

The Iliad by Homer

This is Epic!

Introduction: Epic similes are defined as “elaborate, extended comparisons developed over many lines that compare heroic events to simple, everyday ones.”

In Book 9 of *The Iliad*, Achilles feels all his heroic deeds have gone unrewarded, and he says:

“A bird will give her fledglings every scrap she comes by, and go hungry, foraging. That is the case with me.”

This simple comparison would have greatly helped Homer’s audience understand Achilles’ feelings.

In addition to comparing heroic events to everyday ones, Homer also uses epic similes to elevate a “normal” situation to one of great status or importance. In Book 22, we encounter *many* epic similes. For example, in lines 222-229:

“Great Achilles, hard on Hector’s heels, kept after him, the way a hound will harry a deer’s fawn he has startled from its bed to chase through gorge and open glade, and when the quarry goes to earth under a bush he holds the scent and quarters til he finds it; so with Hector: he could not shake off the great runner, Achilles.”

Where Achilles is merely chasing Hector around the wall, using this comparison the audience is more fully able to comprehend the intensity of the situation.

Assignment Part 1: Find all the remaining epic similes in Book 22. (There are 8, not including the example.) Write down the line numbers, and explain what two things are being compared in each simile. Then, explain the effect of the simile.

Simile: Line numbers	Items Compared	Effect

Name: _____ Block: _____

Date: _____

Assignment Part 2: Create TWO epic similes, using one of the following topics (circle your choice), modeling your similes on the examples provided below:

Doing homework

Running a marathon

Finding a date to a dance

Climbing Mt. Everest

Washing the dishes (or another chore)

Standing in line

Texting your crush

An earthquake (or other natural disaster)

Giving an oral presentation

Christmas shopping on Christmas Eve

Reading Shakespeare

OR...
Create your own topic (with approval from Ms. Muhlbaier!)

Studying for/taking final exams

Taking first place

EXAMPLE #1

As a baby throws a tantrum after not getting what it wants,
Yelling, screaming, crying, and rolling about on the floor,
So, too, do I,
Upon learning I have yet another homework assignment.

EXAMPLE #2

Doing homework is like attempting to take off a band-aid too slowly,
Painful, tear-jerking, agonizing,
So I shall get it done and over with, now.

Write your similes in the space provided below.

Epic Simile #1

Epic Simile #2
