Elements of Myth

How do scientific and mythological stories explain natural phenomena on earth?

Grades 6-8 Lesson: Elements of Myth
Grade Band: 6-8
Arts Subject: Theater
Other Subject: English & Literature, Science

SUMMARY

In this 6-8 lesson, students will read myths, discuss the elements of this literary form, and dramatize a myth of their choice. They will write scientific, research-based reports, as well as fantastical stories to explain natural phenomena of the world.

PREPARATION

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Synthesize literary and informational text.
- Write to inform and express personal ideas to various audiences.
- Activate prior knowledge and make text-to-self connections.
- Define key vocabulary and concepts.
- Infer the main idea and supporting details.
- Synthesize and interpret myths.
- Analyze the structure of a literary text.
- Discuss and/or compose a written piece in response to literature text.

Standards Alignment

National Core Arts Standards

TH:Cr2-6.a Use critical analysis to improve, refine, and evolve original ideas and artistic choices in a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.
TH:Cr2-7.a Examine and justify original ideas and artistic choices in a drama/theatre work based on critical analysis, background knowledge, and historical and cultural context.
TH:Cr2-8.a Articulate and apply critical analysis, background knowledge, research, and historical and cultural context to the development of original ideas for a drama/theatre work.
TH:Cr2-6.b Contribute ideas and accept and incorporate the ideas of others in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.
TH:Cr2-7.b Demonstrate mutual respect for self and others and their roles in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.
TH:Cr2-8.b Share leadership and responsibilities to develop collaborative goals when preparing or devising drama/theatre work.
TH:Pr6.1.6.a Adapt a drama/theatre work and present it informally for an audience.
TH:Pr6.1.7.a Participate in rehearsals for a drama/theatre work that will be shared with an audience.

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TH:Pr6.1.8.a Perform a rehearsed drama/theatre work for an audience.

Common Core State Standards

ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3 Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3 Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

Next Generation Science Standards

MS-ESS1-4. Construct a scientific explanation based on evidence from rock strata for how the geologic time scale is used to organize Earth's 4.6-billion-year-old history.
MS-ESS3-4. Construct an argument supported by evidence for how increases in human population and per-capita consumption of natural resources impact Earth's systems.
MS-LS1-5. Construct a scientific explanation based on evidence for how environmental and genetic factors influence the growth of organisms.
MS-LS1-6. Construct a scientific explanation based on evidence for the role of photosynthesis in the cycling of matter and flow of energy into and out of organisms.
MS-PS2-4. Construct and present arguments using evidence to support the claim that gravitational interactions are attractive and depend on the masses of interacting objects.

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MS-PS3-5. Construct, use, and present arguments to support the claim that when the kinetic energy of an object changes, energy is transferred to or from the object.

Recommended Student Materials

Editable Documents: *Before sharing these resources with students, you must first save them to your Google account by opening them, and selecting "Make a copy" from the File menu. Check out Sharing Tips or Instructional Benefits when implementing Google Docs and Google Slides with students.*

- Persephone Myth Analysis
- Vocabulary: Elements of Myth
- Organizer: Elements of Myth
- Myth Planner
- Science Questions
- Performance Planner

Websites

- Mythic Journeys: Myths from Around the World
- Scholastic: Myths from Around the World

Additional Materials

- 1:1 computer
- Print/digital text of the myth of Persephone (DLTK's Persephone)
- print/digital text of the myth King Midas

Teacher Background

Teachers should be familiar with the role of mythology in the ancient world. Locate and review mythology text from your library or bookroom prior to the lesson.

Student Prerequisites

Students should have a basic understanding of mythology.

Accessibility Notes

Modify movements and space in the classroom as needed to accommodate students. Allow extra time for research, planning, and task completion.

INSTRUCTION

Engage

1. Ask students to think back to their early childhood and try to remember questions they may have asked adults about the world around them. For example: *"What are the stars?" "What does the sun do at night?"* Record their responses on chart paper or an interactive board.

2. Explain that, long ago, people also asked these types of questions about the world around them and that they developed stories to answer these questions. These ancient

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stories are called myths and usually involve gods and goddesses. People created myths thousands of years ago to tell how the world and things in it came to be. Myths also help to explain how people act or why things exist. Generally, these stories can be classified into two main categories: *creation myths* and *explanatory myths*.

3. Tell students that there was a time when no one understood why every year, the growing season ended and the earth became cold and barren for several months. With no scientific information to explain this phenomenon, *how do students think ancient people reacted? Might they have seen the winter months as a punishment from the gods? Could they have been fearful that perhaps one year the spring and summer would never return?*

4. Explain that "Persephone" is a myth explaining why the seasons change. Read the story to find out what this explanation is (DLTK's Persephone).

5. After reading, have students respond to the questions in the Persephone Myth Analysis handout, either through discussion or a written response.

Build

1. Distribute the Vocabulary: Elements of Myth handout. Have students review the elements found in the myth. Elicit from them that myths—like other stories—contain the following elements: *characters, setting, conflict, plot, and resolution*. In addition, myths usually explained some aspect of nature or accounted for some human action. Frequently, myths also included a metamorphosis, a change in shape or form. It is one element of myth that builds imagination. This power is frequently found in Greek myths. For example, Arachne was transformed and spiders were created. Throughout Greek mythology, there is a theme of magical changes that take shape.

2. Have students read "King Midas" and discuss why the metamorphosis taking place in Midas's body is especially appropriate for his character. Have students research collections of Myths from Around the World, Scholastic: Myths from Around the World or other myths from the web or library. Students should read the myths, identify the elements, and classify them as either creation myths or explanatory myths using the Organizer: Elements of Myth handout. Students should share their findings with the class.

3. Invite the class to brainstorm some of the "why" questions they asked when they were little children: *"Why is the sky blue?" "Why are there clouds in the sky?" "Why do we get goosebumps?"* Record student questions on chart paper or an interactive board.

4. Divide students into pairs and have them choose one of the questions and answer it in two ways: as a teller of myths and as a scientist. Tell them to use their imaginations to write their myths. To answer as a scientist, they will have to do research to find the facts that explain

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the phenomenon, and then write a brief, scientific report. Students can use the Myth Planner to organize their thoughts and the sample Science Questions for research ideas.

Apply

1. Divide the class into cooperative groups and have each group choose a myth to dramatize for the class. Together, the group can reread the story to determine which scenes they will act out. In addition, students will decide who will play the various acting roles and the narrator. The group can also appoint students to other roles, such as director, prop or set designer, sound engineer (*to provide sound effects and music*), and an announcer (*to introduce the play and the participants*). Have students plan their skit using the Performance Planner. Each group will present its skit to the rest of the class.

Reflect

1. Discuss the various interpretations and presentations of each myth.

2. Assess students' knowledge of myths with the following writing prompt: *Compare the scientific and mythological explanations of your performance. Provide details using scientific evidence and elements of myth to support your comparison.*

Extend

1. Engage students in a virtual reality experience. Using the *Google Expeditions* app and a set of VR goggles, have students take a tour of *Ancient Greece*.

Credits

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Sources

Bennett, William J. *The Book of Virtues*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1993.
McCarthy, Tara. *Multicultural Myths and Legends*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc., 1999.
Millet, Nancy, and Raymond Rodrigues. *Explorations in Literature*. Glenview, IL: Scott Forseman and Company, 1989.

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