

- Prometheus' story did not end on that rocky mountain. Have students learn more about this great Titan's involvement in the war against the gods, how he was rescued from Zeus' punishment, and how his gift of fire was viewed by some to be detrimental to mankind. Have them find alternate versions of his story and discuss the similarities and differences.
- What would Pandora look like today? Where would she live? What would be in the box? Have students place Pandora in a contemporary setting and write dialogue for this first mortal woman and her adventures in the 21st century. Assign classmates to different roles and act out the new Myth of Pandora.
- The ancient Greeks treasured artisans and skilled workers. Their myths often focused on the beauty of a craft-maker like Arachne or the skill of an architect like Daedalus. It is evident through modern day architecture, pottery, and paintings how important the myths were in Greek life. By using the Internet and art books, have your students locate and discuss examples of mythology or mythological symbolism found in arts and crafts.
- Have your students locate [www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/bruegel/](http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/bruegel/) on the Internet. This site displays the "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus" by Pieter Bruegel and can stimulate oral story-telling. The painting can trigger students' imagination to develop different endings to Icarus' story. Students can relate the picture to a poem about Icarus by William Carlos Williams at [www.poets.org/search/search.cfm](http://www.poets.org/search/search.cfm). Encourage the class to share their stories and interpretations.
- Many proverbs, famous sayings and the origins of words in our present-day language have developed from the ancient myths. Have your students brainstorm a list of mythological characters. Locate some of the characters on the site for "An Etymological Dictionary of Classical Mythology" at [www.kl.oakland.edu/kraemer/edcm/contents.html](http://www.kl.oakland.edu/kraemer/edcm/contents.html) and use their meanings in student-generated sentences and stories.
- The Greeks weren't the only ones to create a story about the origin of spiders. Your students can read other cultural myths about the "spider-woman" and her involvement in the creation of the world. Find her in folktales and myths from West Africa, Japan, and North America. Have students compare and contrast the spider-woman to Arachne.

### Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our Web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

- [www.trinity.edu/departments/education/bakup/sack/volume1/2myth98.htm](http://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.mythman.com](http://www.mythman.com)  
A humorous homework help site for students with classical myth retelling.
- [www.pantheon.org/mythica.html](http://www.pantheon.org/mythica.html)  
"Encyclopedia Mythica" supplies definitions, images, and character glossaries.
- [www.classicalmythology.org/chaptertopics/index.html](http://www.classicalmythology.org/chaptertopics/index.html)  
"Classical Mythology" supplies detailed summaries of the myths.

### Suggested Print Resources

- Bulfinch, Thomas. *Bulfinch's Mythology*. Random House, New York, NY; 1998.
- Burleigh, Robert. *Pandora*. Harcourt, Orlando, FL; 2002.  
This picture book provides a poetic retelling for younger audiences.
- Galloway, Priscilla. *Daedalus and the Minotaur*. Annick Press Limited, Toronto, Ontario; 2003.  
Daedalus' background story is told as it leaves Icarus' fate up to the reader's interpretation.
- Shepard, Aaron. *Master Man: A Tall Tale of Nigeria*. HarperCollins, New York, NY; 2001.  
A folktale with a lesson in hubris for younger audiences.
- Spires, Elizabeth. *I Am Arachne: Fifteen Greek and Roman Myths*. Frances Foster Books, New York, New York; 2001.

### TEACHER'S GUIDE

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

### COMPLETE LIST OF TITLES

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## DEFYING THE GODS

### 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.



## Program Summary

This collection of myths explains the consequences for mortals as well as gods who exhibit excessive pride, or hubris. Many Greeks learned the hard way. They angered and defied the gods with their behavior and poor choices and were usually severely punished.

**The Myth of Arachne** involves a young peasant girl who has an extraordinary talent for weaving. Arachne boasts of her skill and claims that she is even more skilled at weaving than the goddess, Athena. Her comments irritate the goddess and the girl is challenged to a weaving contest. Arachne weaves a tapestry which portrays the Olympian gods in a foolish way. Athena is so enraged that she sentences Arachne to a life of weaving — and turns the girl into a spider! Arachne becomes the first spider on earth, passing on her great skills in spinning and weaving to all of her descendants.

In **The Myth of Prometheus**, a wise Titan named Prometheus and his brother, Epimetheus, are ordered by Zeus to create man and animals. While Prometheus is designing man, Epimetheus takes all of the great skills and abilities like speed and strength and assigns them to the animals. There are no qualities left to give to man to insure his survival and superiority over the animals, so Prometheus decides to give man the gift of fire. Although forbidden by Zeus, Prometheus decides that the importance of giving fire to man would outweigh the punishment that Zeus would inflict upon him. Prometheus creeps up to Mt. Olympus, steals a burning candle from Zeus' throne, and gives it to man. Zeus punishes Prometheus by chaining him to a cliff and sending a horrible eagle to eat his liver every day. Since Prometheus is immortal and cannot die, he spends eternity suffering in terrible pain for defying the gods.

**The Myth of Pandora** involves Zeus' retaliation against mankind for accepting the gift of fire from Prometheus. Zeus sends to earth the first mortal woman, Pandora, who has been given special gifts from each of the gods. Zeus gives her the gift of curiosity, along with a beautiful box to celebrate her wedding to Epimetheus. Zeus advises her, however, to never open the box. Try as she might, Pandora can not stop thinking about the box and its contents. Finally, her curiosity gets the better of her, and she lifts the lid. Out swarms a horde of miseries like greed, vanity and disease. Pandora quickly replaces the lid, but not before all the evils escape into the world. Hope, however, is left in the box to help mankind through the hardest of times.

**The Myth of Icarus** teaches about the tragedy that can result from excessive pride. Daedalus, a famous inventor, is imprisoned with his son by a cruel king. His only way of escaping over the high castle walls is by flight. He fashions bird wings for himself and his son, Icarus. Daedalus instructs Icarus not to fly too high nor too low in the sky. Icarus soon becomes so overconfident in his flying ability that he flies higher and higher and disregards his father's warnings. The sun melts the wax off of Icarus' wings and he plummets into the sea.

## Vocabulary

**arachnid** — A class of invertebrate animals that includes spiders, scorpions, mites, and ticks; the word originates from Arachne, a girl who, according to legend, became the first spider.

**hubris** — A Greek term meaning exaggerated pride or self-confidence.

**mortal** — A human being.

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

**Titans** — A family of giants in Greek mythology born from Uranus and Gaia; they ruled the earth until they were overthrown by the Olympian gods.

## Cast of Characters

*Includes phonetic spelling in parentheses.*

**Arachne (a-RAK-nee)** — A peasant girl known for boasting about her incredible ability to weave and create tapestries.

**Athena (a-THEE-na)** — The favorite daughter of Zeus and goddess of wisdom, justice, battle, and crafts; known as Minerva in Roman mythology.

**Daedalus (DED-uh-lus)** — Gifted craftsman, architect, and inventor for King Minos of Crete.

**Epimetheus (ep-i-MEE-thee-us)** — Brother to Prometheus and one of the Titans; he is known for being slow-witted; his name in Greek means “hind-sight” or “afterthought.”

**Hermes (HER-meez)** — Messenger of the gods; known as Mercury in Roman mythology.

**Icarus (IK-a-rus)** — The son of Daedalus; he runs into trouble when he doesn't listen to his father.

**Pandora (pan-DOR-a)** — The first mortal woman on earth; she is sent by Zeus as a gift for mankind and becomes the bride of Epimetheus.

**Prometheus (proh-MEE-thee-us)** — The wisest Titan and brother to Epimetheus; known as the fire god and friend to mankind; his name means “forethought.”

**Zeus (ZOOS)** — God of the sky and ruler of Olympus; also known as Jupiter in Roman mythology.

## Pre-viewing Discussion

- How do children learn rules or behavior? Do they experiment sometimes? What can be the consequences of experimentation?
- In your opinion, what is the worst possible crime? And the worst punishment? For yourself? For your friends? For the world?
- In Greek mythology, mortals like Arachne suffer terrible consequences for having too much pride. Why is being prideful or boastful wrong?

## Focus Questions

### The Myth of Arachne

1. Why did Athena challenge Arachne to a weaving contest?
2. What picture did Arachne weave during the contest?
3. What happened to Arachne?

### The Myth of Prometheus

1. What do the names Prometheus and Epimetheus mean? How do these meanings represent each brother?
2. Why did Prometheus steal fire from the gods?
3. How did Zeus choose to punish Prometheus?

### The Myth of Pandora

1. Why did Prometheus warn his brother not to accept gifts from Zeus?
2. What did Zeus tell Pandora to do with the beautiful wedding box?
3. Why did Pandora open the box?
4. What was inside Pandora's box?

### The Myth of Icarus

1. How did Daedalus and Icarus escape from imprisonment?
2. What was Daedalus' warning to his son?
3. What happened to Icarus when he disobeyed his father?

## Discussion Questions

- Name the punishments that were given to the main characters in *Defying the Gods*. Were the levels of punishment equal to the crimes or insults? Why or why not?
- These myths involve characters who have broken the rules and defied authority. All of them are severely punished for their inappropriate behavior. Scientists like Galileo or revolutionaries like George Washington also broke the rules. Did they suffer consequences or punishment? How has their defiance against authority affected the world? What are other examples of artists, inventors, or adventurers who have done the same? How has their behavior affected the world?

## Follow-up Activities

- How can students relate to Icarus or Pandora? Have they experienced situations where authority has been challenged? Divide the class into pairs. Have one student represent a character and write a letter asking for advice concerning his predicament. Have the other student answer the letter by offering support, encouragement, or guidance. For example, students might offer sympathy and advice to Prometheus or guidance to Arachne on how to handle temperamental adults. This writing activity can be extended to other Greek myths. *(Continued)*