Mythological Characters
How do Greek mythological figures inspire modern day characters?

Grades 3-5 Lesson: Mythological Characters
Grade Band: 3-5
Arts Subject: Visual Arts, Theater, Dance
Other Subject: History

SUMMARY
In this 3-5 lesson, students will explore the connection between Greek mythology and modern culture. They will analyze Greek culture, mythological characters, and apply elements of mythology. Students will design and paint original mythological characters with watercolors.

PREPARATION
Learning Objectives
Students will:

- Identify elements and vocabulary terms related to Greek myths.
- Infer the moral of a myth.
- Describe the character traits and abilities of mythological characters.
- Compare and contrast ancient Greek mythology with modern mythology.
- Write a short myth about a modern mythological character.
- Sketch and plan a visual representation of an original mythological character.
- Paint a watercolor illustration of a mythological character.
- Present artwork to an audience.
- Analyze and discuss the artwork of peers.

Standards Alignment
National Core Arts Standards
VA:Cr1.1.3a Elaborate on an imaginative idea.
VA:Cr1.1.4a Brainstorm multiple approaches to a creative art or design problem.
VA:Cr1.1.5a Combine ideas to generate an innovative idea for art-making.
VA:Cr2.1.3a Create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials.
VA:Cr2.1.4a Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches.
VA:Cr2.1.5a Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.

Common Core State Standards
ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2 Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

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.*

- Slide: Mythological Characters
- Capture Sheet: Mythological Characters
- Mythological Character Planner
- Vocabulary: Elements and Principles of Design
- Criteria for Success: Mythological Characters

Print & Digital Books
- Books: Book of Greek Myths, Tales of the Greek Heroes, Greek Myths
- Video Read Aloud: The Wooden Horse
- Digital Stories with Audio: Greek Myths, Epic: Greek Mythology

Additional Materials
- Pencils, sketching pencils (H, HB)
- Blank paper and/or grid paper
- Watercolors
- Paintbrushes
- Paper towel
- Cups with water

Teacher Background
Teachers should be familiar with the elements of mythology and Greek myths. Teachers will need to plan space suitable for using watercolor paints and materials.

Student Prerequisites
Students should be familiar with myths and/or fantasy stories.

Accessibility Notes

Provide assistive technologies during the writing and the art-making process. Allow sufficient space to create a watercolor painting.

INSTRUCTION

Engage

1. Read a Greek Myth to students. Below are recommended books but age-appropriate myths from your school library are suitable for this lesson.

- Books: Book of Greek Myths, Tales of the Greek Heroes, Greek Myths
- Video Read Aloud: The Wooden Horse
- Digital Stories with Audio: Greek Myths, Epic: Greek Mythology

2. Discuss the myth with students. Ask students: *Why do readers enjoy mythology? What elements of the story define the book as mythology and not fantasy? How are these stories passed on?*

3. Introduce students to mythology vocabulary words.

- **Myth:** comes from the Greek word "mythos," which originally meant "speech" or "discourse," which later came to mean "fable" or "legend."
- **Mythology:** refers to a collection of myths that together form a mythological system.
- **Demigod:** a half-god or an inferior deity; a fabulous hero, the offspring of a deity and a mortal.
- **Attributes:** a quality that is considered as belonging to, or inherent in a person or thing; an essential or necessary property or characteristic. For example, order and harmony are attributes of Apollo.
- **Symbol:** something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention. For example, the lyre is a symbol for Apollo.
- **Archetype:** The original pattern of which all things of the same species are representations or copies; original idea, model, or type.

4. Display images of mythological characters on pages 2 and 3 from the Slide: Mythological Characters. Ask students: *What are the attributes of these characters? How do they differ from you? How do they relate to characters we see in books, movies, and TV today?*

Build

1. Divide students up into groups to research mythological characters. Distribute the Capture Sheet: Mythological Characters. Have students read myths about the characters and gather information about their attributes, a symbol, a myth, and the meaning of the myth. Review the definitions from earlier in the lesson if necessary. Have a sample character filled in on the chart already and walk through this example step by step noting the origin of the data.

2. Have students share their findings with the class. Students will gain a deeper understanding of the character and can revise sections as they learn and clarify new information from their peers. Ask students: *Who created the mythological gods? When were they created? Where were they created? Why were they created? What is the value and meaning of myths?*

3. Display slide 4 of the presentation to compare modern mythological characters and Ancient Greek figures. Have students analyze the relationship between ancient myths and modern stories. Ask students: *How are the superheroes from comic books, movies, television, literature, video games the same or different from mythological characters of the past? What do these modern stories have in common with the ancient myths?*

4. Tell students they are going to create their own mythological character. Using what they have learned from their research about mythological characters, students will now create their own unique characters. Distribute and review the Mythological Character Planner with students.

5. Students will create a name, one or more attributes, a symbol, a myth, and meaningful significance for their invented character(s). Students may use their research mythological character charts as a reference for creating their characters. Students will fill in a new mythological character chart to create a structure for their new character. Allow time for students to plan and sketch their mythological characters.

Apply
Session 1
1. Have students write a short myth with a beginning, middle, and end. Students should reference their Mythological Character Planner to support the writing process. Each myth must have a conflict to resolve and a moral to the story.

2. Encourage creativity by reminding students that the components of their writing are important because they enable the reader to understand the story. This is each student's opportunity to create a new culture or to tell a story important to them. All great new stories in our culture start somewhere; this is as good a place as any for students to affect our culture.

3. Have students participate in a peer editing session. Pull small groups to support varying writing skills.

Session 2
1. Tell students they are going to sketch a visual representation of their mythological character to later paint with watercolors. Show students examples of simple cartoons, line drawings with color, more complex images with shading and perspective, images with a high degree of perspective composition and detail. Review the Vocabulary: Elements and Principles

[of Design](#) with students. Point out different ways the elements of composition such as line, texture, and shape are used in each picture. Observe the composition of the illustrations. Ask students: *What do you notice about the fore, middle, and background? Does the image convey a particular scene from the myth? Does the image show action or contemplation of the characters?*

2. Review the [Criteria for Success: Mythological Characters](#) handout. Tell students their sketch must include one character, one symbol, one attribute, and meaningful significance.

3. Distribute #2 or "HB" pencils and plain bond or tracing paper to students. Students may refer to existing images, without directly copying them, for ideas on postures and actions for their characters. Some students may prefer grid paper for their freehand drawings. Allow time for students to create several "thumbnail" sketches (small quick pencil sketches) of their characters in a variety of poses and situations to determine which illustration will be most interesting for them to paint.

4. Confer with students as they sketch their characters. Ask students: *What does your drawing symbolize? Why does your character have that expression? What details from the drawing will be important to highlight in the painting?*

Session 3
1. Have students create a watercolor painting of their mythological character.

2. Distribute "H" pencils, watercolor paper, and paint supplies to each student. Have students do a light pencil drawing of their illustration on their watercolor paper. An "H" hard lead pencil (2-4) works best. If not available, standard #2 or HB pencils will work. Encourage students to start with a "light" touch and sharp pencils so changes can be easily erased. Students can add details to the illustration as it relates to their story.

3. Have students reference the [Criteria for Success: Mythological Characters](#) again to review the expectations for colors that reflect the attribute, symbol, mood, tone, or emotion that their character represents. Give students scrap paper so they can experiment with techniques.

4. Model watercolor techniques for students. Students should keep their colors pure by mixing their colors on their palettes and not directly on the paints. They must clean their brushes when going from one color to another to avoid getting muddy colors.

Show the students how to organize their materials on their desks. For instance, water should be near the paints, and the palette should be near their paper. They then paint from the palette to the paper to avoid dripping on their papers when reaching for the water or creating new colors.

5. Allow time for students to paint their mythological characters. Provide feedback to students through the process. Ask students: *Why did you use those colors? Do they relate to your character in any specific way? Could they?*

Reflect

1. Display the mythological characters around the room or hallway. Divide the class into two groups to participate in a gallery walk. The first group will be the "artists" and the second group will be the "spectators," then they will switch roles. Encourage the "spectators" to identify character elements, and analyze the attributes, symbolism, and meaning of the painting.

2. Evaluate students' mythological character paintings with the [Criteria for Success: Mythological Characters](#). Provide feedback to students specifically related to the criteria.

Credits
Original Writer, Charles Nickerson
Adaptation, Ann Reilly
Editor, JoDee Scissors