

Follow-up Activities

- This collection of constellation myths has exciting and sometimes tragic events happening at the beginning, middle, and endings of their stories. Pretend you are a news reporter called to the scene of one of these events. Develop a list of "who," "what," "where," "why" and "how" questions to ask one of the characters. With a partner, take turns asking and recording answers about the tragic or exciting event. Write it up as a "breaking news" story.
- There are many variations and mythological beings in constellation and nature myths. Have students research, compare, and contrast other versions of these tales. Use *Bulfinch's Mythology* by Thomas Bulfinch (Random House, 1998) to discover alternate stories.
- Students can research other stars and planets named after characters in Greek mythology. Have them find out why the beautiful Pleiades, the seven daughters of Atlas, are placed as stars in front of the Orion constellation, or what the names of the moons around the planet Jupiter have to do with mythology.
- Pegasus has more adventures after flying off with Perseus on his back. Have students read about Bellerophon, another brash young man who uses Pegasus' help to battle a monster. Have students write continuations of Pegasus' adventures using their own heroes and quests.
- Motivate your students to study the stars using marshmallows. Have students research a constellation and copy its design by gluing miniature marshmallows onto black construction paper. Students can report on the Greek myth which accompanies the constellation.
- Students can study their favorite night sky friends. The Peoria Astronomical Society links astronomy to Greek mythology at www.astronomical.org/constellations/obs.html. It offers a listing of the stars within each constellation and its accompanying myth.
- Create a class anthology of constellation myths. Have each student write a myth explaining a natural phenomenon found in the night sky. Suggest using mythological characters or developing their own Greek "super powers." To get started, have your students take a myth-writing workshop with author Jane Yolen at www.teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/mff/mythswshop_index.htm

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our Web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

- www.trinity.edu/departments/education/bakup/sack/volume1/2myth98.htm
Lessons on Greek mythology presented for elementary grades and easily adaptable for older students.

(Continued)

- www.pantheon.org
Encyclopedia Mythica supplies definitions, images, and pronunciation guides for gods and heroes.
- www.mythweb.com/encyc/index.html
Look up your favorite Greek character in this encyclopedia of Greek mythology.
- www.mythman.com
A humorous homework help site for students with classical myth retellings.

Suggested Print Resources

- Andrews, Tamra. *Dictionary of Nature Myths: Legends of the Earth, Sea, and Sky*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, NY; 2000.
- D'Aulaire, Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire. *Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire's Book of Greek Myths*. Doubleday, Garden City, NY; 1962. One of the best-loved classical collections of Greek mythology.
- Sasaki, Chris. *The Constellations: Stars and Stories*. Sterling Publications, New York, NY; 2003. This illustrated guidebook examines 88 constellations geared for the novice astronomer.
- Yolen, Jane. *Atalanta and the Arcadian Beast*. HarperCollins Publishers, New York, NY; 2003. Join this legendary huntress as she accompanies Orion on a quest to save her kingdom.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Kimberly Grieco, M.Ed.
Curriculum Specialist, Schlessinger Media

COMPLETE LIST OF TITLES

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| • CONSTELLATION MYTHS | • THE LABORS OF HERACLES |
| • DEFYING THE GODS | • NATURE MYTHS |
| • THE GODS OF OLYMPUS | • PERSEUS & MEDUSA |
| • JASON & THE GOLDEN FLEECE | • THESEUS & THE MINOTAUR |
| • THE JOURNEYS OF ODYSSEUS | • THE TROJAN WAR |

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CONSTELLATION MYTHS

Grades 4–8

Thousands of years ago, the ancient Greeks created a galaxy of myths to explain the mysteries and complexities of the world around them — the seasons, stars and planets, human society, war and peace, feast and famine, good luck and bad — even the creation of the world itself. They believed gods and goddesses, each with special powers, controlled and protected all humans. Many colorful stories about heroes, gods and monsters were memorized and sung by traveling poets long before they were ever written down. As they were passed down from generation to generation, aspects of the stories sometimes changed. These myths provide insight into the history, legends and religion of an ancient civilization, but also highlight fundamental similarities between modern people and those who lived long ago.

This guide provides a summary of classical retellings of Greek and Roman mythology, vocabulary, discussion questions, activities, and print and Internet resources for students and teachers to explore.

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Program Summary

The ancient Greeks were fascinated with the sky and the fixed grouping of stars, or constellations, which illuminate the night. They built their temples in alignment with the stars and created myths to explain the imagined images in the star patterns. *Constellation Myths* explores versions of some of the most popular myths involving the stars.

In *The Myth of Orion*, Artemis, the goddess of the hunt, joins forces with Orion, a conceited and boastful hunter. Artemis' brother, the god Apollo, is annoyed that his sister chooses to spend her time with such a conceited mortal. He overhears Orion boasting of his hunting skills and tells Gaia, Mother Earth, that this mortal believes he is such a great hunter that he could kill all of the animals in the world. She sends a giant scorpion to kill Orion, and it chases Orion into the sea. Meanwhile, Apollo challenges Artemis to demonstrate her skills with her bow and arrow by hitting a small object moving through the waters of the sea. Artemis hits her mark and only then realizes that it is her favorite companion, Orion. In his honor, she places Orion, his hunting dogs and the scorpion in the heavens as constellations.

Two of the most recognizable constellations, Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, are explained in *The Myth of Callisto*. The beautiful nymph, Callisto, becomes a hunting companion of Artemis. Zeus sees Callisto and is attracted to her beauty. A jealous Hera turns Callisto into a bear, and the former nymph spends her days as a hunted animal in the forest. Callisto's son, Arcas, grows up without his mother and comes across her in the forest one hunting day. An overjoyed Callisto raises her great bear paws to hug her son. Arcas believes this is a wild bear readying to attack him and he raises his bow to shoot her. Zeus quickly steps in and turns Arcas into a little bear. Callisto and Arcas are placed in the heavens as the constellations of Ursa Major, the big bear, and Ursa Minor, the little bear.

One of the most romantic myths involving constellations is *The Myth of Andromeda*. Andromeda is a beautiful princess with an even more beautiful but extremely vain mother, Cassiopeia. Cassiopeia brags that their combined glamour makes them even more beautiful than the sea nymphs. This boast angers Poseidon, the god of the sea, and he unleashes the terrible sea monster, Cetus, to attack and destroy Cassiopeia's kingdom. In order to stop the creature, an oracle advises King Cepheus to sacrifice his daughter, Andromeda, to Cetus. The king reluctantly orders Andromeda to be chained to a rock in the sea as Cetus approaches to devour her.

Perseus, aboard the winged horse Pegasus, happens to fly by, spies the beautiful Andromeda, and falls passionately in love with her. He is returning from his quest to slay the Gorgon, Medusa, and he uses the snake-encrusted head to turn Cetus into stone. He rescues Andromeda and they return to the palace for a celebration.

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Cassiopeia doesn't want her daughter to marry Perseus, and she orders her soldiers to kill the young hero. Perseus tricks the soldiers into looking at Medusa's head and they turn to stone. Unfortunately, Cassiopeia and Cepheus also turn to stone. The king and queen, as well as Perseus, Andromeda, and Cetus, are placed in the heavens as constellations.

Vocabulary

mortal — A human being.

Olympian gods — A group of immortal supreme beings who dwelt on Mount Olympus and ruled the world during ancient times.

Cast of Characters

Includes phonetic spelling in parentheses.

Andromeda (an-DRAHM-uh-duh) — Beautiful daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopeia.

Apollo (uh-POL-loh) — God of truth, music, light, and medicine; son of Zeus and twin brother to Artemis.

Arcas (AR-kus) — Son of Zeus and Callisto; his name means "bear."

Artemis (AR-te-mis) — Goddess of animals, hunters, childbirth and the moon; she is Apollo's twin and is known as Diana in Roman mythology.

Callisto (kuh-LIS-toh) — Mother of Arcas; she is a nymph who is a favorite of the hunting goddess, Artemis.

Cassiopeia (kas-ee-oh-PEE-uh) — Queen of Ethiopia and wife of Cepheus; her vanity almost leads to her daughter's destruction.

Cepheus (SEF-ee-us) — Father of Andromeda and husband to Cassiopeia.

Cetus (SEE-tus) — An enormous and horrifying sea monster that Poseidon releases to terrorize mankind.

Gaia (GI-uh) — Mother Earth; she is born from chaos, a great void of emptiness in the universe; she gives birth to many early beings like the Titans, Cyclops, and Hecatonchires.

Hera (HAYR-ah) — Wife and sister of Zeus and the most powerful goddess on Olympus; she is recognized as the protector of marriage; while beautiful, she is very jealous and frequently petty, cruel, and vindictive to anyone who spends time with her husband; known as Juno in Roman mythology.

oracles (OR-ah-kuhlz) — Prophets inspired by spiritual forces; both Olympian gods and mortals used their help to learn human fate and destiny.

Orion (oh-RY-uhn) — Son of Poseidon, he is a large, handsome mortal with exceptional hunting abilities; he becomes a partner to Artemis, the goddess of the hunt.

Pegasus (PEG-a-suhs) — Beautiful winged horse known to help heroes battle against Greek monsters; son of Poseidon and Medusa; he is born from the neck of Medusa.

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Perseus (PUR-see-uhs) — Strong and brash son of Zeus and Danae; he is known for his bravery and courage.

Poseidon (puh-SY-dun) — God of the sea; brother to Zeus and Hades; sometimes violent, he causes great storms and earthquakes with his trident; known as Neptune in Roman mythology.

Zeus (ZOOS) — God of the sky and ruler of Olympus; he shares the responsibility of the earth with his brothers Poseidon and Hades and is considered protector of all humans; he has had many children with goddesses and humans; also known as Jupiter in Roman mythology.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Discuss astronomy and the "heavenly bodies" found in the night sky. What are constellations? What do you know about them?
- Brainstorm stories or facts you know about Orion, Andromeda, and Callisto.

Focus Questions

Myth of Orion

1. Why does Apollo dislike Orion?
2. How does Apollo trick Artemis?
3. Who is placed in the night sky with Orion? Why?

Myth of Callisto

1. Explain why Callisto is turned into a bear.
2. What happens when Arcas sees his mother?
3. How does Zeus intervene between the mother and son?
4. Why do they have a place of honor in the constellations?

Myth of Andromeda

1. How does Cassiopeia's vanity affect Andromeda?
2. How does Perseus save Andromeda?
3. Why is the ending considered to be both happy and tragic?

Discussion Questions

- Hubris, or excessive pride in oneself, is the downfall for many Greek characters. Discuss the characters who become affected by the hubris of themselves or others.
- Each of these myths involves great love and great tragedy. Discuss these themes throughout the constellation myths.
- Why are these characters considered "important" enough to be given a place of honor in the night sky? Do you agree that all of them deserve this honor? Why or why not?