

Homeric Similes from *The Odyssey* of Homer

A gull patrolling between the wave crests of the desolate sea will dip to catch a fish, and douse his wings; no higher above the whitecaps Hermes flew... (*MPT*, p. 652)

A man in a distant field, no hearth fires near, will hide a fresh brand in his bed of embers to keep a spark alive for the next day; so in the leaves Odysseus hid himself.... (*MPT*, p. 654)

...straight forward they sprinted, lifted it, and rammed it deep in his crater eye, and I leaned on it turning it as a shipwright turns a drill in planking, having men below to swing the two-handed strap that spins it in the groove. So with our brand we bored that great eye socket while blood ran out around the red-hot bar. (*MPT*, pp. 665-6)

In a smithy one sees a white-hot axehead or an adze plunged and wrung in a cold tub, screeching steam—the way they make soft iron hale and hard—just so that eyeball hissed around the spike.” (*MPT*, p. 666)

A man surf-casting on a point of rock for bass or mackerel, whipping his long rod to drop the sinker and the bait far out, will hook a fish and rip it from the surface to dangle wriggling through the air; so these [men snatched by Scylla] were borne aloft in spasms toward the cliff.” (*MPT*, p. 683)

Think of a man whose dear and only son, born to him in exile, reared with labor, has lived ten years abroad and now returns: how would that man embrace his son! Just so the herdsman clapped his arms around Telemachus and covered him with kisses... (*MPT*, p. 691)

Salt tears rose from the wells of longing in both men, and cries burst from both as keen and fluttering as those of a great taloned hawk, whose nestlings farmers take before they fly. So helplessly they cried, pouring out tears... (*MPT*, p. 694)

...like a musician, like a harper, when with quiet hand upon his instrument he draws between his thumb and forefinger a sweet new string upon a peg; so effortlessly Odysseus in one motion strung the bow. (*MPT*, p. 702)

And the suitors mad with fear at her [Athena's] great sign stampeded like stung cattle by a river when the dread shimmering gadfly strikes in summer, in the flowering season, in the long drawn days. (*MPT*, p. 705)

After them the attackers wheeled, as terrible as falcons from eyries in the mountains veering over and diving down with talons wide unsheathed on flights of birds, who cower down the sky in chutes and bursts along the valley—but the pouncing falcons grip their prey, no frantic wing avails, and farmers love to watch those beaked hunters. (*MPT*, p. 705)

Think of gold infused on silver by a craftsman, whose fine art Hephaestus taught him, or Athena; one whose work moves to delight: just so she lavished beauty over Odysseus' head and shoulders. (*MPT*, p. 707)

...and he wept at last, his dear wife, clear and faithful, in his arms, longed for as the sun-warmed earth is longed for by a swimmer spent in rough water where his ship went down under Poseidon's blows, gale winds and tons of sea. (*MPT*, p. 709)

Homeric Similes from *The Odyssey of Thompson*

A child lost in a department store will wander, wide-eyed, howling and crying in fear of never seeing his mommy again. Just so those seventh graders entered my classroom on the first day of school.

Like starving dogs will ravage one another over a scrap from the master's table, ripping flesh and gnashing teeth in a fierce and slobbering display; so too will junior high school students battle over a Skittle.

Just as metal filings are drawn to one another by opposing charges, dumb to other natural wonders that may surround them, so too are Holden, Oscar, and Nathaniel magnetically attracted to each other in their little huddle even after the bell has rung.

In the vacuum of space where sound cannot travel, the overwhelming silence and emptiness causes even the bravest astronaut to shudder; such is my first period class whenever I ask for volunteers to speak aloud.

Stampeding elephants raging through the jungle will loudly stomp and tear at green trees and roots, bellowing and trumpeting, a thunderous and fearful cacophony punctuated by the shrieks of startled birds and the terrified cries of smaller creatures. This is just like the sound of students who have first lunch storming down the hallways past my room as they return to class.

As a mother silverback gorilla will attack any man who comes between her and her baby, crashing and tearing about the jungle in a frantic rampage all mortals dread to see and hear, so Julius tears about the classroom before the bell, pummeling Nate, smashing into Myrinda, and grabbing Zack in a mighty hug, all the while roaring and screaming in an extremity of insane hyperactivity.

A rudderless ship will sail off course, winding into deadly straits and rocky grottoes at the will of the wind; such was my sixth period class last Friday when the substitute teacher tried to regain control.

Like a cheetah that stalks the grasslands and then viciously attacks and dismembers an antelope, slitting the belly with razor claws, gaping and crunching on flesh and bones, I took my revenge on those students in sixth period who gave the sub a hard time.

In the half-light of a December dawn, before the sun crests the horizon, a few gentle, crystalline flakes hang in the silent air, hopeful that today will bring the first real snowstorm – just so, Ben, Andrea, and Abi filter into my darkened classroom and quietly contemplate the day to come.

Like the rays of sunlight that reflect from the surface of Caribbean tidal pools at twilight, a nervous-but-ever-hopeful glance from Taylor's blue eyes never fails to warm the icy chambers of this old teacher's heart.

A lion will hide itself in the tall grasslands, crouched and ready to attack any unsuspecting gazelle it scents on the warm breeze; such is how Kenyon waits for me on Friday afternoons, pouncing with his questions and requests as soon as the faculty meetings end.

Before considering the possible consequences, a foolish man will throw himself headlong from a dark precipice, blissfully insensible of the craggy rocks, hungry monsters, and other dangers that lie below; just so, Matt "finishes" and turns in every assignment as fast as he possibly can, even though some of them are nearly illegible.

Like a dolphin gracefully skimming the surface of the ocean as it avoids the hungry jaws of nearby sharks, Sierra anchors her swim team relay at the district championships.

According to the legend, vampires cannot enter your home unless you verbally invite them in. This is just like many of my students who wait for specific, verbal, step-by-step instructions to do anything, even though the assignments and instructions are always projected on the screen.

Just as a spinning top will ping around a table, out of control and bouncing from anything in its path, Josh rotates back and forth in his desk and then shoots off across the room, never able to focus his attention for more than one second.

In a slaughterhouse, hundreds of cattle will gather in a nervous herd around the death chute, moo-ing and stomping as they unknowingly await their doom. Such is how my third period class crowds around the door as they wait for the lunch bell to ring.

A bronze statue remains content and motionless while the pigeons flutter around it in a busy flapping of wings. So too does Courtney sit peacefully at her desk, her quiet hands resting in her lap, while her classmates frantically finish their notebook entries.

In a foreign country where an unfamiliar language is spoken, a man will walk in a confused daze, searching for his hotel or a restaurant, unable to respond to those who address him; just so, Yusuf wanders the hallways, ignoring the ten-thousand announcements from the counseling center asking him to go there.

In the primate building at the zoo, you can work the monkeys into a shrieking frenzy, causing them to bellow and screech at one another in a crescendo of horrifying, near-human wailing. Such is my fourth period class. Always.

Just as the horrifying Kraken will blast its enemies with a disgusting explosion of mucous before devouring them, so too does Porter blow his nose twelve times a period.

Like a fearful and overprotective mother will guard her baby with nervous terror, Mady worries about her English grade whenever her score drops below 99%.

Stranded on an island without food, a castaway will shrivel from starvation and hallucinate about food at every moment. So too does Hailey sit in my class every day begging for scraps.

When a child releases a balloon on the breeze, it will drift aimlessly, bobbing on air currents and floating into the sun. That's just how Hailey floats around the library pretending to do research.

Forced to kiss an elderly relative with a hideous, black, and hairy nose wart, a small child will scream and cry, clinging to Mother, attempting to avoid fate as the gnarled lips get closer; just so, the office aides approach Thompson's class to deliver messages because he never answers his phone and he always tries to embarrass them!

A rodeo bull will press up against the gate, waiting for the buzzer to release him bucking and kicking into the arena, trying to throw his rider and thrash him mercilessly into the dirt; just so Chimalli stands pressed against the classroom door waiting to charge into the hallway when the bell rings.

Morning sunlight reflects off the cool blue surface of a mountain lake, rejuvenating hikers at the end of a long climb and filling their hearts with hope for a good day; just so with Valerie's bright eyes and willing smile, which help me survive 8th period after a long day.

Although the two young lovers who are paying more attention to each other than they are to the movie don't know it, in the silence of a quiet movie theater their whispered voices are clearly audible to everyone else; such is the case with Carter and Emily, whose conversation in English class never seems to end.

A psychopath who has been condemned to the electric chair will go to his doom with a twisted smile and an insane giggle that freezes the blood in the veins of other inmates; this is much like Cole, who knows he must pass his classes in order to stay at Fairfield yet who never turns in an assignment or participates in classwork.

More to come...