

## **Your Heroic Journey**

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The call to adventure is the hero's first step on his/her journey; the hero has the choice to answer or refuse the call. By refusing the call he/she is refusing to be a hero. This is also true in everyday life; when we choose not to help our disabled neighbor we choose not to be a hero. In Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, he writes:

Often in actual life, and not infrequently in the myths and popular tales, we encounter the dull case of the call unanswered; for it is always possible to turn the ear to other interests. Refusal of the summons converts the adventure into its negative. Walled in boredom, hard work, or "culture," the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved.

The true hero answers the call to action or adventure; this is the first step to becoming a hero in one's own life. This unit attempts to assist students in viewing themselves as their own personal heroes through the process of analyzing the hero pattern/archetype, paralleling their own lives to this pattern, and emphasizing the importance of viewing one's own life as a hero's journey. There are many steps to climb on the stairway to becoming your own hero, as Heracles can certainly attest; this unit will not only walk the student up these stairs, but will give him/her a wonderful understanding of the ancient Greeks, their gods, and their myths.

### **Academic Setting**

#### School Setting and Students

Wilson Middle School has one of the most diverse populations in Albuquerque with 37.4% Hispanic, 36.2% Anglo, 11% African American, 7% Native American, 6.9% Asian, and .7% "other." This diversity is reflected in the fact that 44.6% of students participate in either ESL or bilingual education. Not only are Wilson students ethnically diverse, they are socio-economically diverse; the district spans an area that includes both the most economically depressed and most affluent neighborhoods in the city. Fifty-six percent of Wilson students receive free lunch, with ten percent receiving reduced cost meals. Income of less than \$21,385 for a family of four qualifies a student for free meals.

Wilson's stability seems to reflect closely that of most middle schools

in Albuquerque with 86% of students being enrolled at the school both on the 40<sup>th</sup> day and the 180<sup>th</sup> day. The middle school average in the city is 86.2%. The mobility at Wilson is 49.8%; this is the percentage of students who transfer into, out of, or within the school system or school. Attendance rates at Wilson are slightly below par as compared to other middle schools with a 91.6% of students attending school each day. Overall enrollment at Wilson is about average, with 727 students attending during the 1998-1999 school year.

The target audience for this material is gifted middle school students, although the readings, concepts, activities, and projects may be modified for regular education language arts students for both middle and high school levels. A plethora of resources are available in almost every reading level ranging from beautifully illustrated children's books to original texts translated directly from the Greek.

The group of students I am designing this curriculum for are 8<sup>th</sup> graders whom I know very well; they have been students of mine for two years on the block schedule (two 45 minute periods per day). One of the reasons I have chosen to focus on the heroes is not only because many of my students have shown an interest in the Greek heroes, especially Odysseus, but also because most of my students are boys at a very transitional time of life; I feel they would benefit greatly, not only intellectually but emotionally, from plotting out their lives in accordance with the phases of a hero's journey.

The curriculum I am designing is accelerated, enriched and differentiated to meet the needs of gifted students. This certainly does not mean this unit cannot be used in a general education classroom, although some modifications may be necessary. The students will be reading excerpts from Homer's writings which are translated directly from the Greek. The students will be expected to read, at most, twenty pages per night; this has been my expectation in the past two years with gifted 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, and most of them stay ahead on the readings. I also believe that reading is the key to success, and it has been my observation that the students who love to read tend to write very well. The readings for this unit are above grade level and are not typical for 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The projects and activities require a depth of inquiry and a rigor of content that are not usually part of the general education curriculum. The unit will emphasize higher level thinking skills such as synthesis, analysis, and evaluation. Grading will usually be based on creativity, fluency, and elaboration.

### Goals and Objectives

The general goals and objectives of this unit are as follows:

- Develop student understanding of the word "myth" and the importance of mythology.
- Review and memorize the Olympians and some of their myths through creative and cooperative projects.
- Use brainstorming activities to develop student understanding of universal archetypes in their own lives, the media, fairy tales, and myth.
- Develop student understanding of the hero archetype and the stages of the hero's journey through comparing the Greeks' heroes with contemporary heroes.
- Analyze the characteristics of the epic poem, and Homer's writing style in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.
- Use critical thinking and creative thinking skills to develop and create a hero of one's own in the form of a children's book.
- Develop oral storytelling skills through the telling of their own stories with younger students.
- Develop oral skills through teaching younger students about the hero archetype.

## **Context and Background**

### Rationale for the Unit

While taking this course in Greek mythology I shared with a number of friends my enthusiasm for the Greeks. I found that almost everyone has an interest in the myths of this ancient culture, but almost no one has spent much time studying them. Most people know a little about the gods and goddesses but nothing in depth. We all seem to know instinctively that the Greeks have something to offer us that is definitely lacking in our modern world. Personally, I think one of the most important contributions of the Greeks has been an insightful explanation of what it means to be human. Although every culture's mythology has given this gift, I have decided to focus primarily on the Greeks because their ideas have infiltrated our society to such an immense degree; Greek mythology permeates Western literature and art thoroughly. Another reason I have decided to teach Greek mythology to my students is because of the number of students who have shown a fascination with the Greek gods and goddesses. They have actually asked me a number of times if we could study them. I have chosen to focus primarily on the hero journeys because they are so accessible and interesting to the middle school student.

### Subject Background

Before one writes his/her own heroic journey, one must have a decent

understanding of myths as well as the hero archetype. Therefore, I have chosen to start with a discussion of the term "myth" which will be followed by an exploration of the universal archetypes. Myth has many definitions which have changed over time. Typically we use the word myth to mean something that is untrue; this is probably because science has supposedly disproved the creation myths and etiological stories. It is important to note, however, that the Big Bang Theory is just that: a theory. Students will frequently ask what is the point of reading these old tales which are obviously not historically accurate. Well, you can tell them that all history is biased and subjective, and I believe Carl G. Jung was speaking the truth when he said the "imageries of mythology serve positive, life-serving ends." He believed that the findings of science relate to and explain the outside world while myths explain our internal world. We need these stories to understand our dreams and inner thoughts. We can come to know the "greater horizon of our own deeper, wiser, inward self" through studying mythology (Campbell 15).

To emphasize to your students the necessity of mythology it is important to read a myth or story that they can easily parallel with their own lives, which means it involves their internal conflicts or fears. I have chosen to reinforce this concept as well as the archetypes and the hero journey pattern using Maurice Sendak's books. I have chosen his books because his characters are so rich, as well as archetypal: Most of my students are familiar with his books; and, I have personally, since very young, been captivated by them. In the brilliant book, *Where the Wild Things Are*, Max is your archetypal "Good Bad Boy Hero." He enters his own imagined journey to deal with his mother's anger towards him. I will explain to the students that we don't believe the story to be true, but it speaks to us and helps us work through some of those deep conflicts and fears. It also gives us a hero to identify with. Max is conflicted with his mother, and chooses to go on a journey to a land of monsters instead of acting out towards his mother. He tames them and has a wild time. The important themes in this book are the following: anger, imagination, problem-solving, controlling the "irrational savage within," conquering your fears, and fear of the unknown. This book is particularly useful during this lesson because Max creates and imagines his own heroic journey to solve his problems. This is a necessary part of being human, and it is what we will be doing later in this unit.

Did the Greeks believe their myths to be true or did they simply enjoy a good story? Both are true. The Greeks, even the educated, believed in their mythic past. They believed their gods existed and they

believed there was a time when gods and mortals communed. But, they also rationalized their myths; they tried to explain why and how a specific myth came about. Presently, we have many theories which try to explain the origins of myth. The externalist theories and the internalist theories are two methods of interpretation. The Externalists believe that the myths may stem from one or more of the following: a response to the environment; a charter myth, which explains a human practice or social custom; a nature theory, which is often meteorological; or a ritualistic myth, based on a religious ritual. The Internalists, for example Freud and Jung, see myths as more metaphorical, such as an allegory, which is simply an extended metaphor. Sigmund Freud saw myths as representing a person's dream world. Carl Jung took this idea a step further with his archetypes, and the concept of the collective unconscious: This described the human condition as universal, which means that certain images and archetypes exist in every person's unconscious no matter the culture in which you were raised: "Fairy tales and myths are like the dreams of an entire culture, springing from the collective unconscious." (Vogler 33). In general, for this unit, I will be interpreting myths from a Jungian perspective, with a lot of help from Joseph Campbell (although there are a number of myths which contain elements of charter myths or etiologies). I feel that through focusing on the archetypes students will find more meaning in the myths than if we took a more externalist view.

To understand Carl Jung's perspective one must have a decent understanding of the archetypes. He defined archetypes as the ancient patterns of personality that are the shared heritage of the human race. Some common archetypes are the Hero, Mentor, Threshold Guardian, Herald, Shapeshifter, Shadow, and Trickster. Fairy tales are also filled with archetypal characters: the Wolf, the Hunter, the Good Mother, the Wicked Stepmother, the Fairy Godmother, the Witch, the Prince or Princess, and the Greedy Innkeeper (Vogler 36). There are also some distinctly American Archetypes which relate to the untouched frontier, which is free from corruption and is Edenic. This wilderness is good, equated with success and personal fulfillment, while the city is corrupt and evil. The character is a "lovable bad boy" who is rebellious, alone, aggressively individualistic, morally pure, and socially innocent. Max from *Where the Wild Things Are* fits this archetype perfectly. I also think of Allen Iverson from the 76ers as this American Adam character. That black arm band is definitely "aggressively individualistic." James Dean from *Rebel Without a Cause* is another example. The archetypal theme and plot pattern is the American Dream; this dream is one we have all heard since we were in first grade. It's the rags to riches story: you too can be

president; no matter how humble your origins you can be whatever you want to be (Robertson). Two well-known film examples are *Forest Gump* and *Annie*, but there are thousands of others.

A fun activity a teacher can use to reinforce the concept of the archetype is to have the students think about what role they play in their family, as well as what roles their family members play. Also, by looking at television shows one can easily see these archetypes. For example, on the sitcom *The Simpsons*, Lisa is obviously the Hero because she is so good and self-sacrificing, while Bart is definitely a Trickster, with Marge being the Good Mother, and I just don't know about Homer, perhaps the Greedy Innkeeper. Regardless, he does have a mythic name. My students love this show so I'm sure they can run with this discussion, but don't forget to analyze the less central characters. Fairy tales are an easy way to reinforce this concept; they have all seen each Disney movie 20 times. Archetypes are also found on sports' teams, in boy bands like NSYNC and The Backstreet Boys, and even on voyeuristic shows like *Survivor*. Also, *Gilligan's Island's* characters are all obvious archetypes. Basically, find something they all know and run with it.

The archetype that needs to be understood in depth is that of the Hero and his journey. The Hero is usually a savior or a deliverer, and the hero journey symbolizes a journey of the soul. I will first outline the phases and then briefly explain each one. I have chosen to summarize every phase, but there are a few phases you may choose to leave out because they are not very common or are too difficult for adolescents to relate to. One can find many examples of hero journeys in children's literature, but I have found that Maurice Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen* contains almost every phase of the journey, and Sendak himself admits that his tale is a journey into the Underworld (Cech 191). In the following list I have included not only a brief description of Campbell's stages, but a description of Mickey's place during each phase. Using a children's book to illustrate the complexities of the hero archetype serves two purposes for this unit. First, it is more accessible because it is modern, concise, and familiar. Second, it is a beautiful example of a modern hero journey, which is exactly what the students are expected to produce as their final project. I have outlined the heroic archetypal pattern with the following list from Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, a brief definition of each phase, and a description of where Mickey from *In the Night Kitchen* is on his journey:

1. The Call to Adventure (signal of hero's vocation)- Mickey hears a racket in the night.
2. Refusal of the Call (folly of flight from god)- He yells,

"Quiet Down There!"

3. Supernatural Aid (personifications of destiny)- He falls through the floors, his clothes disappear, and he says, "Ooh," to the moon (journey to the Underworld).
4. The Crossing of the First Threshold (guardians of established bounds)- He falls past his mama and papa into the light of the night kitchen.
5. The Belly of the Whale (passage into the womb sphere)- Mickey falls into mixing bowl filled with batter.
6. The Road of Trials (path of initiation)- He is stirred and scraped in the bowl.
7. The Meeting with the Goddess (bliss of infancy regained)- He remains in the batter which is ready to bake (in the womb, bun in the oven, sleeping in timelessness).
8. Woman as Temptress (realization/agony of Oedipus)- Mickey is placed in the oven where he could abandon his quest, and be baked in cake oblivion.
9. Atonement with the Father (recognition by the Creator)-He pops out of the cake, confronts the bakers, and says, "I'm not the milk and the milk's not me! I'm Mickey!"
10. Apotheosis (dissolution of opposites)- He flies his self-made plane (union with plane, deified, free from fear/delusion). He also puts on his Hermes traveling hat.
11. The Ultimate Boon (theft of the Elixir)- Mickey says, "I'm in the milk and the milk's in me." The milk is the elixir.
12. Refusal of the Return (the world denied)- Mickey doesn't refuse to return.
13. The Magic Flight (escape of Prometheus/return to the world with trophy)- He pours the milk into the batter so the cake can be made.
14. Rescue from Without (recall of the hero)- The slide returns him to bed.
15. The Crossing of the Return Threshold (back to the world of common day)- He goes back to bed.
16. Master of Two Worlds (mystery of ready transit)- He can go back and forth in his dreams and imagination.
17. Freedom to Live (nature/function of ultimate boon)- "And that's why, thanks to Mickey we have cake every morning." This is also an etiology.

The first stage of the hero's journey is The Call to Adventure which signifies that destiny has summoned the hero from his familiar society to an unknown place. For example, Theseus is called to Athens to meet his father, and he chooses to go forth to accomplish the adventure. Once there he hears about the horrific Minotaur, and continues on his journey. Metaphorically, this is simply the call to the unknown. The herald or caller of the adventure is often dark and terrifying, but if followed a reward is waiting (Campbell 49).

The second stage, The Refusal of the Call, is usually not maintained by the hero for obvious reasons; what a dreadfully boring tale that would be. To choose not to go on the adventure is to convert the adventure into its negative, and one becomes a victim instead. Hamlet is an excellent example to use to demonstrate this point. He refused to act soon enough, and tragedy ensued. The refusal is to give up what one takes to be one's own interest. This is an important message to give one's students because so many of us do not follow our dreams. It is important to pay attention to the many opportunities life flings our way, and to not remain in our comfort zone. One must go on those journeys, whether they be into our unconscious world or to Tanzania. To refuse the call is spiritual suicide (Campbell 59).

The third aspect of the hero-journey is The Supernatural Aid, or Mentor, which is very prevalent in Greek stories. An example of this is when Theseus chooses to destroy the Minotaur, and Ariadne, who has fallen in love with him, helps him with magical thread. This thread brings Theseus safely into and out of the labyrinth. In everyday life, a supernatural aid represents anything that helps one out of a sticky situation, or it can be a person who aids or guides. It also could be something metaphysical, depending on one's belief system (Campbell 69).

The Crossing of the First Threshold is the fourth stage of the journey. At this stage the hero meets the "threshold guardian" at a boundary that marks the end of safety and the beginning of darkness, the unknown, and/or danger. Pan is an example of a presence inhabiting the area just beyond the protected zone of the village. "Panic" is the emotion humans experience if they venture into his domain. But, the hero must venture forth to continue on his journey (Campbell 77).

The fifth phase, The Belly of the Whale, symbolizes the universal womb and a place of rebirth. Once the hero passes through the first threshold he may enter this dark unknown place, this place of transformation, and he may appear to have died. For example, Heracles dives into the mouth of a sea monster to save Hesione, who is chained to the rocks as a sacrifice. Heracles successfully cuts

through and out of the monster, leaving him dead. This seemingly suicidal mission is not only heroic, but it is viewed as a form of self-destruction wherein the hero is born again. The disappearance in this stage corresponds to a worshipper entering a temple or church. The church is the belly; entering is a life-renewing act (Campbell 90).

The Road of Trials, is the thrill-ride of the adventure. This is where the hero has passed through the threshold and is challenged with a series of trials. The hero is aided by the supernatural helper, or he may realize that there is benign power everywhere in the universe, at least for him. This is an incredibly popular motif in every culture's myths and folk tales. Heracles's Twelve Labors is probably the most well-known in Greek mythology. Theseus's Road of Trials is more literal because he is actually traveling along a road and has one trial after another, or should I say one barbarian after another, until he reaches his most glorious trial, the Minotaur, in the center of the labyrinth. In ordinary life this road of trials symbolizes both the external and internal conflicts that challenge us everyday. How do we deal with our personal monsters? Do we face and destroy or overcome them, or do we let them fester, slowly eating away at our soul? Our dreams are filled with images of these trials and they symbolize "specific psychological difficulties" (Campbell 102).

The Meeting with the Goddess in mythology is illustrated with a marriage between the "triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World." It represents a meeting, most frequently, with the hero's image of mother; although it is also sister, mistress, or bride. This image has been tucked away, hidden since early childhood. Briar Rose in *Sleeping Beauty* is an example of this type of goddess. "Time sealed her away, yet she is dwelling still, like one who sleeps in timelessness, at the bottom of the timeless sea." (Campbell 111). This remembered image can represent coming to terms with how one perceives the world: "The repression of the emotions and feelings relating to the mother has in virtue of this association, produced a tendency to adopt an attitude of distrust, contempt, disgust or hostility towards the human body, the Earth, and the whole material Universe." (Flugel 145). So, simply put, The Meeting with the Goddess, is the meeting with the world, well - at least our perceptions of the world.

The Woman as Temptress phase is one that can be combined with the Meeting with the Goddess phase, or taught separately. In some myths, like Oedipus, the female can represent defeat instead of victory. The hero must not give in to temptation and abandon his quest. The female also can represent the knowledge the hero seeks. Circe and Eve both represent the woman as temptress. If the temptation is rejected the

hero will be blissfully rejoined with the mother, or The Meeting of the Goddess (120). Odysseus successfully does this when he rejects Circe and Calypso, and returns to his wife. It is interesting to note that he rejects immortality for his wife as well.

At some point in the journey the hero must reach his father, and endure his test. The Atonement with the Father phase usually involves various tasks, as well as some sort of initiation. Oftentimes, the hero is guided by a helpful female figure during this time. The father is sometimes portrayed as an ogre-type figure, and almost always something to be feared and respected. If the "roles of life are assumed by the improperly initiated, chaos supervenes." (136). This is best illustrated in the story of Phaethon and his desire to drive his father's chariot. He does not heed his father's warnings which bring his life to a premature end. During this phase, if properly initiated, the hero is:

divested of his mere humanity and is representative of an impersonal cosmic force. He is the twice-born: he has become himself the father. And he is competent, consequently, now to enact himself the role of the initiator, the guide, the sun door, through whom one may pass from the infantile illusions of "good" and "evil" to an experience of the majesty of cosmic law, purged of hope and fear, and at peace in the understanding of being (Campbell 137).

After the hero is reborn through the goddess and takes the power of the father he has reached Apotheosis; he becomes deified and quintessential. Oftentimes the hero may experience androgyny; he is initiated into the dual wisdom of the universe where opposites dissolve. He is free from fear, desire, delusion, and change; he has reached Nirvana or Olympus. Frequently, in myths this is represented by the union formed in marriage. Heracles reaches Apotheosis when he becomes immortal; he marries Hebe, who is the personification of everlasting youth.

The eleventh phase of the hero journey, The Ultimate Boon, represents finding and possessing the goal the hero is seeking. He finally gains the symbols of immortality and youth. In the story of Gilgamesh, a Sumarian king, Gilgamesh seeks the watercress of immortality; after a difficult journey he possesses the elixir, but it is stolen by a snake, and that is why a snake sheds its skin. Some other

examples are the golden apples, the golden fleece, fire and ambrosia. To reach his boon, the hero must trick the gods into releasing the elixir of imperishable being. He then discards his physical body to find eternity. The desire for The Fountain of Youth, immortality, or everlasting youth is just as strong today as it was for the ancient Greeks.

When the hero-quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal, personification, the adventurer still must return with his life-transmuting trophy. The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may rebound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds (Campbell 193).

The Refusal of the Return is frequently the option chosen by the Greek heroes. The adventurer has everything he desires, so why would he want to return? Will he fit in and be accepted? Will they understand the message of his realizations? Odysseus chooses to confront these difficult challenges, and has many obstacles to face before he settles down with his wife Penelope again.

The Magic Flight is the hero's journey back to the world with his trophy. Often the hero must be recalled from bliss, and his return is complicated by a pursuit and obstacles. For example, once Jason has the Golden Fleece he is pursued by Medea's father. Medea distracts their pursuers by convincing Jason to kill her brother, Apsyrtos. She then chops up her brother and throws the pieces into the sea, so her father must find and gather the parts so he can give his son a proper burial. In this myth Medea does most of the work for Jason, but frequently the escape is a test of the hero's superhuman abilities.

In the Rescue from Without phase of the journey "the hero may have to be brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance from without. That is to say, the world may have to come and get him. For the bliss of the deep abode is not lightly abandoned in favor of the self-scattering of the wakened state" (Campbell 207). Not all heroes choose to return, especially the Greek heroes; therefore it takes someone from elsewhere to rescue or remind them to return. Although

Odysseus desired to return to Penelope, he was still rescued by Hermes from Calypso.

Once the hero is convinced to return to the world of mortals he must Cross the Return Threshold. (I imagine astronauts re-entering the atmosphere, after a long voyage). The hero must survive the impact of the return, and face society with his life-redeeming boon. The hero's adventure has taken place in the unknown or "darkness," and he is:

...coming back out of that yonder zone.  
Nevertheless—and here is a great key to the understanding of myth and symbol—the two kingdoms are actually one. The realm of the gods is a forgotten dimension of the world we know. And the exploration of that dimension, either willingly or unwillingly, is the whole sense of the deed of the hero (Campbell 217).

The difficult task of the hero is to teach society what he has learned. "Why re-enter such a world? Why attempt to make plausible, or even interesting, to men and women consumed with passion, the experience of transcendental bliss?" I parallel this task of the hero as similar to trying to teach life lessons to anyone who is not ready to hear them. For Odysseus, this Crossing of the Return Threshold involved killing Penelope's many suitors to teach them the fatal lesson their conscience should have taught them if they had only listened.

Once the hero has crossed this difficult threshold he becomes the Master of Two Worlds; that is, he is free to go between mortals and immortals. He also reveals the important mystery that self-destruction leads to rebirth and new life, but one must give up completely all attachment to:

...personal limitations, idiosyncrasies, hopes and fears, no longer resists the self-annihilation that is prerequisite to rebirth in the realization of truth, and so becomes ripe, at last, for the great at-one-ment. His personal ambitions being totally dissolved, he no longer tries to live but willingly relaxes to whatever may come to pass in him; he becomes, that is to say, an anonymity (Campbell 237).

In ordinary life, this is not a state of mind most of us ever achieve, but symbolically, this could simply be the mini-victory of letting go of

something, or possibly, the ability to understand one's own inner life, while successfully living one's external life.

The last phase on the hero journey, Freedom to Live, is the goal of the hero myth. The hero must shed self-righteousness, which "leads to misunderstanding, not only of oneself but of the nature of both man and the cosmos. The goal of myth is to dispel the need for such life ignorance by effecting a reconciliation of the individual consciousness with the universal will" (Campbell 238). Basically, the hero must address the needs of the community instead of himself; it's time for Heracles to volunteer down at the community center, although even his labors could be seen as the beginning of his community service.

Every hero journey is different, as is every hero. This is particularly true for the Greeks, especially if one compares two of Homer's most famous heroes: Achilles and Odysseus. The heroes in *The Iliad* tend to be aggressive warriors, while Odysseus is quick-witted and cautious. *The Iliad's* Achilles knows he must make a choice between dying gloriously at Troy, or living anonymously at home. To choose the latter would be the death of his soul, so he continues to fight at Troy. Achilles is all about rage and brute force; his main attributes are strength, martial skill, and courage. He is tall and handsome, but he is also angry, impatient, and vengeful. The most extreme example of this is when he drags Hector's body around Troy for eleven days; even the gods were appalled. But, his tragic death was glorious in its celebration of the warrior. *The Odyssey's* Odysseus couldn't be more the opposite. He is not your typical hero; he's brains not brawn - although his strength is superior to most men, it is not what gets him out of difficult situations. It is his prudence, foresight, discretion, and rational self-control that keeps Odysseus alive on his journey. For example, when he returns home to Ithaca he delays the reunion with his wife, Penelope, and methodically plans the demise of her rude suitors. If he had been impatient, tragedy would have most likely ensued. Instead, in the end, unlike Achilles, Odysseus lives a long and happy life.

Once the hero archetype is fully understood both mythically and contemporarily the students must start thinking about the story they are going to write. I will encourage them to place themselves as the hero archetype, but I will not require this. My rationale is that oftentimes fiction is more honest than non-fiction because one can separate oneself from the characters more easily in fiction. Some students are unbelievably confessional, but this is not your typical middle school student. I do want my students to think of themselves as a hero, and this will be discussed in depth, but for their project their hero may be completely fictional.

I will also require them to cover ten phases of the hero pattern. Few Greek myths include every phase, so it seems counter-productive to require them to include each stage. There are many different routes a teacher can take regarding the requirements for the children's book. But, before the actual book-binding begins the students must write a rough draft, have a peer edit their story, write another draft, have the teacher edit it, and then plan the lay-out of the story. (Every teacher has a different approach to the writing process, so I won't go into detail about this.)

The students will be required to follow some guidelines in regard to writing style; they must have some of the characteristics of Homer's epic poetry. This will require the students to take a much closer look at the excerpts from *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Some important elements of Homer's writing style are the following: irony; simile; direct speech; hexameter verse; fixed epithets and adjectives; imagery; genealogies of characters, weapons, and animals. I will only require my students to utilize three aspects of Homer's style. They must use fixed epithets, direct speech, and similes in their hero myths.

One of the most conspicuous aspects of Homer's epic poems are his use of fixed epithets and adjectives. Two frequently repeated examples of these are "wily Odysseus" and "swift-footed Achilles." Have the students look at these epithets which appear again and again, and then create their own for their stories. This will assist them in developing their hero more fully, as well as the other characters.

Direct speech is used in both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* more than half the time. This is partially due to the fact that these poems were performed orally before they were written down. The effect is that these poems are more dramatic, and the characters are very developed. Having the students write in direct speech is a great way to teach the essential "show don't tell" concept. It will also force them to develop the characters in their stories more than they might otherwise.

The last literary device that I will require the students to use in their personal hero myths is the use of similes. A simile compares two unlike things using the words "like" or "as." An epic simile is oftentimes an extended comparison. For example, Scylla, from *The Odyssey* is a simile for a fisherman who pulls fish from the ocean. Another example is Hector's prowess, which is likened to a sharpened axe-edge. The use of similes will invariably increase the imagery in the student's stories, and it will make their stories more epic in proportion.

Once the students have completed a "blue print" of their book, which

includes page numbers, mini sketches, and an outline of the text, they may begin book-binding. I have chosen the more traditional type of book binding which utilizes embroidery thread for the binding, cloth or pretty paper over cardboard for the cover, and white computer paper for the pages. The students will also need to use a needle to sew the pages together. I would suggest getting a book about how to bind books because one mistake can ruin the entire book. It is a painstakingly slow process making sure the entire class is doing each step carefully and correctly. Many of the boys have never even threaded a needle, never mind having sewn, so one can only imagine the challenge. Once the book is made the students can begin filling in the pages with their illustrations and text. This is a project that will take the students about two or three weeks to complete.

The last part of the unit is the oral presentation, which seems apropos because oral storytelling is so Homeric. The students must read their books to a younger audience. I would also require the students to explain the different stages of their hero journey after they have finished reading the book. This will give them practice not only with storytelling, but also explaining things orally.

### **Implementation**

The following lesson plans are designed for students on the block schedule; each class period is a ninety minute block of time. All daily plans will state the objectives, list the materials needed, detail an activity, and describe the instruction. Some lesson plans will also include quizzes, discussions, guided practice, homework, and independent practice. The purpose of the quizzes is only to motivate students to complete their readings, so these should be simple and concise.

#### Performance Standards

Many of the performance standards will be touched upon in each of the lessons. Because so many standards will be addressed in each lesson I have chosen to list the New Mexico State Performance Standards that will be met for the entire unit before all of the lesson plans.

#### Strand I: Reading Process

Performance Standards: 8

Reading Strategies:

Increases comprehension of informational text in the following ways:

- generates questions to be answered while reading.

- reflects on what has been learned after reading.

### Vocabulary Development

- Reads self selected and assigned materials to increase fluency and comprehension.
- Summarizes the main idea and supporting details of a selection.

### Strand II: Reading Analysis

#### Performance Standards: 8

#### Literary Analysis:

- Analyzes the author's use of a variety of techniques (appeal of characters and use of figurative language) to convey meaning.
- Analyzes the inferences and conclusions from fiction contexts, events, characters, settings, and themes.

#### Literary Elements:

- Identifies significant literary devices (metaphor, symbolism, and irony) to understand the author's meaning and perspective.
- Identifies the defining characteristics of classic literature( epic poetry) and themes.
- Describes how tone and meaning are conveyed in poetry through word choice, figurative language, sentence structure, line length, punctuation, rhythm, repetition, and rhyme.

#### Literary Application:

- Analyzes personal perspective towards texts and the influence of society, culture, and historical issues on the reader.
- Explains how themes in literature are a reflection of human issues and experiences.

### Strand III: Expressive Language: Writing

#### Performance Standards: 8

#### Writing Strategies:

- Demonstrates competence in using the writing process to create a final product with emphasis on the following: prepares an outline based upon the chosen organization, edits written work to remove extraneous details and inconsistencies, and revises written work to make it clear.
- Demonstrates competence in using elements of effective writing (organization, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency)

## Writing Conventions:

Demonstrates competence in using writing conventions (grammar, spelling, mechanics and capitalization) with an emphasis on the following: uses correct and varied sentence types, revises writing for word choice, organization, consistent point of view, and transitions.

## Strand IV: Expressive Language: Speaking

Performance Standards: 8

### Speaking Applications:

- Demonstrates competence with appropriate types of speaking (expressive, persuasive, and analytical) for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- Develops and presents arguments that persuade by engaging the audience by establishing a context, creating a personal connection, and developing interest.
- Develops an idea that makes a clear and knowledgeable judgment.
- Presents similar content for a variety of purposes and to different audiences (6<sup>th</sup> graders), showing appropriate change in delivery.

## Strand V: Receptive Language: Listening and Viewing

Performance Standards: 8

### Listening/Viewing Applications:

- Determines the purpose of a variety of auditory/visual texts by determining their bias, intended messages, emotional manipulation, and persuasive techniques.
- Participates in group discussions and activities.
- Shares personal reactions to questions raised.
- Clarifies, illustrates, or expands on a response.
- Analyzes a variety of media, showing how it reflects and shapes cultures, values, beliefs, and attitudes.

## Lesson Plans—Week 1

Day One: Objective: Develop student understanding of the word "myth." Materials/Preparation: Popular children's books, *Heroes and Monsters of Greek Myth* by Evslin, Evslin, & Hoopes. Activity: Introduce the unit by reading a popular children's book to the class. I have chosen the story *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak to better illustrate this lesson. Ask students to brainstorm the thematic

elements of the story. Once they hit upon some of the main themes circle them on the board. Instruction: Ask them why these themes are common in children's books. This discussion must lead them to the idea that these are universal issues for any child, as well as adults. Also, stress the idea that stories will not be read unless they speak to us in some way. At this point bring up the word "myth". Ask some of the following questions: How do we use the word "myth" in conversation? How do we define the word? What are our attitudes about Greek mythology? Why is it important to know about these myths? Can we learn from different culture's myths? What are the purposes of myths? What are the differences between the following: saga, legend, folk tale, fairy tale, traditional tale, and myth? Did the Greeks believe their myths? How do Christians view Bible stories? Lead the discussion to make sure they end up with the following definitions and concepts understood:

1. Myths are ancient histories that tell us how early man saw death, life, love, good, evil, and other aspects of his life cycle.
2. Myths are early science—man's first attempts to explain the forces of the universe and how they operated.
3. Myths are sacred stories that tell of man's relationship to his gods—to the magic powers that could change his destiny if they wished (Trout 10).
4. The Greek word "mythos" means utterance.
5. Myths were performed as a story-teller's art.
6. Myths have many different versions and involve spontaneous change.
7. Myths have a literary character.
8. The Greeks believed in their mythic past where gods and mortals communed.
9. A mythopoeic society is one that engages in myth-making.

Homework: Read the "Mythology Becomes Language" section on page 110 in the *Heroes and Gods of Greek Myth*.

Day Two: Objective: Develop student understanding of the importance and purpose myths/stories play in our everyday lives, and the importance it played in the lives of the Greeks.

Materials/Preparations: markers, butcher block paper, list of book themes in view, and children's books. As homework they must bring in one or two of their favorite children's books to share with a small group the next day. Make sure all students have a book to share. I would have books on hand for those forgetful students. Focusing Activity: Divide the students into groups of three and have the

students read their books to each other. Give each group markers and butcher block paper. Have them list as many themes and life lessons they can find in their books on the paper. Life lessons and themes are often the same with lessons worded more didactically. I have a bulletin board with about a hundred themes listed which really helps middle school students figure out what the novel themes. Instruction: Once the groups are finished have each group share with the large group what their themes and lessons were. Tape these to the wall. Circle the themes that appeared three or more times. Most likely there will be many of the same themes in each book. Discuss why this is and parallel the Greek's need for storytelling as being similar to ours. Homework: For homework have the students read Perseus and Daedalus from *Heroes and Monsters of Greek Myth*.

Day Three, Four, and Five: Objective: Review and memorize the gods, heroes, and important mortals and some of their myths through quizzes, and creative and cooperative projects. I'm requiring my students to know about 30 characters from Greek mythology. Materials/Preparation: Comprehension quiz on Perseus and Daedalus, a Greek myth to read aloud, a list of gods and goddesses to be defined, a prepared lecture on gods, art supplies such as markers, colored pencils, poster board, and card board. Assessment: Give the students a ten -15 question quiz on the Perseus and Daedalus stories. Focusing Activity: Read a Greek myth to the class. Instruction: Discuss the gods and goddesses mentioned in the myth, and interpret the myth. Hand out the list of gods to be defined. Have students share what they know about each god, and then fill in the gaps for them. Guided Practice: Divide students into groups of three or four. Assign one of the following activities to each group: Concentration (Memory) Game, Giant Crossword Puzzle, and Trivial Pursuit. Groups may do the same activity, but make sure each activity is being done by at least one group. Have the students create the following games with the mythological characters. For the crossword puzzle have the students cut out squares with all the letters someone would need to complete the puzzle. This is so the puzzle can be solved repeatedly. You may want to require drawings for these games, but that will extend the time. This activity may take a few days to complete, but once it is complete have the students exchange games with other groups. Each group must play each game at least once. Make sure students play their own game at least once for editing. Grading is based on behavior, neatness, creativity, spelling, and accuracy. Homework: Read "Theseus and Atalanta" by Monday.

Week Two

Day One and Two: Objective: Develop student understanding of

universal archetypes. Materials/Preparation: quiz on "Theseus and Atalanta", list of archetypes on the board or on a hand out, fairy tales and myths to read aloud. Quiz: Give quiz on "Theseus and Atalanta," and discuss. Focusing Activity: Show the students a list of the archetypes with understandable definitions. Share with students the role you played in your own family as a child as well as the roles your family members played. Ask students to share with the class what roles they play in their family. Don't require all students to share because some students may feel uncomfortable divulging this information. Discuss Sendak's Max as the American Adam Archetype. After a hopefully lively discussion, read the students a fairy tale that has a number of obvious archetypes in it and discuss. Guided Practice: In groups of three have students list as many characters and real people they can think of under each archetypal category. Make sure they have at least one example of each archetype. Once they have at least three examples under each category have the groups share their findings with the other groups. Homework: Read "Midas and Pygmalion."

Day Three and Four: Objective: Develop student understanding of the hero archetype pattern. Materials/Preparation: Written quiz on "Midas and Pygmalion," developed lesson on hero archetype and pattern, *In the Night Kitchen* by Maurice Sendak, hand-out with hero journey pattern outlined, and Book One from *The Odyssey*. Quiz: Give quiz on "Midas and Pygmalion." Focusing Activity: Read *In the Night Kitchen* aloud and have a discussion about Mickey as a hero archetype (Hermetic trickster child/hero) . Instruction: Lecture about the phases of the hero journey and have students find the different phases in "In the Night Kitchen". Have the students take notes on this pattern. Discuss the hero pattern in relation to the stories they have read for homework. Homework: Read Book One from *The Odyssey*.

Day Five: Objective: Analyze the style, and language of Homer and the epic poem. Materials/Preparation: Developed quiz on Book One from *The Odyssey*, a developed lecture on the style, and outlook of Homer, the film *The Odyssey*, and Book Five from *The Odyssey*. Quiz: on the excerpt. Instruction: Lecture and discussion on the writing style of Homer, with a focus on fixed epithets, direct speech, and similes. Focusing Activity: Watch the film. Homework: Read Book Five from *The Odyssey*.

### Week Three

Day One and Two: Objective: Develop student understanding of the hero pattern/archetype. Materials/Preparation: Quiz on the Book Five from *The Odyssey*, the film, discussion questions about the film, and

developed lecture on Odysseus. Quiz: Give quiz on Book Five. Focusing Activity: Finish watching the film and discuss film with students. Instruction: Make sure they fully understand the character Odysseus as an archetype and how he differs from the other heroes. Compare film with Homer's *Odyssey*. Relate the hero pattern to Odysseus's journey. Optional: There are many other wonderful films one may show to illustrate the hero journey such as *Jason and the Argonauts*, *Star Wars*, and *Willow*. Homework: Read Book One from *The Iliad*.

Day Three and Four: Objective: Develop student understanding of a modernized hero story. Materials/Preparation: The film *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou*, and discussion/lecture that compares the film to *The Odyssey*. Focusing Activity: Watch the film. Instruction: Lead a discussion that addresses the hero pattern and the archetypes in *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou*. Guided Practice: Form groups of 3-4 students. Have students write out a compare/contrast chart between the two films. Display charts and discuss.

Day Five: Objective: Use critical thinking and creative thinking skills to develop and create a modernized hero story in the form of a children's book. Materials/Preparation: Quiz on Book One from *The Iliad*, *Outside Over There* by Maurice Sendak and hand-out with the requirements for the children's book with grading rubric. An example is found at the end of this lesson plan. Brainstorming chart for story ideas with the following headings: antagonist(s), protagonist, conflicts, action, resolution, setting, and, of course, the phases of the hero journey. Quiz: on Book One from *The Iliad*. Focusing Activity: Read *Outside Over There* to the students. Have them point out the hero pattern one last time. Instruction: Compare Achilles with Odysseus. Then hand out children's book requirements and rubric. Go through it with them to make sure they understand your expectations. Guided Practice: Have students spend the second class period writing down ideas. Require them to have at least three possibilities in each section. This is a brainstorming/pre-write which means they will throw away most of it.

Example of Project Expectations and Grading Rubric:

### Your Heroic Journey

For this project you will write your own children's book which follows the pattern of Joseph Campbell's hero archetype pattern. You must have at least ten of the phases of the journey in your story. You must be able to identify and explain to the class why each phase is the one you claim it to be. Your final book is due three weeks from today. You will have class time this week and next week, but what you don't

finish will become homework during that third week.

#### Requirements and Grading:

- Brainstorming chart with 3 ideas listed under each heading-10 points
- Outline of story-10 points
- Rough draft- 20 points
- Peer edit- 10 points
- Revised draft turned in to teacher with chart, outline, and rough draft attached-20 points
- Final draft-20 points
- "Blueprint" of book- this must outline the layout of your book- 10 points
- The cover of the book, which must have an illustration, the title, and your name on it - 20 points
- Title page, which must have the title of the book and your name- 10 points
- The text, which must have correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, as well as all the elements of a hero's, journey-50 points
- The text must also be written in the style (an epic poem) of *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*- 20 points
- The illustrations which must fill at least ten pages and be elaborate and neat- 50 points
- Presentation to classmates with an explanation of the phases you chose- 20 points
- Presentation to a 6<sup>th</sup> grade class with a discussion of the phases of the hero journey in your story- 30 points

Total Possible Points-300

#### Weeks Four, Five and Six

These weeks will be filled with working on the children's book. I don't feel it is necessary to spell out possible mini-lessons a teacher can do to keep the students focused in the right direction. Hopefully the above rubric is enough of a guideline. Obviously, there will have to be instructions and guided activities for the writing process and bookmaking. I'm sure every language arts teacher has their own methods of teaching these lessons. Personally, I would continue requiring readings from *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* so they stay focused on the writing style, especially Homer's use of direct speech, fixed epithets, similes, and his use of imagery. The last week I would

show *Jason and the Argonauts*. It is really quite good, and they will need a break; bookmaking is hard work.

## **Bibliography**

Bennet, E.A. *What Jung Really Said*. New York, New York: Schocken Books, 1988.

An excellent introduction to Jung's main ideas in a language that anyone can follow.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973.

This classic book is the heart of this unit, and is a must read if one wants to study the archetypal hero in virtually all the mythologies of the world.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Power of Myth*. New York, New York: Doubleday, 1988.

This book is a great summing up of Joseph Campbell's work written in a conversation format. It is very accessible for both teachers and students. The chapter entitled "The Hero's Adventure" is a perfect reading assignment for this unit.

Cech, John. *Angels and Wild Things: The Archetypal Poetics of Maurice Sendak*. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.

This book is absolutely beautiful and fascinating. It is not only a wonderful study of the archetypes, but it is a gorgeously illustrated biography of Maurice Sendak.

Evslin, Bernard. *The Adventures of Ulysses*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1969.

An easy to read and abridged version of the *Odyssey*.

Evslin, Evslin, & Hoopes. *Heroes and Monsters of Greek Myth*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1967.

An easy to read and abridged version of some of the hero myths.

Griffin, Jasper. *Readings on Homer*. Ed. Don Nardo. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998.

A simple, yet decent analysis of *The Iliad* and *The*

*Odyssey.*

Flugel, J.C. *The Psycho-Analytic Study of the Family*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1931.

An insightful study of psycho-analysis.

Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology*. Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown, and Company, 1969.

A great reference book.

Harris, Stephen L., and Gloria Plazner. *Classical Mythology Images and Insights*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1998.

This book is a must read if you are going to teach Greek mythology.

Homer, translated by Robert Fitzgerald. *The Odyssey*. New York, New York: Farrar, Staus and Giroux, 1998.

The best translation of *The Odyssey*.

Homer, translated by Robert Fagles. *The Iliad*. New York, New York: Penguin Books, 1990.

An accessible, modern translation of *The Iliad*.

*Jason and the Argonauts*. Video. Produced by Dyson Lovell. Hallmark Home Entertainment, 2000.

This film is great fun, but Jason is definitely not characterized accurately; he is portrayed more heroically than he was by the ancient Greeks.

Keen, Sam and Anne Valley-Fox. *Your Mythic Journey*. New York, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1989.

A wonderful self-help book that brings together creative writing and mythology in a meaningful way.

LaPlantz, Shereen. *Cover to Cover: Creative Techniques for Making Beautiful Books, Journals & Albums*. Asheville, North Carolina: Lark Books, 1995.

My personal favorite how-to-make-books book.

*The Odyssey*. Video. Produced by Dyson Lovell. Hallmark Home Entertainment, 2000.

This film does a good job with the characterizations and stays true to the themes of *The Odyssey*.

*Oh Brother, Where Art Thou*. Video. Produced and written by Ethan & Joel Coen. Touchstone Pictures, 2000.

This film is hilarious, and an interesting comparison with *The Odyssey*. It is also a good example of modern hero journey.

Sendak, Maurice. *In The Night Kitchen*. New York: Harper and Row, 1970.

An almost complete archetypal hero journey. It is a beautifully illustrated and absolutely brilliant children's book.

Sendak, Maurice. *Outside Over There*. New York: Harper and Row, 1981.

Another wonderful and beautifully illustrated hero journey, although a bit terrifying for younger readers.

Sendak, Maurice. *Where the Wild Things Are*. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.

The classic tale of Max, the American Adam Archetype. This children's book is remarkable.

Stapleton, Michael. *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology*. New York: Bell Publishing Company, 1978.

This is an awesome reference book.

Trout, Lawana. *Teaching Guide for Myth*. New York: Scholastic, 1962.

This book has some simple explanations of mythology and some excellent activity ideas.