

The Hampstead Stage Company

Proudly Presents

Greek Mythology for Kids II

The Greek Heroes

A TEACHER'S STUDY GUIDE

A Note About Our Play:

The play that you and your students are about to see is meant for your enjoyment. There is no need for preparation, any required activity, or essential prior knowledge necessary. However, as this play is not based directly on a book (our usual study guide), but instead, based upon mythological tales, we have provided you with this additional material to make the production a learning experience, as well as a fun one. This guide is for you to use, if you choose, in order to prepare your students for Greek Mythology for Kids II.

Background:

Greek Mythology for Kids II is a marriage of two art forms derived from ancient Greece: theatre and myth. This Mediterranean civilization flourished from roughly 1100 BC until about 100 BC, but its' influence, through the Romans, extends far beyond that. Ancient Greece is the bedrock of western civilization and it is to them that we turn for the formative study of many topics examined today. Geometry, epic and lyric poetry, classical art, tragic and comedic theatre, music, sculpture, medicine, history, politics, democracy, architecture, and philosophy all derive from ancient Greece.

This play is designed to bring students closer to early civilizations through an appreciation of the similarities that all people share. Ancient civilizations created hideous, dark idols to represent their fears and to explain the forces of nature that they did not understand. The Greeks, however, did not do this. Their gods and goddesses were patterned after people. They were beautiful and nearly perfect in form. Yet they were NOT perfect by our standards and sometimes did horrible things. We also find stories of unimaginable cleverness and courage.

Greek Beliefs:

Olympus: Mountain where the gods lived

Earth: Where we live

Hades: Where the dead go after they cross the River Styx

Greek Places:

Mycenae: A major city in ancient Greece which was also a military stronghold.

Tomis: Roman city that the poet Ovid was banished to in A.D. 8, situated along the Black

sea coast

Nimea: Ancient Greek site with a grove and temple to Zeus

Colchis: Region on the eastern coast of the black sea where the golden fleece was watched over by a fearsome dragon.

Greek Gods, Goddesses, Heroes, Heroines and Creatures:

Achilles: The great Greek's warrior

Aeolus: Keeper of the Winds

Amazons: A tribe of warrior women

Arachne: A girl who was changed into a spider by Athena

Ares: The god of war

Argonauts: Heroes who chased the Golden Fleece

Atalanta: Swift runner

Atlas: The son of a Titan who carried the weight of the sky on his shoulders

Boreas: The north wind

Centaur: Half horse, half man

Charron: Ferried dead souls across the River Styx

Charybdis: A monster that swallowed ships

Chimera: Three-headed, fire-breathing monster

Chiron: Wise centaur, teacher of great heroes

Cronus: A Titan, the second Lord of the Universe

Demeter: Goddess of the Harvest

Echo: Nymph who fell in love with Narcissus, she was made to disappear and to repeat only what others said

Eos: The dawn, sister of the sun.

Eros: The God of Love

The Fates: Three old women who determine how long you could live

Gaea: Mother Earth

Giants: Snake legged sons of Mother Earth

Graces: Three Goddesses of Beauty

Hades: God of the Dead

Harpies: Birds with the heads of ugly women

Hera: Goddess of Marriage, Queen of Olympus

Heracles (Hercules): Strongest man who ever lived, son of Zeus

Hippolyta: The queen of the Amazons.

Hydra: A foul beast with body of a serpent and many heads.

Jason: The leader of the Argonauts, prince of Thessaly, and the husband of Medea.

Narcissus: Youth who fell in love with his own appearance

Nike: Spirit of Victory and friend of Zeus and Athena

Nemean Lion: Enormous lion who roams the Nemean wilderness.

Orion: Great hunter

Orpheus: Legendary figure, poet and musician, son of Calliope, and one of the Argonauts.

Pan: God of Nature

Pandora: First beautiful mortal woman

Pegasus: Winged horse

Persephone: Daughter of Demeter and Queen of Hades
Poseidon: Lord of the Sea
Prometheus: Creator of man
Sirens: Maidens who sang and lured sailors to their death
Titans: Children of Mother Earth and the Sky
Uranus: The Sky, first husband of Mother Earth
Zeus: God of Thunder, the mightiest of the Olympian gods

Preparation:

Q: On a map, locate the modern day country of Greece. From its' spot in the Mediterranean, what inferences about Greece can you make?

A: Both a rich maritime and agricultural heritage. More advanced students might like to do a report on Athens and Sparta as a comparison of very opposite cultures.

Q: On a map, locate other countries from the area that you recognize today. What are they?

A: Egypt, Israel, Persia, etc. should make names in today's news more interesting for they can be traced so far back. *Aladdin*, for example, is a Persian tale.

Q: What inferences can you make about the people living in the Mediterranean area?

A: Students should recognize that there was a great opportunity to trade and to share both culture and material possessions. They should also understand that the closeness of the area and the differences between people and cultures also led to arguments and wars, much as they do today.

Q: Make a timeline and trace how far back in time these people lived that they will be seeing and hearing about during the play. What are the similarities between today's society and that of the Greeks? What are the differences?

A: There are numerous comparisons that the students can make. List and discuss each.

Q: Please define the English expression; *It's all Greek to me*.

A: It's very difficult to understand. One of the reasons Greek seems difficult to us is that they write in a different alphabet and all their letters have different names. Write the Greek alphabet and notice the differences between these letters and English. Try to take your spelling test using the Greek alphabet.

Please Enjoy Our Show!

Follow Up Activities:

The Hampstead Stage Company, like the ancient Greeks themselves, use masks to depict various characters. Masks are a great opportunity for students to deal with emotion in a tactile way. Papier-mâché and clay masks are a good opportunity for students to put characters first into art and then into words.

Write about the emotion on the face you have drawn. Students can also write about the character their masks are depicting. What color is the person? What are the physical features? Write the character's back-story.

Have the students write his/her own myth to explain some natural happening. For example: Where does the sun come from? Where do we get thunder? Etc.

The sieve of Eratosthenes, an ancient Greek mathematician, is still used today. The sieves are great fun to make and help students learn the patterns of multiples as well as

the beauty of numbers.

The ancient Greeks were great mathematicians and in fact had secret math societies where they tried to discover square roots and to solve other mathematical problems. Through the use of geometry, they were able to compute the distance to the sun and to make classically beautiful structures. Break the class into *math societies* and have them develop problems for the other societies to solve.

Have students find the geometric forms (triangle, rectangle, ellipse, circle, square) in art and architecture.

Have an Olympic Party, where each student comes dressed as a mythological character and tells about himself/herself. The other guests at the Olympic Party have to guess who it is.

Ovid, your guide for this play, was a Roman poet who told wonderful adventure stories about how heroes defeating different creatures who roam the land. Write *an* adventure story where a hero meets and defeats a terrible beast. Compare and contrast the Greek society with the Roman society.

Not only did the ancient Greeks admire wisdom and cleverness of the mind, they were also concerned with the body and making it healthier. They were very competitive and started the Olympic games to see who were the swiftest, the strongest, and the best jumper. Hold your own Olympic games and foot races. Challenge the other classes to come to your Olympics. Find a modern day Olympic hero and tell the class about him or her.