

Enduring Heroes Unit Plan

Unit Overview

Unit Title

Enduring Heroes

Unit Summary

Greek mythology is referenced in our everyday lives. We wear Nike* shoes, shop for Midas* mufflers, and commend people for doing Herculean feats. But who were these people with special powers? Students read stories about the heroes of Greek mythology and compare the characteristics of Greek heroes to modern heroes. Students explore the question, *What is a hero?* and consider how the definition may change across time and culture. They then select a contemporary hero and write a myth based on the hero. The myths are written as digital books that can be shared with younger students or read to senior citizens as a service-learning project. This could be done as an integrated unit on Greek civilization.

Subject Area

Creative Writing, Social Studies

Grade Level

6 - 8

Higher-Order Thinking Skills

Decision Making, Analysis

Approximate Time Needed

3 weeks

Unit Foundation

Targeted Content Standards and Benchmarks

Utah Education Standards*

Language Arts

Standard 2: Students read functional, informational, and literary texts from different periods, cultures, and genres.

Objective 3: Demonstrate competency in reading and interpreting LITERARY text. Recognize the features of each literary genre to increase understanding and appreciation of literature, e.g., myth, essay, poetry, young adult literature, classics.

Standard 10: Students write functional, informational, and literary texts for various purposes, audiences, and situations.

Objective 3: Demonstrate competency in writing LITERARY text.

- Use writing process strategies to construct a literary text, e.g., myth, essay, poetry.
- Use the features of each literary genre, e.g., character, plot, meter, setting, chronology.
- Use the elements of literature, e.g., theme, metaphor, symbolism, types of conflict, dialogue.

Social Studies (World History)

Standard 2: Students will comprehend the contributions of classical civilizations.

Investigate the purpose and influence of religions and philosophies on classical civilizations of

Greece, Rome, China, and India.

Examine the essential elements of the belief systems of Greek mythology, Judaism, Christianity, Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.

Student Objectives/Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Describe, analyze and interpret myths from different cultures and time periods, particularly ancient Greece
- Use an effective writing process to produce an original myth that incorporates some features and structure of myths
- Conduct research on different belief systems to develop generalizations and insights about myths and their role in society

Curriculum-Framing Questions

Essential Question

What is a hero?

Unit Questions

- What meanings do the Greek myths have for us today?
- How do you write a myth?

Content Questions

- Who were the ancient Greek heroes and what were their stories?
- What are the qualities of a Greek hero?
- Who are modern heroes?

Student Assessment Plan

Assessment Summary

Journal writing is used throughout the unit to respond to informal questions as well as Curriculum-Framing Questions. Questioning is also used throughout the unit to spark discussion, monitor learning, and promote higher-order thinking.

The unit begins with tapping students' prior knowledge about mythology with the [Venn diagram](#) assessment. Teachers review the myth planning guide as well as a myth storyboard to monitor student understanding and progress during the unit. Students use the writing self-assessment form to set goals for their writing and to think about their myths before meeting with their writing group. A project rubric is used by students and the teacher to guide and assess student work. Peer conferencing and student-teacher conferences are conducted to assess student work along the way and give students an opportunity to revise and edit work before turning in a final product. Students who choose to create a wiki use the wiki rubric to monitor their work. A reflection is given at the end of the unit to allow students to reflect on the unit and their understanding of a hero's journey and how it relates to them personally.

Assessment Timeline					
Before project work begins		Students work on projects and complete tasks		After project work is completed	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venn Diagram • Journals • Questioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Self-Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journals • Questioning • Writing Self-Assessment • Teacher-Student Conferences • Project Rubric 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myth Planning Guide • Myth Storyboard • Wiki Rubric • Peer Conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Rubric 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit Reflection

Unit Details

Prerequisite Skills

- Keyboarding
- Word processing
- File management
- Basic Internet use
- Citation of electronic sources

Instructional Procedures

Week One

Heroes in History and Myth

Introduce the unit by posing the Essential Question to students, *What is a hero?* Have students record their own ideas in a journal. Then, hold a whole-class discussion around the question asking students to give examples of heroes in their lives. Use chart paper to record all definitions. Begin to generate a list of contemporary heroes. Explain to students that they will be learning about classical and contemporary heroes and reexamining their definition as they read about the heroes of the past and present.

Briefly review different kinds of traditional stories—myths, tall tales, fables, and family stories. Place students in small groups and ask them to fill in the Venn diagram. Encourage students to make generalizations from stories from their families and cultures. After they complete the diagram, conduct a full-class discussion about the similarities and differences of these kinds of stories. Explain that during this unit, they will learn more about these different kinds of stories..

Select some Greek myths about heroes. Be sure that the stories you select are age and reading-level appropriate. These might include [stories](#)* about Hercules, Theseus, Perseus, Atalanta, Jason, Bellerophon, and Odysseus. Assign stories to small reading groups. Decide if groups will read more than one story. If done over multiple days, each group could read a few stories. Instruct students to create charts that show a character’s name and the character’s heroic characteristics. Have students choose roles, such as note-taker (keeps the character chart), storyteller (summarizes the story to the rest of the class), and presenter (presents the chart to the class). Depending on individual student needs, group members can take turns reading parts of the story or each student can read the story

individually then hold a group discussion about the story.

After each group has read a story, ask each storyteller to summarize the story, and then ask the presenter to explain who the hero of the story is and what makes the character a hero. Keep a master list on chart paper with the hero's name and characteristics.

Next, look back at the class's original definition of a hero. Referring to the list of the Greek heroes' characteristics, discuss what the stories reveal about Greek culture, and discuss whether the Greeks would have a different concept of what a hero is than we do. Have students write their own definition of a hero in their journals. Have students share their definitions in pairs and then ask students to come to a consensus on a definition of a Greek hero as a class. Record the definition on the chart paper. Keep this definition visible throughout the unit.

Week Two

Heroes of the Past and Present

Ask the Unit Question, *What meanings do the Greek myths have for us today?*

Discuss how the characteristics of Greek heroes differ from the heroes that we admire today. Add to the list of contemporary heroes.

Explain that Greek heroes are not always what we, today, might consider good role models. In some cases, their actions might seem violent and deceitful, but a deeper look at what they did reveals their true motives, which were usually what the Greeks admired. For example, explain that Perseus decapitated Medusa; however, one of his motives was loyalty to his family. Still, many heroes of the past possess the traits of physical strength and courage in the face of danger. Have students record their thoughts to the following question in their journals, *Why have our definitions of what a hero is changed over time?* Have students share their opinions in pairs.

Heroes in Our Times

Ask students to share their last journal entries in a whole class discussion. Have students name personal heroes and explain how their heroes' character traits match up with the list the class created about the Greek heroes. Have students record these traits in their journal.

In groups of three, allow students to go to the [Heroism in Action ThinkQuest](#)* and investigate at least three contemporary heroes. Have the class compare the heroes they studied, and revisit and alter, if necessary, their contemporary definitions of a hero. Discuss the changing definition of *hero* across time and culture. Add to the list of heroes. Review the list and discuss the different types of heroes on the list. The list may include celebrities. Discuss the difference between a hero and a celebrity and how a celebrity might be a hero.

Explain to students that they are going to choose one hero and write the hero's story as a myth. They should choose someone that they admire. This hero can be from the present or the past. Have students consider the following:

- Qualities that make the person great
- How the qualities were instilled
- What drives the person to accomplish heroic actions
- What makes the person a hero

Decide if students will be confined by a particular culture or time span. If not, encourage them to select individuals from different fields and cultures. Suggest some of the great figures of the twentieth century which may include Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, César Chávez, Anne Frank, Jackie Robinson, the Dalai Lama, Thomas Edison, and Rosa Parks. Other such figures, perhaps lesser known, are Rigoberta Menchu, Medgar Evers, Rachel Carson, Helen Caldecott,

and Jane Goodall. Tell students they can also choose someone from their personal life as well. Show students how they can use the Web sites listed in the Resources section for selecting and researching heroes.

Provide time for students to research and choose an appropriate hero. Conduct a class or small-group brainstorm to generate more ideas.

Explain that each student should focus on the following research questions:

- *What qualities made the hero heroic?*
- *What were the challenges the hero faced?*
- *How did the hero overcome challenges?*
- *How did heroism change the hero's life?*

Explain that if students choose a hero in their personal life, an interview may be necessary to gather the needed information. Show students how to use the true heroes guide as they document their findings in their journals.

Week Three **Examining a Myth**

Ask the Unit Question, *How do you write a myth?* Tell students that in order to write their own myths, they need to understand the structure of a myth. Use one of the myths that the students read and as a class, deconstruct the myth using the myth handout. Have students record the following in their journals:

- How the main character is introduced
- How the situation is explained
- Description of the main challenge
- How the main challenge is met
- The outcome of the the main challenge.

Have students analyze myths, using the framework from the book *The Hero's Journey: A Guide to Literature and Life*, by Reg Harris and Susan Thompson. Explain to students that *The Hero's Journey* depicts a pattern for myths and for life and includes three main stages:

- **First Stage:** The character faces separation from a familiar world.
- **Second Stage:** The character faces initiation and transformation. The character's old ways of thinking and behaving are changed or destroyed, and the character experiences a new level of awareness, skill, and freedom.
- **Third Stage:** After meeting the challenges for initiation, the character returns to his or her world. With the return, the character is more capable and confident, and is treated as a hero by the community.

As the class deconstructs the myth, discuss some of the common characteristics of myths. For example, discuss how gods and goddesses in myths appear superhuman but experience human emotions. Point out that myths often include magic, and review how gods and goddesses sometimes show up in disguise.

As an option, have each student group deconstruct another myth for more experience.

Creating a Modern Day Myth

After students have an understanding of how myths are written, explain the process for writing their own modern myth using their chosen character. It should follow the pattern of the hero's journey and include the characteristics of myths that have been discussed. As a resource, tell students to use [Mythography](#)* to find descriptions of Greek gods and goddesses to assist in defining character traits.

Explain the format used for the myths they create is a digital book that include graphics and animation. Show examples. Have students choose an audience, such as younger students, family, or senior citizens.

Before they begin writing, ask students to fill out the goals section of the writing self-assessment. Instruct students to use their note cards and the myth planning guide as prewriting tools. Demonstrate how this is used with the myth planning example. As you take students through the steps of creating a myth, develop a rubric as a class. Use the example project rubric as a guide. Explain different aspects of the assignment and show examples. Assist students in defining the quality traits that should be included in the rubric and then differentiate each level accordingly. To help students develop their myths based on the framework they learned about earlier, use the myth storyboard. Show them the myth storyboard example, and then discuss and add criteria to the project rubric.

Make sure students use the project rubric to guide the creation of the digital books. When students finish drafts of their myths, ask them use the writing self-assessment to think about their work in preparation for meeting with their writing groups. Have students write, peer conference, and revise the myths before putting them into digital format. Conduct individual student conferences to give feedback and suggestions before the final books are due. The myth example can be used as an exemplar.

When completed, have students share their myths with the chosen audience and use the rubric to self-assess their work.

Discovering Your Journey

Discuss how the hero's journey is reflected in the books we read, the television shows we watch, and the movies we see. Encourage students who are interested to create a [wiki](#) about the role of heroes in the lives of today's teenagers. Give them the wiki rubric to help them guide their work.

As a final reflection activity, ask students to think about their own lives and a situation when they took the hero's journey. Explain that students are to consider a challenge or a change that they have faced. For example, this could be moving to a new school, joining a sport's team, or making a new friend. If this is difficult, they can write about a friend or family member who experienced the hero's journey.

Have each student write a short reflective piece about their hero's journeys in their journals. Ask them to consider the Essential Question again, *What is a hero?* and describe how their thinking has changed since the beginning of the unit. Encourage students to examine the self-growth and discovery that resulted from their journey. This can be done as homework.

Accommodations for Differentiated Instruction

Special Needs Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use myths that are written at an appropriate reading level• Create a limited list of contemporary heroes, and preselect reading and research materials
Nonnative Speaker	Allow the student to read and research in the student's first language but require the writing to be done in English
Gifted/Talented Student	Have the student write a myth by rewriting a Greek myth and placing a contemporary hero in the Greek myth that would represent the modern day equivalent

Materials and Resources Required For Unit	
Technology – Hardware (Click boxes of all equipment needed)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Camera	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Disk
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Computer(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Printer
<input type="checkbox"/> Digital Camera	<input type="checkbox"/> Projection System
<input type="checkbox"/> DVD Player	<input type="checkbox"/> Scanner
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet Connection	<input type="checkbox"/> Television
<input type="checkbox"/> VCR	<input type="checkbox"/> Video Camera
	<input type="checkbox"/> Video Conferencing Equip.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Technology – Software (Click boxes of all software needed.)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Database/Spreadsheet	<input type="checkbox"/> Image Processing
<input type="checkbox"/> Desktop Publishing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet Web Browser
<input type="checkbox"/> E-mail Software	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multimedia
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Encyclopedia on CD-ROM	<input type="checkbox"/> Web Page Development
	<input type="checkbox"/> Word Processing
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Printed Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harris, R. & Thompson, S. (1997). <i>The hero's journey: A guide to literature and life</i>. Napa, CA: Ariane Publications. • Low, A. (1985). <i>The Macmillan book of Greek gods and heroes</i>. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
Supplies	

<p>Internet Resources</p>	<p>Greek Mythology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greek Heroes www.mythweb.com/heroes/heroes.html* Clearly written and animated stories about Greek heroes • MythNet www.classicsunveiled.com/mythnet/html* Information about Olympian gods and Greek heroes • Mythography www.loggia.com/myth/gods.html* Descriptions of Greek gods and goddesses
<p>Internet Resources</p>	<p>Contemporary Heroes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academy of Achievement www.achievement.org/autodoc/pagegen/mainmenu.html* A Museum of Living History that organizes biographies of achievers by category of contribution • American Library Association, Great Web Sites for Kids www.ala.org/parents/page/greatsites/people.html#a* • Offers a "Biographies" section with a comprehensive list of biography Web sites • Biography.com www.biography.com* A general resource about famous people • Distinguished Women of Past and Present www.DistinguishedWomen.com* Biographies of important women • National Women's History Project www.nwhp.org* An excellent resource on women's history, including stories of many remarkable and heroic women • The Hero's Journey www.yourheroicjourney.com/Journey.shtml* A thorough explanation of the hero's journey <p>Writing Myths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing with Writers http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/mff/mythswshop_index.htm* An online myth writing workshop with an author
<p>Other Resources</p>	<p>None</p>

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