

Abstracts from Gods, Heroes, Myths: The Legacy of Ancient Greece

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

Allen Appel

This curriculum unit was designed with the intention of helping a gifted and resistant high school population learn about and make use of Greek mythology. Twice Exceptional children qualify as both gifted students and as students with learning and/or emotional disabilities. This unit utilizes a variety of media with which to approach Greek mythology, giving students with different strengths and weaknesses the opportunity to excel as they learn. The primary objective of the unit is to help teachers and students benefit from an educational design that incorporates different kinds of didactic and experiential learning exercises, as students eventually integrate concepts of mythology into their lives in a useful and meaningful way.

Might Versus Right: An Ancient Greek Guide to Moral Dilemmas

David Baldwin

This unit explores the process teenagers' follow in making moral decisions. They face difficult choices everyday. Perhaps the ancient Greeks can provide lessons, which are applicable to modern society. Greek tragic characters can show some moral decisions and their consequences. Each tragic character must decide whether to revere their personal integrity or to give into what existing laws dictate as "right." Students will explore the decisions each character makes in the face of controversy. What are the long-term effects? Did they make the right decision? Why did they make that decision? Why do laws exist? How does personal morality guide decision-making? Hopefully, this unit will provide ideas and starting points for discussing difficult issues. This unit also covers such topics as intolerance, diversity, violence, peer pressure, and discrimination.

The goal of this unit is to engage students in meaningful thought and action through reading, writing, speaking, discussing, and action. It is geared toward a literature or English class in high school. Students will read Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Medea*.

Your Heroic Journey

Emily Bayer

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 states:

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 Hercules can certainly attest. This unit will not only walk the student up these stairs, but will give him/her a thorough understanding of the ancient Greeks, their gods, and their myths.

This six week curriculum unit is designed for gifted middle school students, but certainly may be used with regular education students, with some modifications. This unit would also be appropriate for 9th graders, and because *The Odyssey* is required reading for all freshmen it seems all the more appropriate. The readings include excerpts from both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*; the myths of Perseus, Daedalus, Theseus, Atalanta, Midas, and Pygmalion; and three of Maurice Sendak's books. Students will also view the following films: *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou*, *The Odyssey*, and *Jason and the Argonauts*. The final project of the unit consists of writing an illustrated children's book, which follows the hero pattern/archetype.

Anya Cornelius

The Odyssey is an epic poem that is taught to incoming freshmen at Albuquerque High School. In teaching *The Odyssey*, one must give some background about Greek civilization, geography, history and Greek mythology. *The Odyssey* can still be read without this information, but it can not be fully understood without it. There are many different ways to go about teaching *The Odyssey* to freshmen. Teachers will teach the same concept differently because of their beliefs, their own background and their teaching style. With this in mind the following is my take on the teaching of *The Odyssey*, and therefore it can be rearranged based on one's style and taste.

This unit is designed for freshmen students in a regular education classroom. Students will begin this unit by researching gods, goddesses, creatures, etc... They will have to present the information back to the class. This will help provide a more in depth introduction to Greek mythology. Students will also take notes on my lecture about other important figures in Greek mythology, and how the Trojan War was started. After this introduction, students will begin reading *The Odyssey*. At the beginning of *The Odyssey*, students will read out loud for full understanding. Once we have gotten into the meat of the story, students will hopefully be enthralled enough to read silently alone. Students' culminating project will be to design a travel brochure that features three stops Odysseus makes on his journey. Students are to hype these stops to possible future travelers, noting only the good aspects of each.

Archetypical Explorations of Self-Discovery in Hesiod, Homer, and Sophocles

David M. Gutierrez

This is a nine week unit designed for eighth grade students at Washington Middle School. The unit explores central Greek texts which have had enormous influence on the literature of the past two-thousand years. In addition to introducing students to this literature in particular, it also addresses many literary concepts in general. Poetry, drama and myth are all addressed, as well as certain literary concepts such as tragedy, allegory, and symbolism. Furthermore, an emphasis has been placed on Jungian interpretation of myth, allowing students to see their own place in the heroic structure. Thus, through reading, discussion and writing, students will engage in their own heroic journey of self-discovery, learning not only about literature, but also about themselves and their place in the world.

To accomplish these goals, students will read selections from Hesiod, as well as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Homer's *The Odyssey*. Although this will be challenging for the students, setting high goals will encourage them to aspire to understand the material and succeed at responding to it. To facilitate this, instruction should take into account Multiple Intelligence theory. Thus a wide variety of images, music, and hands-on instruction should be utilized. In addition, we will make many references to popular culture, both in its portrayal of Greek myth and its use of the hero's journey. In so doing, students should complete the unit with a strong understanding of the texts and the ability to interpret them in a meaningful and personal way.

Teaching Greek Myths: A Way To Understand Hero Archetypes

Donna McBroom

This unit can be used as an introduction to the Greek myths and drama that are required reading for high school students. Because of the allusions to Greek mythology in so much of our literature, poetry, and art students need to be aware of Greek literature. A background in Greek mythology can also be used as a way to look at the roles of heroes, masculine or feminine, in the literature they read. The curriculum is designed to engage reluctant readers as well as more proficient readers in an honors class. Therefore, it includes ideas for genre literature as well. The lesson plans provide several suggestions for ninth and tenth grade classes that can be adjusted to any level of your students' ability. One lesson plan is included for a tenth grade honors class. When students begin to apply what they know about the archetype of the hero and the hero's journey to the books they read, it gives them a tool to use in thinking about characterization and plot. I have used parts of this unit with students who have nearly dropped out of school, and have found them interested, engaged, and thinking.

How Are Greek Gods and Goddesses Viewed in Today's Popular Culture?

Erica Pacheco

This curriculum unit integrates Greek Mythology with a comparison of modern day celebrities and is designed for sixth grade special education students with specific learning disabilities and behavior disorders. It is a very basic unit, but can be adapted to any level. This seven-week unit will utilize elements of literature, language arts, and social studies, focusing on the text *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths*. During this unit the students will learn about the similarities and

differences between myth, saga, legend, and folktale, with examples from literature as a means to providing practice and mastery over the pertinent concepts. Next, they will be introduced to the Olympian Family of the Greek Gods and Goddesses and their archetypes and then begin to make connections to their own lives and produce an original myth that has some modern day association.

History and Mythology

Mary Anne Polster

In T. J. Luce's *The Greek Historians* he writes in the first chapter, "It seems paradoxical to assert both that the reaction against Homer was a major stimulus to the birth of history and that the classical historians took directly from Homer their basic subject matter and the form in which they presented it." In one short sentence we have the case of wrestling between the literary genre of the eighth century that captivated the hearts and minds of the Greek people for centuries, and the "invention of history" in the fifth century B.C. This unit approaches the misgivings one had for the other, and presents to the student ample opportunity for critical thinking and discussion. This does not end with a mere viewing of the early facts, but intrudes into present day research on Troy and necessarily the *Iliad* along with the struggles of Achilles. It even projects into present day psychoanalysis through the works of Campbell, who takes as his "guiding idea" to find "the commonalities of themes in world myths, pointing to a constant requirement in the human psyche for a centering in terms of deep principles – for the experience of being alive." For students to digest a few of these ideas will inevitably help them in the search for a deeper awareness of "self" and their place in and relationship to their environment, and perhaps a brief glimpse of their own inward mystery. Through journals, discussion, position papers, and research reaction papers, students will share their insights and find in themselves the faces of reality and myth.

Holding out for a Hero

Susannah Ross

This is a nine-week unit the objective of which is to explore the patterns and characteristics of the archetypal hero in literature from their roots in ancient Greek literature to the modern hero in popular culture. It is an opportunity to connect many different genres, cultures and centuries of literature with a common thread. The hero archetype has permeated literature from its incipience. Some of the first known

manuscripts are legends of heroes. This curriculum unit is about the characteristics and patterns of the hero archetype in Western literature. The hero archetype is one of the mainstays of our literary diet. Our appetite, it seems, can never be satiated when it comes to hero consumption. In studying the characteristics and patterns of legendary literary heroes, we can understand what it is that creates this need for heroes.

A culture in need of a hero supplies one with all of the requisite attributes valued by the culture. Joseph Campbell suggests in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* that heroes are the manifestation of the best in our own human nature. "It appears that through the wonder tales which pretend to describe the lives of legendary heroes, symbolic expression is given to the unconscious desires, fears and tensions that underlie the conscious patterns of human behavior"(256). This is perhaps the best explanation for our endless fascination with the hero and the heroic epic. The journey, quest, or challenge undertaken by the hero becomes our journey as well. The monsters and evils he faces are our own internal demons, and the skills and attributes he possesses or uses are exaggerated manifestations of what society values.

In this unit, the students will study the background of the hero archetype. We will chart the patterns and list the heroic characteristics. The students will see how the characteristics of heroes reflect the needs and values of the various societies, and will ultimately use this knowledge to decipher heroic patterns in contemporary popular culture. As Head and Maclea say in *Myth and Meaning*, "It becomes obvious after reading much of the heroic literature of the ancient Greeks that a literary formula of heroism emerged which reflected not only what the Greeks demanded in their stories of heroes but what qualities of manhood they valued"(142). Ultimately, the expectation is that certain characteristics will emerge as dominant depending on the values of the culture and the individual creating the legend. The less desirable characteristics are also exaggerated and usually lead the hero into difficulty. Both the desirable and undesirable are necessary for a hero to be accessible and human. To be heroic is to overcome the internal demons as well as the external. Heroism would be too easy, as well as dull reading, if the heroes were perfect. After all, all can aspire to heroism, none can hope for perfection.

The Greek Roots of Our Western Literary Canon

Glenda Thompson

This is a six-week unit designed for juniors and seniors at Freedom High School. Freedom is an alternative high school for students who, for various reasons, have either not succeeded in the "regular" school setting or have chosen to work in a smaller setting. Most students at Freedom have gotten behind in their studies before arriving at our school due to poor attendance, and are thus lacking an understanding of some of the basic elements of our "canon." This unit traces the traditional Western canon from its beginnings in mythology to the modern day. Emphasis is placed on the universality of images and symbols in myth throughout the world, how these myths influenced early Greek drama and literature, and how Greek literature has impacted our modern understanding of literature and culture.

During the six-week unit, students will read myths from many cultures including Hindu, Norse, American Indian, and Greek. Students will view images and symbols from various cultures, and come to an understanding of their universal nature. Readings from Joseph Campbell will be included to provide insight into understanding the importance of myth to the individual and to the development of culture. Students will read *Antigone* and *Medea*, Greek plays from the fifth century B.C., and compare their themes and social questions to modern concerns and events. We will also compare the works to modern literature, and come to an understanding of the importance of early works on the development of our culture and philosophies. The ultimate goal of *The Greek Roots of Our Western Literary Canon* is to help students appreciate and understand the relevance of literature, ancient and modern, to our lives.

Mythology: Gods, Heroes, and Universal Themes

Shelly Thornton

This unit is designed for a sixth grade language arts and literature class of learning disabled students, and should take approximately four weeks to complete. Even though this unit is designed for a language arts and literature class, it could easily be adapted to a social studies class whose curriculum includes a section on the ancient world. The overall goal of this unit is to teach language arts and literature skills through the vehicle of mythology. The focus will be on introducing the students to mythology in general, and specifically Greek mythology to use as a point of comparison to other mythologies. The first week of the unit will begin by familiarizing the students with general mythological concepts and vocabulary. In the second week they will learn about the gods and goddesses of the Greek pantheon. The third week covers the concept of universal

myths, focusing primarily on three themes chosen by the teacher. Those themes are creation myths, flood myths, and hero myths. On the fourth and final week the class will delve more in depth into the theme of hero myths. The class will work with three heroes in particular: Perseus, Heracles, and Odysseus. Throughout this unit we will work on skills covering the reading process, reading analysis, writing, speaking, receptive language, and research, as well as using a lot of comparing and contrasting of the concepts across various cultures.

Hero Journey: Not a Trip to Subway

Donna Whitcomb

This unit is specifically designed for ninth grade English students. *The Odyssey* is a required ninth grade text which emphasizes character development and patterns. Our emphasis is on the pattern of the Hero Journey and important signifiers associated with it. Students will be asked to evaluate the text in cooperative groups and assess the significance for contemporary stories. At the end of the unit, students will be asked to produce a creative project rather than test-oriented formal assessment. This unit builds on prior knowledge and is relevant to adolescent realities.