

Extended Paragraph – The Descriptive Essay

Assignment: Write a physical description of a person, a scene, or place in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. Use Homer's poems for the basis of your description.

What is a descriptive essay? The descriptive essay is a genre of essay that asks the student to describe something—object, person, place, experience, emotion, situation, etc. This genre encourages the student's ability to create a written account of a particular experience. What is more, this genre allows for a great deal of artistic freedom (the goal of which is to paint an image that is vivid and moving in the mind of the reader).

One might benefit from keeping in mind this simple maxim: If the reader is unable to clearly form an impression of the thing that you are describing, try, try again!

What do I describe? You might like to describe one of the heroes, Helen, or another character. Homer provides descriptions of the battles and battlegrounds, the areas where the soldiers camped, and inside of tents and buildings. (You may not describe Helen as I use her for my example.)

Research your topic: Here is an example of the research on Helen.

Odyssey 22.224: "high-born Helen of the white arms"

Iliad 3.171: "Helen, fair among women"

Iliad 3:228: "long-robed Helen, fair among women"

Odyssey 4.120: "Helen, like Artemis of the golden arrows"

Odyssey 4 in between Lines 296 & 306: "long-robed Helen, peerless among women"

Odyssey 15 in between Lines 92 & 109: "Helen, the beautiful lady"

Odyssey 15 in between Lines 120 & 130: "fair-cheeked Helen"

Iliad 13 in between Lines 754 & 774, & Odyssey 15.56: "fair-tressed Helen"

In each of the following lines/passages of *The Iliad*, in appearance she is described simply as "fair-haired Helen":

Book 3 in between Lines 324 & 340; Book 7, Line 354; Book 8 in between Lines 78 & 97; Book 9 in between Lines 328 & 346; & Book 11, Line 368 & in between Lines 489 & 516.

After researching the poems for the descriptive information on your subject, proceed to write the essay using this essay map. See **Writing with the Masters**, pp. 41-42, for additional information.

Topic Sentence – State **topic**/*focus*

Example #1 – expand with 2-3 sentences of explanation

Example #2 - expand with 2-3 sentences of explanation

Example #3 - expand with 2-3 sentences of explanation

Conclusion Sentence

Example Topic Sentence: Legend says that **Helen of Troy** possessed such *great beauty that her “face launched a thousand ships.”*

Example Descriptive Paragraph:

Legend says that Helen of Troy possessed such great beauty that her “face launched a thousand ships.” Homer provides little physical description of Helen in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In both poems, he refers to her as “high-born Helen of the white arms.” He describes her as “fair among women” and “peerless among women.” From this, the reader may surmise that she ranks as one of the most beautiful women in the world as she has no peers. Helen wore “long robes” and with her long “fair-hair” she presents as the epitome of beauty. With fair cheeks and tresses, Homer compares her to the goddess “Artemis of the golden arrows.” Though Homer provides little in physical description, men worshipped Helen as a goddess who possessed great beauty. Both Menelaus and Paris fall in love with this woman. When Menelaus launches his thousand ships, they sail to Troy to rescue this beautiful woman, his wife, Helen.