

PBS Lesson Series

ELA, Grade 6, Lesson 15

Teacher Packet

Characteristics	“Arachne”	My Myth

Why Ancient Greek Mythology Is Still Relevant Today

If there is one subject that is still widely taught today, it has to be the subject of ancient Greek mythology. It isn't just taught as part of a literature curriculum at school but is also part of most history lessons. Some people might wonder why the world is still so hung up on ancient Greek myths when they are nothing but stories and they came from thousands of years ago. However, one look at the vast amount of ancient Greek-themed movies and literature today, people will quickly come to the conclusion that the world is still fascinated with Greek mythology though they might not always be able to say why.

For those who think that ancient Greek mythology stories are nothing more than a bunch of outdated tales, they just happen to be wrong. For sure, these stories may have been written hundreds if not thousands of years ago, but it is good to remember they were written by wise men who had a hand in helping shape modern thinking. These great men, Aristotle and Sophocles to name a few, were not mere storytellers; they didn't spend their days weaving tales just because they wanted to and had nothing to do. They were too good for that and this is why their Greek myths have withstood the test of time and are relevant until today. In fact, they might even still be relevant a hundred years from now.

What Are Greek Myths?

To some people, Greek myths are these epic tales of gods and goddesses gallivanting about the earth, achieving all sorts of impossible tasks. They are stories of people dealing with the gods and either they come out triumphant or they end up bloody and charred or turned into animals and plants. Indeed, a person who doesn't look beyond the surface will think these tales are nothing more than flights of fancy by old story-tellers from the past but a deeper look at the stories will tell you more than that. These myths aren't just legends and while they are "just stories" they are stories with a purpose and reason. A deeper look at Greek myths should reveal morals, philosophies, and even warnings.

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These tales rarely have the happily-ever-after endings people are so used to these days but remember, they weren't written for entertainment—they were written with a higher purpose. One wouldn't expect such great minds to waste their time telling a story for the sake of telling a story; they had to have purpose and they had to impart knowledge. In truth, these myths give people a chance to glimpse at the way the Greeks lived and how they thought back then. It might seem hopelessly outdated and unimportant but the exact opposite of that is true.

What Is the Importance of the Greeks?

Most people will not really notice it unless they are told to do so, but there are so many Greek influences around the world today. In fact, it is impossible to go around to completely understand the basics of things like fine arts, literature, and performing arts without touching on some Greek myth. These myths were an integral part of ancient Greek culture because this was how they passed down lessons from one generation to the next without things getting boring and dull. Anyone who has ever picked up a book on Greek myths or seen a movie inspired by one can attest to its action-packed nature. Some might wonder what the point is to just passing down stories—stories that were made up and were in no way true but that was the beauty of Greek mythology in ancient times. They became the perfect way to impart lessons without being dull or boring.

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What Did These Myths Do?

These myths were told to people and it helped them realize the difference between right and wrong. It helped them come to terms with how they should be humble and never think themselves immortal or they might just be proven wrong in the most horrible and inopportune of ways. Also, these tales tell people of heroes and how true greatness was achieved by those who dared while at the same breath, showing the flaws of these heroes.

Any modern person who reads or hears of Greek myths will be hard-pressed to stay unaffected. They are simply that good and this proves just how relevant they still are. Anyone can pick up a book of Greek myths. For sure, they will get something from it.

Why Study Greek Myths?

Reading and hearing about Greek mythology is one thing but why are modern people still made to study them? The answer to that is very simple: to learn. People still study the ancient Greeks and their myths much in the same reason they study other cultures and that is so they can learn from it. After all, when you study a culture as progressive as that of the ancient Greeks, you really can't help but learn lessons. These myths, for their part, show modern people a glimpse of how they thought in the past, what they considered important, how their morals worked, etc. Another reason to study those Greek myths is because they have contributed a lot to classic and modern literature in the form of symbols.

It has been said that simply by studying or even just reading some of these myths, people can learn how to control their actions or at least think better of what they do. After all, a lot of these stories tell tales of how human follies, stupidity, and even hubris get people in trouble. In a sense, these myths serve as a warning for people on how they should and should not be. The irony of the situation is that most people still tend to go with their follies, choose to make stupid decisions, and have hubris. It is almost comical how these myths capture human behavior in the ancient times that are still alive and kicking today.

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Greek Gods		Greek Goddesses	
Apollo	music	Aphrodite	love and beauty
Ares	war	Athena	wisdom
Hades	underworld	Demeter	nature
Hephaestus	fire and metal	Iris	rainbows
Hermes	travel	Khione	snow
Poseidon	seas	Persephone	spring and flowers
Zeus	weather	Selene	moon
		Thetis	sea

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Independent Practice:

Write a Greek myth using the characteristics that we studied.

Make sure to include:

- a human and a Greek god as characters
- a purpose which explains a natural phenomenon
- a lesson
- what you learned from lesson two about exposition, conflict, climax, rising action, and resolution