

MYTHOLOGY: GODS AND GODDESSES

- Introduction

Although to the ancients, myths were simply accounts of the doings of deities that they believe actually existed, today's students see these same stories as a body of literature. The distinction is one that students should understand, for though the stories are interesting for their own sake, and retain an essential appeal to the human imagination, they are equally important for what they have to say about the past.

Mythology: Gods and Goddesses is a two-part program that seeks to introduce students to both aspects of mythology: the historical and the literary. The stress of the program is on giving students an idea of the nature of the Greek and Roman gods and of the importance of these gods in the lives of the ancients. In most cases, no attempt is made to tell the entire myth; rather the emphasis is on telling just enough of the most important stories, most draw from Bulfinch's Mythology, to introduce the student to the principal figures in Classical mythology and to whet their appetites to read the myths for themselves.

To avoid overwhelming students by the many new and foreign-sounding names (the Greek and Roman names for each god as well as the names of many other figures in Greek and Roman mythology), it is suggested that the program be presented on two separate days.

A list of vocabulary words that may be new to some students has been included in this Teacher's Guide. We suggest that you discuss these terms and their meanings in Mythology, as well as in general usage, before presenting the program.

- Summary of Content

Part One

- The two most important functions of the Greek and Roman deities were controlling the natural world and directing all areas of human life.

- Program discusses how myths came to be written and the relationship between Greek and Roman myths, and introduces Olympians—the most important gods and goddesses—who lived on Mt. Olympus.

- Prometheus created humankind, and defied Zeus's order not to give humans the gift of fire. To punish the mortals for Prometheus's transgression, Zeus sent to earth Pandora with her box full of evils.

- In the story of Hera's jealousy of Zeus—her husband—and the wood nymphs, Hera dooms one of the nymphs, name Echo, to an eternal existence as a voice that can never speak first, but must always reply.

- The changing of the seasons on earth is explained in a myth about The King of the Underworld, Hades (or Pluto) and Persephone, whose mother was Demeter, goddess of the harvest.

- Hades and Persephone appear in another myth dealing with the separation between the world of the living and the world of the dead. The other characters in this story are Orpheus, son of the god of music; and Eurydice, the woman he loved.

- Hercules—son of Zeus and a mortal woman called Alcmene—slays the nine-headed Hydra. Hercules was the only ancient hero to eventually become a god.

- Part Two

- This part of the program focuses on the younger gods and goddesses. As in Part One, a myth is told for each important deity introduced.

- The first is Athena, who turns Arachne, a mortal, into a spider as punishment for her disrespect to the gods.

- The next story tells of the mythological origins of the Trojan War. Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, Hera and Athena are involved in this myth, as well as a Trojan prince named Paris and Helen, the most beautiful woman on earth.

- Apollo's son, Phaethon, demanded permission to drive the sun's chariot across the sky for one day. Apollo reluctantly agreed—but the boy could not control the horses. Great damage was done to earth and the heavens.

- Apollo's sister, Diana (Artemis to the Greeks) was known to have a terrible temper. A young hunter happened to see her bathing, and Diana punished him severely. She turned Actaeon into a giraffe.

- Related Programs

MYTHS AND LEGENDS: MIRRORS OF MANKIND (#255) Illustrates how myths and legends dealing with the changing seasons parallel the stages of

man's life. Deals with myths and legends of creation, childhood, heroism, and death and discusses how they attempt to explain the nature of the universe and man's place in it.

HOMER'S MYTHOLOGY: TRACING A TRADITION (#6263) Identifies Homeric legend as the first significant record of Greek Mythology. Students learn how the Iliad and The Odyssey related to actual history, and how these works influenced subsequent fiction and poetry.

- Warm-up Activities

1. The following words are used in the program. Although most are understandable from the context in which they are used, you may wish to review them with your students, before they view the program, to make sure that they understand them.

Part One Part Two drought testament aspect moderation immortal
arrogant hindering intricate traditional counsel allotted homage
puny reverence defy resolve ember artisans insatiable prophecy
vanity prevailed slander unrestrained forfeit unbridled transformed
rounded unrelenting deprived crevice nymphs barren satyrs renowned
sallow trident avenge plagued tempests sear

2. The next two pages contain a list of the Olympian Gods and Goddesses discussed in the program. Greek names, Roman names and the realm assigned to each God or Goddess are all listed. The publisher grants permission to reproduce the lists. Students may use them to become familiar with the "characters" before viewing the program or for review afterwards.

Part One

Greek Name Roman Name General Information

Zeus Jupiter King of the gods and goddesses God of thunder and Justice

Hera Juno Queen of the gods and goddesses Wife of Zeus Goddess of marriage and motherhood

Hades/Pluto Pluto King of the Underworld, Zeus' brother

Demeter Ceres Goddess of grain and the harvest Zeus's sister

Persephone Prosperine Queen of the underworld Demeter's daughter

Poseidon Neptune God of the sea, Zeus' brother

Heracles Hercules God of athletes, Zeus' son

Hestia Vesta Goddess of the hearth Zeus' sister

• Part Two

Greek Name Roman Name General Information

Athena/Athene Minerva Goddess of wisdom Goddess of righteous wars, peaceful arts, and handicrafts Zeus' daughter

Aphrodite Venus Goddess of love and beauty

Eros Cupid God of love Aphrodite's son

Hephaestus Vulcan God of metalworkers and artisans God of fire, Hera's son

Apollo Apollo God of light and music, archery and healing Zeus' son

Artemis Diana Goddess of hunting, wild things, the moon, and childbirth Zeus' daughter, Apollo's twin sister

Ares Mars God of war and thieves Son of Hera and Zeus

Hermes Mercury God of merchants Messenger of the gods Zeus' son

Dionysus Bacchus God of wine Zeus' son

• Related Activities

1. Imagine that you can interview one of the ancient gods or goddesses introduced in this program. Which one would you most like to meet? What questions would you ask? Imagine how the god or goddess might reply to your questions.

2. Find out which planets and constellations are named after figures in Greek and Roman mythology. (See especially Pegasus, Cassiopea, Andromeda, Orion, Cygnus, Pleiades, and Signs of the Zodiac.) Tell the class about the figures in the constellations.

3. Look around your community and make a collection of businesses, symbols, streets and places that are named for figures in Greek and Roman mythology.

4. Choose one of the following heroes and heroines, read a myth about the figure you have chosen, and then retell it to the class.

Atalanta
Baucis and Philemon
Jason and the Golden Fleece
Antigone
Theseus and the Minotaur
Odysseus/Ulysses
Daedalus and Icarus
Achilles

5. Try to imagine what the Olympians might say about life in the twenty first century. You might write a brief play in which each Olympian comments on the aspects of human life that were his or her particular concern; for example, Hera might comment on modern marriage; Hermes on muggers; Apollo on rock music; Athena on the wisdom of our age; Ares on nuclear war; Aphrodite on teen-age love, and so on.

6. Hydra was the nine-headed swamp monster that Hercules killed. Find out what one of the following monsters was like, and write a brief description. If there is a story involved, retell it briefly.

Sphinx
Scylla and Charybdis
Minotaur
Harpies
Cyclops
Cerberus
Chimaera

If you like to draw, make a picture of one of these monsters.

7. The ancients portrayed their gods and goddesses in sculpture and drawings. Go to the library and find a book with photographs of ancient Greek and Roman art. See if you can find pictures of ancient statues of the gods or goddesses mentioned in the program, or of temples dedicated to them.

8. Athena's emblem was the owl. Most of the gods and goddesses had sacred trees or plant and were associated with particular animals. Choose three of the gods and goddesses mentioned in the program and find out what each one's sacred animals and/or plants were and the significance of each.

9. Find out about ancient Egyptian mythology. Compare the Greek and Roman gods with those of ancient Egypt. How were they different? Similar?

10. Make up a modern story based on one of the following mythical themes:

a person who is granted a wish, a person who causes a lot of trouble by being too curious, a strong person who can perform seemingly impossible tasks, a person who is punished for talking too much.

Or, choose one of the myths mentioned in the program and retell it in modern terms.

11. Make a family tree of the gods and goddesses of Mt. Olympus.

12. Find out something about what every day life was like in ancient Greece and Rome. Report your findings to the class.

13. Use a college or unabridged dictionary to find the origins of the following words. Each one is named for a character in Greek or Roman mythology.

tantalize Saturday hypnotize January panic March genius museum
morphine Europe juvenile hydrant June atlas music helium

• Review Questions

1. Some of the ancient myths explained why the world was the way it was. For example, how the ancients explained thunder. How the myth of Demeter and Persephone explained the changing seasons. Name some other natural phenomena that the ancients believed the gods controlled.

2. According to the ancients, how were the gods and goddesses different from humans? In what ways were they like humans?

3. Who were the Olympians? Why were they given this name?

4. Tell what a myth is. How is a myth different from a modern short story?

5. Why are the Roman myths similar to the Greek myths? Why do the gods have different names in Roman mythology?

6. What are the main functions of these gods: Zeus, Poseidon, Pluto? How are they related?

7. Prometheus is the kind of figure that people who study mythology call a culture hero. A culture hero is responsible for helping and teaching the people. What good things did Prometheus do for humans according to ancient Greek mythology?

8. Explain these phrases: "a Pandora's box, "a Herculean task."

9. In what ways did the goddess Hera make trouble for Hercules? Why did she dislike him from the moment he was born?