

Writing an Epic Poem

An epic poem is one that tells the story of a hero and his exploits. There are several different kinds of epics – some celebrate one grand adventure, while some span the life of a hero. In *Beowulf*, the entire life of the epic hero is related through the telling of three fantastic battles. By the end, when our hero dies, we feel he has led a worthy life and fulfilled his fate or destiny. However, there are also tragic heroes, who for whatever reason are unable to fulfill their destinies, and who die or who suffer a tragic transformation by the end of the poem, like in *The Exeter Book*. One thing is certain: an epic is a long journey, consists of many episodes, and traces the development of the hero and all that help or hinder him. Through the course of the epic the hero will change, grow, and die. It is only in death that we will ever come to an understanding of whether this hero's deeds were good, and goals achieved. If so, then the hero is celebrated. If not, then the tragic hero is mourned not for the loss of his life, but for the failure of the quest.

There are all kinds of heroes, in all walks of life. Heroes can be fictional and super-heroic; they can also be real-life people who just stand out by fulfilling a dream, or enabling others to fulfill a dream. Real-life heroes can also be tragic, suffering some great downfall to serve as an example to us all of what *not* to be.

Your assignment is to write an epic poem. This poem should tell the story of a **hero (YOU)**.

Remember the steps of the hero's journey and try to incorporate them into the plot of your epic poem. Keep in mind that the steps of the journey can be both physical and psychological, and both literal and figurative. A battle can be a literal hand-to-hand conflict, or a psychological dilemma with the self.

A note about poetry: it is what it is. Poetry is subjective. You can give it rhyme, rhythm, and meter. It can be free-verse in its truest sense. It's up to you. Some people revel in the challenge of constructing verse in heroic couplet, utilizing a regular A/A/B/B rhyme scheme incorporated with iambic pentameter. Some people would rather just tell the story. Either style is perfectly acceptable. **MUST INCLUDE AT LEAST 1 EXAMPLE OF ALLITERATION, 1 EXAMPLE OF A CAESURA, and 1 EXAMPLE OF A KENNING. PLEASE HIGHLIGHT!**

As for length, this poem should tell a story. If the poem were single spaced, I would expect it would be at least one page to tell a complete story. Don't be afraid to write something much longer. Should be **no** shorter than 25 lines of poetry.

I will help you with your first line- **Pick One:**

- 1) This tale is true and mine, It tells...
- 2) This lonely ____ longs for _____...
- 3) I make this song about me full _____....