

The Odyssey: **Literary Terms**

Epic

Question:

- What does “Epic” mean?

What does it mean if something is “epic”?



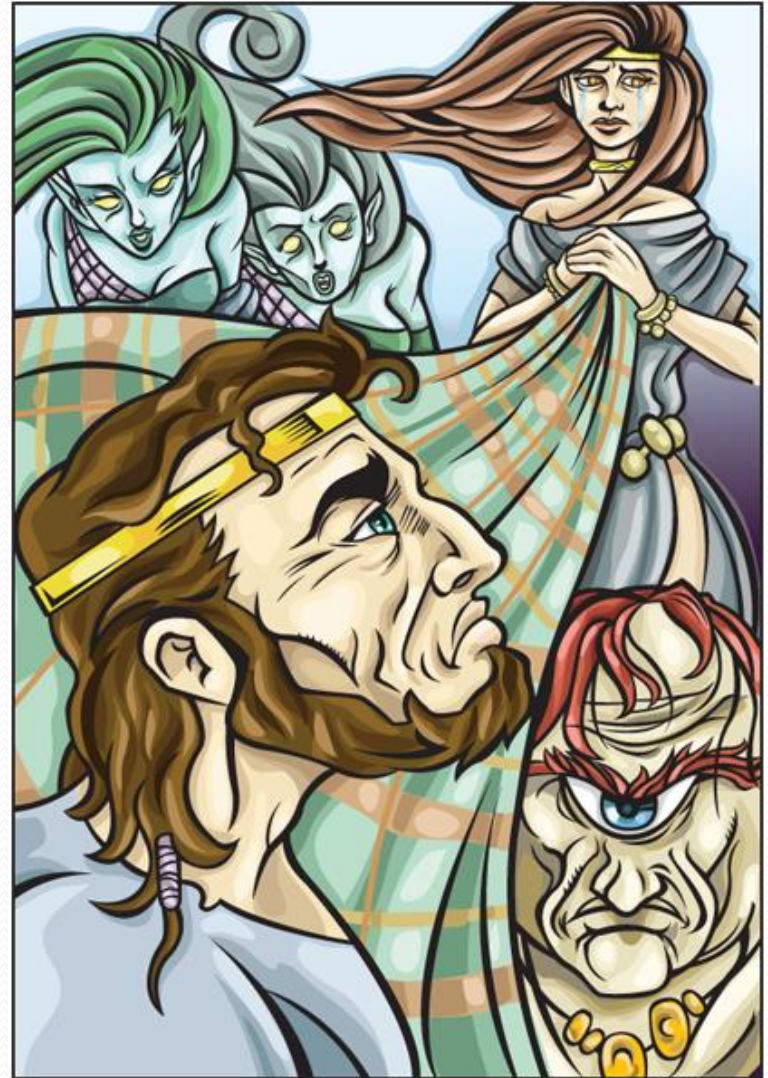
NOT JUST FAIL.

EPIC FAIL!!!!!!



Epic Poetry

- **Definition:** a lengthy narrative poem that usually contains the heroic deeds and events significant to a particular culture or society.
- **Example:** *The Odyssey*
- 10 characteristics of epic poetry



Epic Poetry

Characteristics:

- Begins “in medias res” (in the middle of things)
- Has a vast setting
- Features lengthy, formal speeches
- Contains divine interventions—THE GODS!
- Features heroes that embody the values and morals of the civilization
- The protagonist often must descend into the underworld/hell
- An epic is written in ornate, poetic language.
- It incorporates myth, legend, folktale, and history and often includes the intervention of the gods in human affairs.

Quick write and share:

- What does “HERO” mean to you?
- Who is a hero to you and why?

Epic Hero

- **Definition:** the protagonist of an epic poem
- Brave and noble character
- Admired for great achievements
- Affected by great events
- An epic hero is the central figure in an epic who has superior qualities and risks personal danger to pursue a grand quest.
- **Example:** Odysseus, Hercules



Epic Heroes

- Hero, in the original Greek sense, means a demigod—the offspring of a god and a mortal.
- In a broader sense, a hero is one who stands out from the ordinary individuals as one who *embodies* the values or ideals of a particular culture.



Characteristics of the Epic Hero

- Must be brave and complete a quest filled with difficult tasks and danger
- has superior or superhuman strength, intelligence, moral, character, and/or courage
- Ethical
- On a quest for something of great value (to him or his people)
- Villain(s) try to keep the hero from his quest
- Physically beautiful
- Still human, so has a flaw/weakness

Characteristics of the Epic Hero

- Risks death for glory or for the greater good of society
- Reflects the ideals of a particular society
- Has courage, loyalty, honor, bravery, leadership, self-control, daring, and wit

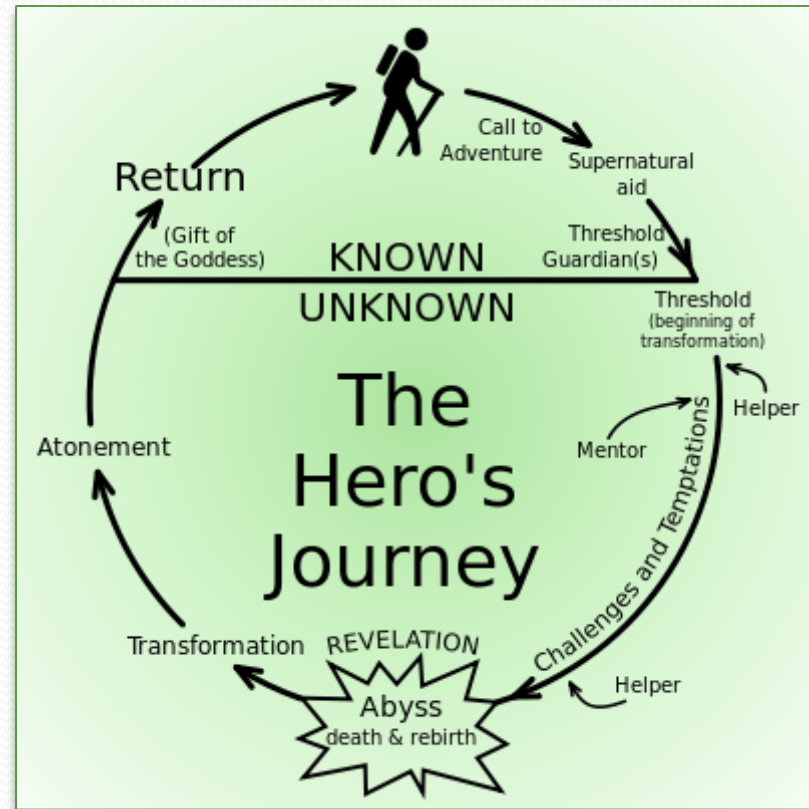


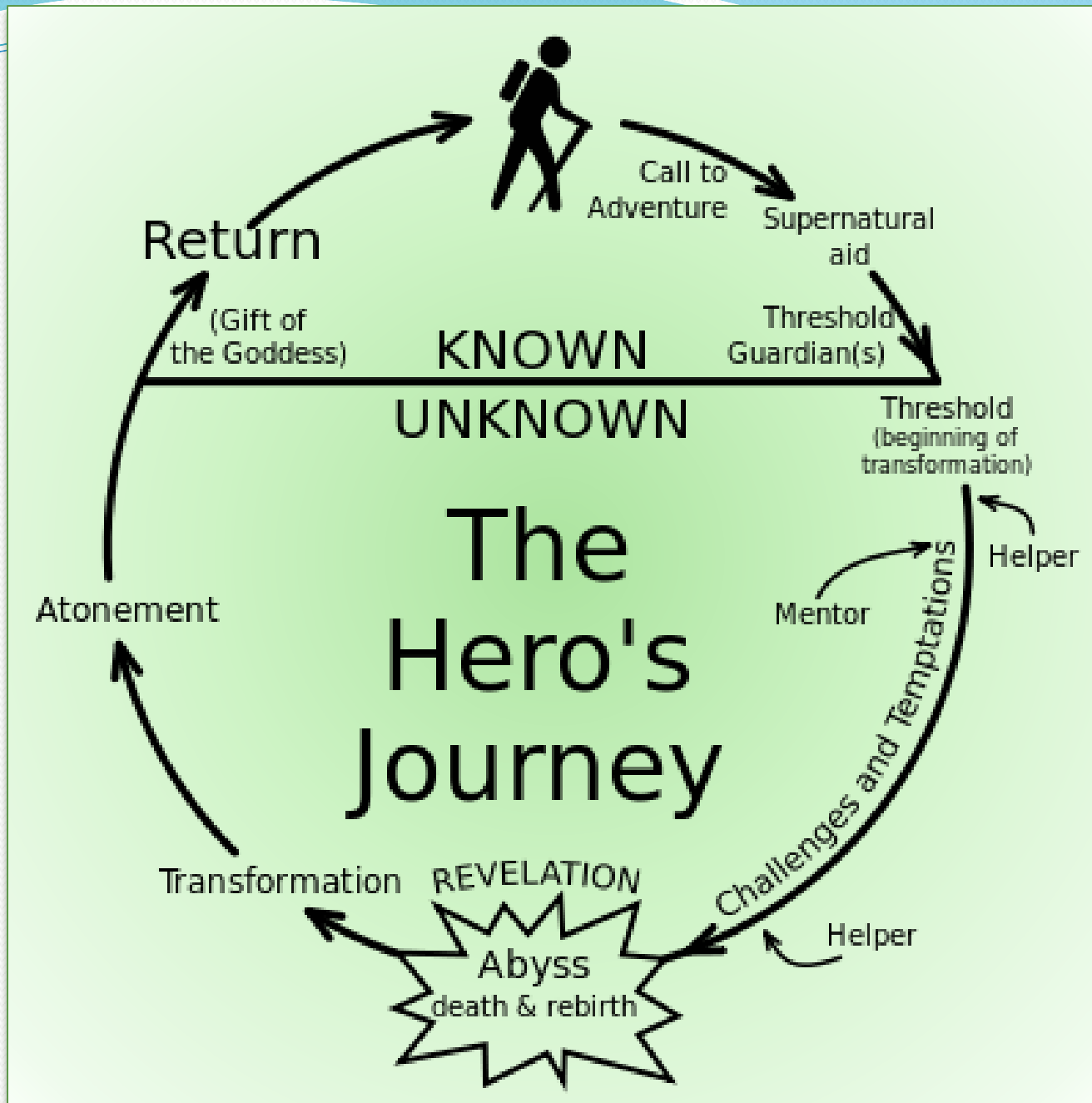
More details about Epic Heroes

- The actions of epic heroes consist of deeds of great *valor*, and/or deeds that require superhuman courage.
- Supernatural forces—gods, angels, and demons—interest themselves in the actions of epic heroes and *intervene* and/or *interfere* from time to time.
- The epic hero is an “archetype”: a model or pattern of character-type that is found in works across time and cultures, regardless of era, faith, character.

Steps in the Epic Hero's Journey

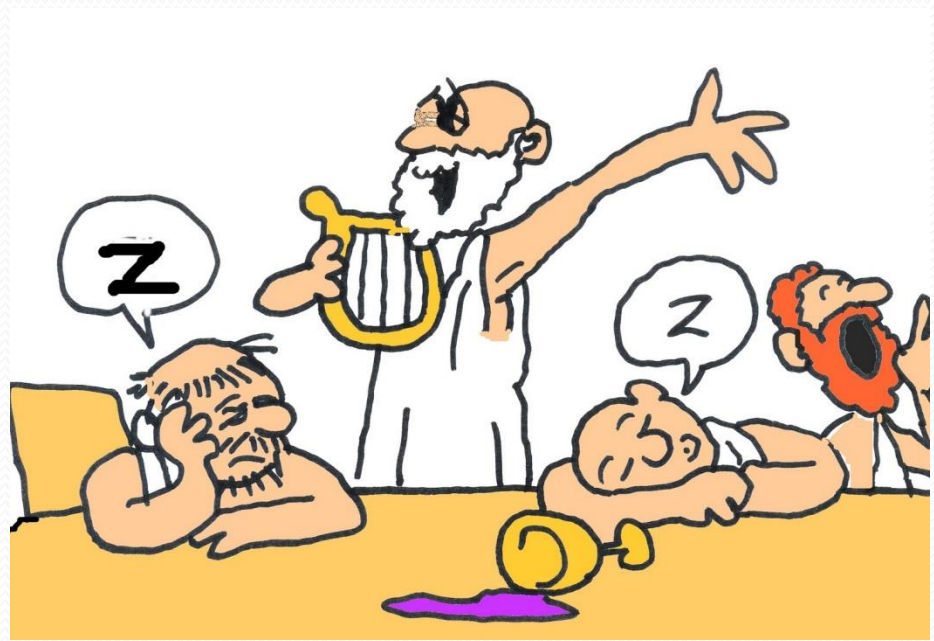
1. Call to adventure and/or quest for identity or duty
2. Leaves home for a long period of time
3. Journey consists of difficult tasks
4. Hero must depend on his wit
5. Journey leads to a transformation or self-realization
6. Hero regains his rightful place in society





Epic Simile

- **Definition:** an extended simile that is elaborated in great detail and usually runs over several lines
- Still uses “like” or “as”
- Often contains thoughts that do not relate directly to the plot
- Used for **emphasis**

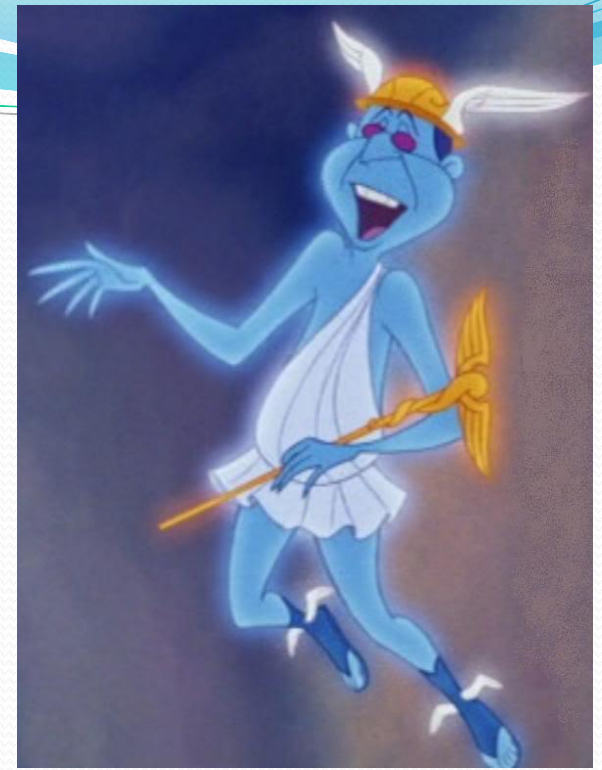


Epic Simile

Hermes' flight:

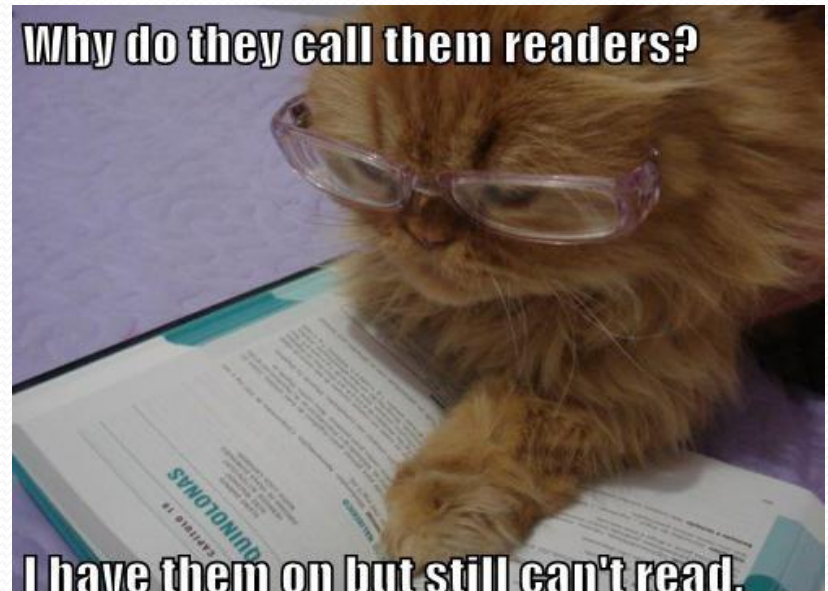
“A gull patrolling between the wave crests of the desolate sea will dip to catch a fish and douse his wings; no higher above the whitecaps Hermes flew until the distant island lay ahead, then rising shoreward from the violet ocean he stepped up to the cave” (Homer 652).

What is Hermes' flight being compared to here?



Oral Tradition

- **Definition:** stories that were told and retold verbally from one generation to another
- Many ancient Greeks were not **literate** unless their profession required them to be
 - Women didn't have jobs, so most were illiterate
 - Men who partook in business professions (trading, selling goods) were literate



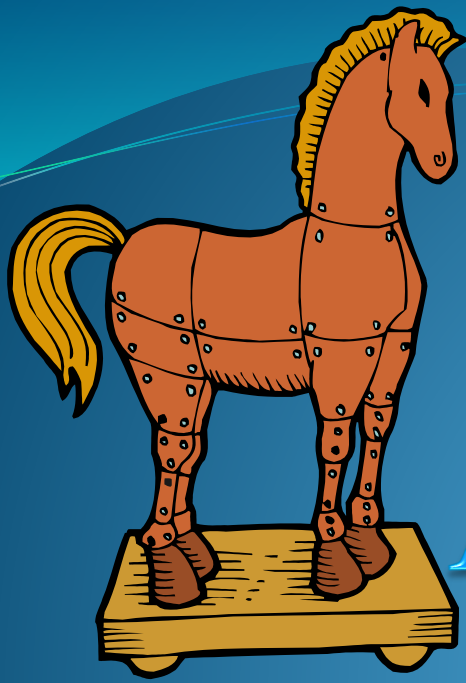
Tragic Flaw

- **Definition:** the character defect that leads to the downfall of the protagonist in an epic or tragedy

Example:

- **Odysseys' PRIDE:** Odysseus and his men escape from the Cyclops, but as his ship is sailing away, Odysseus yells out that his name is Odysseus, son of Laertes. He has a great deal of pride, and it often causes him to make rash decisions.





The Value of Hospitality in Ancient Greek Society



HOSPITALITY in

Homer's time was well shown through long travels such as Odysseus' in *The Odyssey*.

There are many possible reasons why hospitality was more prevalent in those times.

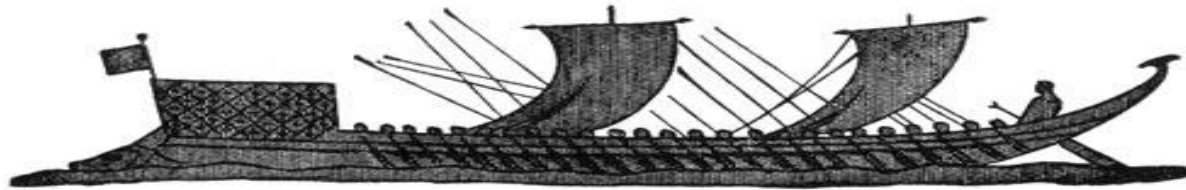


ANCIENT GREEK VALUES

- **Intelligence**
- **Glory: equivalent to FAME**
 - War stories
 - Souls that achieved glory during life were given privileges in Hades
- **Hospitality: Helping others**
 - Offered food, shelter, protection to travelers without question
 - Hospitable even when they didn't want to be
 - Brotherly duty or fear of the gods?
- **Loyalty: family, community, & gods**
- **Bravery**

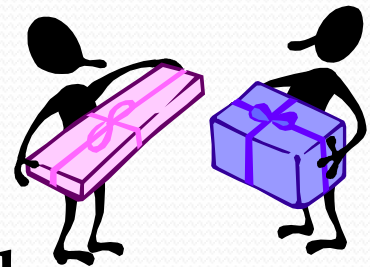


1. **Traveling in Homer's time was much more extensive and lengthier than in modern times.**



2. **Transportation was much slower -
(traveling by foot or by boot).
Because of this many nights were spent away
from home in different locations.**
3. **There were no hotels to stay in so what was a
person to do?**

3. There were no hotels or inns so travelers had to rely on the hospitality of others for shelter, food, and protection. There was some payment for this hospitality in the form of a gift exchange.



4. Another possible reason for this hospitality was the fact that there were not nations that would allow travelers to enter their territory safely.

5. Without such hospitality, strangers could be captured or even killed for entering a foreign land.

6. *Xenia* is the Greek relationship between two people from different regions. This allowed for the members of the relationship to safely travel into the other member's territory and receive a place to stay and something to eat.



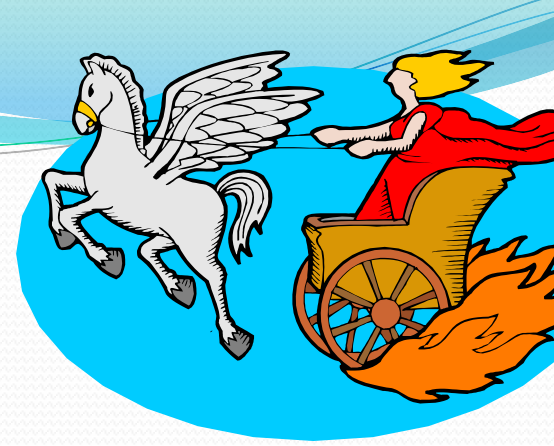
IMPORTANCE OF XENIA

- It is a guest/host relationship
- A xenoī (the person) is guest, host, stranger, friend, foreigner all in one.
- No one mistreat or take advantage of this (the guest can't kill, rape, steal, etc. from the host and vice versa)
- This is protected by Zeus.
- We know Paris violated xenia by taking Helen, which did bring Zeus' anger.
- **In the *Odyssey*, we will see xenia being done correctly and it being violated as well. It is one of the important themes in the book.**

- 1. The Greeks believed the gods wanted them to show hospitality to anyone**
- 2. Hospitality was treated as a test from the gods.**
- 3. Turning away someone and not providing them this hospitality would result in some form of punishment from the gods.**



The fear of the gods' wrath is seen in many of Odysseus' travels. Many of the hosts ask Odysseus to pray for their happiness to the gods in return for their hospitality.



The ancient Greeks knew that the gods would occasionally disguise themselves and visit unsuspecting people. By treating every guest like a god, there would be no mistake of accidentally treating a god differently, just in case one was to show up at their door disguised as a stranger.



Finally, hospitality could have been used to spread one's name and bring them a sense of fame if they would provide a high standard of hospitality to strangers. It could have been a way to show how wealthy one was.



THE ODYSSEY

- In *The Odyssey*, Homer starts by telling about the last days of the Trojan War
- The man responsible for the fall of Troy is Odysseus
 - Trojan Horse story
- Because Odysseus was instrumental in Troy's destruction, *he angered the gods who were sympathetic to Troy*
 - The gods vow that he will have a long and difficult journey home.



This journey takes 10 years and is the subject of *The Odyssey*.

THE ODYSSEY

- **Odysseus and his men encounter many dangers which make their return to Ithaca difficult:**
 - **Monsters**
 - **Women who try to keep him from his wife**
- **Somehow, Odysseus always finds a way to get out of difficult situations**
 - **Intelligence/cleverness**
 - **Quick thinking**
 - **Bravery**

