

You Can Take it With You: Meaningful Integration of Mythology in the High School Twice Exceptional Classroom

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We move in a world of fantasies which,
untroubled by the
outward course of things, well up from an
inner source to
produce an ever-changing succession of
plastic or
phantasmal forms... Thus there arose a
picture of the
universe which was completely removed
from reality,
but which corresponded exactly to man's
subjective
fantasies.

—C.G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*
(Segal 26)

Academic Setting

This educational unit is intended for use with the Twice Exceptional (2X) Language Arts class located in the Career Enrichment Center, an APS magnet high school offering classes that enhance a student's transition into college and/or the work force. Nursing programs, building trades, cosmetology, pre-med science, forensics, animation, and banking classes are just a few of the classes offered here to any student in APS. Because students who attend CEC are generally self-motivated (along with the fact that students and teachers here can concentrate on learning and teaching), the campus feels a bit like a community college. As such, the environment is perfectly suited to house the 2X program, whose students are not generally "self-motivated." Despite the fact that somewhere between 1200 and 1800 students rotate through the CEC three times a day (the school is on the block system), the 2X students are notoriously gregarious and visible to everyone who works at the school, including our administrative staff. Because of this collegial atmosphere, students in the 2X program and their parents usually develop an effective working rapport with our own staff, which helps maintain effective communication and support for everyone involved in the students' academic and social maturation.

Twice Exceptional students, sometimes known as Gifted/Learning

Disabled or as being Gifted with Factors, are a remarkable if vexing group of kids who are known to be the delight and ruination of classrooms everywhere. These students are challenged by both giftedness and/or some compromising factor(s), which typically include learning disabilities and/or emotional problems. In their article "Responding to Needs of Twice-Exceptional Learners: A School District and University's Collaborative Approach," Higgins and Nielsen point out that, as a result of their dual exceptionalities, these students fail to thrive in most gifted, remedial, and regular educational environments, as their gifts and talents are often hidden by their weaknesses (288). 2X students often conceal their disabilities with sometimes bewildering displays of avoidance (usually with gifted ingenuity). Otherwise brilliant students can become class clowns, bullies, recluses or guitar players, as others stray towards gangs and drugs; many simply drop out. Mental health issues frequently play a role in their lives as well. Of the 24 students who were in the 2X program for the 2000-2001 school year, at least 15 took medication to help with a variety of difficulties, including ADD, ADHD, depression, borderline personality disorder and autism. The majority of 2X students will suffer at least some depression and/or anxiety related to their failure to thrive in the school setting, and one would expect as much as their needs are "often overlooked and under served" (Dix and Schafer 22).

Their academic avoidance can be easily understood. A typical 2X student might display extremely high verbal skills during classroom discussion or on the WISC III, but may not be able to copy a sentence onto another piece of paper to relate their ideas. Other students may have perfect recall and be able to visualize mathematics, but cannot express themselves adequately through spoken or written words. Part of the frustration is in their knowing the material even as they fail (they often realize they are smarter than their teachers), and part of their frustration is in the self-awareness that is apt to be more acute than one might give them credit for. Twice Exceptional students are often "global thinkers" (Higgins and Nielsen 297) who can grasp the overall picture, but cannot understand or trifle with the necessary skills or bits of knowledge needed to master a discipline (as in a student who takes calculus but cannot add fractions). In line with that global knowledge, 2X students tend to have an intellectual sophistication that belies their years, and one can see how they may have trouble fitting into some classrooms where the approach to reading material is not flexible (I might be working Hawthorne on them and they're pestering me about Kubrick, Castaneda, and Hunter S. Thompson).

Although 2X students are often rebellious and profess an uncaring attitude towards school, they are uncannily perceptive and sensitive. Many of them have used this to their advantage to control their environment (and their teachers) to get away with low expectations and less academic accountability. Many—if not most—of our new students expect to get away with efforts that got them through middle school. Many of our students also have inflated ideas of their own intelligence and expect to ace the test, complete an extra project, or in some way cajole and manipulate emotions to receive a passing grade, and they are often surprised to find that they can fail classes in the program. Similarly, many 2X students have inaccurate ideas of their likely futures (given their stay on their present course), as they often entertain visions of MIT, West Point, or Hollywood, despite repeated failures in settings that test their determination. This aspect of their personalities is often devastating to parents, teachers and the students themselves, as they're stuck with that most hated of all labels—that kiss of doom—"*He has potential.*" This stamp is both accurate and debilitating to our students, who *should* be going to college, but most likely will not make it unless big changes in study habits and overall discipline are implemented. 2X students are notoriously unorganized and often come to the program with substantial deficits in academic ability and basic classroom skills. Because of their lack of success in the classroom, they often have self-defeating thoughts about their abilities; they may whine and complain a great deal, and I might persuade them to stop their whining and get to work, but they need to work to stay in the program. My aim is to teach them writing skills that will take them through college, but it's an uphill battle. The primary challenge is to keep the discourse at a college level as I appeal to their intelligence, while I try to elevate their skills to a point that is concomitant with their intellectual ability.

Thus our volatile mix: a brilliant, sophisticated, frustrated and rebellious student who has promise, but is also misunderstood. This student is under appreciated and has high aspirations, but ultimately understands and sees his or her likely future as an underachieving, Monday-morning quarterback, destined to be the truck driver most-versed in Hemmingway or particle physics (and sometimes that's a good place to be). And the question: How does one sell the aesthetic and practical aspects of rigorous academic application to an entire class of bad-attitude, short-attention-span, teen-age misfits?

Goals and Objectives

My broad goal is to help my students develop a practical understanding of mythology that they can enjoy and put to use in other ways, both academic and creative. At the very least, the most

resistant and/or most academically challenged student will build a foundation of knowledge that he or she can use as a source for comparison or literary allusion in other writing assignments and classes. In addition, students will develop or hone concepts of literary analysis and terminology that can be used in other writing. Another goal is for my students to work on examining concepts from a variety of sources (as in reading, lecture, film, discussion, pop society and politics), derive ideas of their own, and be able to integrate that information into a well-supported paper. Finally, I hope that the unit will go at least some way towards helping the students attain introspection and insight into their own values, towards their own concepts of heroism and values, and towards their future, thus integrating and perhaps concretizing the information they receive.

The general objectives of the unit that will help students attain the aforementioned goals are:

- Students will develop an understanding of allegory and symbolism as it applies to mythology and popular culture.
- Students will use critical thinking to interpret and analyze mythological stories and characters.
- Students will use critical thinking to apply literary criticism to mythological stories and characters.
- Students will use creative thinking to write their own myths.
- Students will use creative and critical thinking to generate ideas from multiple forms of media, integrating them into coherent essays.
- Students will use the Internet to research information about pertinent Greek gods and places.
- Students will use reflective/introspective thinking to evaluate their feelings regarding their values and related issues regarding heroism.

This curriculum unit will meet educational standards as specified by *Albuquerque Public Schools Language Arts Content Standards and Performance Standards* for grades nine through twelve:

Strand I: Reading Process

The student employs appropriate reading strategies to read and interpret increasingly complex texts for a variety of purposes.

9-12 Benchmarks: The student develops and demonstrates proficiency with a variety of reading processes to analyze, interpret, and

evaluate a wide variety of informational texts across content areas.

Strand II: Reading Analysis

The student responds to, examines, and critiques historically and culturally significant issues and events portrayed in literature that both illustrate and affect people, society, and individuals.

9-12 Benchmarks: The student critiques and evaluates the literary and social merit of a variety of historically and culturally significant works.

Strand III: Expressive Language- Writing

The student writes effectively for different audiences and purposes, using appropriate writing strategies and conventions.

9-12 Benchmarks: The student develops and demonstrates fluency and style in writing and a command of writing conventions across content areas to describe, narrate, express, persuade, and analyze for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Strand IV: Expressive Language- Speaking

The student speaks effectively for different audiences and purposes, using appropriate speaking strategies and conventions.

9-12 Benchmarks: The student develops and demonstrates fluency and style in speaking and a command of speaking conventions to describe, narrate, express, explain, persuade, and analyze for a variety of purposes.

Strand V: Receptive Language- Listening and Viewing

The student demonstrates, analyzes, evaluates, and reflects upon the skills and processes used to communicate by listening to and viewing a variety of auditory and visual works.

9-12 Benchmarks: The student critically evaluates the effectiveness of a variety of

auditory and visual works, including multi-media presentations.

Rationale

The rationales for leading a group of Twice Exceptional students through a unit on mythology are centered both on personal experience and conclusions drawn from relevant literature. Though my students read books of their own choice each day, coordinating lessons around that same novel would be impractical at best; some students would finish the book in a matter of days, while others would not finish within the year. For learning about literary analysis I have found that reading short stories, reading excerpts from novels and watching films offer the best opportunities for the class to move along together. In addition, I can expose the class to a wider variety of authors without having to commit to finishing an entire novel that they are resistant to. Mythology fills the bill nicely, as students can receive a global understanding of a concept, era and region while recognizing its impact on today's world. The brevity of the myths makes them accessible to all of my students, while more advanced students can take on the larger works. Students interested in independent study will have a variety of options that can satisfy their interest and complement their strengths, as suggested by Dix and Schafer (28). The unit, taught in seminar fashion, will allow students to have autonomy (as needed) while learning through interdisciplinary thematic learning, as indicated by Higgins and Nielsen: "Interdisciplinary learning is founded on the belief that (Twice Exceptional) students need the opportunity to investigate complex ideas and construct their own meaning for topics and content across a number of separate academic disciplines."(296)

Context and Background

To illustrate his philosophies, Plato wrote dialogues about his conversations with his mentor, Socrates. "The Allegory of the Cave," from Plato's *Republic*, is a dialogue between a teacher and student wherein the scholar leads the disciple to visualize and understand the predicament of humanity through the metaphor of a small group of naïve people who are chained up in a cave. These individuals know nothing of the outside world and observe only the shadows cast on the wall in front of them where they are forced to look, unable to see even the fire behind them. One person is finally freed from the bonds and is able to escape the cave and see the light of the sun, though the experience is both difficult and frightening. After adjusting to the light, the individual looks around and observes all the wonders of the outside world, and is vexed about returning to the intellectual confines

of the cave: should that person attempt to relate these discoveries? What costs will be incurred if he or she attempts to educate those within, and what costs will the individual suffer if no attempts are made to help others understand what they could or should know? The allegory depicts the cave dwellers as people confusing shadowy images as truth or reality. Plato suggests that there are truths within our grasp that can be realized only by those who have the courage to take the painful steps towards enlightenment, while those remaining in the cave will be resistant to learning new possibilities. Plato also posits the notion that truth is always within us, and that the process of teaching is about helping people recognize what answers reside within, rather than impressing foreign opinions upon impressionable minds. An experiential exercise will introduce the concept of allegory to the class.

A good follow up to an experiential exercise (after the discussion and processing is finished) is some easy but competitive list making. Twice Exceptional students are usually eager to vie against each other in most any fashion, particularly when it comes to showing off their intellectual acumen. Making lists is non-threatening to students with dysgraphia or other communication problems, and it's easy to do outside the classroom. Lists can also be a springboard to other writing activities that they are unaware of. If a teacher tells a student to "write about what you know" or "pick a topic you're interested in," resistance is likely to follow. On the other hand, if a teacher picks up a stop watch, and if that teacher displays a certain prize to the class with appropriate aplomb (the 2X kids love stupid, countertop toys from the bookstore), and if that teacher announces something like "Mythological characters, 60 seconds: Go!"... kids get pencils moving. Additionally, starting units with exercises like this can give students satisfaction when similar activities are requested at the end of the unit; it proves that they've learned something and might make the learning process seem a bit more worthwhile.

A sensible progression from this point is to tell students what it is they'll be working on for the next few weeks or months. Syllabi or outlines of topics and projects—including rubrics—are helpful. Most of the students will somehow lose them, but it's a good practice and it prepares them for what's in front of them. Silverman (27) suggests that Twice Exceptional students receive directions and information in more than one manner, as many are strictly visual or auditory learners.

At this point in a unit I like to set the class loose to do some research on their own, using the Internet to glean pertinent information about the places and times that we'll be studying. While integrating technology into the classroom sounds great, it has often proven to be

more of a hindrance than a boon, as the multi-tasking, gifted problem children surf their way to distracted abandon. It's a tough problem to deal with, but it is critical to teach practical technology applications to today's students, who believe they can cut and paste their way into college. I've found it useful to give directions about retrieving specific information from the Internet, and I rarely accept alternative options. Asking students to write their own timelines or draw their own maps from print or screen guarantees that they'll at least look at what it is they are bringing forth. Similarly, I frequently require students to print out written information and then highlight relevant sections for rewriting (sources must be included). On the other hand, Power Point presentations can be helpful as storehouses of the various papers and assignments that students will be completing, though I've found that students typically spend more time messing around with graphics and surfing for images than they do in actual writing. A simple answer to this problem is to require all writing to be done prior to the construction of any Power Point slides. Once these technological problems are accounted for, students can proceed with their research assignments.

At some point students should be made accountable for reading text and taking notes on lectures, and creation myths are a good place to start. Creation myths are common to all cultures. They offer people order and comfort in a frightening world, as the stories explain origins of the universe, humanity, and divine entities. Creation myths typically include violent struggles between the elements, which are often personified with gender specific stereotypes (mother earth, father sky). The Greek cosmos, heavily influenced by Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources, was comprised of a three tiered structure that included a place up high for the gods, a place on earth for mortals, and a place down below for the dead. The Greek creation myth is recorded in Hesiod's *Theogony*, which is a relatively short and accessible read (it's gruesome enough to hold my students' attention). Hesiod wrote approximately 50 years after Homer, in the 8th century B.C. His *Theogony* is seen as the most authoritative account of the origins of the Greek universe. This universe began with Chaos—defined as "chasm" or "void"—who was followed by Gaea, the original earth mother. Tartarus came into being at the same time as Gaea, but he was relegated to the confines below the surface of the earth where various monsters and odd gods would later reside (Harris and Platzner 51). The final ingredient in this soup was Eros, whose divine presence resulted in a new generation of gods. The *Theogony* chronicles the consequent coupling, births and struggles of these early gods, and Hesiod lists dozens of giants, titans, nymphs, and other entities that were created at this time. The Greek creation myth is marked by a

succession of male offspring who murder their fathers. This cycle was stopped after Zeus killed his father (Cronus), which helped turn Chaos towards stability, though Zeus and his Olympians still fought several foes until some semblance of order was achieved in the cosmos (the greater "cosmic order" is a critical concept in Greek mythology). The *Theogony* provides a framework for reference and introduces the pantheon of Olympic gods with whom we are most familiar, setting the stage for the soap opera of bitter infighting, backstabbing, and lewd debauchery that makes this study so worthwhile.

As students become acquainted with the Greek gods, the class will turn again towards individual research and study of a specific god or hero of their choice. More independence and autonomy in their decision-making should empower them (hopefully) to take on research with more zeal than if specific Greek characters are assigned to them. Twice Exceptional students frequently take more time than other students in choosing project topics, so teachers must stress that this examination of characters will be brief and to-the-point. Students will be presenting their findings to the rest of the class, who will be responsible for the information. Early presentations of short projects within a unit give students an idea of how their peers are performing, which can diminish the tension of being responsible for one large project at the end of the unit. Another objective of this section is for students to memorize the ascension of the major Greek gods, including at least one pertinent fact about each (the teacher will have to fill in gaps left by presenting students). Additionally, memorization of the Muses will be required. The Muses were nymphs born of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the embodiment of memory. Muses generally sang and danced all day, occasionally making an appearance to bless a lucky soul at birth or to inspire a gifted mortal in some artistic endeavor. Possibly because of the artistic proclivities of many of the 2X students, the study of the Muses has tended to fascinate them. The Muses are often spoken of in Western literature, so being familiar with them will eventually be useful. Another rationale for having Twice Exceptional students memorize lists and facts is in the act of memorization itself; it's a critical component of successful study in high school and college, though it seems as if it's often overlooked as a useful or fair requirement of students in Special Education. My feeling is that memorization should be demanded of students so that they get practice with it, though there should be some flexibility or "room" in the assessment of the entire unit. Students with specific weaknesses can compensate with strengths in other areas to make sure that overall effort is rewarded.

By this time, students will be tiring of information, so a change might be in order. The myth of Sisyphus will be a lead-in to a surprise one-act play. In the myth, Sisyphus tricks death not once, but twice, resulting in his unfortunate fate of boulder rolling in the Underworld. This story appeals to most students, who can relate to the endless drudgery and demands of an uncaring world. Aside from that, punishment themes in the Underworld seem to be memorable. After reading the story of Sisyphus in class, two volunteers will be needed to perform Woody Allen's "Death Knocks," from his novel *Getting Even*. "Death Knocks" has been as favorably received as any reading in the Twice Exceptional program. It involves one aging Nat Ackerman of Kew Gardens, who is unceremoniously interrupted by Death. Death trips on the windowsill, crashes into Nat's apartment, and says, "Jesus Christ. I nearly broke my neck," (Allen 31). Nat convinces Death to play gin rummy (hence the title) for his life. Students have always been willing to act out this scene, which is a worthy departure from the classroom routine. After discussion and comparison of the two stories, the students will hear another Woody Allen bit, this time from his book, *Without Feathers*. In this story, Allen describes his own mythological monsters, including the Frea, a sea creature with the head of a crab and the body of a certified public accountant (193). Related exercises follow.

The next section of the unit will involve students reading a selected hero myth on their own, with lecture and discussion supporting the text. The focus will be on Heracles. Most students have at least some knowledge of Greek heroes, and 2X kids are no exception; they seem to relate to the diverse personas, impossible feats, and struggling nature of these characters. Like the Twice Exceptional population, Greek heroes share many characteristics while demonstrating their own individualism. Harris and Platzner (228) point out that Greek heroes have a divine parent(s), possess great strength, and display courage and martial skill. These attributes are often demonstrated in infancy, as in the case of Hermes (though he was a god), who stole Apollo's cattle as his mother slept off the rigors of his birth. Similarly, Heracles strangled two snakes while he was still spitting up in his crib. Young Greek heroes were both fancied and disliked by the gods, so they were sure to have their abilities tested in completing impossible tasks and defeating terrible foes. Many were raised away from home to protect them from a father's fear of reprisal. They often were sent on long journeys, which usually included side trips to the Underworld where they might receive information critical to the completion of a task. Heroes typically suffered as they grew. This inner torment usually had to do with fulfilling their potential as leaders while they reconciled their problematic attributes. These

traits—quick tempers, violent outbursts, and smart mouths—could help in a pinch, but otherwise compromised or cursed their success. Not surprisingly, most Twice Exceptional students come into the program with a rap sheet that is similar to those written about Heracles, Achilles, and Odysseus, et al. Angry, verbally gifted teenagers with ADHD have a hard time keeping a lid on it, and power struggles with authority figures are common in their history. Without doubt their hubris can be legendary, as in the case of a former student who belonged to that faction of skinheads who renounce racism (along with everything else). When his principal asked him to refrain from walking on the school's logo, the youngster attempted to engage his superior on the philosophical merits of the request. The results were classic mythology: the "divine" figure inquired as to the transgressor's name, which was proudly stated as he commenced dancing a jig in his jack boots atop the tiled logo. This transgression mirrors one made by Odysseus: he taunted the already defeated Cyclops, Polyphemos, by proudly naming himself as the individual who blinded him, earning Odysseus Poseidon's punishment of an arduous journey home. Similarly, the brash student moved from cleverness to ridicule, resulting in his own exile from high school (and into the 2X program). One of the primary goals of the program is to have the students recognize how one's strengths are one's weakness, as they hopefully learn about discretion, picking the right battles, and playing the game.

Before moving further along in the study of mythology, concepts of critical analysis should be tossed into the pot. Freud has been a good topic of discussion in the Twice Exceptional classroom, as the man and his ideas are controversial, intellectual, and, of course, sexual. Aside from that, most of the students have a familiarity with some Freudian terms or concepts, and they are usually eager to know more. While many of his theories are patently sexist and appear to stem largely from his own example of projection (in this therapist's opinion), Freud's impact on psychology, society, and modern thought cannot be ignored. Whether the concepts are rejected or embraced, knowledge of Freud will broaden the intellectual scope of a college-bound writer

Sigmund Freud was born in 1856 in Moravia, moving to Vienna in his early childhood. In medical school he began to study hypnosis as a means to treat hysteria (psychosomatic symptomology). Freud popularized the notion of the unconscious—the layer of the psyche that loomed large beneath the conscious (what one is aware of at any moment) and the preconscious (thoughts or memories we can easily recover and bring to attention). If the conscious were visualized as the

tip of an iceberg above the water, and the preconscious was a few feet of faintly visible ice just below the surface, the unconscious would be the huge hidden remainder that could sink the unsinkable. To Freud, the unconscious was an immutable force of nature where drives, instincts, and memories of trauma resided out of reach, though the unconscious itself could reach up and manifest itself through dreams, anxieties, or neuroses. Aside from that prospect, the unconscious also was the source of our motivation, which Freud felt was directly tied into feelings about sexuality and death. To complicate matters further, Freud also believed that there existed an uneasy struggle between the conscious and the unconscious, which often resulted in a person's denial or resistance as to the source of their motivating drives.

Before turning to psychiatry, Freud studied neurophysiology, which could have been the source of his interest in the importance of the nervous system on the human organism. When the organism is born, its only concern is to gratify the physical needs that sustain it and make it feel good; warmth, food and clean diapers are demanded without any consideration to other factors. This is the id practicing the pleasure principle, as the infant insists on physical desires being taken care of immediately. The id personality is abundantly illustrated by Dionysus (also known as Bacchus), an Olympic god born from Zeus' thigh. Dionysus, as we will see, was the enfant terrible of the Greek gods, demanding instant gratification just as he insisted everyone play his games.

Within the first year of life, the developing infant/id will begin to differentiate from being an "it" to being an "I," as the ego comes into the picture to act as an agent for the id in boosting its bargaining power. This agent/ego has a working knowledge outside the sheltered world of the id, and will increase the child's ability to manipulate the world he or she increasingly controls. The communication between the id and the ego is provided by a growing conscious mind, as the ego begins to operate in compliance with the reality principle, which is seen as the beginning of reason. This dynamic coasts along for a while, before the ego encounters roadblocks to gratification in the form of parents, who dole out rewards and punishment. As the ego gets better at negotiating with the strictures of parents and society, the superego begins to emerge, which is built on the experiences of learning what to avoid and what to strive for. These last notions are the conscience and ego ideal of a healthy individual, emerging when the child is around seven years of age.

As the id, ego, and super ego grow into parts of a personality, so too—according to Freud—does the development of certain psychosexual stages, which relocates the libidinal energy (life force)

from one erogenous zone to another. The baby's first encounter with pleasure is oral, as a nursing, teething, chewing child is a happy child. If problems arise in the feeding of the infant (too much or too little), the result might be diagnosed in adulthood (if you're seeing a Freudian psychoanalyst) as an oral aggressive or oral incorporative personality. The oral stage of development lasts about a year to a year and a half, which is followed by the anal stage. This stage of life has to do with an infant further differentiating between id and ego as it starts to control something—its anus—for the very first time. Conflicts from this stage center on "irregularities" in toilet training, and can result in anal-retentive tendencies, as when people control their lives by withholding and accumulating things or people around them. The converse is an anal expulsive defense mechanism, which is a tendency to be sloppy or unorganized in a physical and psychic sense (as in having "bad boundaries"). These opposites are frequently illustrated by the example of Felix and Oscar from Norman Lear's *The Odd Couple*. After three to five years of anal self-examination, our bored child has hopefully moved into the phallic stage, a delightful time of happy, genital stimulation, though that happiness will be short-lived. As the child becomes a more social being, differences in parents and attachments to them increase. According to Freud, our mothers are the first and primary objects of our attachment. Every baby has a desire for the comfort and tactile sensations provided by their mother, and Freud believed that this feeling was also sexual in nature (though it is clear that this desire for intimacy and touch did not involve the physicality and orgasm of adult sexuality). The problem for the male child has to do with the fact that he has, in his father, a challenger for the "rights" to his mother (this theory fits handily with Sophocles' play about Oedipus, so Freud was able to put a fancy name to his new idea). Aside from that problem, Junior is due for yet another quandary when his broadening experiences reveal that he has something that girls don't have. This is thought to be a good thing at first for the child, but fear of losing what you have can crimp a boy's confidence, resulting in Castration Anxiety (fear of actual castration is transcended by the metaphorical contest of vying against a superior male figure). The way out of this problem is for the male child to abandon his feelings for his mother as he aligns himself with his father's values, stashing sexual urges for a few years until he hits puberty (or the latency stage) and starts to look at girls his own age. At this point, Freud was hard-pressed for coming up with an analogous theory for young girls (like the Greeks, Freud liked orderly ideas that occurred in pairs or neat little groups). Freud believed that girls also favor their mothers. Their turnaround involved their frustration over not having a penis. This desire was subsumed by the rationale that, if they couldn't have a penis, they could have some

substitute, as in a baby, or perhaps in the male figure whom she could one day have a baby with (hence the common liking for dolls and things feminine). The daughter develops a special relationship with her father, though her sexual identity is still idealized with her mother (Freud believed this, along with the absence of a "moralizing" castration anxiety, led women to be less fervently heterosexual).

By this point in the lecture, students inevitably are beside themselves with ridicule for these tenets, and who can blame them. On the other hand, it's easy to point out their own endless fascination and grade school experiences with the likes of eating, evacuation, and genitals. Students in the program have seen an immature student regress into a thumb-sucking fetal position on the floor, and they have also discussed their occasional Bacchanalian weekend exploits that would match—sad to say—any college fraternity ritual. Another point for them to ponder is the environment in which Freud proposed ideas about infantile sexuality; the site of an errant ankle titillated these Victorians. At the very least, students should be impressed with the fact that Freud moved the Western world back towards *some* level of discussion or familiarity with our own corporeal forms, which can be reinforced by their growing knowledge—hopefully—of how the rest of the world dealt with aspects of carnal knowledge.

As for Freud and his psychosexual stages, where does it leave us? It leaves us with the possibility of several defense mechanisms that might arise from the ego's struggle to moderate both id and superego, as the unconscious hinders or twists the anxiety into a more acceptable construct. Perhaps the best-known defense is denial, which is a refusal or inability to recognize some repugnant factor about ourselves. This can be seen in people who claim they "blacked out" to avoid personal responsibility for an assault or other misdeed. In Greek mythology, denial could be correlated to *ate* (rhymes with *café latte*), a type of mental blindness that keeps a character from seeing the transgressions he or she is committing. This is amply demonstrated in Euripedes' tragic play, *Bacchantes*, about the Dionysus and his penchant for extremes of good times and merciless penalties. While *Oedipus Rex* is typically studied as a connection between Freud and Greek myth, one would not be doing poorly in examining Euripedes' *Bacchantes* to see elements of Freud.

Dionysus is often assumed to be simply the god of wine and drunken revelry, but to the Greeks he represented a far more complicated character. Dionysus (Bacchus) was also the god of drama, disguises, and masks. Celebration was important enough to the Greeks to assign it a full time god to make sure partying was done the right way, which entailed drinking and letting down your hair, as long as it was done

with moderation (indeed, holding ones' liquor was considered de rigueur by the Greeks, as evidenced in the maiming of the Cyclops—a sloppy drunk—by Odysseus). At the same time, standing outside oneself, or *ekstasis* (literally, "letting in Dionysus"), was seen as an occasional necessity. A similar catharsis (a rapid and intense liberation of feelings associated with stress or trauma) was also thought to be attained by attending tragedies, which were plays that "rapidly became the dominant force for reinterpreting the significance of old myths for the Athenian public" (Harris and Platzner 426). Similarly, catharsis is intended to occur in the psychoanalytic relationship, though the therapeutic model of neutral responses by an analyst often entails several months or even years going by before the "corrective emotional experience" takes place.

At any rate, Dionysus makes his return to his homeland to right the name of his mother and spread his new cult of drinking, dancing, and cavorting around in the woods with lots of crazed, scantily clad women. Everyone in town is in favor of this except for King Pentheus, who is unaware that the new guy in town is Dionysus (and is, in fact, his first cousin as well). It seems Pentheus' gravest impudence—aside from his hostility and hubris towards Dionysus—involves his refusal to recognize aspects within himself that he harshly condemns in others. Dionysus appears in disguise to Pentheus, assuming the form of a fair-haired, less-than-savage male. When he first sees Dionysus, Pentheus says:

You are quite
handsome,
stranger, for
women's taste...
Your hair is
long—apparently
you never wrestle.
It flows over your
cheeks, full of
appeal. And your
complexion is so
clear...

Pentheus keeps up this wonderment throughout the first half of the play, even as he openly doubts the veracity of Dionysus' claims, ignores his warnings, and boasts of how he'll punish the women who have left town to drink, frolic, and tear small animals to pieces. Freud would have diagnosed Pentheus with reaction formation, a defense mechanism that turns an objectionable impulse against itself. An example might be a child declaring his hate for his parents, or

possibly a philandering evangelist calling for sinners to be cast out. In this case, Pentheus' homophobia masks his uncertainties about his own sexuality. This is confirmed when Pentheus gives in (and rather quickly) to Dionysus' suggestion of dressing the king in drag to spy upon the frolicking maidens he had previously condemned. As soon as Pentheus puts on a wig and a dress he undergoes a quick transformation, trading in his brutish male persona for that of a giggling, flirtatious young woman:

Pentheus: What
do I look like?
Have I not the
pose of Ino? Or
Agave, yes, my
own mother
Agave?

Stranger
(Dionysus): When
I look at you I
seem to see their
very selves.

But here's one of
your tresses out of
place. It is not as I
fixed it, under
your snood (a
headband or small
cap).

Pentheus: I must
have dislodged it
inside, while I was
tossing my locks
up and down in
bacchic ecstasy.

Stranger: I will
arrange it again, I
am your maid.
Come, hold your
head up.

This scene gets even richer, with Dionysus giving the King advice on how to walk like a woman. Prior to this boudoir performance, Pentheus was desperately trying to capture and kill Dionysus, but he

apparently got over his ire when his tormentor suggested playing dress-up. As the scene unfolds, Dionysus layers on the sarcasm, foretelling Pentheus' pending demise, though the King is too slow to pick up on the god's ironic word play. Dionysus takes Pentheus into the forest to spy on the romping women, "hiding" him in a tall tree. As these women continue their celebration, they are eventually overcome by their irresistible Dionysian urges, possessing uncontrollable strength and vigor as the fun eventually gets out of hand. Freud would see this initial Dionysian celebration as an indication of the women's repression that originated from the stifling expectations of the Apollonian demeanor. Though the society felt that it practiced rationalism and was proud of its brand of democracy and justice, it was, in fact, a miserable place to be for any slave or woman. Their ensuing fall into frenzy might be an example of catharsis (and rage) that would indicate a great deal of societal stress among the population. A case for this angst can be made when the readers see how easy it is for Dionysus to coerce the women to commit a horrific act. The god of wine, masks and disguises convinces the women that they see a lion, when they are actually looking at their king. Chief among these women is Agave, mother of King Pentheus, who rallies her sisters to knock down the tree and capture the lion/Pentheus. Agave then proceeds to divvy up her son for everyone to share:

But she was
foaming at the
mouth and rolling
distorted eyeballs,
out of her right
mind, possessed
by Bacchus. His
pleadings were of
no avail. She
seized the hand of
his left arm and set
her foot against the
poor wretch's side
and tore off his
arm at the
shoulder... One
carried off an arm,
another a foot,
shoe and all.

This is clearly an example of the Greek's *ate*, or of Freud's denial. When Agave returns to town with the "lion's" head, she boasts of her

exploits to her father, Cadmus. Agave compares herself favorably to male hunters, who require spears and nets to hunt, while she and her friends happily dismembered this "lion" with their bare hands. This is an example of Freud's idea of introjection. Introjection (also called identification) entails the adoption of someone's traits into one's own persona, which can perhaps be observed when the women's rugby team out-drinks (and out-curses) the men's team. As for Agave, she appears to want to act like and out-do her son, and even asks for his whereabouts so that she might show off the lion to him, even as she is swinging his very head around in victory.

So... what can we—as teachers—do with this information? Norman Holland points out that "literary criticism is about books and psychoanalysis is about minds. Therefore, the psychoanalytic critic can only talk about the minds associated with the book." (1) Freudian critics used to see literature as a manifestation of the repressed life of the author, whose own mental processes might be symbolized in the text (this has been out of favor for several decades). These critics can examine a story as if it were a dream, reading for examples of repressed desires, fears, or latent elements. Psychoanalytical criticism can also be used to describe or explain character dynamics within the text. In Hemingway's "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," one can safely assume that the author was aware of castration anxiety when he described the henpecked husband's rifle in comparison to the much more powerful gun of the able bodied hunting guide (see also *Miami Vice*). The story, rife with adultery and tension, is easy pickings for Freudian analogies.

Still, one might be unimpressed with the end results of psychoanalytic criticism (or any literary criticism for that matter). Holland proposes that we read literature both for delight and for "the experience of entering the imaginative world created by the writer" (6). The role of the critic is to provide new ideas that "enable you (the reader) to add to your delight - instruction helps delight and delight helps instruction. In that sense, all literary criticism would benefit from psychological wisdom" (7). Of course, wisdom and Freud will seem antithetical to some, but I believe that knowledge of Freud and being able to apply or refute that knowledge will be invaluable to the Twice Exceptional students as they argue their way through college.

The study of Jung and archetypes should be an intellectual diversion that will help these students further understand the connections between their own lives, ancient literature, and modern thought. Swiss-born Carl Jung was a younger contemporary of Freud who was greatly influenced by the latter's notions of dreams, the unconscious, and the psyche's correlations to mythology. It could be said that Jung

was one of the first humanistic and multi-cultural psychotherapists, as he examined and honored cosmologies from around the world to better understand and explain the plight of his own patients' problems. His theory differed greatly from Freud's disease model of mental health, which held that our lives were sentences, as it were, handed down at birth which we were relegated to endure until death. Jung was decidedly less ominous about the fate of one's soul, which was reflected in his more humble approach to the use of didactic knowledge and psychotherapy. About therapy he was reputed to have said, "Learn as much as you can, but leave it outside the door" (Dean Rudoy, lecture University of New Mexico, 1991).

Jung believed that the psyche was comprised of three parts: the ego, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconsciousness. His idea of ego equaled the conscious, or familiar mindset, while the personal unconscious was comprised of thoughts that might have been forgotten or suppressed, though that "material" was not generally deemed inaccessible. The collective unconscious (where Jung showed great ingenuity) exemplified a shared database of the sum of human knowledge and experience that each human was born with. An example of this might be seen in exploring the knowledge of certain indigenous people (particularly the Yanomamo of South America), who continue to perplex anthropologists and botanists with their awareness of how specific plants and parts of plants—taken at different times of the year from distant regions and often mixed with other plants—make up complex antidotes, poultices, and psychoactive substances, harvested from among the hundreds of thousands of plants in the Amazon jungle. The combinations requiring trial and error experimentation are staggering; Jung would have used the mystery to support his notion of the collective unconsciousness.

Though most of us can't directly access this database, it does affect our thoughts, feelings, behaviors and decisions. Jung postulated this idea after examining his own dreams and finding correlating patterns within all the cultures he studied. These patterns would manifest themselves as parallel characters, themes, or designs in civilizations around the world. Jung called them "archetypes." These archetypes—all of them—are buried deep within our collective unconscious, where they wait to impress themselves upon our lives, in our artwork, in our décor, or in our decision to read *Anne of Green Gables* or watch *The Terminator*. Archetypes can be seen in flags or cave paintings (New Mexico's *zia*, a symbol of the Hopi combines both). They might be ancient symbols, the meanings of which change through time. Examples of archetypes are also seen in the familiar roles of the nurturing mother and the protective father. The hero

archetype, of course, receives much attention, as does the stereotype of the villain. Healers, tricksters, crones, and bogeymen are found around the world. One might think that a diverse, modern culture could easily produce new archetypes. At first glance, the "dumb blonde" jokes might show promise of originality, but one has only to read about Pandora to see that the story has already been told.

An archetype, however, is more than a role; it's an instinctive inclination to perceive or do something in a particular, scripted manner. Thus, Jung felt we all had the potential to heal the sick, make people laugh, father dozens of offspring, or commit ghastly crimes. This carnal predilection would reside in Jung's "Shadow," which goes back to our pre-conscious days of pure animal instinct and survival (analogous to Freud's "id"). As it implies, the Shadow's darkness compensates our conscious decision-making. As a soul is stressed—be it god, hero, mortal or animal—it will tend to regress in terms of using older, less useful coping mechanisms. Jung would see it as the Shadow surfacing. When Achilles' feelings are hurt by Agamemnon in the *Iliad*, he mopes around like a child; when his buddy Patroclus is killed, we can see the Shadow overtake Achilles, as even the gods become repulsed by his excessively barbaric vengeance. These ideas will be examined when the class reads from *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

This last bit of reading will conclude the unit's examination of specific Greek myths, as the class starts moving towards a concrete ownership of the concepts they'll have studied thus far. A nice segue from Jung might be the study of memes, a concept submitted to the world by Richard Dawkins in his 1979 book *The Selfish Gene*. In his book, Dawkins proposes that we humans are basically living machines consigned to carry out the proliferation of genes, and that genes—through the organisms they control—change the environment to further their own abundance. The DNA molecule and the genes they build have been the primary replicators and innovators of our universe until the recent advent of a new kind of replicator, which Dawkins describes as "the soup of human culture." (192). Dawkins coined the term "meme" (from the Greek *mimesis*, as in mime or mimeograph) as the name for a building block of societal dissemination; that is to say, a meme is the exchange of *any* idea from one person to another. Dawkins explains, "When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme's propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell." (192). Stories, skills, shoe styles, songs, technologies, advertisements, archetypes - any idea that ever was conceived is a meme. Of course, some memes are more

successful than others, and typically have traits that ensure long-standing success (as in the case with genes). Lasting knowledge about maintaining a fire is easy to understand, but what about the persistence of certain stories—myths—through the ages? Certainly written records and artwork have helped the staying power of myths, but how can one explain the archetypal similarities of successful myths/memes? Dawkins gives the example of the "hell fire" and "god" notions as a set of "mutually-assisting memes" (197). If people are compelled to believe in and anguish over an afterlife of torture as a result of transgressions committed against a particular doctrine, then one can see how the reputed answer of salvation would be—at least—something to think about. It would seem that fears within the human condition solicit questions, and whether the answers or dogmas professed are benevolent or threatening, they (the memes) have staying power.

It is believed the Greeks themselves were somewhat flexible in the interpretation of their own myths and the religious ceremonies around them, as they could make correlations of other culture's mythic figures to their own. While mythology was hugely important to Greek societies, the stories were not held as "revealed truths" and did not have "the binding authority of scripture" (Harris and Platzner 32). Today's critics argue over whether or not mythology exists primarily to explain natural occurrences or to rationalize cultural practices, rites and beliefs; others maintain that myths are predictable products of our own psyche. I believe that, while there are interesting arguments for *what* mythology might be, it seems clear that it is something that is necessarily born of our intrinsic "need to know." Just as mastery of the environment would include survival memes (instructions for getting by) it stands to reason that humans would feel more comfortable with sets of instructions (memes of mythology) that explained the mysteries of our origins, purposes, and prospects.

To test the veracity of these ideas, a teacher could make a quick quiz to introduce the next topic of study. A bit of *Star Wars* word association with the class might point out the degree to which the film is ingrained into our psyches. An examination of the classic movie makes sense, as it brings the relevance of ancient mythologies to the present. *Star Wars* follows the classic stages of the hero's journey, which is nicely outlined by Vogler in *The Writer's Journey* (18). In the film, Luke Skywalker turns down a call to adventure that would require leaving his comfortable, ordinary world (as do Achilles, Odysseus, Bilbo Baggins, and Harry Potter). A mentor figure, Obi Wan Kenobi (Athena, Merlin, Gandalf, et al.), persuades Luke with noble notions of making a difference in the universe, along with

tempting knowledge of secret forces, martial skills, and information about his father. A threshold is crossed when Luke's family and home are destroyed, which is followed by his first test against thugs and storm troopers in a rowdy jazz club. In this scene, Ben Kenobi shows that, despite his wise restraint and old age, he can still kick some intergalactic ass. Han Solo is introduced here as the roguish, loner mercenary who winds up proving his heroic worthiness, though his mockery of The Force and other forms of hubris will result in some harsh penalties (see Odysseus). In short fashion, a princess in need of rescue is introduced, who—with the help of a faithful android/vassal—will save the universe. Luke and his crew eventually confront the face of evil after a dangerous journey to a forbidden land (The Death Star, The Underworld, Sauron), wherein the heroes discover truths about universal values and their own selves as well. Interestingly, Lucas' Princess Leia is one of the few genuinely heroic females from literature. Leia shows initiative, courage, leadership, quick thinking and the ability to fight it out with the bad guys, while displaying none of the equivocating habits typically placed upon strong female characters. Instead of fainting, blushing, or falling in love, Princess Leia exchanges invectives with her rescuers as she unleashes her anger on the storm troopers. This modern heroine has more in common with the Greek goddesses than with female literary figures of the last 3000 years. Though the aforementioned were absolutely feminine and vain, they could be brutal fighters. Leia herself can be compared to Artemis, the virginal goddess of wild life and hunting. Artemis was a private individual who took umbrage with boorish, intruding individuals. This was discovered by Actaeon, who once spied upon Artemis while she was bathing. Artemis turned him into a deer, and Actaeon's own dogs then tore him apart. Leia would have approved.

The June 18 edition of *Newsweek* Magazine (2001) published a story about the great golfer, Tiger Woods. Aside from the usual accolades, the article mentioned an elite circle of confidants who had befriended Woods and endeavored to support and consult each other. This group consists of Michael Jordan, Charles Barkely, Ahmad Rashad, and Alex Rodriquez. They represent the wealthiest and most elite athletes, who contend with issues of wealth and race that few can fathom. To celebrate Woods' 25th birthday, the group flew to the Bahamas to play golf, gamble, smoke cigars, and advise each other while they stayed in Jordan's \$25,000 a night private suite (named for him) in an exclusive resort. For the people of this age, these athletes and their peers bear an inescapable likeness to the pantheon of ancient Greek gods and heroes. To help the modern student of mythology integrate their learning into a meaningful lesson, this curriculum unit

will resolve by examining the heroic journey of an athlete who preceded Woods and Jordan and blazed the trail for their success. Muhammad Ali is that hero.

Muhammad Ali sprang into the spotlight during the Rome Olympics of 1960, where he won over his fellow athletes (who called him the mayor of the Olympic Village) and his competitors to win the gold medal (Remnick 102). His rise to fame began in the middle class Black neighborhoods of Louisville, Kentucky, where Cassius Clay made an impression on boxers and teachers alike. Despite his gifted facility with words, Clay/Ali never learned to read well, but he was able to charm his way through school with wit and a winning personality. Though his teachers were not keen on passing him, his principal, Atwood Wilson, was impressed by Clay's training regimen and dedication to boxing. When he was fifteen, Clay was up at five in the morning, running his regular three to five miles. He disdained soda, cigarettes and other distractions as an impediment to his stated goal of becoming the world champion. Clay was polite and gentle; he was no schoolyard bully, and he often carried a Bible with him. When his teachers balked at giving him a diploma, Wilson said, "One day our greatest claim to fame is going to be that we knew Cassius Clay or taught him... Do you think I'm going to be the principal of a school that Cassius Clay didn't finish? Why, in one night, he'll make more money than the principal and all you teachers make in a year." (Remnick 95). Cassius Clay prevailed despite what would appear to be a learning disability (or at least an ineffective education). He failed his army aptitude test and scored a 78 on the army administered IQ test, resulting in an I-Y classification, which meant "Ineligible for active service," (Remnick 285). Despite this, Clay went on to become a memorable speaker (if forgettable poet). Clay overcame the racism of the Jim Crow South, and, unlike most boxers before him, escaped the usual clutches of organized crime. He went on to eventually win over the duplicity of millions of people who were shocked by his outspoken defiance and will. If people were somewhat amused by Clay's outrageous proclamations, they were horrified when he changed his name to Muhammad Ali and loudly proclaimed his conversion to Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam. Ali then took on the most powerful nation in the history of the world as he refused to join the fight in Vietnam when the army decided to accept I-Y classifications for the draft. Ali's famous quote to a reporter was, "I ain't got no quarrel with them Vietcong." David Remnick points out that, despite the fact that Ali was largely ignorant of the politics involved, he reacted instinctively, as he did in the ring, and showed his "gift for intuitive action" (287). Ali's ability with words and ability to improvise is easily compared to Odysseus, who was favored by the

Greek gods for those same attributes. Both heroes were somewhat taken with themselves at times, and were known to push the limits. Odysseus, who told Polyphemus that his name was "no one," was destined to become "no one" after his impulsive display of hubris and cruelty toward the Cyclops. Odysseus would eventually lose his men and his ships, and he eventually washed up naked on a distant shore. When he finally returned home after ten years, the former ruler *was* a "no one," stripped of his identity and kingdom, and left with a family who didn't recognize him (he was, incidentally, recognized on his return by his dog—Argos—who was a pup when Odysseus left for the Trojan War. The mangy, war weary Odysseus found his mangy dog out on the trash pile behind his palace. Argos approached his master, sniffed him, wagged his tail, and promptly died.). When Ali refused the draft, he was stripped of his title and sentenced to the maximum five years in prison and \$10,000 fine. He was stripped of his title and any respect he had earned from the vast majority of the American people. Ali eventually was vindicated by the Supreme Court in 1971, and he won his title back from George Foreman in 1974, but his three and a half year absence from boxing took its toll. Ali was past his prime and lost the title again. He could have retired to fame and fortune, but a life of ease is not part of the heroic disposition. During his travels, Odysseus was seduced by Calypso, a beautiful goddess who lived on an island paradise. She held on to the warrior-king Odysseus for seven years, bestowing him with every comfort imaginable that a goddess could bestow. Calypso eventually tempted him with immortality, but Odysseus declined, citing his professed devotion to his wife, Penelope, and his heroic imperative to prove himself through challenges. Ali, smitten by the same heroic need to prove himself, continued boxing, and eventually retired after being embarrassed in the ring too many times. Sadly, in mythic fashion, Ali contracted Parkinson's. Those gifts that propelled him to god-like status—his unmatched physical and verbal abilities—are now gone, and Ali is left with his rapid fire mind and almost no means of communicating his thoughts. Smiling is hard for him (Remnick xiv). It would be a mistake to equate this ironic punishment—which seems to have been ordered straight from the depths of Tartarus—as some mythic payment for the hubris cast towards the United States government. Rather, one thinks of the apology Ali recently sent out to Joe Frazier, the boxer Ali brutally lambasted for years as a "gorilla", and an "Uncle Tom." The taunting that Ali rained down on his opponents was well known, but the ridicule and pain that Frazier received from Ali has left a tarnished mark on Ali's legacy. Like Odysseus—and any hero—Ali has spanned different worlds, from sports and fame to sit-ins and freedom marches. As with other heroes, Ali has shown his human frailties and imperfections. What appears to

be different about Muhammad Ali, in his latter years as a hero or god figure, is his grace, happiness, and apparent sense of peace. When his biographer, David Remnick, asked Ali how he'd like to be remembered, Ali mentioned being "...a black man who won the heavy weight title and who was humorous and who treated everyone right." Ali also talked about the "fight for freedom, justice and equality...as a man who tried to unite his people... and if that's asking too much, then I guess I'd settle for being remembered only as a great boxing champion who became a preacher and a champion of his people. And I wouldn't even mind if folks forgot how pretty I was," (306). Of course, the obvious difference in looking at Ali and the other heroes and gods examined in this paper is that Muhammad Ali is very much real and alive, proof that mythological characters and characters of mythological proportion are not always that far apart, and that we mortal humans can overcome adversity to take on and accomplish tasks that had seemed insurmountable.

Implementation

This unit is designed to fit into the flexible structure of the Twice Exceptional Language Arts classroom. Due to the nature of the program, teaching plans and student projects are frequently interrupted by meetings, crisis, or some unforeseen educational opportunity that requires attention. Because of the long class blocks, there is ample time for reading, lecture, web research, and writing, though circumstance frequently calls for changes in the classroom schedule. Additionally, some students will finish quickly, while others typically will need an extra day or so to finish assignments. There are occasions when ADD lends itself to engrossed concentration, and there are times when distractions preclude almost any progress. As such, rigid expectations of adhering to given time frames will end in power struggles, loss of interest, and lack of momentum. Similarly, a successful teacher in this environment must be sensitive to the sensibilities of the students; if an exercise or project is not working out, one should consider suggestions or changes. One must also consider assessment. Because of the varied writing and reading abilities of the students, opportunities should be made available for hard working students to overcome learning disabilities. This can be accomplished through rubrics that cover a wide variety of categories, such as prewriting, content, organization, voice, vocabulary, and mechanics. It has been my practice to promise every student side-by-side editing on the computer (possible only in a small class), and I believe that this one routine—repeated dozens of time through the year—explains the impressive strides that students make in their writing ability.

"The Cave" (used with permission from David E. Taber)

Objective: To surprise the students with an unusual exercise that lets them experience and discuss the significance of Plato's allegory.

Materials: A dark room or planetarium; a source of bright light (an overhead projector works well); a screen or white wall; string/rope (use with discretion); chairs; volunteers.

Three to six students are seated in chairs facing the screen or wall, with the light source directly behind them. The students are told to face straight ahead in absolute silence. If the students are mature enough, they can be *loosely* bound to their chairs or each other to more or less symbolize bondage. Take the remaining students aside and tell them that they will be given a cue to make shadows on the wall as they hoot and screech and make all manner of animal noises. The teacher will then address his cave dwellers and sternly remind them that this is their world in front of them; they know only the shadowy forms on the wall and the noises they hear. They can only speak about the noises and forms on the wall, though they have nothing from the outside world to compare to what they see and hear. These beings are unaware of any other existence: this is it. After a given period of shadows and noises, release one student and turn his or her face into the light. Lead this cave dweller into the light as he or she stumbles up the steps of the planetarium, as they experience the fear of new knowledge. As the teacher leads the student out of the room, he or she should continue to clarify Plato's allegory and the dilemma of the holder of the new knowledge. This student may require a little coaching before being taken back to his or her seat, whereupon they will have to struggle with explanations and questions and doubts about new worlds. Help the dialogue as necessary with questions. Release the other students and pass out the "Allegory of the Cave" for reading. When students are done with the reading, discuss the story and help them process the experience (make sure to discuss the title and the meaning of the word "allegory").

"Make a List"

Objective: To engage students in a competitive warm up activity that gets them thinking about mythology and sharing what they know before they have time to think about being oppositional.

Materials: Paper, pens, inexpensive prizes, stop-watch or wrist watch

Pass out paper and pens or pencils. Direct the student's attention to the front of the class. Surprise the class with a silly toy. Instruct the class to pick up their pens. Look at your watch and announce: "Greek

gods and heroes. 60 seconds. Go." When they are done with that list, go on to another one before they read their answers. You might try mythological creatures, gods and heroes from other different cultures or religions, comic book super heroes, cartoon characters, figures from American folk tales, or urban myths. Be sure that students save their lists (or make sure you save them) for a similar exercise at the end of the unit.

" Presentation of the Curriculum Unit"

Objective: To inform the class about what they will be studying and to "bring them on board" with evidence of interesting and well-planned exercises.

Materials: Syllabi for everyone.

Pass out the syllabus and explain what the students will be doing for the next few weeks. You might ask if anyone is familiar with the readings or myths on the syllabus. Go through the syllabus point by point, highlighting movies, essays, and expected due dates. Avoid potential power struggles by considering all suggestions seriously (if possible), but avoid defending your decisions about curricula.

"Place and Time"

Objectives: To help students develop an idea of the regions and eras that we will be studying.

Materials: The Internet or library; Power Point software or paper and colored pens.

Students are given written instructions to draw or produce a map of the Mediterranean, upon which they are to identify Greece, Italy and their major cities and relevant islands (both ancient and modern names). Students are also given instructions to develop a timeline (3,000 B.C. to the year 146) that compares milestones of different global regions to the major highlights of ancient Greek civilization. Students should be cautioned that "cutting and pasting" without learning the material is unacceptable. If that becomes an issue, then students can be required to draw maps and timelines on paper after getting the information from the Internet.

"Creation"

Objectives: To have students familiarize themselves with the Greek creation myths through reading and lecture, inspiring the students to make creation myths of their own.

Materials: Copies of Hesiod's *Theogony*; paper and pens for student

notes.

The teacher will ask the class about creation myths with which they are familiar. Students should be questioned specifically on the origins of the Greek universe. The *Theogony* should be read out loud in class, with the instructor writing pertinent facts and lines of lineage on the board (anything the teacher puts on the board *must* be written down by the class in their notes). The students will be quizzed on the origins of the Greek universe (the teacher should tell them exactly what they should know), but the teacher should not make any attempts to help the students memorize the material. Following daily readings (it should take a while to finish) students should work on their own creation stories, which will be read out loud when completed (at teacher/student discretion).

"Memorization"

Objectives: To have students use mnemonic devices to memorize the Olympic gods and the nine Greek Muses. Students will learn about the etymological origins of a valuable skill as they utilize it in their studies.

Materials: Paper and pens; lists of Olympic gods and the nine Greek Muses.

Some Twice Exceptional students will be able to memorize this information after one reading, while others will probably struggle with the assignment. Ask the students how they went about memorizing details of the Greek creation myth. Reread the portion of the *Theogony* that explains the origins of Mnemosyne, the personification of memory and mother of the Muses (who were fathered by Zeus). Ask the class if they are familiar with mnemonic devices, and ask for or demonstrate an example. Inform the class that they will have a few days to work on memorizing the older and younger Olympic gods, as well as the nine Muses. The quiz can be written or verbal, if there is time and a quiet place to have students recite their knowledge. The older Olympians are Zeus, Hera, Demeter, Hestia, Poseidon, and Hades. The younger Olympians are Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Hermes, and Aphrodite. The nine Muses are Calliope (epic poetry), Clio (history), Polyhymnia (mime), Melpomene (tragedy), Thalia (comedy), Erato (lyric choral poetry), Euterpe (the flute), Terpsichore (light verse and dance), Urania (astronomy). For extra credit or for students who finish with their work quickly, additional exercises can be assigned that require students to make up their own Muses.

"High Times with Sisyphus and Woody Allen"

Objectives: To have students read and relate a well-known Greek myth to a work of modern comedy, and to realize that there is room for fun and amusement in the study of literature.

Materials: Copies of "The Myth of Sisyphus," "Death Knocks," and "Fabulous Tales and Mythical Beasts"

Ask the class about punishment myths with which they are familiar. Introduce the story of Sisyphus with questions about the tale and the word "Sisyphean." Have the class read the story out loud or on their own, and follow this up with discussion of the story as a possible allegory about life and/or work. Find two volunteers to act out "Death Knocks," and follow this with related questions (Is it funny? Is it accurate? How does it compare with the story of Sisyphus?) The lesson can stop at this point or it can continue with a reading of "Fabulous Tales and Mythical Beasts" (this portion of the lesson can be saved as a back up plan for any failed exercise in the future, lost video tape, substitute, etc...). After the reading, students will be allowed to choose from a number of different creative writing projects, with satire of Greek mythology as a focal point. Choices can include descriptions of their own mythological characters or beasts, writing newspaper articles about mythological events, creating dialogue between mythological characters, or designing movie posters about mythological incidents (this half of the lesson plan might work out nicely after the students have read *The Odyssey*, which is filled with odd occurrences and creatures).

"The Hero"

Objective: For students to become familiar with character traits of the Greek hero.

Materials: Readings about Heracles; *Jason and the Argonauts* (film/video, directed by Nick Willing, 2000).

The class will read about Heracles, with lecture from the teacher regarding traits of the Greek hero. Heracles (the consummate Greek hero) was written about by numerous people, with Apollonius of Rhodes being the primary source of material. Having not a handy copy of the *Argonautica* nearby, I did find Michael Macrone's *Brush Up Your Mythology*, which described several adventures involving Heracles. A video about Jason—a different type of Greek hero—will augment readings about Heracles. Students will invent twelve Herculean tasks of their own, and will be assigned a short essay that describes a "heroic" battle or task in which they have been involved.

"Sigmund and Dionysus"

Objective: To familiarize students with Freud and concepts of psychoanalytic literary criticism.

Materials: Copies of Euripides' *Bacchants*.

Knowledge of Freud will be imparted through lecture. The class will read the *Bacchants* out loud, with psychoanalytic criticism being discussed and argued throughout. The teacher will help the class in reading James Dickey's poem, "Cherry Log Road." Students should read the poem on their own, underlining Freudian possibilities while they consult their notes. The class will then share their findings with each other, which will help broaden their short written summaries of the poem. Students will then choose one of two short stories that they will apply psychoanalytical literary criticism to: Hemingway's "Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," or Katherine Anne Porter's "The Grave." Short essays (three to five paragraphs) will be required for the short story assignment.

"Jung, Archetypes, and Myth"

Objectives: To familiarize students with Jung and his concept of archetypes as the class applies their knowledge to writings from Homer.

Materials: Excerpts from *The Iliad* (books 1, 5, 7-9, 19-24); excerpts from *The Odyssey* (Books 1, 5, 6, 7, 9-12, 21-24); *The Odyssey* (film/video, directed by Andrei Konchalovsky, 1997).

Jungian concepts will be taught through lecture. The readings will be done in class, both out loud and silently. The main points of each chapter should be outlined and explained by the teacher prior to being read by the class. Some flexibility might be in need during these long readings. The film version of *The Odyssey* will support their understanding of the written work. Identification of archetypes will be emphasized throughout the study of these stories. If the class appears to be doing their reading and is prepared for discussion, written assignments can be omitted, though quizzes on content can be utilized as needed. Students can supplement their appreciation of the Trojan saga by examining one of several websites that specialize in the archeology of ancient Greece.

"Memes"

Objectives: To have students examine and integrate concepts from other schools of thought into their thinking about the relevance of mythology and literature.

Materials: Copies of chapters two and eleven from Richard Dawkins'

The Selfish Gene.

The concept of memes will be studied through reading and discussion, with an emphasis leaning towards ideas of literature and immortality. Students will attempt to derive their own completely original concepts or characters in a short essay format, which will be collected and saved by the teacher. These new memes will be tested for "fidelity" (was the concept fertile enough to be remembered by its maker and/or the class?) towards the end of the year, when the teacher will surprise the class with the challenge of recalling the memes they created at the start of the school year.

"Lucas Leaves a Mark: The Mythology of 'Star Wars'"

Objective: To have students make relevant connections between ancient mythology and modern mythology.

Materials: A copy of George Lucas' movie, *Star Wars* (1977).

Surprise students with a quick word-association game that brings out the thoughts/memes we share about the movie - almost any word from the movie will do (Obi Wan, Wookie, Darth..., Death Star, etc...). Ask the class to share memories they have about seeing the movie (if, indeed, they have seen it), and explore the possibilities of comparing the story to ancient Greek mythology. Assign a five paragraph comparative essay that will examine ancient and modern aspects of the heroic journey. Have the class review characteristics of the Greek hero, and move towards a lecture on aspects of the heroic journey. Watch the movie (if students have not seen a particular movie before, I sometimes show it twice; once without interruptions, and another time for pauses and discussion).

"'I am the Greatest': Making it Real"

Objective: To have students examine their lives, finding aspects of ancient mythology within their own experiences, as they consider definitions of heroism and how it might apply to their hopes for the future.

Materials: *King of the World*, by David Remnick; *When They Were Kings* (Film/video, directed by Leon Gant, 1996).

Students will hear selected readings from Ali's biography (read by the teacher) and will watch the movie that chronicles his life up to the "Rumble in the Jungle" against George Foreman in 1974. Discussion will focus on Ali's life outside the ring, including his social activism and eventual fight against Parkinson's disease. Students will write three to five page personal position papers about: definitions of

heroes; heroes in their own lives; and the potential for heroic accomplishments in their futures.

Documentation

Allen, Woody. "Death Knocks." *Getting Even*. New York: Vintage, 1978: 31-43

Allen mocks intellectualism, the mafia, literature, and Hassidism, to name a few.

---. "Fabulous Tales and Mythical Beasts." *Without Feathers*. New York: Ballantine, 1983. 191-195.

More of the same, with chapters titled: "The Whore of Mensa," "If the Impressionists had Been Dentists," and "No Kaddish for Weinstein."

Boeree, Dr. C. George. *Carl Jung. Personality Theories*. 1997. Accessed 18 June, 2001 <<http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/jung.html>>

A concise and understandable source of material on Jung.

Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976.

A book that poses a profoundly elegant idea that is simple to understand. Dawkins created a lot of commotion in the science world with this book.

Dickey, James. "Cherry Log Road." *The Norton Introduction to Literature*. New York: Norton, 1981: 619-621.

A favorite poem of mine, composed by the man who gave us *Deliverance*. The poem is about young lovers who meet in a junkyard of old cars.

Dix, Jennifer and Susan Schafer. "From Paradox to Performance: Practical Strategies for Identifying and Teaching GT/LD Students." *Gifted Child Today Magazine*. Jan-Feb. 1996: 22-31.

An article that offers some insights in teaching Twice Exceptional students.

Euripides. "Bacchants." *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights*. eds. Stephen L.Harris and Gloria Platzner. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1998: 446-478.

A good translation of a great story. I find Euripides' stories to be very accessible and fun to read. Harris and

Platzner's text is an excellent source of information on Greek mythology.

Hemingway, Ernest. "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." *The Norton Introduction to Literature*. New York: Norton, 198:. 33-54.

Perhaps my favorite short story, this tale includes infidelity, drinking, cruelty, death, and a tremendous ending. A 2X favorite.

Hesiod. "Theogony." *Homeric Hymns, Epic Cycle, Homeric*. Trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000: 79-155.

This particular translation was fashioned along the lines of classical novels from generations past, with Greek on the left and English on the right.

Higgins, Dennis and Elizabeth Nielsen. "Responding to the Needs of Twice-Exceptional Learners: A School District and University's Collaborative Approach." *Uniquely Gifted: Identifying and Meeting the Needs of Twice Exceptional Students*. Ed. Kay Kiesa. Gilsum, NH: Avocus, 2000: 287-303.

Higgins and Nielsen have taught in the classroom and the University. Elizabeth Nielsen is the professor who inspired me to specialize in teaching Twice Exceptional kids.

Homer, *The Iliad*. Trans. Richard Lattimore. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1961.

Lattimore's translation is still the standard for *The Iliad*.

---, *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fitzgerald. New York: Random House, 1992.

Fitzgerald's translation continues to be one of the most popular and widely used versions of *The Odyssey*.

Holland, Norman N. "The Mind and the Book: A Long Look at Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism." 1998. Accessed June 18, 2001.

<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/nnh/mindbook.htm>

An excellent source of information on this topic... makes the topic palatable.

Jason and the Argonauts. Video. Dir. Nick Willing. With Jason

London and Dennis Hopper. Hallmark Entertainment, 2000.

This movie captures the problematic demeanor of Jason as a hero, and Dennis Hopper is worth watching any time.

Jung, Carl. "Symbols of Transformation." *Jung on Mythology*. Ed. Robert A. Segal. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1998: 26.

This book offers up an exhaustive examination of all of Jung's writings, describing in detail how they pertain to mythology.

Macrone, Michael. *Brush Up Your Mythology*. New York: Gramercy, 1992. 109-118, 145-146.

A quick and humorous resource for the classroom and scholar.

The Odyssey. Dir. Andrei Konchalovsky. With Armand Assante, Isabella Rossellini, and Vanessa Williams. Artisan Entertainment, 1997.

Great special effects and a fine cast of actors.

Plato, "The Republic." *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Ed. Edith Hamilton, Princeton: Bollingen, 1973: 747-752.

Not for the faint of heart. This translation offers little in the way of explanation or direction for wading through such a voluminous tome.

Porter, Katherine Anne. "The Grave." *The Modern Tradition: An Anthology of Short Stories*. Ed. Daniel F. Howard. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1979: 263-267.

A touching story about a sister and her brother, who discover a grave while exploring. Reminiscent of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Remnick, David. *King of the World*. New York: Random House, 1998.

A fine book. Remnick is the editor of *The New Yorker*. He won the Pulitzer Prize for *Lenin's Tomb* in 1994.

Samuels, Allison. "Tiger's Brothers." *Newsweek*. 18 June, 2001: 48-49.

One of the rare articles to cast a different light on Tiger Woods.

Star Wars. Writ. and dir. by George Lucas. With Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fischer, and Alec Guinness. Lucas Films, Ltd,

1977 and 1997.

A work of mythology that spans epochs... should be around for a while.

When We Were Kings. Dir. by Leon Gast. With Muhammad Ali, George Foreman, James Brown, B.B. King, Don King, Spike Lee, Norman Mailer, George Plimpton, and Mobutu Sese Seko. Grammercy Pictures, 1996.

An outstanding film that won an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. This movie shows vintage Cassius Clay in action and portrays the politics behind the renown "Rumble in the Jungle."