

An epic is a long poem that tells the story of important events in the history or folklore of a nation or culture. An **epic hero** is the larger-than-life main character. For example, Odysseus is the epic hero in the *Odyssey*. His larger-than-life characteristics include his great strength, his incredible aim with a bow-and-arrow, and his cleverness. Epic heroes usually have the qualities that are valued by the society they belong to. The ancient Greeks valued skill with the bow and cleverness, so their hero Odysseus has those qualities.

For each question, indicate the letter of the best answer.

1. Which of the following is the best description of an epic?
A. a short story about the heroes of a nation or culture
B. a nonfiction book about the heroes of a nation or culture
C. a brief article about the heroes of a nation or culture
D. a long poem telling stories about the heroes of a nation or culture
2. An epic hero is a larger-than-life character. Which of the following is the best example of an epic hero?
A. a man who is tall
B. a man who wins a race
C. a man who has the strength of fifty men
D. a man who steals a lot of money

3. An epic hero often does adventurous deeds or acts. Which of the following is the best example of an epic hero's adventurous deed?
A. a battle in which the hero kills a dreaded monster
B. a meeting in which the hero stands up for the rights of his friends
C. a social event in which the hero meets new friends
D. a lazy boat ride on a summer afternoon
4. An epic hero usually has the characteristics that are valued by a society. Suppose that a society valued honesty above all else. Which of the following would you expect to be true of that society's epic hero?
A. He is always kind and generous.
B. He always tells the truth.
C. He solves problems cleverly.
D. He always wins his battles and defeats his enemies.
5. Which of the following is the best description of an epic hero?
A. a clever adventurer described in an epic
B. a larger-than-life character who is the main character of an epic
C. a wise ruler described in an epic
D. a cultural leader described in an epic
6. Which of the following statements is ALWAYS true about an epic?
A. It is written in Greek or Latin.
B. It is valued by all societies.
C. It is a long narrative poem.
D. It celebrates battle victories.

13. How is an ordinary simile different from an epic simile?

- A. Ordinary similes do not usually contain *like* or *as*.
- B. Ordinary similes are not metaphors.
- C. Ordinary similes appear only in narrative poems from early cultures.
- D. Ordinary similes are brief comparisons using simple images.

14. Which of the following is the best example of an epic simile?

- A. All men marvel at a mighty flash of lightning, which is gone the moment it is seen. So ran his horse, like lightning in the mountains.
- B. The horse was as fast as lightning.
- C. The horse was shiny, velvety black, with a streaming tail and a graceful gait that made everyone turn for an appreciative stare.
- D. To its owner, the horse was a treasure more valuable than gold.

15. What does this epic simile tell you about the culture where the epic takes place?

- The warriors crept toward the ships quietly, like a wolf on the hunt. In his hunger, the wolf whines a little when he catches a scent. Yet he holds back his bark, for fear of frightening off his victim.*
- A. The people of this culture lived where there are wolves.
 - B. The people of this culture worshiped wolves.
 - C. The people of this culture enjoyed hunting.
 - D. The people of this culture kept wolves as pets.

A tall tale is an American folk story that contains some or all of the following: humor, a larger-than-life hero, amazing deeds that are hard to believe, and hyperbole (exaggeration).

Many ancient cultures had stories called myths. Some myths told about the actions of gods. Others told how certain traditions, such as festivals, started, or why natural things, such as thunder and lightning, happen.

Others told of heroic humans. Mythic heroes often have a god or goddess as a parent, gain special knowledge or gifts, and face tasks that seem impossible.

For items 16-20, list ALL the characteristics of a tall tale that it clearly shows. Choose from:

- A. humor
- B. amazing deeds
- C. larger-than-life hero
- D. hyperbole

16. A great storm was stirring. It lifted up half of the state of Kansas and set it down in Missouri. Then, just to be fair, it lifted half of Missouri and set it down in Kansas.

17. When Big Bill heard the storm was coming, he decided it was about time to clean his house. He took out his biggest rope, twirled it three times around his head, and roped in the storm. He pulled that storm all the way across Nebraska and set it loose in his home.

Choose from:

- A. humor
- B. amazing deeds
- C. larger-than-life hero
- D. hyperbole

18. When Paul Bunyan was growing up, he used to eat forty bowls of oatmeal in the morning. Then, after this snack, he would have breakfast.

19. In Paul's logging camp, the tables were so long that the men serving food wore roller skates. They had to move fast, otherwise the food would get cold before they reached the other end of the table.

20. Paul's blue ox, Babe, was so big that it took a crow a whole day to fly from of one of Babe's horns to the other.

For items 21-24, list ALL the characteristics of a myth or of a mythic hero that appear in it. Choose from:

- A. actions of a god
- B. why life is the way it is
- C. why a natural event occurs

21. Apollo was the Greek god of music and light. He killed the monster Python, a giant snake. In honor of this victory, Apollo started the Pythian Games, a sports event that was held every four years.

22. The hero Hercules was a son of the Greek god Zeus and a mortal woman. Because of a crime he committed, Hercules had to perform twelve Labors. The Labors included battling fire-breathing monsters and moving rivers. Hercules was incredibly strong, though, and he had the help of the gods. He completed all twelve Labors.

23. An Ashanti myth of Africa tells that, in the beginning of things, the sky-god Nyame kept all stories for himself. Anansi the spider wished to have the knowledge in these stories, so he made an agreement with Nyame. If Anansi could capture four hard-to-catch creatures, Nyame would give him the stories. Anansi succeeded, and that is why people tell stories today.

24. The Hopi Indians tell that once Coyote went hunting with Eagle. The Coyote said the hunting was poor because there was not enough light. Then, they found a spirit village. In the village were two boxes that controlled light. Coyote and Eagle stole the boxes. Eagle let Coyote carry them, but only if he promised not to open them. Coyote was too curious. He opened them, and the Sun and the Moon escaped. The world grew dark and cold, and that is why there is winter.