

Red Sneaker Productions: MythMasters: *Tales from Greek Mythology* Educational Guide, Grades K-12



About the Performance

Blow the dust off stories from ancient Greece and bring the power, majesty, and magic of Mount Olympus to life! MythMasters supplements your teachers' units on Greek mythology and explores the stories of Phaeton and Helios, Orpheus and Eurydice, and Echo and Narcissus. Through a skillful blend of mime, comedy, drama, puppetry, masks, music, reverence, irreverence, and lots of audience participation, the gods and goddesses, heroes and villains, monsters and maidens of Greek mythology walk the earth once more.



About the Program Creators

David Zucker and **Richard McElvain** have been performing educational theatre together for more than 30 years, developing enrichment programs on Greek Myths, Shakespeare and Math. **David Zucker** is an actor, director, playwright, mime and teacher whose unique programs have been delighting, enlightening and inspiring audiences for 45 years. He has performed for over 1 million children in his career! David regularly performs as a guest artist for Young Audiences and Arts For Learning chapters across the country. He has been chosen from over 900 ensembles as a National Young Audiences Artist of the Year. **Richard McElvain** is an actor and director. He has appeared in film ("Mermaids") and television ("Spencer for Hire"), as well as on stage throughout the Boston area for the past 40 years. He directed the critically acclaimed production of Peer Gynt at the Boston Conservatory, appeared in the world premiere production of Israel Horovitz's Unexpected Tenderness at the Gloucester Stage, and staged his own adaptation of A Christmas Carol at the Merrimack Repertory Theatre.

Program Learning Goals

1. To bring to life some of the most famous Greek myths.
2. To explore how myths change and evolve over time.
3. To familiarize students with many of the Greek gods and goddesses.

Essential Questions

1. Why did the Ancient Greeks write and tell myths?
2. What kinds of beliefs or natural phenomenon do myths explain?
3. What are modern myths or stories that explain why something is the way it is?

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Educational Guide, Grades K-12



Vocabulary

- **Storytelling:** the art of telling a story about real or imagined events using gestures and words to bring the events and characters of the story to life in the minds of those listening
- **Myth:** a traditional story about historical events that helps explain a belief or phenomenon
- **Fairy tale:** a story about magical events and creatures in a make-believe world
- **Legend:** a traditional story about a person or place that is based in truth but may have developed fictional elements
- **Mythology:** a collection of myths belonging to one religion or culture
- **Polytheism:** a religion centered around the belief in many gods and/or goddesses

Key Facts and Cultural Context for Students



Ancient Greece

Ancient Greece was home to the first civilizations in **Europe**. Greece is made up of thousands of islands in the Aegean and Ionian seas. Greek myths likely evolved from stories told by the Minoan civilization of Crete, an island in Greece, over 4,000 years ago.

Greek Mythology

The people of Ancient Greece worshipped many gods, goddesses, and heroes. They told stories, or **myths**, about these gods and built temples to them. These myths often feature large battles, monsters, and overcoming challenges, and taught the importance of intelligence, bravery, and acting morally.

Featured Greek Mythological Figures

Helios: the god of the sun who drives the sun across the sky in a chariot every day

Phaeton: the human son of Helios who attempts to drive Helios's chariot and fails

Orpheus: a talented musician and poet who journeys to the underworld to find his wife

Eurydice: the wife of Orpheus who died from a snake bite

Echo: a nymph (nature goddess) whose punishment was to only speak the last words spoken to her

Narcissus: a handsome young man who falls in love with his own reflection in a pool of water

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Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

- What do you know about the history, culture, language, and geography of Ancient Greece? What would you like to know? How could you find out more?
- What is the difference between a myth, a legend, and a fairy tale?
- What might a story teach us about history that we might not get from a history book?

Pre-Performance Activity: Comparing Myths, Fairytales, and Legends

Learning Goals:

- To identify and categorize the definitive characteristics of different types of stories
- To differentiate a myth from other types of stories



Materials:

- “Demeter and Persephone” (myth): <https://greece.mrdonn.org/greekgods/demeter.html>
- “Little Red Riding Hood” (fairy tale): <https://www.dltk-teach.com/rhymes/littlered/story.htm>
- “Robin Hood and the Golden Arrow” (legend): <https://storiestogrowby.org/story/robin-hood-and-the-golden-arrow-story-legend-stories-for-kids>

Directions:

1. Discuss myths, fairy tales, and legends. What defines each (*see page 2 for definitions*)? What are some examples of stories from each category?
2. Read “Demeter and Persephone”, “Little Red Riding Hood”, and “Robin Hood and the Golden Arrow” without telling students what category each story falls into. While reading, make note of the characters, the plot, and the resolution.
3. Using the story notes, have students make a case for which category each story falls into. Why would one story fit a category better than another? Could any of the stories fall into multiple categories?
4. Focus on “Demeter and Persephone”. What makes this a myth? What belief or phenomenon does it attempt to explain?

Extensions:

- Find other examples of myths, fairy tales, and legends. Why do they fall into one category versus another?
- Pick one category and write an original story that features the characteristics of that category.

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Post-Performance Discussion Questions

- What was your favorite story from the performance? Why?
- What did you learn about Ancient Greece and Greek Mythology?
- In what ways did you think about history from a new perspective?

Post-Performance Activity: Myth Making

Learning Goals:

- To creatively explain a belief or natural phenomenon
- To compose and produce the presentation of an original story

Directions:

1. Discuss myths as a traditional story that helps explain a belief or phenomenon. Reflect on the performance and the significance of these myths on Ancient Greek culture.
2. Brainstorm a list of different beliefs or natural phenomena that a myth might explain. For example, a myth could explain why we have hurricanes or the origin of the house cat. Try to come up with as many ideas as you can.
3. Pick one belief or natural phenomenon on your list to explain. Try to think outside the box! Maybe you know the scientific reason why the sky is blue, but what other explanation could you invent that would make an exciting story?
4. Write a modern-day myth that explains the belief or natural phenomenon you chose.
5. Illustrate your myth either with pictures or by acting it out. Which characters do you need to represent? How will you show the setting? Which events will you include in your illustrations? What themes were present in the story?
6. Bring your myth to life by drawing pictures to accompany the story, creating a comic book that tells the story, or acting it out in a short play.



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Further Resources

- [The Kennedy Center's Digital Collection on Myths, Legends & Folktales](#)
- [Encyclopedia of Greek Mythology](#)
- [GreekMythology.com](#)
- Amery, Heather: *Greek Myths for Young Children*, Usborne (2009)
- Blaisdell, Bob: *Favorite Greek Myths*, Dover Publications (1995)
- D'Aulaires, Ingri and Edgar: *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths*, Delacorte Press (1992)
- Hamilton, Edith: *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes (Illustrated Edition)*, Black Dog & Leventhal, 2017

Curricular Connections

Arts Standards: Theatre and Visual Arts

Creating

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. (T.Cr.01, V.Cr.01)
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. (T.Cr.02, V.Cr.02)

Performing

- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. (T.P.06, V.P.06)

Responding

- Perceive and analyze artistic work. (T.R.07, V.P.07)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (T.R.08, V.P.08)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (T.R.09, V.R.09)

Connecting

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. (T.Co.10, V.Co.10)
- Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding. (T.Co.11, V.Co.11)

English Language Arts and Literacy Anchor Standards

Reading

- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (R.PK-12.2)
- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. (R.PK-12.4)

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Curricular Connections, continued

English Language Arts and Literacy Anchor Standards, continued

Writing

- Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences. (W.PK-12.3)

Speaking and Listening

- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (SL.PK-12.2)
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. (SL.PK-12.3)

Language

- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. (L.PK-12.3)
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings. (L.PK-12.5)

History and Social Science

K

- Topic 1: Civics: classroom citizenship (HSS.K.T1)

Grade 1

- Topic 1: Civics: communities, elections, and leadership (HSS.1.T1)
- Topic 2: Geography: places to explore (HSS.1.T2)

Grade 2

- Topic 2: Geography and its effects on people (HSS.2.T2)

Grade 6

- Topic 1: Studying complex societies, past and present (HSS.6.T1)

Grade 7

- Topic 4b: Ancient and Classical Greece, c. 1200-300 BCE (HSS.7.T4b)

Grades 9-12

- World History I Topic 1: Dynamic interactions among regions of the world (HSS.WHI.T1)

