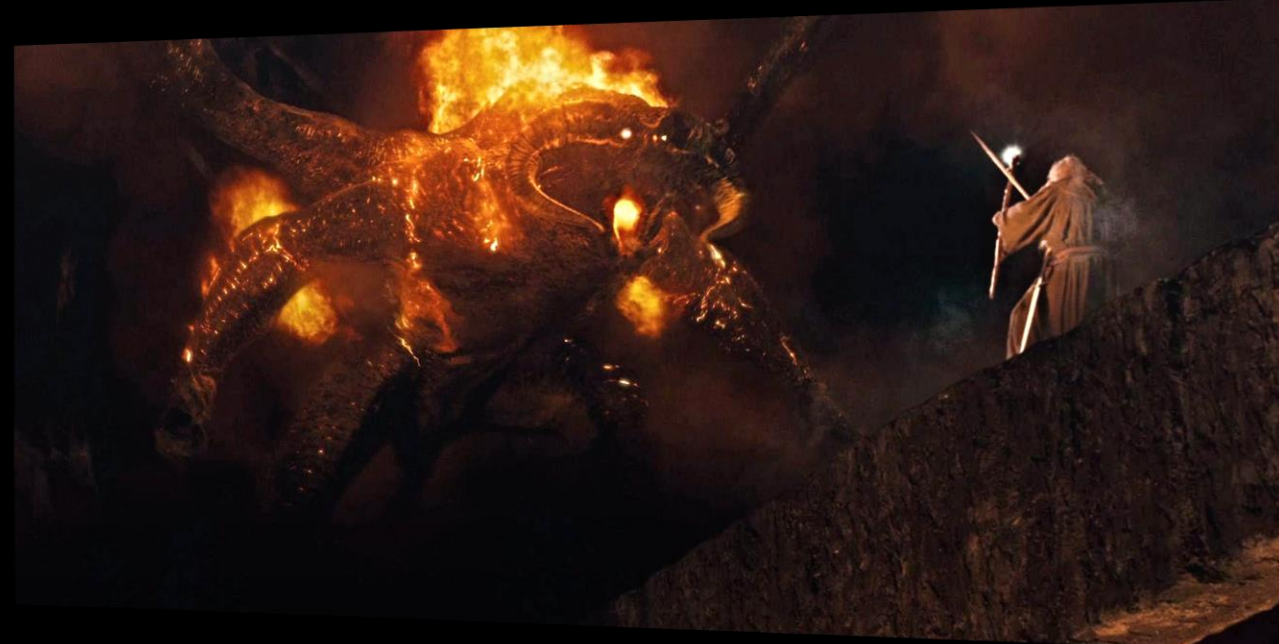
1. the narrator vouches for the truth of his story
2. there are invocations
3. elaborate greetings
4. long speeches
5. frequent repetition of 'typical' elements, for example the stock adjective or formula, the stock scene such as the hero arming for battle.



Epics express a delight in the physical world, shown by painstaking descriptions of such things as the setting, meals eaten before or after an important event, the hero's weapons, clothing, or ships.



THE EPIC TODAY



The epic has continued even into modern times, though it's form has changed over the years. Samples of the epic can be found in the works of fantasy authors such as J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis; Science-fiction authors like Isaac Asimov and Frank Herbert.



It can also be seen in philosophic writers such as Ayn Rand; the films of directors like Akira Kurasawa and George Lucas; and even the comic book adventures of Modern day heroes such as: Superman and Batman.

The adventures that inspire us today in the 21st century began with the utterances of a wandering blind poet from the 9th century BC. We are inspired because the hero's journey is in a sense our own journey. Soon we will embark on reading one of the epics that started it all. Brace yourselves for Homer's *The Odyssey*.



PRACTICE EXERCISES

1. Define the concept of 'Epic'.
2. Mention at least three (3) famous epic/sagas.
3. Mention three (3) heroes.
4. Which are the two (2) types of epics?
5. Which are the five (5) conventions of the epic?
6. Mention at least two (2) formal features noticeable in epics.



*“Mythology teaches you what’s behind literature and the arts; teaches you about your own life.”
- Joseph Campbell*



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