

**Five-page paper 1, due for revision September 14**

The idea that life is like a sport is an ancient one. In Western literature, it dates all the way back to the Bible (“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” – 2 Timothy 4.7) and the Greek poet Pindar, who wrote religious poems that celebrate the Olympic Games. And yes, when Timothy says “course,” he’s using the word in the sense of “race course” or related words like *cursor* (which in Latin means “runner”) or *curriculum* (which means “race”). You know the word for that, because we’ve studied it. It’s a metaphor.

A poem based on the metaphor is A. E. Housman’s “To an Athlete Dying Young” (anthology pages 760-61). About that, write a paper that sorts through the emotions communicated and explains what is gained by articulating the emotion in metaphoric detail. Wouldn’t it have been simpler and more efficient, for instance, to say just, “He died young and I’m sad”?

Say no. Say it in about four pages of detail about the words in the poem’s seven stanzas, plus half a page for introduction and half a page for conclusion. One start on Housman’s diction: “The time you won your town the race / We chaired you through the market-place” means “The time you won the race for your town, we sat you in a chair and carried it through the marketplace.”

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A few negatives:

Please not a paper titled “Paper.” Orient your reader with a specific title.

Please not “In this paper I will say three things.” Please not “In conclusion.” Don’t sit there in the driver’s seat talking about what you’re planning to do after you find your key; just drive the car.

Please not the impossibly general opening paragraph beginning “From the beginning of time” or the opening paragraph that pretends not to know stuff that I know you know I know (“What is a race? Well, Webster’s Dictionary says . . .”).

Out of the negatives, one positive:

Look at the words – Housman’s, not Pedia’s. They’re interesting. Notice some interesting things about them and you’ll be interesting too.