

# MYTHOLOGY

## Activities/ Products

**Teachers, read through the following suggestions and/or go on-line to view these two sites. Several activities are suggested in both websites with differences and some similarities. Be creative and make your own if you wish.**

- 1.** From <http://www.mythweb.com/teachers/tips/tips.html> select from the activities included.

The following lesson plans and activities are designed to build such skills as creative writing, observing, vocabulary development and art appreciation. They can be used independently of each other and are not intended for use in any particular sequence. You can choose the activities that are most appropriate for your curriculum.

### **A. Composition**

- What could be easier than fighting the many-headed Hydra, stealing the Golden Fleece from a fire-breathing dragon, escaping from a labyrinth or flying with wings of wax and feathers? Students can demonstrate how easy it is by writing "How To" compositions based on these tasks.
- Students can use their knowledge of the myths as a foundation for writing character sketches. What were Hera, Pan, Athena and the other gods and goddesses really like? Students will be able to disclose to the world the truth about these characters in the sketches they write.
- Students can also use the myths as a basis for writing opinion essays. Should mortals be allowed on Mt. Olympus? This notable topic was never settled in Ancient Greece. It is up to your students to resolve the issue by developing persuasive argumentative essays. Other topics to consider: why (or why not) were the Labors of Hercules sufficient to absolve him of the crime of killing his children? If you were the judge, what punishment would you have administered to Tantalus for stealing the nectar of the gods? After reading the story of King Midas, what do you think is more important -- wealth or wisdom?

### **B. Letter Writing**

- Learning how to write letters does not have to be drudgery. Ask your students to select a favorite Greek god, goddess, hero or heroine. Listed below are a series of assignments that give students practice in writing application letters, order letters, request letters and friendly letters:
- Tell students their favorite mythological character has just retired. Zeus, the

father of the gods, is now accepting applications for a replacement. Ask your students to write letters of application and a brief resume or biographical sketch.

- Students, in the role of their favorite hero or heroine, will be leading an expedition on a dangerous journey (e.g., Jason questing after the Golden Fleece, Perseus seeking Medusa's head or Theseus attempting to defeat the Minotaur). Before they can go, students must order the necessary supplies. Letters can be addressed to Heroic Discount Supplies, 744 Olympian Way, Athens, Greece.
- Every aspiring hero or heroine needs to receive the proper instruction and training. Fortunately, there are a few openings in the most distinguished university in ancient Greece. In order for your students to secure a space, they should write for an application, a catalog and financial aid information. Requests can be sent to: University of the Muses, 300 Aphrodite Way, Laconia, Greece.
- As the best friend of a mythological character, students write a letter offering support, encouragement or guidance. For example, students might write to the following characters: Orpheus after failing to bring back Eurydice from Hades (sympathy and advice), Polyphemus after being tricked by Odysseus (compassion and concern), Ariadne after being jilted by Jason (commiseration).

### **C. Designing A Mythology Game**

Designing a mythology game provides students with an ideal opportunity to put their creative imaginations to work. Allow them to use their expertise and enthusiasm to create a board game based on the famous adventures of the Greek heroes and heroines. Stories rich in details and adventures include: Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece, the Labors of Hercules, the adventures of Theseus, or Odysseus and the Cyclops. Students choose a favorite story and note the details they wish to include in the game. They write a rule book and design and produce the necessary accessories: board, cards, dice, spinners, etc. Invite your students to exchange their games and provide feedback to each other on the ease of use and playability of their creations.

### **D. How Myths Have Influenced Our Language**

Mythology's influence is evident in our language. It is hard to imagine reading or writing without drawing upon myth-oriented adjectives or idioms. As part of your everyday curriculum or as part of a separate word-study unit, ask your students to research the histories of words that come from the Greek myths. For instance, ask them what it means to have an "Achilles heel". As they do their research, they'll find that Achilles was a Greek hero whose mother rubbed him with ambrosia and put him in a fire (or dipped him in the river Styx) when he was a baby so his body could not be pierced by weapons. Since he was held by the heel during the process, his heel was not protected. Paris found this out and shot Achilles in the heel with an arrow. From this, let pupils speculate on the meaning of the modern-day expression and then let them check their definition with dictionaries. Students might record words in a notebook or compile a mythological dictionary.

The following partial list of mythological references and some words they have inspired will get you started.

Atlas: A mythical giant who supported the heavens on his shoulders. (The

book of maps known as an atlas is named after a legendary African king, sometimes thought to be descended from the Atlas of Greek myth.)

Hercules: Also known as Heracles, the greatest hero of Greece. (A particularly great exertion is said to be a Herculean effort.)

Labyrinth: A dangerous maze built for King Minos. Sacrificial victims were sent into the Labyrinth from which it was almost impossible to escape. At the center was the monstrous Minotaur. (The English words labyrinth and labyrinthine may derive from certain double-headed axes, archaeological examples of which have been found on the Greek island of Crete, site of the kingdom of mythological King Minos and the Labyrinth.)

Midas: A king who had the power to change all he touched to gold. This blessing became a curse. (The Midas touch.)

Pan: Shepherd god, son of Hermes, with legs and horns of a goat. (Pan was considered to be the cause of the sudden fear that sometimes comes for no reason, especially in lonely places. That's why it's called "panic".)

Procrustes: Man who offered his "one-size-fits-all" bed to passing travelers, adjusting his guests to the bed by stretching or chopping them as appropriate. (An article in The New York Times refers to art historians who try to force the famous painter Pablo Picasso into "the Procrustean bed of theories.")

Sisyphus: Sinner condemned to roll a rock uphill for eternity. (A Sisyphean task.)

Tantalus: A king allowed to partake of the nectar of the gods. He abused this privilege by stealing the divine beverage to share with his human friends. For this sin he was condemned to the Underworld, where he stood in fresh water that receded whenever he tried to drink and under a tree filled with ripe fruit always just beyond reach. (tantalyze)

Titans: An ancient race of giants who were overcome by Zeus in a struggle that shook the world. (titanic)

### **E. Values Discussion On The Nature Of Heroism**

Tales from the past generally equate heroism with physical strength and raw courage in the face of danger (see the stories of Hercules, Theseus and Bellerophon). Recently, however, new definitions of heroism and new kinds of heroes have emerged. To many, research scientist Jonas Salk, astronaut John Glenn and civil rights leader Martin Luther King are contemporary heroic types on the American scene. They do not slay monsters or engage in bloody battles, but they have captured the imagination of many Americans. What qualities of heroism, redefined, do they possess? It is possible that they will some day find their place in the myths our generation leaves as a legacy to future ages?

In another sense, POWs, sports figures, actors and actresses and some holders of high office are looked at as heroes. Ask your students to write a paper based on the question, "Who is your hero...and why?" These additional questions will aid your students in developing their essay: What are some of the traits that make this person a hero to you? Are these heroic traits parallel in some way to the traits of the ancient heroes you have learned about from the Greek myths?

### **F. Greek Mythology And The Arts**

The Ancient Greeks used the myths in all varieties of their artwork.

Architecture, sculpture, painting, pottery, metalwork, jewelry, weaving and embroidery showed how important the myths were in the lives of the people.

Listed below are a variety of activities that will allow your students to expand their knowledge of Greek mythology and arts. Visits to libraries and museums as well as access to reference books you may already have in your classroom will aid your students in the following projects.

- Visit an art museum. See the sculpture, pottery, jewelry and coins of ancient Greece. Record the myths that inspired them. Draw sketches of some of your favorite items.
- Find photographs of the famous buildings of ancient Greece (Parthenon, Knossos, Delphi). Prepare a short report about one or two of them.
- Find sketches of the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian styles used in classical architecture. Write a short paper in which you identify the differences between the styles.
- Find pictures of Greek vases. List the myths that were used in the decoration of the vases.
- Model a figure out of clay of one of the heroes or gods from the myths.
- Make your own design on paper to be used for one of the following: a vase, a shield for a hero or a robe for a goddess.
- Create a panel mural depicting one of your favorite myths.

### **G. Your Students Can Be Mythmakers**

There are a variety of other ways that your students can work creatively with myths. The activities described below can be adapted for use at any level.

- A valuable experience for your students is writing, telling and illustrating their own myths. These can be recorded in little booklets and compiled in a class anthology. Your students can write a myth explaining a natural phenomenon or create a story with a moral lesson. Some students may want to think of an emotion (love, envy, fear or jealousy) and write an adventure using that emotion as the theme. After the myths have been written, invite your students to read their myths to the class.
- Assign each student or pair of students a character from the Greek myths (Daedalus, Persephone, Athena, Pan, etc.). Ask them to find out who their character is and what significance he or she plays in the myths. Upon completion of their research, have each student or pair present a short oral report to the class.
- Impromptu role playing offers your students an opportunity to interpret the Greek myths. Ask your class to brainstorm a list of characters and their corresponding adventures. Begin with a dramatic incident such as Odysseus being held captive by Polyphemus the Cyclops and let your students build in as much action and dialogue as they wish. Medea reacting to being abandoned by Jason after aiding him in his quest offers the basis for an interesting monologue. Your students may want to refine their role-playing by trying many versions, discussing them and taping the best. They can combine their episodes into a dramatic collage or present one-act plays complete with props and costumes based on specific episodes.
- Every day we come across references to myths, especially in advertising. Encourage your students to watch for these and bring in examples for discussion. Why do florists use Mercury (the Greek Hermes) as a symbol for their delivery service? Why is a magazine of the arts called Daedalus? And so on. Ask your students to create their own ad campaign (using a real or imaginary product) that features one of the gods or heroes from the Greek myths.

- Have your students pick a character from the Greek myths and create a "family tree" based on the information they can find about the various gods, goddesses and heroes who have passed through their character's life. If your student picks Medea, he or she would probably want to include Jason, Theseus and King Aeëtes in the family tree. Family trees can be illustrated with pictures and accompanied by short descriptions of each individual's respective importance in the character's life.

### **H. Inquiring Minds: Mythology Makes The Tabloids**

Suggested by Betty Johnson at Georgetown High School. Based on her article in English Journal, April 1990. (Copyright 1990 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Printed with permission.)

Anyone who has spent time in their local supermarket has seen the latest tabloid headlines: "Rabbit-Faced Baby Born to Buck-Toothed Mom" or "Aliens Abduct Man and Return Him to Earth 100 Years Later." These absurd articles can actually pave the way for an interesting mythology assignment, because the Greek myths your students have been reading provide bizarre stories for such journalistic license: "Three-headed Dog Guards Portal to Underworld", "Flying Horse Helps Hero." An interesting and fun group project involves having your students become a newspaper staff to produce a paper in the style of a tabloid.

Taking a few afternoons to explore different parts of the newspaper through prewriting will help your students discover story ideas and sow the seeds for potential articles.

Begin with an examination and discussion of actual tabloids. Hand out copies and ask the class to read the front page. Brainstorm with the class: how does the front page sell the paper? After reading the various headlines, pick one as a class and read the article inside. Once the article is read, discuss the differences in what the headline promises and what the article actually says.

#### **Headlines and Articles**

Once your students are comfortable with the style and format of the tabloids, ask them how mythology lends itself to this kind of journalism. The class can brainstorm a list of possible headlines which you can copy on the blackboard. Ask each student to choose one of the headlines and write for five minutes. This prewriting becomes the source of articles with headlines like "Mysterious Rocks Destroy Ships at Sea" or "Baby Strangles Snake with Bare Hands."

#### **Interviews**

Another prewriting idea to help students invent stories for articles requires a prompt for five minutes of writing. "You are a famous reporter and have been given an exclusive interview with \_\_\_\_\_. What juicy information would your readers want to know?" They can choose any mythological character to fill in the blank, or the class can brainstorm a list of names like Medusa, Orpheus, Daedalus, King Minos, etc.

#### **Quotes**

Designed to inspire quotes in interviews, this activity can also generate dialogue for stories. Put the names of mythological characters on strips of paper and have students draw one out of a hat. Ask them to write as many direct quotes as possible for that character. For example, the Cyclops might be overheard saying, "I've had my eye on Odysseus for a while." Five minutes of prewriting can generate a variety of quotes.

#### **Stories**

This fifteen-minute activity groups three students who collaborate on a story. Given five minutes each, students take turns writing. The first student might begin, "A king once turned his daughter into a golden statue." Supplying details to develop the story, the second student uses the five minutes to write the body, and the last person ends the story. If each student begins a story during the first five minutes, all three have the chance to write a beginning, middle and end.

### **Advertisements**

Before having your students prewrite the advertisements, ask them to bring an advertisement from any newspaper which satisfies this question: "What product would a specific mythological character advertise?" The following day, tape the ads on the chalkboard. Popular ads might include beauty products, florists, automobiles, speedy services, clothes or bottled water. Choosing one of the ads, students prewrite for ten minutes. Offer them colored markers if they want to illustrate. Keep the advertisements on the board to inspire further writing.

### **"Dear Aphrodite"**

Once students develop a feeling for the style of writing used in tabloids, give them the option of using that style to write pieces found in other newspapers. "Dear Aphrodite" letters, complete with answers from the love goddess, in the style of "Dear Abby," provide more prewriting practice for their newspaper. Students write a "Dear Aphrodite" letter, exchange it with another person, and then write a response.

### **Letters to the Editor**

Because letters to the editor are based on current topics, ask your class to help you list a few on the board. Once you have a list, students can brainstorm specific myths that match the topics. Some examples of topics and myths are theft (Jason and the Golden Fleece), drinking (Polyphemus and Odysseus), marital problems (Zeus and Hera) and kidnapping (Hades and Persephone). For the ten-minute prewriting, students choose one and express their opinions in letters to the editor.

### **Classified Advertisements**

The question, "What would a mythological character have to sell?" provides a prompt for a five-minute prewriting. Students make their own lists which might include thunderbolts, archery lessons, love potions, dating services, marriage counseling or muscle fitness. With a combined list of suggestions, each person chooses one from the list and writes for five to ten minutes.

### **Obituaries**

A newspaper isn't complete without an obituary column. For this activity, the class brainstorms a list of heroes in mythology that might include Odysseus, Hercules, Achilles or Jason. They write for five minutes about one of the heroes. Creating the details of the hero's life can point a student in the direction of a future piece for the newspaper.

Each prewriting activity can be followed by a voluntary sharing by reading to the class. Once past the prewriting phase, students go on to choose those pieces that they want to draft. From the drafting phase, they move to shaping, revising and editing all articles. To facilitate the composing process, group, peer and teacher conferences are used. If there is time, conduct a mini-lesson on writing interesting leads and using a journalist's questions. Class time can be used to assemble the paper. It is amazing how someone in each group is an artist while

another has a computer to print the paper.

Students will take great pride in their creativity while you can take greater pride in their application of writing skills to a new subject.

2. From the site [http://gretchenle.com/online\\_units/mythology.html](http://gretchenle.com/online_units/mythology.html) the teacher may choose from these activities/products.

We are starting a new and exciting unit on Greek mythology. You will be working in groups to become experts on the gods and goddesses, and you will be responsible for a group presentation and an individual project.

There will be two rounds. Each group makes two presentations, and each individual is responsible for two projects. You may NOT repeat a project, and no two people in the group may duplicate projects in the same round. If two people want to do the same project, roll the die to see who gets first choice.



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### Required Presentation - the Museum

Each group must assemble a museum exhibit about the god or goddess you have chosen. It should be assembled on a trifold presentation board and contain all the required elements. Click [HERE](#) for details about the museum exhibit.

### Individual Projects

(choose one each round)

Each student picks one of these projects per round. You may not repeat a project, and you may not do the same project as another student in your group in the same round. Roll the die in case of disagreements.

Note: All projects must be submitted in writing, in addition to being demonstrated or performed in front of the class.

### Museum Exhibit

The museum exhibit should give the audience lots of detailed information arranged in a colorful, graphically pleasing way, about your god or goddess. The following items are required:



The Greek and Roman names of your god or goddess in a colorful title.

At least 6 pictures of your g/g, taken from different art media (paintings, sculpture, pottery, bas-reliefs, etc.)

A short (100-150 words) summary of each of the major myths your g/g was involved with (see me for advice if you can't identify which myths to use)

The symbols usually associated with your g/g

A list of groups of people who thought of your g/g as their patron (for example, gamblers often prayed to Hermes for luck)

A colorful family tree which shows where your g/g fits into the family

### Projects:

- [Rap song](#)
- [Nominating Speech](#)
- [Dramatic Monologue](#)
- [Poems](#)
- [Board Game](#)
- [Picture Book](#)
- [Newspaper Article](#)
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- [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

## Projects



### **Rap song**

This rap song should be about the life of the god/goddess. (Remember that the purpose of these projects is to convey information to your classmates.) It must be performed by at least two people in the group. The minimum length is four stanzas long. (It **MUST** be tasteful). If you would like to bring in music to use for your performance, please bring in a tape/CD player to use.

### **Nominating Speech**

This is a campaign speech to convince audience who are voting in a People's Choice Event to vote for the god/goddess as the greatest of all the Pantheon. (Your classmates have the vote, and unless your god/goddess gets elected, you will be exiled to the Underworld.) Give it passion, power, and lots of facts to convince the voters. You must design at least two colorful campaign

posters, and your speech should last two minutes. Be specific about why your g/g deserves the honor!

**Dramatic Monologue**

You are the god/goddess. You are going to "act" a speech about your life. You will tell the class about your life with an emphasis on dramatics and emotion. How did it feel when you were thrown off Olympus because you were ugly? Tell us and emote! This monologue should include all the details of your life, and last at least 2 1/2 minutes.

**Poetry**

Writing poetry about the gods and goddesses is fun! Two poems make up one individual project. You may use one formula poem, but one should be a creative, nonformulaic poem. Remember that the purpose of these projects is to convey information to your classmates. All poems must be illustrated!

Formula Poems:

Bio Poems	Acrostic Poems
Greek name Write four traits that describe character Relative (brother, sister, daughter, etc.) of _____ Lover of _____ (list 3 things or people) Who feels _____ (list 3) Who needs _____ (list 3) Who fears _____ (list 3) Who gives _____ (list 3) Who would like to see _____ (list 3) Resident of _____ Roman name	Z (three words starting with Z that describe Zeus) E (three words starting with E that describe Zeus) U (three words starting with U that describe Zeus) S (three words starting with S that describe Zeus) J (three words starting with J that describe Zeus) O (three words starting with O that describe Zeus) V (three words starting with V that describe Zeus) E (three words starting with E that describe Zeus) Note: the acrostic poem must be at least eight lines long. You may use both the Greek and Roman names.

Nonformula Poem:

The creative poem should be four stanzas long and rhyme. Illustrate it! Be creative! You may put it on a scroll, if you wish.

**Mythology - The Board Game**

You will design a board game that uses a specific myth and the life of your god/goddess as its theme. It will be modeled on Monopoly with game pieces, dice, fate cards, and a game board with squares for moves. All of the game pieces, game cards, and board should be colorful and decorated with symbols from myths about your god/goddess (g/g).

When a classmate is finished playing your game, he or she should be able to tell about the myth your game is based on. BE SPECIFIC in your fate cards and the penalty squares!

**Materials:**

Two Manila folders, one of which will be the game board and the other will be cut up for game cards.

One clear transparency to copy the game to demonstrate on the overhead.

Scissors, crayons, colored pencils, clip art to decorate the board and board pieces.

One die with which to roll for the moves

1. Decide what the object of your game is. (This will vary by myth, but an example would be to rescue Eurydice from Hades, or free Prometheus from the mountaintop, etc.)
2. On the back of the folder, write the object of the game and the rules (What happens if two players land on the same space? How do you win?).
3. Design 2 game pieces to represent the players. These should be in a Greek style.
4. Cut out 12 game cards that resemble "Chance" or "Event" cards. These will be the things that happen to your characters' game pieces to advance or send them backwards on the game board. Write down an event on each card (like "You look at Medusa and turn to stone - lose two turns"). Decorate the other side of the card.
5. Write the title of your game across the top of the opened manila folder. Design the game board on the inside of the folder. The squares can be in any design. Mark some of the spaces "Draw a Card" spaces.
6. Practice playing the game to make sure it works.

Evaluation: Your grades will be based on the following: is the game playable, and are the directions clear? Is it well decorated with illustrations from the myths? Is it colorful and creative? Can the players deduce the details of the myth from the game?

**Picture Book**

You will write and illustrate a story about the life of your god/goddess (g/g). It should be at least 8 pages long and lavishly illustrated. The text must be typed. Here is an example of a (very small!) page:

This is the space that you should use to illustrate your myth (You may use either portrait or landscape set-up).

Your text goes here. You should have 5-7 lines of text per page.

The picture book should tell the story of one of the myths. You may illustrate it with any type of media, but the art must be original. You should have a cover page, a title page, and at least 8 pages of story. Picture books will be displayed in the library unless you object.

**Newspaper Article**

The newspaper article should be similar to real news articles. Make sure to include the 5 W's - who, what, where, when, and why. You should have a headline, byline, and a dateline, and the article should be set up in columns. It should tell the story of one of the myths concerning your g/g as it would appear in a newspaper. It should be at least 1/2 page long and include "quotes" from the witnesses.

**Live News Broadcast**

This is similar to the news article, but instead of writing for print media, you are the reporter at the scene. With your microphone and camera person, you will narrate the ongoing news event, interview witnesses, talk to the g/g involved if possible, and generally give a live news broadcast on one of the myths that concern your g/g.

You must make a script which will be turned in after your "broadcast."

**PowerPoint Presentation**

You may use PowerPoint for many of the projects, but make sure you have a reason for using PowerPoint. What are you doing that will look better in presentation software? Be aware that you shouldn't use dense text, so this is not a good choice for written myth summaries. Please bring your proposal to me for approval before proceeding.

Remember - PowerPoint is just presentation software. It is not useful for everything, and it makes some projects look worse. The bells-and-whistles are fun, but unless they add something to your presentation, concentrate on the information you are trying to convey.