

A ROUGH LIST OF EPICS

Africa

Sundiata (Mali)
Mwindo (Congo)
Tambuka (Kenya)

Asia

Gilgamesh (Mesopotamia)
Enuma Elish (Mesopotamia)
Iliad (Asia Minor)
Odyssey (Asia Minor)
Mahabharata (India)
Ramayana (India)
Shahnameh (Persia)
Book of Genesis (Palestine)
Book of Exodus (Palestine)
The Tale of the Heike (Japan)
The Journey to the West, or Monkey
(China)
The Three Kingdoms (China)
King Dongmyeong of Goguryeo (Korea)
King Gesar (Tibet)
Silappathikaram (Tamil India/Sri Lanka)
Manimekalai (Tamil India/Sri Lanka)
David of Sassoun (Armenia)
Manas (Kyrgyz Turkey)
The Secret History of the Mongols
(Mongolia)

Europe

Oresteia (Greece)
Aeneid (Italy)
The Divine Comedy (Italy)
The Liberation of Jerusalem (Italy)
Orlando Furioso (Italy)
The Song of Roland (France)
The Song of the Nibelungs (Burgundy)
The Saga of the Volsungs (Norway)
Njal's Saga (Iceland)
Laxdala Saga (Iceland)
The Peril of Sziget (Hungary)
Kalevala (Finland)

The Poem of My Cid (Spain)
Don Quixote (Spain)
The Cattle Raid of Cooley (Ireland)
Beowulf (England)
Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight
The Faerie Queene (England)
The Henriad (Shakespeare's *Richard II*,
Henry IV parts 1 and 2, *Henry V*)
(England)
Parzifal (Germany)
Hamlet (England)
Paradise Lost (England)
The Prelude (England)
The Kossovo Epic (Kossovo)
The Lusjads (Portugal)
Hamlet (England)
Lacplesis (Latvia)
Faust (Germany)

Americas

Popol Vuh (Mesoamerica)
Omeros (St. Lucia, West Indies)
The Gaucho Martín Fierro (Argentina)
Hiawatha (USA)
Moby Dick (USA)
The Cantos (USA)
Paterson (USA)
Davenport's Version (USA)
The Gardens of Flora Baum (USA)
The Alamo (USA)
Genesis, an Epic Poem (USA)
The New World (USA)

EPIC ELEMENTS

1. The epic storyteller

The prayer or invocation
The appeal to tradition
Frame tales
Blindness and memory
The retrieval of the story as itself an epic theme

2. The Creation Myth

Does it need to be explicit?
The dividing of the primal unity
Creation by word
The rules of recombination
False starts
The great flood

3. The Hero

Miraculous birth
Obscure origins
Blazing the trail: the hero as representing but transcending the cultural norm
The heroic code
Heroic leadership and its dangers

4. The Quest

The question
The journey
Obstacles and enemies
Monsters, natural and divine; our own monsterhood
Magical helpers, weapons, and talismans
Games, rituals and trials
The great battle
The noble death or return

5. Kinship and Kinship Troubles

Kinship in human evolution
Succession and nepotism
Adultery
Youthful rebellion and oedipal conflicts
Hero twins and male bonding

The dangerous woman
In-law troubles, bad gifts and bloody feasts
The burning house and tragic kin-slaying

6. Definitions of the Relationship Among the Three Worlds

Nature
Culture
The divine and the covenant
Introduction to the divine personalities, their history, relations and conflicts

7. The Fall of Natural Man

The beast-man
The Fall: awareness of death, moral knowledge and self-consciousness
Sex
Clothes and shame
Drugs
Technology, invention or shamanic revelation of new technology
Mobility, the loss of the home place
Loss of one kind of strength, gain of another
Domestication of animals
Agriculture

8. The Descent into and Return from the Underworld

The dead companion and the need for funeral
Funeral games
The hero, the shaman, and the animal spirit guide
The guardians and lords of the realm of death
The protecting talisman
The conversation with the dead
The prophecy
The commission: the assignment of the task or duty
The return to the land of the living
Time anomalies

9. The Founding of the City

The idea of home
The building of the walls and gates
Sacrifice and commutation of sacrifice
Origin of present rituals, food laws, taboos, mutilations, etc, distinguishing ingroup from others
Genealogies of gods and humans
The establishment of a civic language
Orientation in space and time: placenames, the cosmological center, boundary markers, the calendar
The code of laws

10. The History of the People

From myth to history
War
Singled out by the gods
Faults and flaws of epic nations: epic hero versus epic ruler
National destiny

11. Setting an Example—Definitions of Core Values

Building a value language
Good-bad
Right-wrong
Elevated-base
Admirable-despicable
Firstness-secondness
Meso-meta
Pure-impure
Playful-serious
Natural-artificial
Wise-foolish
Sacred-profane
Venerable-ridiculous
Tragic-comic
Honest dealing-trickery
Beautiful-ugly
Contradictions and choices in the application of these values

12. The New Medium of Communication

From mute to spoken
From oral to written
From written to printed
From print to new media
New record-keeping institutions
Unification and fixing of national language
Economic changes in the media of exchange
A new religion

13. Formal Markers

Meter and mnemonics: the epic lyre
Formulae and mnemonics
Story-tunes and mnemonics
Formalization of meter in written works to preserve the human voice
In prose, the challenge of finding a substitute for verse
Mnemonic equivalents in other forms: prose fiction, drama, film, etc
Epic Magnitude
Lists and comprehensiveness
Boundary conditions