

THE COTERIE

no small characters.

THEMES AND TOPICS LESSON PLAN

Created for use in your classroom after seeing

Geek Mythology: I Was a Teenage Immortal

Grades 9-12

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Common Core Writing Standards:

CCR Anchor Standard 9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the author takes.

Materials Included:

- Greek Mythology stories:
 - Hades and Persephone (Appendix A)
 - Artemis and Actæon (Appendix B)
 - Hephaestus, Aphrodite, and Ares (Appendix C)
 - Zeus, Metis, and the birth of Athena (Appendix D)

Student Objectives:

Students will be able to

1. Analyze similarities of two different versions of the same story in context to grade focus area.
2. Analyze differences of two different versions of the same story in context to grade focus area.
3. Reinterpret a story from source material to relate to modern life.

Assessments:

- Free-writing notes: Students will turn in their lists of similarities and differences
- New story outline: Students will outline a retelling of one of the Greek myths presented in *I Was a Teenage Immortal* in a way that relates the story to their life
- Re-telling Performance: Students will perform their re-telling based off of their outline.

Grade Focus Areas:

- **9th-10th Grade:** Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material
- **11th-12th Grade:** Analyze how two or more texts treat similar themes or topics

Lesson:

Introduction

- *Greek and Geek Brainstorming (10-20 minutes)*: Students are assigned one of the four Greek mythological stories presented in *Geek Mythology: I Was a Teenage Immortal*: “Hades and Persephone” (Appendix A), “Artemis and Actæon” (Appendix B), “Hephaestus, Aphrodite, and Ares” (Appendix C), and “Zeus, Metis, and the Birth of Athena” (Appendix D). Pass out the corresponding appendix included. Give students a few minutes to read the story, then ask them to brainstorm two lists: similarities between the myth and the show; differences between the myth and the show.
 - After about 10 minutes of brainstorming, students will synthesize the information into a Venn diagram.

Building Activities

- *Small Group Collaboration*:
 - *Step 1 (5-10 minutes)*: Students get into groups based on the story they were given. In these groups they share their Venn diagrams, discussing the differences and similarities found.
 - *Step 2 (5-10 minutes)*: They list at least 5 reasons as to why the playwright of *Geek Mythology: I Was a Teenage Immortal* might have changed the story in the way he did.
 - *Step 3 (10-20 minutes)*: Students brainstorm elements of the source material that could relate to modern lives (i.e. emotions the characters feel, relationships between the characters, etc.).
 - *Step 4 (10-20 minutes)*:
- *Making a Modern Presentation (20-30 minutes)*: Choosing one or more of their listed ideas from step 3, each story group will write an outline to retell their story in a way that is relevant to today’s society (ex: making it a musical using pop songs, making each character a different archetype you meet at school, creating a reality TV show, etc.) From this outline they will practice acting it out in order to perform it for the class.
 - Students will perform the re-telling of their Greek myth for the class. After each group performs, the class will reflect on the presentation, citing text examples to explain choices.

Wrap-up

- *Collaborative Reflection (15 minutes)*: Students will discuss what they have learned as an entire class. Use guiding questions such as the ones provided below to facilitate deep and meaningful conversation.
 - While sharing your Venn diagrams, what differences did you find within the group? What similarities did you find?
 - How did these similarities/differences affect your modernization of the story?
 - How did the story change as the process went along?
 - Which did you connect with more, the original source material, *Geek Mythology*, or your modern telling? Why?

- What are some other ways in which mythological stories tie into your life?
- What were the challenges you faced in creating a modern telling?

Keep the collaborative discussion going by asking if students within each story group how their take was similar and different from the others in their group.

- Where did you get a different perspective?
- Why did you choose that idea?
- How did it change your version of the story?

APPENDIX A

Hades and Persephone

Source: *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Classical Mythology*
Osborn, Kevin and Dana Burgess. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Classical Mythology*. New York: Penguin, 1998.

Hades, god of the Underworld, fell in love with Persephone and wanted her as his bride. His brother Zeus consented to the marriage—or at least refused to oppose it. Yet he warned Hades that Demeter would never approve this coupling, for she would not want her daughter spirited off to a sunless world. At Zeus's suggestion—or with his tacit understanding—Hades resolved to abduct the maiden.

Persephone was gathering flowers one day on a plain in Sicily. Hades suddenly appeared, thundering across the plain in his four-horse chariot. The god swooped down upon Persephone, scooped her up with one arm, and literally and figuratively deflowered her—leaving the plain scattered with blossoms of every color.

The appearance, abduction, and disappearance happened so swiftly that none of Persephone's companions witnessed the kidnapping. And though she called out to them—and plaintively called for her mother—no one heard her pleas. The earth opened up before Hades' chariot and the god drove the jet-black horses down into the chasm. As Hades and Persephone disappeared into the depths, the hole closed up behind them. Demeter soon came to collect her daughter, but could not find a trace of Persephone. Distraught and desperate, Demeter searched high and low for her daughter. She traveled to the farthest corners of the earth, searching for nine full days and nights without ever stopping to eat, drink, bathe, or rest. Demeter was in a fury. She destroyed lands, crops, and livestock as she bewailed the loss of her daughter. She threatened to make the earth barren forever and thus destroy all of humankind if she did not find Persephone.

Finally, on the tenth day, the goddess Hecate told Demeter that Persephone had been carried away, but she did not know by whom. The two goddesses went to Helios, the god of the sun, who saw everything that happened on Earth. Helios did tell her what had happened, but also tried to persuade Demeter that Hades—as Zeus's brother and ruler of one third of the universe—was not an unfit husband for Persephone.

Demeter refused to accept Hades as a suitable mate for her precious daughter. Enraged by the news of Persephone's abduction (and Zeus's possible complicity), she refused to return to Mount Olympus. Instead she roamed the earth in the guise of a mortal, forbidding the trees to bear fruit and the earth to nurture vegetables and herbs.

After a full year of famine had plagued the earth, Zeus realized that if he allowed Demeter to persist, all of humankind would starve—leaving no one to honor and

make offerings to the gods. Zeus sent a parade of gods and goddesses to Demeter to beg her to come back to Olympus and to restore fertility to the earth.

But Demeter refused to budge until her daughter stood by her side. Zeus had no choice: He relented, promising to bring Persephone back to her mother. Hermes, summoned by Zeus, raced down to Hades to fetch Persephone. Hades shrugged compliantly and agreed to let her go. Persephone had not eaten a single thing—whether from sorrow, loss of appetite, or stubbornness—since her arrival in the Underworld. But before she left, Hades urged Persephone to appease her terrible hunger by eating a single pomegranate seed. Sadly, this apparent act of kindness was a trick: Anyone who tastes the food of Hades must remain in the Underworld.

The deed having been done, Rhea—the mother of Zeus, Demeter, and Hades—proposed a compromise that her children reluctantly accepted: Since Persephone had eaten there, she had to dwell at least part of every year in the Underworld. Rhea suggested that Persephone spend six months (or, according to some, three or four months) as Queen of the Underworld and the rest of the year with Demeter. After agreeing to the deal, Demeter restored Earth's fertility and returned to Olympus with Persephone. But when the time came for Persephone to return to the Underworld, the earth became colder and less fertile until her reemergence months later.

Since the abduction of Persephone, spring and summer have given way to autumn and winter, and the earth's fertility has followed the progression of seasons. In the fall, seeds—like Persephone herself—were buried underground. But in the spring, Persephone and the earth's crops came out into the sun once more.

Appendix B

Artemis and Actæon

Source: *The Age of Fable, or Stories of Gods and Heroes*
Bulfinch, Thomas. *The Age of Fable, or Stories of Gods and Heroes*. Stilwell, KS: Digireads, 2007.

It was midday, and the sun stood equally distant from either goal, when young Actæon, son of King Cadmus, thus addressed the youths who with him were hunting the stag in the mountains:—"Friends, our nets and our weapons are wet with the blood of our victims; we have had sport enough for one day, and tomorrow we can renew our labors. Now, while Phoebus parches the earth, let us put by our implements and indulge ourselves with rest." There was a valley thick enclosed with cypresses and pines, sacred to the huntress queen, Artemis. In the extremity of the valley was a cave, not adorned with art, but nature had counterfeited art in its construction, for she had turned the arch of its roof with stones, as delicately fitted as if by the hand of man. A fountain burst out from one side, whose open basin was bounded by a grassy rim. Here the goddess of the woods used to come when weary with hunting and lave her virgin limbs in the sparkling water.

One day, having repaired thither with her nymphs, she handed her javelin, her quiver, and her bow to one, her robe to another, while a third unbound the sandals from her feet. Then Crocale, the most skilful of them, arranged her hair, and Nephele, Hyale and the rest drew water in capacious urns. While the goddess was thus employed in the labors of the toilet, behold Actæon, having quitted his companions, and rambling without any especial object, came to the place, led thither by his destiny. As he presented himself at the entrance of the cave, the nymphs, seeing a man, screamed and rushed towards the goddess to hide her with their bodies. But she was taller than the rest and overtopped them all by a head. Such a color as tinges the clouds at sunset or at dawn came over the countenance of Artemis thus taken by surprise. Surrounded as she was by her nymphs, she yet turned half away, and sought with a sudden impulse for her arrows. As they were not at hand, she dashed the water into the face of the intruder, adding these words: "Now go and tell, if you can, that you have seen Artemis unapparelled." Immediately a pair of branching stag's horns grew out of his head, his neck gained in length, his ears grew sharp-pointed, his hands became feet, his arms long legs, his body was covered with a hairy spotted hide. Fear took the place of his former boldness, and the hero fled. He could not but admire his own speed; but when he saw his horns in the water, "Ah, wretched me!" he would have said, but no sound followed the effort. He groaned, and tears flowed down the face which had taken the place of his own. Yet his consciousness remained. What shall he do? — go home to seek the palace, or lie hid in the woods? The latter he was afraid, the former he was ashamed to do. While he hesitated the dogs saw him. First Melampus, a Spartan dog, gave the signal with his bark, then Pamphagus, Dorceus, Lelaps, Theron, Nape, Tigris, and all the rest, rushed after him swifter than the wind. Over rocks cliffs, through

mountain gorges that seemed impracticable, he fled and they followed. Where he had often chased the stag and cheered on his pack, his pack now chased him, cheered on by his huntsmen. He longed to cry out, "I am Actæon; recognize your master!" but the words came not at his will. The air resounded with the bark of the dogs. Presently one fastened on his back, another seized his shoulder. While they held their master, the rest of the pack came up and buried their teeth in his flesh. He groaned, — not in a human voice, yet certainly not in a stag's, — and falling on his knees, raised his eyes, and would have raised his arms in supplication, if he had had them. His friends and fellow-huntsmen cheered on the dogs, and looked everywhere for Actæon, calling on him to join the sport. At the sound of his name he turned his head, and heard them regret that he should be away. He earnestly wished he was. He would have been well pleased to see the exploits of his dogs, but to feel them was too much. They were all around him, rending and tearing; and it was not till they had torn his life out that the anger of Artemis was satisfied.

APPENDIX C

Hephaestus, Aphrodite, and Ares

Source: *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Classical Mythology*
Osborn, Kevin and Dana Burgess. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Classical Mythology*. New York: Penguin, 1998.

Hera, reconciled with her son Hephaestus, arranged for him to marry the goddess of love [Aphrodite]. Zeus, Aphrodite's adoptive father, agreed. Unsurprisingly, the marriage of the enchantingly beautiful, sensual, and insatiable Aphrodite and the powerful, but gruff, ugly, and lame Hephaestus was not a happy one. Aphrodite could not confine her love to just one other. The goddess did not remain faithful to Hephaestus—not by a long shot. She had countless affairs with both gods and mortals.

The most long-standing and significant of all Aphrodite's lovers was Ares [god of war]. But one night, the lovers tarried too long together. As Helios hitched up his golden chariot of the sun, he saw the lovers in Ares's palace in Thrace.

When Helios told Hephaestus what he had seen, the smith god forged an unbreakable bronze net and secretly attached it to the posts and sides of his bed. Then he bid Aphrodite adieu, saying he was going to relax in Lemnos for awhile.

Of course, as soon as he was gone, Aphrodite sent for Ares. When the morning came, Hephaestus walked in . . . and found the two ensnared in the net. The cuckolded god quickly gathered all the other gods at his bedside to witness the shame of the naked and helpless couple and to heap ridicule on them.

Appendix D

Zeus, Metis, and the Birth of Athena

Source: *greekmythology.com*

"Athena's Birth." *Greekmythology.com*. GreekMythology.com, 2013. Web. 2 January 2014.

Zeus came to lust after Metis, and chased her in his direct way. Metis tried to escape, going so far as to change her form many times, and turning into various creatures such as hawks, fish, and serpents. However, Zeus was both determined and equally proficient at changing form. He continued his pursuit until she relented.

An Oracle of Gaea then prophesied that Metis first child would be a girl but, her second child would be a boy that would overthrow Zeus as had happened to his father and grandfather. Zeus took this warning to heart. When he next saw Metis he flattered her and put her at her ease. Then with Metis off guard Zeus suddenly opened his mouth and swallowed her. This was the end of Metis but, possibly the beginning of Zeus's wisdom.

After a time Zeus developed the mother of all headaches. He howled so loudly it could be heard throughout the earth. The other gods came to see what the problem was. Hermes realized what needed to be done and directed Hephaestus to take a wedge and split open Zeus's skull. Out of the skull sprang Athena, full grown and in a full set of armour. Due to her manor of birth she has dominion over all things of the intellect.