



BY **MICHAEL ERICKSON**
DIRECTED BY **GAD GUTERMAN**

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Setting the Scene

Since the beginning of time, civilizations of people have created stories to help explain the world around them. Before science, there was a desire to understand everyday occurrences, such as the sun rising in the morning and setting in the evening, why sea travel could be so dangerous, and what happens after death. Each civilization came up with their own rationalizations for how and why life worked the way it did, and one of the most famous of these was the mythology of the Ancient Greeks.

The Ancient Greeks created stories in which powerful gods ruled over the earth. In their stories, the gods would interact with humans and set them on quests or dispense punishment if humans did the wrong thing. These stories, or myths, were oftentimes outlandish and funny, as the Greek gods made as many mistakes as the humans did. However, every myth had a message, or a warning, for its audience, and it was through these that the Ancient Greeks learned the difference between right and wrong.

Since the fall of Ancient Greece, other civilizations have adapted the myths and legends to create stories that can help guide people through right and wrong. Sometimes characters or events are changed depending on what each individual civilization decides to give focus—for example, the Ancient Roman Empire took their myths and gods from the Greeks, but since they were a more militaristic civilization, they altered the myths to focus on war and survival.

Greek Myths: Heroes and Monsters takes the Ancient Greek myths and explores how they have been adapted throughout time, especially how they would look for a modern audience. Since we look at our world less in terms of good versus evil and hero versus monster, this play seeks to explore what makes someone good and what makes someone bad. Can a person who has done a bad thing also be considered a hero? Do monsters deserve to be outcasts just because they look different, or make a single mistake?

Words to the Wise

MYTHOLOGY: A collection of myths

REALM: A kingdom

DOMINION: The territory under a king or queen's control

FORETHOUGHT: Careful consideration of what may happen in the future

FAMINE: Extreme limited supply of food

OMNIPOTENT: Having unlimited power

HINDSIGHT: Understanding of an event that has already happened

INGENUITY: The quality of being clever, original, or inventive

Who's Who

ZEUS: Lord of the Sky and Thunder, King of the Gods

PROMETHEUS: the creator of mankind who disobeys Zeus and is punished greatly

EPIMETHEUS: brother of Prometheus and husband to Pandora

PANDORA: wife of Epimetheus, she is given a jar full of evil to watch over

MEDUSA: a gorgon with snakes for hair and the power to turn people to stone with just one look

PERSEUS: a hero who seeks to kill Medusa

HERMES: Messenger of the Gods, God of Travel and Communication

DEMETER: Goddess of the Harvest, Nature and the Seasons

PERSEPHONE: daughter of Demeter and friend to Hades

HADES: King of the Underworld, God of the Dead

DAEDALUS: an engineer in Ancient Greece, responsible for creating the labyrinth

ICARUS: the son of Daedalus who suffers a great fall

KING MINOS: the King of Crete and father to Ariadne and the Minotaur

THE MINOTAUR: named Clarence, he is a half-man, half-bull, and the son of King Minos.

ARIADNE: the daughter of King Minos and sister to Clarence, the Minotaur

THESEUS: son of Aegeus, from Athens; he seeks to kill the Minotaur

AEGEUS: the father of Theseus who falls prey to his son's mistake

SISYPHUS: a man punished for his crimes by the Gods

Please feel free to adapt these materials to suit your classroom needs and reproduce them for future use.



What's the Story?

The play begins with Professor Boring, a lecturer at the Stockholm Museum of Important Things, asking what makes a hero a hero and a monster a monster. He links these questions to questions that the Ancient Greeks asked, when suddenly, a narrator appears and begins to walk the audience through some Greek myths. Before there was a world, there was only darkness, and then Chaos appeared. After Chaos, there was

light, and the violent Titans ruled the earth. Zeus and the other Olympians appeared to overthrow the Titans. There was a terrible war, and the Titans lost. Zeus and the other gods brought order.

Zeus enters, instructing Prometheus to create people. Although wary, Prometheus does as he is told. Zeus, happy with the result, orders Prometheus to never give the humans

fire. Prometheus raises his creations, teaching them everything they need to know to survive. When night falls, the people beg Prometheus for fire, as they are cold and hungry. Unable to watch them suffer, Prometheus gives them fire. With their gift, people are able to create tools and medicines, as well as roads and ships. Zeus grows angry, as all of these advances cause people to question the power of the gods, and he punishes Prometheus by sending him to the Underworld, where his liver will be continuously eaten by vultures for eternity.

Pandora, the wife of Prometheus' brother, Epimetheus, is given a jar filled with a lot of bad stuff, including illness and suffering. She is told to never open it. However, when her husband comes home, he goads her into seeing what's inside. While they are fighting over the jar, it accidentally opens, releasing all of the bad stuff into the world. All that is left inside is hope.

The Professor explains that now that the jar's contents are out in the world, monsters have begun to appear. Medusa, a terrible monster with snakes for hair, enters. She has the power to turn people to stone if they look at her. Heroes come to kill her, but they are defeated. Finally, the hero Perseus arrives; he uses his shield like a mirror to avoid looking directly at Medusa, and he is able to kill her. She dies a very dramatic death, but feels unsatisfied with the way her story has been told. She pushes the Professor out of the way and decides to give her perspective.

In Medusa's version of the story, she explains that she made a mistake which angered the goddess Athena and resulted in her cursed existence. Perseus arrives once more to kill her. However, she gives him a pair of sunglasses, enabling him to look at her directly without turning to stone. Perseus decides to help her by restyling her hair. He reveals that he's always wanted to open a hair salon, but his father insisted that he become a hero instead. When he's finished with her hair, Perseus is able to look at Medusa without turning to stone.

The story moves on to the island of Crete, where King Minos is discussing renovations to his palace with an engineer, Daedalus. In addition to a swimming pool and a spa, he would like Daedalus to build a labyrinth—a maze that no one can get out of. Minos wants to use the labyrinth to imprison his son, Clarence, the Minotaur, a creature that is half man, half bull. Daedalus encourages King Minos to work on their relationship in different way, perhaps with counseling, but King Minos won't hear of it. He imprisons Daedalus and Icarus, Daedalus's son, forcing them to complete the maze. Daedalus completes the maze, but feels that imprisoning Clarence is wrong. Icarus agrees and together they hatch a plan to fly away. With wax and feathers, they are able to soar away from Crete. However, in his excitement to fly, Icarus flies too close to the sun. His wings melt and he crashes into the sea, never to be found again.



The Professor returns to the stage with a Venn Diagram, eager to continue his presentation. He questions which characters are truly the monsters and which are the heroes, using the incident with Daedalus, King Minos and the Minotaur as an example. Next, he introduces Theseus, another hero who seeks to destroy the Minotaur, who he feels is a monster.

Before he departs for Crete, Theseus makes a promise to his father, King Aegeus: when he sails home, his crew is to fly red sails if Theseus is dead and white sails if he is alive. When Theseus arrives in Crete, he meets Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos and sister of the Minotaur. She offers him a ball of string so that he can find his way back out of the labyrinth. She accompanies him through the labyrinth, leading the way. Theseus, who is a little clueless, isn't much help. They find Clarence and he and Theseus bond over skateboarding. Ariadne leads them out of the maze and the three of them sail for Athens. Distracted, Theseus forgets to raise the white sails and Aegeus, overcome with grief at the sight of the red sails, jumps into the ocean.

Theseus, worried that his story makes him look bad, asks for a do-over, but the narrator explains that even heroes makes mistakes sometimes. The Greek Chorus appears to sing a song about tragedy. Upset, Theseus exits, and the Narrator introduces a myth about a lion who terrorizes a village. The villagers go to the Oracle at Delphi, and she tells them to call Hercules. A young girl, Hercules appears, shocking the village. She defeats the lion without any problems, but the townspeople, while

thankful, decide to tell everyone Hercules was a man.

Suddenly, the play stops, with all of the actors coming out onstage. One actor is worried about the accuracy of the stories that they are telling, but another actor explains that they myths have changed for every generation, and every generation tells them in their own way. Using the story of Sisyphus, she explains what she means. Sisyphus was doomed to an external punishment, just like Prometheus. He tricked the gods, and now he has to roll a boulder up a mountain forever. When he reaches the top, the boulder rolls back down, and he starts all over again. The actor explains that to the Greeks, Sisyphus was a symbol of crime and the certainty of the gods' punishment. It's a story of determination, and sometimes Sisyphus is considered a hero. Other times, he's seen as a symbol of futility; he puts in all of the effort to roll the boulder up the hill, but it never goes anywhere. The actors decide that Sisyphus is both a hero and a monster, and that the story is complicated.

They introduce another complicated story, that of Persephone. In a time when it was summer all year round, Persephone and her mother Demeter, the Goddess of the Harvest, would spend all of their time together. One day, Demeter leaves Persephone alone for a moment, and the young girl meets Hades, God of the Underworld. Hades convinces Persephone to come with him to the Underworld for a play date. They exit, and when Demeter returns, she cannot find her daughter. In her despair, the world begins to die, causing snow and rain, and killing all of the crops.



Zeus, concerned, tells Hermes, the messenger of the gods, to find Persephone. He tells Hermes to make sure that Persephone does not eat any pomegranate seeds, or she'll be forced to stay in the Underworld.

Down in the Underworld, Hermes finds Hades and Persephone playing together. He tells Persephone that she must go home. However, before she leaves, Persephone eats six pomegranate seeds. This means that she must return to the Underworld every year for six months. This is what created

the seasons. When Persephone is down in the Underworld, Demeter mourns, causing fall and winter. When Persephone returns, the world comes alive again in a splendid spring and summer.

The Professor re-enters, concluding his presentation. The other actors appear onstage, discussing what it means to be a hero. They each have their own ideas about heroes and monsters, but they see these stories as a gift that is ever-changing, a gift that is different for each generation.



Learn More About It



Hercules (1997 film)

This animated Disney film focuses on the hero Hercules, and his quest to find his real parents. His journey takes him throughout Ancient Greece, and he defeats monsters and falls in love. Like *Greek Myths: Heroes and Monsters*, it is an adaptation of the myths, so there are a lot of differences!



Jim Henson's The Storyteller: Greek Myths

This television series from the 1990s uses puppets and extensive makeup to tell a variety of Greek myths, including Theseus and the Minotaur, Perseus and Medusa, Daedalus and Icarus, and Orpheus and Eurydice.



Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan

The first in a series of novels, this modern story moves all of the gods, monsters and heroes of Ancient Greece to the United States, where demigod (half-human, half-god) Percy Jackson must prove that he didn't steal Zeus's lightning bolt in order to stop a war with the gods.



Ancient Greek Myths for Kids greekmyths4kids.com

This extensive website allows kids to explore different myths and how they connect to each other, as well as discover information about life in Ancient Greece.

Life in Ancient Greece

Greece is a small country in southeast Europe, on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea. To the east, across the Aegean Sea, is the country of Turkey. To the west, across the Ionian Sea, is the boot heel of Italy. Three countries rest along the northern border of Greece: Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria. In this area of the world, some of the longest reigning and farthest reaching empires existed, including the Turkish Empire and the Roman Empire. The Greeks, while never as powerful as their neighbors, managed to make their mark on the modern world through their cultural and political practices.

MAJOR CITIES

One of the main reasons Ancient Greece did not become a massive empire like other civilizations at the time was because of the way that communities organized themselves. Greece had a large collection of city-states, which they called a polis. Larger than a city, but smaller than a state, these city-states each had their own way of doing things. Sometimes these city-states would come into conflict with one another over their ideas, which led to war. Due to fighting happening within Ancient Greece, the Greeks were not able to defend themselves against invaders, which eventually led to the fall of Ancient Greece and the rise of the Roman Empire. Some major Greek city-states were Athens, Sparta, Corinth, Delphi and Thebes.

DEMOCRACY

Athens, which is the modern-day capital city of Greece, was the birthplace of a system of government known as democracy. This might seem familiar to you, as it is also the type of government that is practiced in the United States. In a democratic government, every citizen has a say in what happens—it is important to note that in Ancient Greece, only men were considered citizens, so they were the only ones who had a vote. When you turn 18, you will be able to cast a vote to make decisions about the future of the USA. As one of the major pillars of a democracy, it is a very important right.

DAILY LIFE

Considering that Ancient Greece thrived more than 4,000 years ago, it is understandable that the day-to-day life there would be different than the life we are used to. In Ancient Greece, men had all of the power. Their jobs included politics, arts and crafts, construction, trade, manufacturing, sea-faring and agriculture. Men were also soldiers who would defend their city-states during wartime. Women stayed at home, where they would harvest fruit, vegetables and olives. They had no political rights. They were also in charge of raising children, and sewing and weaving cloths.





SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

Ancient Greeks were some of the first people to study and record knowledge in an attempt to explain the universe. As the next section of the guide will explain, many myths were used to try to explain why things happened in Greece. However, the Greeks continued to study in order to find answers. The Greeks were the first people to practice medicine, logic and astronomy. Discoveries made during this time became foundations for modern scientists to continue to discover the world around them. As far as general education goes, young men were sent to state schools for a few years in order to become intellectually developed. Wealthy boys were sent to academies, where they might have learned mathematics, philosophy and rhetoric. The Academy of Plato, one of the most well-known philosophers in the world, would have been a major school. Girls received no formal education, but might learn to read and write at home.

THE OLYMPICS

The Ancient Greeks created a tournament of great athletic contests in the city-state of Olympia. These Olympic Games took place every four years to honor Zeus. Such contests would include track and field events like the marathon, javelin throw and long jump. They were a time of celebration and peace, bringing people from all city-states together. Greek Olympics took place until around 400 BC. Today, the Olympic Games take place every four years in a different country around the world, and bring athletes from countries on six continents together to compete.

ART AND THEATRE

The Greeks made great strides in their art and culture. Today, artists and engineers still study Greek architecture and sculpture in order to build and create modern work. Many buildings and temples from Ancient Greece still stand today, and museums all over the world have Ancient Greek collections. Art was used as a way to honor the gods and explore the beauty of the world. Ancient Greece was also the birthplace of theatre; festivals were held each year, where tragedies, comedies and musicals would be performed. Dionysus, the God of Festivals and Parties, was honored by one of the largest festivals. Actors would perform songs in costume, portraying different characters (and sometimes the gods). Theatrical practices in Ancient Greece paved the way for all types of theatre that you see today, including the Imaginary Theatre Company's production of *Greek Myths: Heroes and Monsters*.



Science and Seasons

Before modern science gave humanity a way to understand the world, the Ancient Greeks decided that the world around them was the result of the power of the gods. Hurricanes were created by Poseidon, God of the Sea, as he battled monsters. Thunder and lightning came from Zeus, God of the Sky, as he ruled the world from the top of Mount Olympus.

Thanks to major advancements in science and technology, we now know that hurricanes and other ocean storms are not caused by Poseidon wielding his trident, but by changes in atmospheric pressure and wind speeds. Thunder is a crashing noise heard after a lightning flash due to the expansion of rapidly heated air, and lightning comes from electrically charged areas within storm clouds.

As we see in *Greek Myths: Heroes and Monsters*, the Ancient Greeks also found an explanation for the changing seasons. To the Greeks, winter came because Demeter was separated from her daughter, and without Persephone, Demeter did not have the will to care for the Earth. We now know that there are seasons because of the revolution of the Earth around the Sun.

Research the four seasons. Compare and contrast them, writing down key traits for each season. Then, explain why each season has the traits that it has. Spring has already been done as an example, but feel free to add any new findings to the list.

<p>SPRING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Length of daylight increases• Warmer temperatures• Flowers and other plants begin to bloom• Oftentimes, there is a lot of rainfall• The Earth begins to tilt more towards the Sun	<p>FALL</p>
<p>SUMMER</p>	<p>WINTER</p>

Myths and Legends

Myths are traditional stories that often explain some natural or social phenomenon (like hurricanes and thunder). Typically they will involve supernatural beings (like gods and monsters). Myths play a fundamental role in society, as they are tools used to teach lessons and explain life. Most societies have myths, which might be called legends. Today, mythical stories and legends are often told to children. They have a symbolic nature and can be used to teach children right from wrong.

You have spent a lot of time now studying the myths of Ancient Greece, but did you know that you can also create a myth of your own? Myths are created to give answers to questions that you may have, so all you need to do to begin is find something that you're curious about.

First, choose what your myth will be about. Maybe it will be something about nature like fire or clouds, or maybe it will be something about people, like love or jealousy. It could even be something completely different, like where chocolate came from!

What's your myth going to be about? _____

Next, you'll need characters. Every story has to have characters, so you'll need to pick some main characters for your myth. For example, if you were telling the story of Theseus and the Minotaur, your main characters would be Theseus, the Minotaur, Ariadne and maybe even King Minos, since he's the reason Theseus and the Minotaur found each other. Your characters can be whomever you like, including yourself. Remember, myths will often have a supernatural being as well.

Character List: _____

Then, you'll need to plan your story. What are the major events, and how will the action of the story move from one event to the next? Make some notes below.

Now, it's time to write your myth! You have your characters, and your major events, so it's time to put everything together. Remember, you're the storyteller, so you want to include interesting details and all of the information that your reader needs know to understand your story.

Write your myth below, then trade with a classmate and read each other's myths to learn new things!

Through the Labyrinth

Ariadne, Theseus and the Minotaur are trapped in the maze, and they don't know the right path to take. See if you can help them escape before King Minos finds them!

