

Epic has traditionally been regarded as the noblest of the poetic art forms, dignified by its origins in classical antiquity and by its elevated subject matter. On this course we will begin with Homer's *Odyssey*, one of the earliest European epics (known as a 'primary' epic because of its origin in oral tradition), and progress through the epic tradition as it manifests itself in English literature. We will look first at the Old English epic *Beowulf* (a native example of primary epic), and at vernacular poetic analogues from the Anglo-Saxon period. We will then examine later medieval epic and heroic texts, concluding with Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, a text which was tangibly influenced by the themes and motifs of classical epic literature. In the second half of the course we will study Milton's *Paradise Lost*, a radical interpretation of classical epic convention, and a selection of Romantic poets who draw on classical epic in astonishing and original ways in some of their writings (Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley). The course will conclude with Derek Walcott's *Omeros*, a contemporary prose reworking of Homer. All of the texts will be studied in their relevant cultural, linguistic and theoretical contexts.

The module will be **assessed** by two equally-weighted essays.

Prescribed Texts:

Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. E.V. Rieu (Penguin Classics, 2003).

Beowulf: A Verse Translation, trans. Michael Alexander (Penguin Classics, rev. edn, 2001).

Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Stephen A. Barney (Norton Critical Editions, 2006).

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (Longman Annotated English Poets Editions, 1971).

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (Norton: A Norton Critical Edition, 1979).

Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Queen Mab*, in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Freistat (Norton: A Norton Critical Edition, 2001).

John Keats, *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*, in *John Keats: The Complete Poems* ed. John Barnard (Penguin Classics, 1988).

Derek Walcott, *Omeros* (Faber and Faber, 1990).

ENG9EP Module Reader (available from English Department office [A11]).

Katie Halsey and Stephen Penn