

SESSION XVII: WRITING

Book 19

Progymnasmata

Classical training in rhetoric included preparatory writing exercises called the *progymnasmata*. These exercises in composition introduced the beginning student to basic forms and techniques that would then be used and combined when practicing more advanced exercises and speeches. One of these progymnasmata was called the *encomium*, a composition written to praise an individual. This writing exercise expounds the virtues of a specific person (e.g., Joe is a strong warrior), but does not talk about virtue in a general sense (e.g., strength in war is admirable).

An encomium has six parts. The *Prologue* comes first. It introduces the topic and, at the end of the paragraph, states or implies the opinion of the writer. The second part of this exercise is a paragraph called *Description of Heritage* about the person in question. The writer looks for ways to praise the person on account of his family history. For instance, if a person comes from righteous parents, then highlight the fact that he learned his righteous habits at home and added to the glory of the family name. Next comes a paragraph called *Description of Upbringing*. The point is to show how the person profited from a good education or overcame a bad one. The most powerful part of the encomium comes next: the *Description of Deeds*. In this section the writer praises the excellencies of the mind, body and fortune of the subject. For example, the writer praises the practice of philosophical virtue, the way the person looked and his wealth, influence or social stature. Since Christianity has transformed our society it seems out of place to dwell on physical appearance or possessions, so instead the paragraph should concentrate on the actions and motives of the subject. This can be especially powerful if his life demonstrates a pattern. Next is a *Comparison* of the subject to someone else to portray him in a favorable light. The final paragraph is an *Exhortation* or *Prayer* in which others are called on to imitate this person's example.

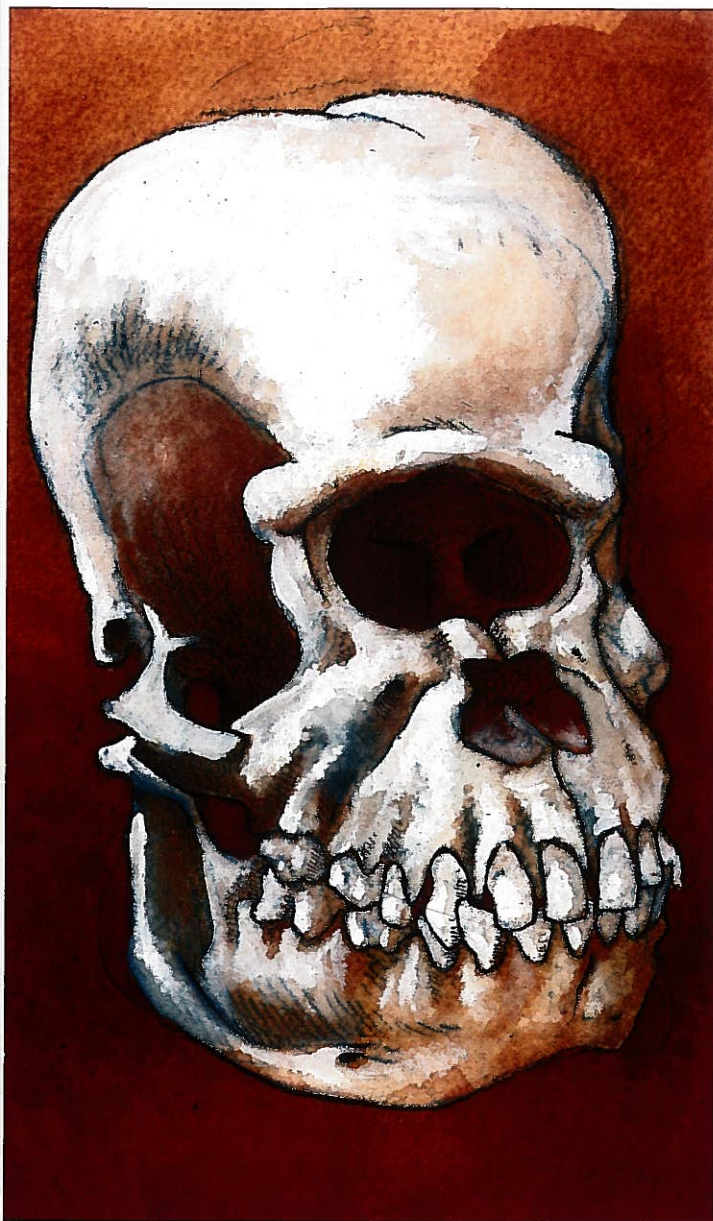
Write an encomium on the following statement: Odysseus demonstrated self-control. Use the following outline as the structure for your composition, making each part one paragraph long.

18. Does he threaten the suitors before he leaves Ithaka?
19. How does he amaze Penelope his mother?
20. What story does Nestor tell Telemachos?
21. Is Helen a sympathetic character in the Odyssey?
22. What do Menelaos and Odysseus have in common?
23. What do the suitors want to do with Telemachos?
24. How is Kalypso persuaded to release Odysseus?
25. What happens after Odysseus builds his raft?
26. Who is Penelope?
27. Who is Telemachos?
28. Who is Menelaos?
29. Who is Helen?
30. Who is Poseidon?
31. Who is Athene?
32. Who is Nestor?
33. Who is Kalypso?
34. Who is Nausikaa?
35. Who is Hermes?
36. Who is Alkinoos?
37. Who is Demodokos?
38. Who is Euryalos?
39. Who are Ares and Aphrodite?
40. Who are the Kikonians?
41. Who are the Lotus Eaters?
42. Who is Polyphemos?
43. Who is Poseidon?
44. Who is Aiolos?
45. Who are the Laistrygonas?
46. Who is Circe?
47. What is Hades?
48. Who is Elpenor?
49. Who are Skylla and Charybdis?
50. What are the cattle of Helios?
51. What is Aiaia?
52. Who is Teiresias?
53. Who are the Sirens?

Optional Activity

With some of your friends or classmates, write a short play about the reunion of Odysseus with Telemachos, and Odysseus with Penelope. Once you are happy with the wording of the play, assign parts and act it out.

READING ASSIGNMENT:
Book 19



- I. Prologue
 - Introduce the topic
 - State your opinion
- II. Description of Heritage
 - Praise the person on account of his family history
- III. Description of Upbringing
 - Show how the person profited from his education
- IV. Description of Deeds
 - Praise the excellencies of his actions and motives

Where does one dig up the idea for a myth? Some think that the ancient Greeks found fossils that inspired stories of the one-eyed giants, like Polyphemus. On February 5, 2003, *National Geographic News* reported the discovery of the tusk, several teeth, and some bones of a *Deinotherium giganteum* on the Greek island Crete. A distant cousin of the elephant, this mammal—the second-largest ever to walk the earth—stood fifteen feet tall at the shoulder, and had tusks that were over four feet long. The supposed eye socket was formed from an extremely large nasal opening in the center of the skull.

V. Comparison

- Portray the person favorably to someone else

VI. Exhortation or Prayer

- Call upon others to imitate this person's example



READING ASSIGNMENT:
Books 20 and 21

SESSION XVIII: DISCUSSION

Books 20 and 21

A Question to Consider

If someone were stealing from you, how should you treat them?

Discuss or list short answers to the following questions:

Text Analysis

1. We have previously considered the importance of hospitality. How is this reinforced at the return of Odysseus?
2. The entire book is about Odysseus being “unkalypsoed” or revealed out of hiddenness. How is all of Ithaka “unkalypsoed?”
3. Odysseus and Telemachos make plans to deal with the suitors. Why do we not have any doubts about the propriety of this?
4. Why do Odysseus and Telemachos return to the house separately?
5. What is significant about Melanthios?
6. What is the point of Argos?
7. Odysseus is dressed like a beggar. Why do you think he actually begs from the suitors?
8. What does the boxing match with Iros tell us?