

Write Your Own Invocation!

Invocation - a convention of classical literature and of epics in particular, in which an appeal for aid (especially for inspiration) is made to a muse or deity, usually at or near the beginning of the work. The word is from the Latin invocatio, meaning “to summon” or “to call upon.” Homer’s Odyssey, for instance, begins:

Tell me, Muse, of the man of many ways, who was driven

far journeys, after he had sacked Troy’s sacred citadel.

Many were they whose cities he saw, whose minds he learned of,

many the pains he suffered in his spirit on the wide sea,

struggling for his own life and the homecoming of his companions.

* The traditional Muse of epic poetry is Calliope, although Homer does not address her by name in his invocation at the beginning of the Odyssey.

Student example:

Tell me, Muse about the man of many miles,
Who many times dashed as he ran through the streets
of Santa Monica.
He saw the Fatigue of his teammates and knew their pain.
On the course, he too suffered great pains within his lungs,
Yearning for the finish line, and his teammates’ success.
He could not guide his team to victory, though he wanted to:
His teammates had lost the race because of their laziness.
The slackers had disregarded the wise words
Of the well-traveled coach Cady, who knew the path to victory.
Tell the tale for us, beginning with the previous day,
Sometime after the piercing bell had sounded.
When all the others, seeking refuge from the torments of school
Had fled, light-footed to the safety of their homes.
Yet he alone, longing for the final mile and his own return,
Was confined by sound-minded Coach Cady, who strives for excellence,
To the fenced-in, crimson rubber surface that was his training
ground.

Teacher example:

Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story
Of a teacher, pusher of cart, keeper of papers, tamer of
students,
Disheveled and rushing, working long hours
Her only desire to inspire, to instill a joy in literature.
Her eyes weakened from the digital ages,
Though her agile mind scaled the heights of Olympus,
paving a golden path for her second block.
Dedication was the badge of courage around her neck,
her heart worn
Proudly on her sleeve, for each child conjured a
sympathy in her breast, each child’s mind
And person tenderly cared for.

Now, create your own invocation (describing YOU). Use the writing frame on the back if you need help getting started!

Step 1: Play with epithets. A strict band director could be labeled “time-beating Sakow.” A popular cross-country coach “flat-footed Coach Cady,” A nagging mother “shrill-voiced Leona.” Play with Homer’s language. Imitate the invocation from *The Odyssey* by imagining that this is the opening to an epic about your life. How might your rhapsode begin? ***You are only required to write a minimum of ten lines.***

Now write your own:

Call upon a deity / identify him / her by writing an epithet describing him / her

Call to the Muse next by first praising him / her, then by asking him / her to aid you in the writing of your narrative.

Now describe **who the story will be told about** (YOU) using an epithet:

Finally, **fill out the poem by writing a brief summary of your life story, or what makes you who you are** – remember not to use complete sentences, play instead with epithets, similes, figurative language, etc so that it is in poetic form!