



The Olympian World



Activities for the Classroom

Introduction

Your students will step back in time to a civilization that formed 3,000 years ago – ancient Greece. As they read and explore a wide variety of Greek myths, they will look through the eyes of classical Greeks in an attempt to understand the origin of the universe and the beginning of humankind. Students will examine Greek culture and explore ancient stories – writings that attempt to answer complex questions such as: How did the world begin? How were people created, and why? Why are there stars in the sky? Why are there seasons? As your students read and analyze creation myths, morality myths and hero myths, they will make connections to their own lives and recognize the influences of Greek mythology present in the world today.

Overview

Introduce your students to The Olympian World by exploring the influence of Ancient Greeks on our everyday lives. Greek symbolism appears everywhere from Nike running shoes to the Midas mufflers on family cars. With the understanding that ancient Greek culture still plays an important role in our lives, students will focus on myths and their relevance in Greek culture.

The essential questions explored during this course of study are:

- How does reading about mythological characters help us make connections to our present day world?
- How can research and inquiry lead to new understandings?

Students will focus on two enduring understandings:

- Myths attempt to explain the unexplainable
- Readers and writers make sense of the human experience through storytelling

They will learn about the three different types of myths: origin/creation myths, morality myths, and hero myths. On their adventure, students will meet gods, goddesses, heroes, and magical beasts and learn their stories. Students will discover that all myths had the following eight characteristics:

- Myths are an attempt to explain natural phenomena
- They have many gods
- The gods and heroes are superhuman beings
- The gods have emotions
- Myths contain magic
- Gods often appear in disguises
- Good is rewarded and evil is punished
- Myths contain violence

Your students will demonstrate their increased knowledge and appreciation for the Greeks by writing an original myth or an Odyssey of their own. The journey doesn't have to stop there. We've prepared a booklet of places to visit, interesting books to read and web sites to explore. Use these along with the extension activities to further discover the Ancient Greeks.

Suggested Projects You Can Do In The Classroom

Create a Shield¹

Students will begin their journey with an in-depth study of the major Gods/Goddesses of the Olympian World. They will examine each figure's traits, values and unique symbols. Symbols such as Poseidon and his trident or Artemis with her bow and arrow not only identified the God/Goddess but relayed important messages about their very persona. Spend some time with your class and help them to identify their favorite figure in Greek mythology and create a shield that reflects this particular character(s).

Materials Needed:

- Cardboard
- Aluminum foil
- Heavy string or yarn
- Paper towels
- Masking tape
- White glue
- Scissors



Directions for your students:

1. Cut the cardboard piece into a circle or shape that best fits the shield you would like to create.
2. Think of a god/goddesses and their symbol and draw it on the piece of cardboard. Use a pencil so you can erase if you make mistakes. You can also do this on another piece of paper and then glue it onto your shield.
3. Gently paint around the symbol with the black paint. Wipe off any extra that you have. This will make your symbol stand out.
4. Decorate other parts of the shield with images that you connect with the god. For example, with Poseidon, you could draw the sea or a boat. With Artemis, you can draw a deer that she might be hunting.
5. Cover the back of your shield with foil. Overlap the foil onto the front corners of your shield.
6. Cut a piece of string/yarn and glue it to the back of your shield. Make sure it fits snugly around your arm. This is your handle. Now, you're ready to defend yourself!

Stargaze²

As the pioneers in astronomy, the Ancient Greeks deeply valued the night sky. Stars and constellations not only guided faraway travelers home, but through myths, reminded Greeks of the positive/negative consequences of their actions. Often times, gods/goddesses were turned into constellations as a reward or punishment. Examples include the vanity of Cassiopeia and the tragic story of Orion. The Ancient Greeks believed that the sun's rotation moves in circles which are represented through the Zodiac. The Greeks are recognized for naming over half of the approximately eighty-eight constellations we identify in the sky today. Expand your students' knowledge of the night sky by using these great suggestions to help you get started. In no time, your students will be pointing out stars and constellations to family and friends.

1. Find a good observing site- It should be free of city lights and tall buildings so you have a great view of the entire sky.
2. Dress warmly! You'll be spending a long time outside so make sure to wear layers to keep you comfortable.
3. Try to get to your observation site early so you are familiar with it.
4. Bring supplies such as binoculars, a flashlight, snacks, a portable chair or blanket. Remember, you'll be there for a while so you should be comfortable!
5. Start simply and use your eyes. Using a guide book of stars and constellations will help you too. Then, you can consider buying a telescope. Some suggestions for books are:
 - *Stars and Planets* by Kingfisher Knowledge
 - *Find the Constellations* by H.A. Rey
6. You and your students can join an astronomy club. They'll get help from others and make new friends who share their interest.

Greek Vase Painting³

Greeks valued artists for the beauty, luxury and talent they brought to everyday life. The first artists focused on Greek gods/goddesses for their inspiration and often depicted them on paintings and pottery. In particular, potters preferred to create vases which showcased the figures based on well-known myths. These vases, often painted in either a black-figure style or red-figure style, were not only used for decoration but also to serve food and hold wine. In myths, ceramic platters and carafes of wine are elaborately described because hospitality was a major component of Ancient Greek culture. Use the directions below to have your students create their own vase in the Greek classical style.

Materials Needed:

- One clay pot; any size
- Pencils
- Black permanent markers
- Designs/patterns from Greek pottery. The following web sites are good sources for additional information on Greek pottery and examples:
 - <http://www.2020site.org/greece/>

Directions for your class:

1. Select a repeated graphic or symbol from your design pattern and using a pencil, draw it around the top and base of the pot.
2. Using the patterns as inspiration, draw a Greek figure onto the middle of your pot. Make sure to repeat the figure onto the back of your pot.
3. Using the black marker, color in your patterns and drawing. Refer to the pictures and web sites to see how your pot resembles the ones created by ancient Greek artisans.
4. You can use your vase to hold flowers, art/craft supplies or simply as decoration!

Make An Adventure Map!

Myths often focused on a hero's journey to faraway locations. In this way, myths helped to identify and put boundaries on a world that seemed vast and indefinable to the average person.



Directions for your class:

1. Reproduce a map of Greece with the entire Mediterranean area and its surrounding countries.
2. Then, draw an adventure of map of one of the heroes we read about in our unit.
3. Locate and label places that he/she visited on different days.
4. Make a map key as well as a compass rose.
5. Use colored pencils to decorate it.

Example:

Odysseus or Hercules and their adventures would be plentiful.

Myth Chance, Luck or Fate!⁴

In Greek mythology, the powers of fate, chance and luck impacted the lives of each of the central characters in a myth. Have your class take one of the many figures he or she read about during this program and create a board game that is based on their journey! For example, you might use the myth of Persephone or Atlas.

Materials Needed:

- Two manila folders; one will be used as the game board and the other for clue cards and game pieces.
- Crayons/colored pencils to decorate your game board, clue cards and game pieces.
- One die
- Scissors
- Glue or tape

Directions for your class:

1. Determine which mythological figure you want to base your game on. Use your book or different web site for ideas.
2. Brainstorm possible rules/instructions for your game. Ex: how will you determine who goes first? Can one player send another player back to the beginning?
3. Using one of the manila folders, decorate two game pieces for each player.
4. Create at least 12 clue cards. On one side, write down an action that will send a player forward/backward on the game board. On the other side, you can title the card-Fate, Chance or Luck. Make sure to decorate your card.
5. Take the folder that is your game board and decorate it with the correct number of spaces needed for your game. Make sure to include spaces to draw cards, lose a turn, and go back to the beginning as needed.

Become a Coin Collector!

One of the most valuable Greek contributions to society was the creation of a system of using coins or currency in exchange for goods and services. Ancient Greek coins can still be bought and new collectors can learn a great deal by examining these collections. Explore these web sites and books and help your students start this exciting hobby today!

Books

- *Coin Collecting for Kids*, by Steve Otifonski

Web sites

- <http://collecting-us-coins.com/>
- <http://dougsmith.ancients.info/>
- <http://www.toddmiller.com/maps/index.html> (provides locations of the mints of ancient civilizations)



Books to Read

Deary, Terry. **Top Ten Greek Legends.** Scholastic, 1998.

A humorous account of Greek Mythology, including funny poems, diary entries and Ancient Greek “Wanted” posters.

Heifetz, Milton D. **A Walk through the Heavens: A Guide to Stars and Constellations and their Legends (Walk Through Heavens).** Cambridge University Press. 2000.

An easy-to-use guide to constellations and star gazing. This book starts with the recounting of ancient myths and works with its way to the modern science of astronomy.

Honan, Linda. **Spend the Day in Ancient Greece.** Wiley Publications. 1998. This interesting book details a typical day in the life of an ancient Greek child. Through their eyes, read about family parties, a birthday celebration for the goddesses Athena and attend athletic events.

Manguel, Alberto. **Bullfinch’s Mythology (Modern Library Classics).** 1998. An incredibly thorough compilation of various types of myths and fables. This book recounts mystical myths from the days of ancient Greek gods and goddesses, details the dangerous world of King Arthur’s knights and brings to life, the legends of Charlemagne. If you are lover of fables, myths and stories, this book will delight and enrapture you!

The New York Public Library Amazing Mythology. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000.

This book is a complete lesson in Greek Mythology from the scholars at The New York Public Library, with young scholars as the main focus. It also contains over 200 questions to help stimulate discussion, along with anecdotes from others mythologies such as African, Norse and Egyptian.

Osborne, Mary Pope and Osborne, Will. **The Deadly Power of Medusa.** Scholastic, Inc. Apple Paperbacks, 1988.

This book, intended for Middle school scholars, is a story about the Adventures of Perseus.

Sutcliff, Rosemary. **Black ships before Troy: the story of the Iliad.** Delacorte Press, New York 1993.

Details the adventures of “The Iliad,” in the same vein as “Adventures of the Odysseus.”

Web Sites

Explorations: A Web quest to Inspire Good People to Explore Greek Mythology

An informative and easy to navigate web site with sections on the Ancient Greeks, important myths and Hero characteristics.

<http://www.iwebquest.com/greece/greece.htm>

Mythweb

Includes narratives of key myths and Greek gods/goddesses along with an encyclopedia that allows you to search for important terms and heroes.

<http://www.mythweb.com>

HistoryforKids-Ancient Greece

An entire web site devoted to the lives and contributions of the Ancient Greeks. Learn more about Greek government, their daily lives, dress and even what they ate! You'll be amazed at what has lived on long after this ancient civilization has crumbled.

<http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/greeks/index.htm>

Pegasus' Paradise

This web quest provides reference information on the gods/goddesses, villains and heroes important to Greek mythology. Exciting games are also included such as linking Greek mythology to Roman.

<http://library.thinkquest.org/4553/>

Astronomy for Kids

This site devoted to expanding your love for the stars and the sky! Start with the constellations you already know and identify new ones with games and quizzes. This web site also includes a searchable dictionary as well as online classes to continue your journey into the universe.

<http://www.kidsastronomy.com/>

Places To Visit

Elements of Greek Architecture, Washington, D.C.

Many of our government buildings and national memorials/monuments showcase typical elements of Greek architecture. These elements include columns, open air areas and the presence of round domes or circles. Visit the nation's capital to see the influence of the Greeks even today. Use the following web site prior to your visit to set the stage:

- <http://www.carlos.emory.edu/ODYSSEY/GREECE/>

Grand Central Terminal, New York, New York

Located on 42nd St in the heart of Midtown Manhattan, a train station would seem, at first glance, to be an odd place to explore mythology. However, the ceiling of the enormous main room in New York's Grand Central Terminal is considered one of the more accurate renderings of the night sky in New York.

Jasmine Hill Gardens and Outdoor Museum, Montgomery, Alabama

A treasure of a find for the Greek enthusiast! These gardens are situated on over twenty acres and are home to beautiful plants and flowers, statues of Greek gods/goddesses and replicas of famous temples. In addition to strolling the gardens, visitors are encouraged to take curator-led tours to learn more about the native Greek culture and the continuing influence of this great civilization.
<http://www.jasminehill.org/info.html>

Nashville Art Museum/The Parthenon, Nashville, Tennessee

The Parthenon is Nashville's art museum and an exact replica of the original Parthenon. In addition to holding the city's art collection, the museum contains exhibits exploring Greek sculpture and culture.

United States Naval Observatory, Washington, D.C.

Expand your knowledge of the night sky by using a telescope at the observatory. Take a tour of the building and learn more about the science of astronomy.

<http://www.usno.navy.mil/USNO>

¹ Teacher Created Materials, Inc. A Guide for Using D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths in the Classroom. 1993.

² Rao, Joe. "10 Steps to Rewarding Stargazing."
< <http://www.space.com>.> Accessed 5 May 2005.

³ < <http://www.carlos.emory.edu/ODYSSEY/>> Accessed 6 June 2005.

⁴ < <http://members.aol.com/leesixthgrade/bookgame.html>. > Accessed 29 June 2005.



Junior National Young Leaders Conference
1919 Gallows Road
Suite 700
Vienna, VA 22182

Accepting nominations online at:
www.cylc.org/JrNYLCnom