



# Greek and Roman Art

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Evening for Educators

March 20, 2002, 5:30 - 8:30

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Museum # 1989.005.001



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## An Overview of Greek Vases

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Written and Compiled by Douglas R. Allen, Alta High School

“The grace and balance of the forms of Greek vases and the compelling image of their decoration first impress modern viewers. Yet for the ancient Greeks, these vases were mostly functional objects, made to be used, not just admired. They used ceramic vessels in every aspect of their daily lives: for storage, carrying, mixing, serving, and drinking and as cosmetic boxes and perfume containers. Elaborately formed and decorated, vases were considered worthy gifts for dedication to the Gods.

Every community produced utilitarian pottery, but only a few main centers created fine decorated pieces. Distinct regional styles emerged in the Archaic and Classical periods from Corinth, Lakonia, Ionia, South Italy, and especially Athens.

The typical Athenian pottery workshop was a small establishment consisting of a potter and several assistants. The potter prepared the clay, threw or formed the vases, and oversaw their firing. He may also have decorated the vases himself, or employed vase-painters to decorate his wares.

The skill of potting and painting were often handed down from father to son. Signatures on vases suggest that many potters and painters did not have high status and some may even have been slaves. The creation of pottery was laborious, dirty work that generally took place outside the city limits because of the space needed and the thick smoke produced by the kilns.”

-([www.getty.edu/art/collections](http://www.getty.edu/art/collections))

### Clay Preparation

The clay used by the ancient Greeks to make their vases was reddish-brown in color with very good working properties. The clay was dug at a nearby clay pit and hauled by cart to the site of the workshop. The clay pits used by ancient potters are still in use today. The workshop was located in an area reserved for the potters. The clay preparation and firing occurred outside, and the manufacture and painting of the vases was done inside a covered area or building. Four to twelve people could be found in a workshop. Some were potters, some were painters, and others were workers, apprentices, and slaves. Once enough clay was gathered, the next step was refinement to make it more workable. The clay was first crushed and placed in holding tanks with a lot of water. The mix was stirred thoroughly and then left to soak and settle. The larger sticks, rocks, and other debris were heavier than the fine particle clay and sank to the bottom. The top layer was then transferred into another tank, mixed with water again, and allowed to settle. The process was repeated until the clay reached the desired state of purity. The clay was allowed to stiffen and was then removed to age until needed. This method of clay refinement is still in use today by modern Greek potters.

## Potters' Wheel

Before the clay could be formed on the wheel, it first had to be worked or wedged, to remove air bubbles. This also made the clay more uniform in consistency and easier to throw. The Greek potter's wheel consisted of a large wooden or stone disc at the top, attached to an axle which was set on a pivot point in the ground. The wheel head was balanced to run true. The wheel was kept in motion by an assistant or slave, allowing the potter to use both hands to form the vases. Potters worked with limited number of forms, whose shapes were designed for beauty as well as function. Besides throwing on the wheel, some vases were made by coiling fat rolls of clay around a base of clay and pinching them upwards and shaping them to form the wall. A few drinking vessels were partly made from molds of fired clay.

## Vase Painting

Greek vases were painted by people who specialized in this area. A few potters also painted, but in general the two processes remained separate so that a painter often worked for one potter. The vases were painted before firing while still leather hard. The paint used was actually clay slip refined from the same clay used to form the vases. The refinement by settling created a slip that was made up of the very finest particles. To prepare the vase for painting, it was first polished, or burnished, with a smooth rock or piece of bone. The design was carefully painted in one of two styles. The earlier method is known as black-figure painting. The figures were painted in black while the background remained the red color of the clay after firing. The later style of painting is known as the red-figure style. In this method the background and details of the figure were painted black while the figures remained red after firing (see descriptions below). Details were applied with a special tool made of animal gut and a bone tip, which looks much like a modern pastry tube. A fine raised line of thickened slip was applied with this tool. The designs showed scenes of gods and man in many situations found in real life and in mythology. All aspects of daily lives of the people of Greek society were depicted on these vases. Thus, these vases became invaluable in understanding how these people worked, played, worshiped, and lived.

### Painting black-figure pots

1. After an initial drawing on the pot (probably with charcoal) the artist filled in the complete figure using the refined clay as paint. When fired this turned black.
2. The next stage was to add extra colors - these were painted over the refined clay "paint". Sometimes the artist used white clay for parts of the clothing and a reddish purple for the beard and hair. These colors were unchanged after firing. The white has sometimes completely or partially worn off on surviving pots.
3. Next the fine detail was added by incision - scratching through to the underlying color of the vase with a sharp tool. The artist also incised around the complete outline to give a sharp edge to his figure.
4. The FIRST phase of firing (lid open) would have fired both paint and unpainted clay to "red". When the kiln lid was closed, both paint and unpainted clay went black. The kiln was open again for the THIRD phase, and as it cooled the unpainted clay reverted to its red color. The painted parts which had turned black could not revert because of SINTERING.
5. After firing, the pot was burnished (polished). All the "paint" - that is the figure and designs - was changed to black, leaving the background in the natural red of the clay.

### Painting red-figure pots

1. The rough outline was drawn on the clay with charcoal: this normally disappeared when the pot was fired, but if the clay was soft an impression was sometimes left.

2. The second stage was for the painter to go round the outside of the figure with a thin brush (approximately 5mm wide) and paint a line to enclose the figure completely. This line can very often still be detected on the finished pot. It will be BLACK after the pot is fired.

3. Next comes the detailed drawing within the figures. On the finished pot this line is remarkably consistent in width, and usually "sticks up" in relief. We don't know how it was done - whether with a very fine brush or a special tool (like those used for icing cakes). The latest theory is that a series of tools with hairs attached could have been used - dipped in the clay paint and laid on to the pot to make curves, spirals or whatever. The relief line, drawn with "refined" clay will turn black after firing.

4. The background was next filled in with a broad brush (the reason for the 5mm line now becomes clear). The "paint" is a refined version of the same clay from which the pot has been made, and so there is no great difference in color until the pot is fired.

5. The FIRST phase of firing (lid open) would have fired both paint and unpainted clay to "red". When the kiln lid was closed, both paint and unpainted clay went black. The kiln was open again for the THIRD phase, and as it cooled the unpainted clay reverted to its red color. The painted parts which had turned black could not revert because of SINTERING.

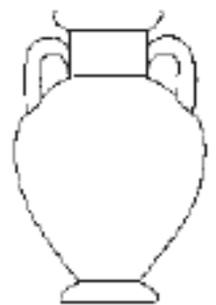
6. After firing, the pot was burnished (polished). All the "paint" - that is the background and the relief line - was changed to black, leaving the figure in the natural red of the clay.

### Ancient Greek Pottery Types



**Alabastron:** (al'u-bas'tron, -trun, -bä'stron, -strun) An alabastron is a jar having an elongated shape, narrow neck, flat-rimmed mouth, and rounded base that requires a stand or support. The form of the alabastron is based on vessels from Egypt. An alabastron is used as a container for perfumed oil and takes its name from alabaster, the material from which the original Egyptian examples were made. Greek artists adopted the Egyptian alabastron's shape in the 600s B.C. but made the vessel in a variety of materials.

**Amphora:** (am'fur-u) A large two-handled storage jar having an oval body, usually tapering to a point at the base, with a pair of handles extending from immediately below the lip to the shoulder with a narrow neck and set on a foot. It was used by the ancient Greeks and Romans to carry wine or oil and as a commemorative vase awarded the victors in contests such as the Panathenaic games.



Neck Amphora



**Aryballos:** (ar"u-bal'us) A curving, long-necked vessel with a spherical body flat-rimmed mouth, and often a single handle extending from the lip to the shoulder of the jar. It was used chiefly for fragrant ointments.



Colanin Krater

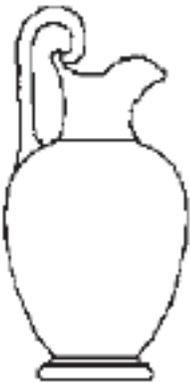
**Krater:** (krA'tur) A krater was designed as a container in which to mix wine and water for serving at social gatherings. It is characterized by a wide mouth and body with two handles projecting vertically from the juncture of the neck and body.



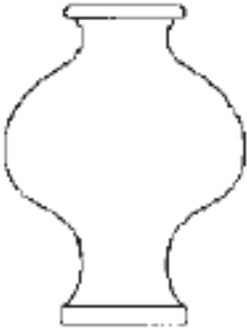
Volute Krater



**Kylix:** (kl'liks, kil'iks) A shallow bowl having two horizontal handles projecting from the sides, often set upon a stem terminating in a foot. A kylix was generally used as a drinking cup.



**Oinochoe:** (oi-nok'O-E") A wine pitcher or jug, characterized by a curved handle extending from the lip to the shoulder, and a round or trefoil mouth.



**Psykter:** (sik'tur) The psykter is a wine jar with an oval-shaped body tapering at the neck, set on a high foot. Such vessels with a hollow stand were filled with water and placed in the krater to cool the wine.



**Rhyton:** (rl'ton) An ancient Greek drinking horn, made of pottery or metal, having a base in the form of the head of a woman or animal.



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Compiled by Douglas R. Allen

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## Greek Amphora

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Written by Douglas R. Allen



Manner of the Antimenes Painter, Greek

**Black - Figure Neck - Amphora**, c. 510 - 500 B.C.

Terracotta with glaze, height 17 in. (43.2 cm)

Purchased with funds from the Friends of the Art Museum and Emma Eccles Jones

Museum # 1990.001.001

The Black-figure Amphora is an ancient Greek jar or vase with a large oval body, narrow cylinder neck, and two handles that rise almost to the level of the mouth. It is flat on top and has a disk foot. Amphoras were mainly used for storage of wine, oil, or grains. The vase could have been sealed, but it is unclear whether this would have been accomplished with a potted lid or some other means. The neck amphora shape was very popular during the late period of the the black-figure style.

### Slide Description

This vase has an elegant tapering body, and is an excellent example of the proportions established by the Attic potters in the sixth century B.C. The two-handled storage jar has painted black forms which adorn the polished red clay. It is decorated with a pattern of rays emerging from the foot, followed by a band of lotus buds and then a key pattern, while the neck features a lotus-and palmette chain. Typical of classical vases, however, most of the surface area is given over to the illustration of gods and scenes from Homeric Legend. The figures are in black with accents of white for their hands and faces with burgundy red in the clothing. On one side of the jar, the god of light and music, Apollo, is depicted playing a kithara. He stands between his mother, Leto, and his twin sister, Artemis, the moon goddess. On the other side (illustrated here), warriors, perhaps Achilles fighting Memnon, are depicted in combat. The clear and skillful treatment of the figures is done in the manner of the Antimenes Painter, who was one of the most innovative black-figure painters of the late sixth century.

### Antimenes Painter Style

This vase is painted in the manner of the Antimenes Painter. The Antimenes(an-Tim-en-eez) painter painted many images of Herakles and Athena together, responding to public demand for timely themes in art. Art historians can identify stylistic traits that recur in vase paintings of theme, the use of white, and characteristics of composition as the manner of the Antimenes painter.

## Decoration

Areas on the vase are left in natural red clay as the black-figure technique is used to delineate details. Incision is used to cut through the light clay of the pot with a sharp tool to create a fine line. Because the lines were so fine many intricate patterns could be introduced. Some Black figure painters combined incision and other techniques, of which the most common was adding color to the design. White and reddish purple were added for skin and garments along with the black. The vase is beautifully balanced with a repetition of pattern in floral, geometric, and figure design work.

# Greek Amphora Lesson

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Written by Marge Wilson

## Introduction:

1. Show the slide of the amphora and discuss the style, use, shape of the vase.
2. One of the figures on the vase is Apollo, one of the twelve Olympians. Apollo was the son of Zeus and Leto; born on the island of Delos, which was raised by Poseidon to escape the wrath of Hera. His famous twin sister was Artemis (Diana). The sun god, and god of fine arts, medicine, music, poetry and eloquence. He had many amours: Leucothoe, Daphne, Issa, Bolina, Coronic, Clymene, Cyrene, Choione, Calliope and others. Destroyer of monsters: Phthon, Cyclops. In English literature: Keats "Hyperion," Shelley "Hymn to Apollo," Francis Thomson "Daphne," and scores of allusions in Arnold, Marvell, Milton, Shakespeare, and Spenser.
3. Another figure on the vase is perhaps Achilles. He was the son of Peleus and the sea goddess, Thetis. Educated by the centaur Chiron. Greatest Greek warrior of the Trojan War. Killed Hector, the greatest Trojan warrior. Slain by Paris. Central figure in Homer's *Iliad*.
4. Check in the mythology section for stories of these heroes.

## Suggested Activities for Elementary Students:

### 1. Core Objectives:

**STANDARD: 1340 - 01:** The student will plan and improvise plays based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history for informal and formal theatre.

Find the story of Achilles in the mythology section. Remember his mother dipped him in the River Styx to make him immortal, but because she held him by the heel, his heel did not touch the water. He was killed in the Trojan War with an arrow to his heel.

Have the students write a skit or several about scenes from Achilles life. Create costumes like the Greeks. Find music or have the students find music to go with the scenes. The story could be done in mime or with words.

Students could also do a story using animation, claymation, or real characters and make a videotape.

2. Create a writing assignment from the stories. They could include a newspaper account of Achilles' last battle or an account of Achilles' journal.

3. Make up a new myth about Achilles and have him become a modern day hero. Draw the new myth on the amphora outline included in this plan.

#### Suggested Activities for Secondary Students

1. Research and discover what was going on in the rest of the world in 510-500 B.C. Draw a time line with a description of the events.

2. What were the discoveries in science at this time. Write a paper telling about them.

3. Write a hymn to a modern day hero.

4. Have the students read and talk about Keats "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Compare it to the Greek Amphora. Could it be the same one?

#### JOHN KEATS (1795-1821) ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

1    Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
2        Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
3    Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
4        A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
5    What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
6        Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
7        In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
8        What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
9    What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
10       What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

11   Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
12       Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
13   Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
14       Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
15   Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
16       Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
17       Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
18   Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;  
19       She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
20       For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

21   Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
22       Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;  
23   And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
24       For ever piping songs for ever new;  
25   More happy love! more happy, happy love!  
26       For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,

27 For ever panting, and for ever young;  
28 All breathing human passion far above,  
29 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,  
30 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

31 Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
32 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
33 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
34 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?  
35 What little town by river or sea shore,  
36 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
37 Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?  
38 And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
39 Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
40 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

41 O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede  
42 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
43 With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
44 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
45 As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
46 When old age shall this generation waste,  
47 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
48 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
49 "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,--that is all  
50 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."



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## Greek Amphora Outline

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## Apulian Oinochoe

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Written by Douglas R. Allen



Greek from Southern Italy (Gnathia)

**Apulian Oinochoe**, c. 300 B.C.

Terracotta with glaze and added colors,

Height 13 3/4 in. (34.9 cm)

Purchased with funds from the Friends of the Art Museum and funds from Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Barker.

Museum # 1990.039.002

An oinochoe is a single-handled pitcher that was primarily used to transfer wine from a larger mixing vessel to a drinking cup. These vases were made in a wide variety of shapes and designs, including those incorporating a molded human head.

### Slide Description

In this vase, the shape displays a tall jug, with a narrow neck and a pouring spout. Almost the entire surface is covered with a black glaze. There is the mask of a lion, positioned just above the trefoil-shaped lip, which takes the place of a human representation that are often found on such vases. The lion head seems almost to be the source of the liquid in the oinochoe. The stately, slender shape of the vase is further decorated with a pair of white doves resting on leaves of yellow ivy, framed by scarlet drapery. Two bands of ribbing separated by a central band of red-and-yellow ivy motif accentuate the verticality of the vase.

### Decoration

The surface portrays a beautiful black glaze and has a very developed fluting design around the entire vase. This design is not merely incised but built up with more form so that the ribbing has a three dimensional quality about it. Other detail on the vase shows painted images in white, yellow, and burgundy red that have been painted over the black. The spout is very wide so that when the liquid would be poured out it would roll over the flared lip of the vase.

# Figure/Ground Lesson

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Written by Jim Saw, Palomar College, used by permission

**Purpose:** The relationship between figure and ground is a very important relationship in Greek vase painting. Ancient Greek artists needed to understand the shape of the figure and the background in order to paint both red-figure and black-figure pottery (see description of vase painting on page 6 and 7). This lesson explores the relationship between figure and ground in design. In simplest terms the figure is what you notice and the ground is everything else.

**Age:** High school, but the information can be adapted for other grades.

## Objectives:

1. Understand the characteristics of the design element shape.
2. Learn the relationship between figure and ground.
3. Design an obvious figure/ground relationship using a letter of the alphabet.
4. Make an ambiguous figure/ground composition using the negative shapes from the letter project.

## In Class Preparation:

Show the students the slides of the three Greek vases (Apulian Oinochoe, Black - Figure Neck Amphora, Attic Red-figure Kylix). Discuss how red-figure and black-figure vases are painted. Go over the definitions listed below.

## SHAPE

Shape, like the other design elements, is one of the visual tools used by designers. A shape is an area that is separate from other areas and/or its background. The separation can be by a boundary line or a change in value/color, texture or any other difference that lets you see that the shape is different. The boundary can be an outline or a distinct edge like cut paper, a rough edge like torn paper or a soft edge like a smear of charcoal.



## FIGURE

The part of a composition that we pay attention to is called figure. The figure is also called a positive shape. In a simple composition there may be only one figure. In a complex composition there will be several things to notice. As we look from one to another they each become figure in turn. Recognizable objects (subject matter) are easy to see as figure. In compositions without recognizable subject matter what we see as figure will depend on the abstract relationship between the visual elements. The most interesting at any moment is the figure.

## GROUND

Everything that is not figure is ground. As attention shifts from figure to figure the ground also shifts so that an object can go from figure to ground and back. Ground is sometimes thought of as background but this is not always true. In a flat composition there is nothing behind the figure (if there was there would be the illusion of depth). The shapes are side by side.



When the figure is surrounded by space in the composition the ground looks like a shape (the format) with a hole in it the shape of the figure (see example to the left). In this case the ground looks like a background for the figure and there is a shallow space developed. In this example the figure and ground are both visible even though the ground (grey) is all that is shown.

space stays flat.

If the figure contacts the edge of the format or other figure shapes the ground seems to surround the figure and a series of ground shapes are made. These are called negative shapes and no longer appear as a background. The

## FORMAT

The area that a composition takes place in is called the format. The format is defined by its size and shape (i.e. a vase). The format's edges are generally indicated by a border or the edge of the background color. The default format is the size and shape of the page or canvas that the composition takes place on -- unless that space is reformatted with a new design area indicated. Choosing an appropriate format means choosing a shape and size for the ground.

## FIGURE/GROUND RELATIONSHIP

The figure always defines the ground and the ground defines the figure. They are inseparable -- you can not have one without the other. If you draw the figure in a composition, you are drawing the ground at the same time (see "S" in grey ground above). The edges of one are the edges of the other.

The classic face/vase illusion forces the viewer to shift from one figure to the other but not to see both as figure at the same time. When you see the faces as figure, the vase is the ground. When you see the vase as figure, the faces are the ground.



The figure/ground relationship is so important that an artist must consider all of the composition when designing. It is a mistake to only plan the figure. The entire area of the format must be given careful consideration or the image will be only partially designed.

If the entire area of the format can be made interesting, all of the shapes, spaces and/or objects appear as figure and 100% of the format is working visually. If only the subject matter, or main abstract shapes are carefully designed to look interesting, the designer is giving away the rest of the format space to stay as ground. A composition that is all interesting has an advantage over one that is only partially interesting.

## PROJECT

### OBVIOUS FIGURE/GROUND



Design an alphabet letter that fits in a rectangular format so that it touches all four sides. The letter must be easily recognized and occupy 50% of the space in the format.

Only two colors may be used: one for the figure and one for the ground. Any style of upper or lower case letter may be used.

The negative shapes from this project will be the visual information you use for the next project. There must be at least five negative shapes.

Try one of your initials and make a monogram for yourself.

### THE LETTER

Look through books or magazines for a style of letter that appeals to you. Adapt an existing letter style or make up your own. The letter must be recognizable so that it will be an obvious example of figure. Remember you will use the negative shapes from this project next time so design the letter with the negative shapes in mind. In other words, design the entire format -- both figure and ground.

### DESIGN TIPS

There are many styles of type and more invented every day. Here are some concepts that are used in most letter designs:

**Strokes:** The marks that make up letters all have names but can be summarized as strokes. Some letters use only one width stroke (gothic letters) but most use strokes of different widths. The wider strokes are usually vertical with the horizontal strokes thinner. The wide strokes give the form stability and are critical in the recognition of the letter. Observe letters to see where the different stroke weights are placed. On letters with curves, especially script letters, the transition in stroke width is smooth and gradual. The gracefulness of a letter is greatly influenced by where and how this transition is accomplished.

**Waist:** The visual center of a letter is its waist. This is where the center of B, K and R, and the horizontal stroke of E and F are located. The waist is usually above the measured center giving the letter more weight on the bottom for stability. The lower areas are also usually wider than the tops for the same reason. Some letter styles violate this with very high (or rarer still, very low) waists-- but be cautious of this idea.

**Consistency:** Unity is the goal of all designers. The parts of the letter and especially the decorative strokes (serifs) should be the same or compatible in style.



### FITTING THE FORMAT

It might be necessary to stretch your letter somewhere to make it touch the sides of the box it is in. The top part of an S, or B, for example, is usually smaller than the bottom part so it might need widening. Narrowing the lower part may also work. The letter should touch all four sides of the format box.

Exaggerating part of a letter or tilting it can also help make it fit better. Strike a balance between fitting and the aesthetics of the letter's shapes (both positive and negative).

Cropping (cutting off part of the letter) can work if you are careful where you do the cutting. Most parts of a letter are necessary but some edges can be supplied by the viewer's imagination.

Remember to design both the letter (figure) and the negative shapes (ground). Both must be interesting for the image to work well.

### HALF AND HALF

It is important for the next project that the negative shapes from this project use half of the format. Judging when your letter occupies 50% of the space is not easy. Look to see the same amount of each color (figure and ground). This is an aesthetic challenge since it will make the letter thicker than most type styles.

Thicken the main letter strokes while thumbnail sketching. Keep the letter readable and consistent in style. Pay particular attention to the width of every stroke in the letter. Make the curves smooth and changes in line weight gradual with the thick and thin areas in the appropriate places. Use a French curve if you have trouble drawing the curves freehand.



Adding to the decorative parts of the letter can fill space as long as the design is not compromised. Remember that the strokes that make up the letter should be the most visible. Try changing the format shape to better fit the letter. Avoid an exaggerated (thin) rectangle since it will be more difficult to use on the next project.



### NEGATIVE SHAPES

One of the points of this assignment is to point out that planning the ground shapes will help make the figure shapes more interesting. Remember that you are going to use only the negative shapes from this project in the next. Strive to make all of the shapes in the design interesting. Variety is the spice of life -- make the shapes a little different in: shape, size, direction and/or proportion. The more negative shapes, the better -- up to a point. Have the parts of the letter touch or overlap each other to make more shapes. Adding or exaggerating the serifs on the letter can be an effective way to do this. Changing the proportion of an area so it touches the side of the box is another. Avoid any large shapes, especially long ones, since they will be difficult to use in the next project.

## MAKING THE PROJECT

Use thumbnail sketches to find a design idea. Start with the letter and draw the format shape around it. Thicken the strokes of the letter to make it occupy half of the format area.

A full size rough will be needed. Draw the rough in your sketch book and adjust the proportions and details until you are satisfied with the composition. Construction paper comes 9 inches by 12 inches so it makes sense to make the finished product that size or smaller. There is nothing magical or sacred about a 9 by 12 inch format. Do not compromise your design to make it conveniently fit a piece of paper.

It will take three pieces of paper to make these two projects. One for the figure and ground shapes and two the same color for backgrounds. Cut all of the papers to the same size -- the size of the format.

Trace, transfer or cut up your rough and use it as a template to put the letter design on the color paper that is to be the letter (figure). Keep any marks light and easy to erase. Cut out the letter being careful to cut exactly on the line and to save all of the negative shapes (to use in the next project).

## COLORS

Use two colors that will show well against each other. Color has the potential for psychological as well as visual impact. Choose colors that work well with the style of letter you designed. Both colors should show well against the white of the page or you will need a border. Avoid two colors that are the same value unless one is bright and the other dull.

## BORDER

A border is optional but necessary if either of the colors are too light to contrast with the white of the Design Books paper. Yellow is a color that nearly the same value as white. Choose a border color that contrasts equally with both letter and ground colors. Keep the border narrow so it does not compete with the image.

# Ambiguous Figure/Ground Lesson

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The figure/ground relationship in the last project was obvious because the alphabet letter used was the only recognizable shape. The negative shapes might have been interesting but that is not enough to make them figure when there is such obvious subject matter. There are, however, other criteria for controlling a figure/ground relationship.

This lesson will explore the most important of these using the negative shapes from the last project to make compositions where they will be:

- Negative shapes to another figure.

- Form a positive shape(figure).

- Be part of an ambiguous figure/ground relationship.

## CONTROLLING FIGURE

There are an infinite number of figure/ground combinations so there is no simple rule of thumb that will make it easy to control this phenomenon. What you notice is figure. To control figure you have to control attention. What is figure changes as you look around the composition, noticing different things in turn. When there is subject matter the nature of the objects and their relationship to each other will influence what will be seen as figure. In a composition that is abstract to the point where there are no recognizable objects (nonobjective) other criteria must be used to control what is figure.

Contrast and placement are the strongest tools for controlling attention. Some concepts:

**Simple:** The mind wants to find the simplest solution to any visual problem. This is not because the mind is lazy but because the visual world is so complex that you could not cope with all of the information you take in without simplifying it to make it understandable. One factor for coping is finding simple shapes and shape relationships. Complex shapes may be more interesting but we are drawn to the simple shapes because they are the easiest to identify and to relate to.

In Gestalt psychology "good" shapes have the qualities: simplicity, regularity, symmetry and ease of being remembered. All things being equal, such shapes are more likely to be seen as figure. That means that complex shapes, especially ones that do not hold together well, are more likely to be seen as ground.

**Singular:** You tend to see only one figure at a time. Multiple shapes and complex shapes are less likely to be seen as figure. Simple shapes are singular -- they have unity. That may make them less interesting but it also makes them easier to relate to. Multiple shapes are more likely to relate to the ground unless there is something that ties them together visually into a single form (like marching ants making a line).

**Center:** The center of the format is the first place you look in a composition. A shape that is in the center, especially a shape that dominates the center, is more likely to be seen as figure. Shapes that are around the edges will relate more to the format and are usually seen as ground.

Use all three of these concepts and you have a single, simple shape in the center of the composition. The last project was such a composition. The letter designs would still be readable as figure/ground if the letters were not recognizable (turn yours on it's side to see). A letters is a single object that dominates the center of the composition. Some letter forms might not be simple, but the simplest of them are the most likely to be seen as figure. Some of the letter's ground shapes may be in the center of the format but shapes along outside edges all tend to be ground shapes.



## FIGURE/GROUND EXPERIMENTS

Now you will make three different compositions using the "negative shapes" from the last project. All of these will be made on the same format shape and color as the first project. The shapes may be turned over but they may not overlap each other or go outside the edges of the format.

You will make the first two to see how the above information helps dictate what will be seen as figure and what will be ground.

One of the advantages of collage is that you can try many possibilities before committing yourself. Try to see how effectively you can accomplish each of these objectives before moving on to the next.

Reassemble your original letter design using your "negative shapes" to make sure you have all the pieces.



### STILL NEGATIVE SHAPES

Use the "negative shapes" to make a new composition where the shapes are still seen as ground. That means you will make a figure shape (the background color) with the "negative shapes," but not the same shape as the original figure. The figure should be a single shape, as simple looking as possible, in the center of the composition. That means that the "negative shapes" should all touch the outside edge of the format or nestle into shapes that do. Try to avoid shapes that float or protrude into the center space.

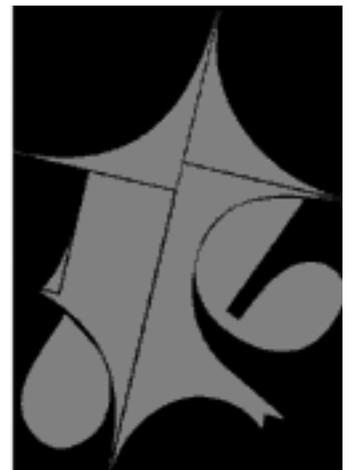
In the example to the left the black should be seen as figure -- actually as two figures (the little horizontal bar on the left is also figure). The grey shape that loops near the bottom is also likely to be seen as figure because it makes a simple, easy to notice shape. The black lines are left between the grey shapes so you can see what the original "negative shapes" look like.

Anyone that looks at your composition should say that the figure is the color of the background paper and the "negative shapes" are still negative shapes. Try it. Ask two people what they notice as figure in your composition (what color is figure?).

### NOW FIGURE

Try a second composition using the "negative shapes." This time turn them into the figure and let the format color be the ground. This is the opposite of the previous experiment. Keep the "negative shapes" in the center and try to make them into as simple a shape as you can. Avoid areas where the background color shows as a shape in the midst of the figure you are making. That shape will be seen as figure. Work until it is clear that the new shape is figure.

In the example to the right the grey shape in the center of the format is the figure (the black lines would not show in your composition). The black all around the edges stays as ground except on the right side where it protrudes into the grey. It does not hurt that the grey touches the outside edge some, but it would be more likely to be seen as figure if it did not.



Ask two people what (color) is the figure in your composition.

Now that you have some experience making the same shapes into both figure and ground you will make them into both in the same composition.

## AMBIGUOUS FIGURE/GROUND

Use the negative shapes from the previous project to make a composition where all of the shapes are both figure and ground in turn.



### HOW TO DO IT

If you did the first project well you already have a set of attractive "negative shapes" that will be easy to make into figure. The problem is to turn the format (color) into figure. To do that you have to divide it into simple, attractive shapes by the placement of the "negative shapes."

Touch all of the "negative shapes" to each other so that they form new shapes out of the background. Try to make as many of these new shapes as you can. Let the edges of the shapes flow across the composition in a graceful and rhythmic way.

When you are finished ask two people what (color) is figure. They should say both colors are figure and both are ground. Experiment with alternate configurations until you have an interesting composition that where the figure/ground relationship is ambiguous.

### HOW TO USE FIGURE/GROUND

There will be some kind of figure/ground relationship in every composition you make. One of the best things you can do for your designs is to try to make them as interesting as possible. The best way to do this is to make the ground function as a significant part of the image. This can be controlled by making the amount of the ground appropriate to the situation-- not too much and not too little.

From Palomar College Design class lesson by Jim Saw

<http://daphne.palomar.edu/design/fandg.html>

### Core Objectives:

1190-0109: Demonstrate an ability to use at least two ways to begin a composition. For example:  
Blocking in all of the main parts before adding details.

Creating mental grids and visual alignments to increase the accuracy of scale, proportion, and placement in a drawing.

Drawing quick gesture studies to define the attitude and position of a subject.

1190-0303: Indicate parts of a picture in which objects that contrast with their background have more optical weight than those which blend with their background.

1200-0102: Create works of art using art elements and principles.

Create expressive works of art using art elements, including form, texture, value, and depth.

Create expressive works of art using principles to organize the art elements, including unity and emphasis.

## Attic Red-Figure Kylix

Written by Douglas R. Allen



Related to the Style of the Thalia Painter, Greek Attic Red-figure Kylix, c. 510-500 B.C.

Terracotta with Glaze

Purchased with funds from the Marriner S. Eccles Foundation for the Marriner S. Eccles Masterwork Collection

Museum # 2000.8.1

A kylix (also spelled cylix), is a wide-bowled drinking cup with horizontal handles designed to be drunk from a reclining position. In ancient Greece it tended to be a

practical in design, with twin handles for a sure grip. It was one of the most popular forms from Mycenaean times through the classical Athenian period. There was usually a painted frieze around the outer surface depicting a subject from mythology or everyday life. On the bottom of the inside of the piece was also a painting, often depicting a dancing or drinking scene.

### Slide Description

The UMFA's kylix is an excellent piece of ancient Greek pottery. It has a beautiful black surface and the painting is skillfully handled. The black slip surrounds the figures which are on the outside of the kylix as well one on the inside.

### Decoration

The decoration of the kylix is comprised of a band of patterns balanced with floral designs, figures and an animal. The figures around the outside rim and the other composition on the inside of the bowl are very detailed. This flat round surface called tondo, is well suited for painting and provides an area for intricate designs. These two parts were often juxtaposed, one commenting on the other. The outer decoration was visible for all to see while the inside decoration was more private and revealed to the individual who had emptied the bowl.

For example, there may be one theme presented on the outside of the kylix, such as dancing and drinking, a happy party theme while on the inside, once the wine was exposed there would be a figure being sick and vomiting, suggesting the opposite theme.

In the UMFA's kylix the figures on the outside are drinking and dancing while the one on the inside is solemn and carries a bat or weapon.



# Red-Figure Design Lesson

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Written by Douglas R. Allen

Art History: Show the slide of the Attic Red-Figure Kylix

Theme: Discuss the design potential of the black background and the red clay being exposed to the surface. Discuss the philosophy of design on the outside of the vessel as well as on the inside.

Objectives: Students will

- \*understand the Red-Figure design process
- \*appreciate the detail in design
- \*brainstorm for ideas in design
- \*understand balance in design
- \*understand harmony and unity in design
- \*understand stylized design of anatomy
- \*understand floral and geometric design

Materials:

paper  
pencil  
pen  
scratchboard  
tape  
x-acto knife  
burgundy red tempera paint  
paper towel

Instruction for Activity:

1. Students create a circular design using some or all of the following themes: floral, geometric, anatomical.
2. Design is created with pencil on paper which is the same size as the scratchboard.
3. Once the design is completed and a skillful use of balance and harmony is displayed in the design it is ready for transfer. Tape the paper design to the top of the scratchboard so that the copy is secure only at the top. That way it can be flipped up and down as one is working to see the progress.
4. Take a pen and go over the design which has been created in pencil on the paper. This should leave an indentation of lines on the scratchboard surface from the pen tracing.
5. Once you have all the lines redrawn over with pen then you are ready to start using the x-acto knife to scrape away the areas that you will expose as white, you will later color most white areas with burgundy red tempera paint.
6. Use the curved blade of the x-acto knife to create fine lines as well as pull off larger areas of black.
7. Once you have completed your design and all areas of white have been exposed recheck to make sure you have emphasized your design theme, having harmony and unity in your composition.
8. Make any adjustments to complete your design.

9. Take the burgundy red tempera paint and paint over the white exposed areas. With a paper towel wipe off the excess and wipe off all areas of black. The scratchboard is sooth and should wipe off easily. This will leave the Terracotta color in the white areas of the design. Any areas of the design that you want to remain white will need to be carefully worked around.
10. If there are some areas that you want to leave white, thin lines, etc. you can now go back in your design and pull those areas out with your x-acto knife.

Display the Results : Learning is then enhanced.

Critique as a Group: Talk about the designs, themes, etc.

Core Objectives:

**STANDARD: 1030 - 04:** The student will interpret and apply visual arts in relation to cultures, history, and all learning.

**OBJECTIVES: 1030-0402:** Connect various kinds of art with particular cultures, times, or places.

**STANDARD: 1040 - 01:** The student will explore and refine the application of media, techniques, and artistic processes.

**OBJECTIVES: 1040-0101:** Explore a variety of art materials while learning new techniques and processes. -Use value, color, and texture to create interest.

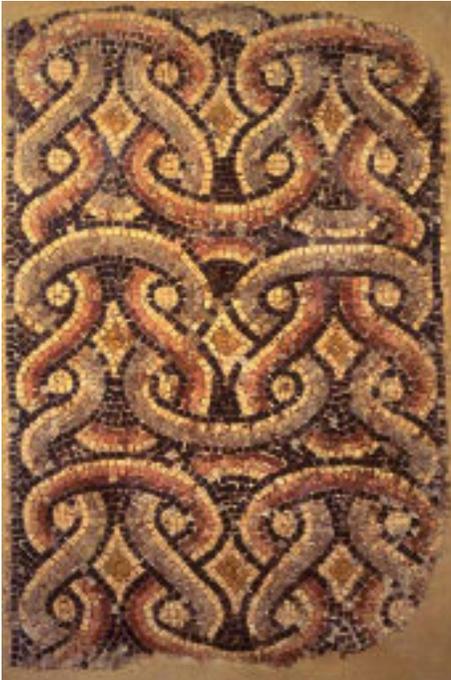
**STANDARD: 1050 - 02:** The student will analyze, reflect on, and apply the structures of art.

**OBJECTIVES: 1050-0202:** Create works of art using the elements and principles. -Use contour lines to indicate the form of objects.

## Mosaic Pavement Panel

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Written by Douglas R. Allen



Roman

**Mosaic Pavement Panel**, c. A.D. 400 - 500

Tesserae and concrete, 32 1/4 X 47 3/4 in. (81.9 X 121.3 cm)

Purchased with funds from the John Preston Creer and Mary Elizabeth Brockbank Creer Memorial Fund and Friends of the Art Museum.

Museum # 1990.039.001

A mosaic is surface decoration made by inlaying small pieces of various colored materials to form pictures or patterns. Small pieces of colored stone or glass were used which were called Tesserae. The Tesserae are often fragments of these materials which were held together with grout. To tessellate then, was to form or adorn a surface with a mosaic. Tessellation, which is a word used in areas of art, math, and science was to take these pieces and create a careful juxtaposition of elements into a coherent pattern. The solidity and durability of the mosaic medium made it an ideal decorative feature for the ambitious projects

of the Greco-Roman world. Mosaics decorated walls, vaults, and floors of ancient buildings.

### Slide Description

The Museum's example was part of a floor mosaic from a Roman villa in the ancient Near East. Floor mosaics were made for practical as well as decorative use, and therefore hard-wearing natural stone was the material most often employed. Decorative floor mosaics have been found in all parts of the Roman Empire. Due to the popularity and increased demand for floor mosaics during the Roman Imperial period, geometric stylized motifs such as interlace, menders, and scrolls were developed that could be applied equally to large, elaborate buildings or private villas. The Museum's mosaic is a design composed of inter braided bands of double guilloche, which is interlaced curved lines.

### Decoration

The design is beautifully woven with bands that are interlaced with stone of warm tones. One band has white, light pink, and a dark coral hue, while the other band is white, light gray, and dark gray. Both bands are outlined with black and a diamond shape is formed between the bands in yellow ochre which is also outlined in white and black. The involved design is a magnificent creation of repeating patterns and would have taken an immense amount of time in its production.

# Mosaic Lesson

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Written by Diana Bass

## Objectives:

1. Students will compare mosaics from various civilizations
2. Students will construct their own mosaics based on a symbol or issue that relates to their personal culture
3. Students will listen to guest speakers discuss the similarities and differences between working with stained glass and working on a mosaic
4. Students will work with a partner and write a dual poem in which the processes described in objective #4 are compared.

Age: Elementary Students

## Core Curriculum Connections:

**Objective: 6220-0101:** Develop observation skills

**Objective: 6220-0107:** Develop creative thinking in social studies

**Objective: 6220-0109:** Develop map and globe skills

**Objective: 6220-0501:** Apply and understanding of culture that relates to traditions, beliefs, and behavior patterns as they relate to material culture

**Objective: 6220-0702:** Demonstrate collaboration in working with others to achieve a specific purpose

**Objective: 6220-0701:** Demonstrate the characteristics of a life-long learner

## ACTIVITIES

1- Provide one minute for students to write as many things that are made out of glass, small stones, or tiles as they can think of. Have students sit on top of their desks with their lists. One at a time, students will read one item from their list. Have other students check off answers that they also have on their list. The goal is to be the last person on top of the desk (when students have checked off everything on their list, they must sit back down in their chair).

2- Prepare a slide show of mosaics from various cultures. As you tell students about each mosaic, have them complete a Venn Diagram that compares their similarities and differences (similarities where circles interconnect; differences where they separate). You may consider a requirement of five similarities and ten differences. Have students compare their findings with a partner. They should add anything to their Venn diagram that their partner came up with and they did not.

3- Go back through the slides and have students locate the countries from which the mosaics came on a map. Beneath the label, students should determine two things about the culture based on the subject matter in their mosaic(s).

3a- Using small squares of colored, card stock paper, beans, or stones, students should design a contemporary mosaic that reflects the symbols or issues in their lives/culture. On an index card, students should provide a title for their work and a brief explanation of its meaning and significance to their lives. The index cards should be posted beneath their mosaics when you display them

4- Invite a person who works with stained glass and someone who works with mosaics into your classroom. When they are finished addressing the students' questions, have students compare the methods used by stained glass versus mosaic artists.

5- After students have brain stormed comparisons, they will write a dual poem. One side of the poem will represent the artist working with stained glass, the other the artist working on mosaics. The purpose of a dual poem is to compare. The poem doesn't have to rhyme. Whenever a phrase, word, or statement is written on the same line as a statement said by the other person involved in the poem, it is said at the same time. When the words read every other line, they are said in the same manner. Have students read their poems to the class when finished.

As example, the following is a dual poem about a servant and the French Queen, Marie Antoinette:

BETTE	MARIE ANTOINETTE
Doll House Oh Childish woman!	Come with me to the Doll House
There we will	There we will
Waste The afternoon	Wile The afternoon
Me with my crumbs	I with my crumpets
Remembering Children at home Hunger	Imagining childhood pleasures Playing with porcelain dolls
Cold	Plenty
Fear	Warmth
	Contentment
REALITY	REALITY

6- Have students write a want ad for the artist who designed and created the ancient Greek mosaic. Have them consider the skills, education, and traits that such a person might require. Publish their want ads and mosaics by making a special bulletin board where they will be posted.

**LANGUAGE ARTS VARIATION:**

You may discuss the power of description and have students describe a mosaic and from their written descriptions have other students make a mosaic. Compare what the author envisioned with what the artist created.

**SCIENCE VARIATION:**

Have students compare the structure, strength, and age of various rocks. Have them make a time-line of various rocks from the earth's surface and sub-surface. The time line should include pictures.

**GEOGRAPHY:**

Have students construct a 3-D map that shows where the major gems and stones of the earth are located. Have students then label the countries from which the slides are shown.

**MATH:**

Have students develop a formula to determine the number of stones used in the museum's mosaic. They should share their formulas within small groups and then share the formula that they feel would be most successful with the overall class. Compare the numbers they came up with the actual number of stones used in the mosaic.

## Aphrodite with Eros on a Dolphin at Her Side

Written by Douglas R. Allen



Greco-Roman

**Aphrodite with an Eros on a Dolphin at Her Side**, c. A.D. 200

Marble, height 43 3/4 in. (111.1 cm)

Purchased with Funds from the Marriner S. Eccles Foundation for the Marriner S. Eccles Masterwork Collection

Museum # 1990.014.001

According to Greek legend immortal flesh that had been tossed into the sea spread into a circle of foam and from this foam, Aphrodite was created. Her name literally means foam-born and she became the Greek goddess of love and beauty. Aphrodite was originally a great fertility goddess. She became the Greek goddess of both carnal and ideal love. She had a domain that included the innermost feelings of the heart and the source of human passion. She could charm everyone, even the gods. Ancient representations of her were noted for their sensuality—the nude Aphrodite by Praxiteles were said to have shocked the pious residents of Cos. The Museum's later Roman Aphrodite displays just such a voluptuous, human presence appropriate to one who loved mortals as well as gods.

Aphrodite's influence was perhaps more widespread than that of any other god. She has been the subject of both ancient and modern artists and her presence classical art reveals her importance to ancient Greek society.

### Slide Description

The marble figures have been skillfully created displaying the essence of human form. Aphrodite would have had long tresses of hair, as is evident from the traces remaining on her back and left arm. She had a slender waist, long legs, and a decidedly *contrapposto* pose. The dolphin at the figures' lower right reminds us that Aphrodite was born of the sea: the baby Eros is another representation of love and its seductive charms. Eros is also referred to as Cupid and some sources say that Eros was the son of the goddess Aphrodite. As Aphrodite's son, Eros loses a bit of his power and prestige and becomes more of a companion to the goddess of love and beauty. This could be one explanation why Eros through the years is transformed in myth and art from a handsome young man to a chubby child.

The Eros figure feels as if he could come to life from the detail in his childlike form ranging from his facial expression to his small delicate hands. The missing head on Aphrodite may have borne a resemblance to a family member of the statue's patron as a pretense to a divine lineage.

## Decoration

The three dimensional forms of the Aphrodite with Eros are beautifully sculpted. They are classical in their approach and display the believability of Turning stone into human form.

# Aphrodite Lesson

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Written by Diana Bass

## APPLICABLE CORE STANDARDS

### **Objective 6220-0101**

- Observe an image, artifact, or model, and list what you see
- Determine the cultural or historical origin of the image, artifact, or model
- Infer how an artifact reflects the society or culture that produced it

### **Objective 6220-0104**

- Develop speaking skills

### **Objective 6220-0104**

- Defend a point of view in group discussion

### **Objective 6220-0203**

- Analyze examples of the interconnectedness between past and present cultures.

## Goals

II. Students will review the roles and responsibilities of the Gods and Goddesses in the Greek pantheon

III. Students will compare the way various Greek Gods are portrayed in sculpture

IV. Students will individually sculpt the Goddess Aphrodite based on accounts that they read about her

V. Students will compare their product with the statue of Aphrodite shown in the Museum of Fine Arts

## Activities to Introduce Greek Sculpture

I. At the beginning of class, students will respond to the question written on the board, “Would the sculpture shown on the over head be appropriate to show in a museum in your home town?”

II. Have students discuss their ideas in a group of four. Have a spokesperson summarize the three costs and three benefits that the group came up with for having a sculpture such as the one shown on the overhead placed in a museum located in their home town.

III. Show a variety of Greek sculptures. Have one group look for the things that the Greeks try to communicate about the body; another group will identify issues or concerns that seem to be communicated in the statues; have another group look for ideas that the sculptors or patrons were trying to communicate; have the last group look for ways in which the sculptures shown compare to the people we place on the covers of magazines, in the movies, etc.

IV. After you show the slides, have students intermix. Thus, you would have one person from the first group discuss her findings with someone from each of the other groups (otherwise known as the jigsaw method).

V. As a class, come up with a list of ten things that you can determine about the ancient Greeks based on the sculptures you saw.

\*\*\* Pictures of Greek sculpture can be found in Let’s Travel in Greece, edited by Darleen Geis, The Art of Ancient Greece by Shirley Glubok.

### Activities to introduce or review the Greek Pantheon

- I. Have the Greek Gods and Goddesses typed or written on large card-stock paper or poster boards. Have their responsibilities written on separate cards or boards. Give each student the name of a god or his responsibility. Time the students to see how quickly they can find the match if they have a god card they would find the person who has that God's responsibility or vice versa). So, Aphrodite would find the card that had "Goddess of love and beauty" on it
- II. Once student have found each other, have them read their cards one at a time in a large class circle
- III. Students will then make a family tree of the Greek Gods on which they find contemporary movie stars to represent the Gods that are depicted on the tree
- IV. On the tree, students must have a picture of someone to represent the God/Goddess; a brief explanation of that God's duties, and the design of the tree itself should explain how the Gods/Goddesses are related to each other

### The Statue of Aphrodite

- I. After students have read a myth in which Aphrodite plays a significant part, have them sculpt a statue of Aphrodite based on the type of person she was
- II. Students can use play-doh, modeling clay or Plaster of Paris (see the art connection at the end of this lesson plan).
  1. They should write an ID card for the statue explaining why it was sculpted in that particular manner.
  2. After students have completed their statues, have them use a Venn diagram to compare their renditions of Aphrodite with the statue housed at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts.
  3. Have students predict the potential meaning behind the dolphin and Eros/Cupid. Tell students the actual symbolic meaning as explained in the slide description of this lesson plan.
  4. Students will design and arrange a portfolio in which they place pictures and descriptions of statues that focus on Aphrodite. They will then rank the statues in terms of which is the most technical, the most true to what they envision Aphrodite to be, the best preserved, etc. Have students create their own categories for ranking and analysis.
  5. Last, have students discuss the ways that their standards for beauty relate to those seen in Greek statues such as the statue of Aphrodite.

### ART CONNECTION

Students will make a plaster of paris statuette

#### Materials needed:

- wooden block for base
- wire cutters and pliers
- plaster of paris, bucket
- paints and paintbrushes
- sturdy, pliable wire (spool wire or coat hangers work well)

Nail an end of the wire to the center of the block. Create the outline for the rest of the statue's body. Use smaller pieces of wire for arms. Mix the plaster of paris as directed; make a thick mixture. Cut rags in to strips and then dip them in the plaster. Next, wind the strips around the wire. A spatula can be used to make designs and intricate details. Once the plaster has hardened, smooth it with a file and sand paper. Once this is complete, the statue can be painted.

**SCIENCE CONNECTION:**

Students will study the chemicals that are used to preserve an ancient statue. They must then come up with a recipe for restoration in which they put the ingredients and steps required to preserve a statue such as Aphrodite

**LANGUAGE ARTS CONNECTION:**

Write a critique of the sculpture Aphrodite from Aphrodite's perspective. What would she admire and detest?

**MATH CONNECTION:**

Students will determine the amount of marble it would take to complete the sculpture of Aphrodite if she were shown as a six foot woman. Students must measure themselves and figure out the materials needed to sculpt themselves.

## Season Sarcophagus

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Written by Douglas R. Allen



Greco-Roman

Season Sarcophagus of the Constantinian Period, c. A.D. 325

Marble, 18 1/2 X 58 1/2 X 20 3/8 in., (470 X 148.6 X 51.8 cm)

Purchased with funds from the Marriner S. Eccles Foundation for the Marriner S. Eccles Masterwork Collection  
Museum # 1989.005.002

A sarcophagus is a stone coffin located above ground and often decorated. The word sarcophagus was derived from the Greeks and denoted a limestone box that was thought to decompose the flesh of the corpse placed inside it.

### Slide Description

The deceased person is depicted on this sarcophagus, or coffin, at the moment of his entrance into eternal life. The skillful work on the hands and face of the figures suggest the understanding the artists has for anatomy. The two generalized, mask like faces below (as opposed to the highly individualized carving of the central figure) represent mourners. The scroll in the deceased's left hand suggests that he was a scholar. The four amorini (cupids), one pair winged and one not, represent the Four Seasons and thus the inevitable passage of time. The flying drapery behind the two winged figures suggest movement and the ascension into the after life. The symbols of this sarcophagus are similar to those on an example in the Villa Doria-Pamphili in Rome made between A.D. 260 and 280.

### Decoration

The stone sarcophagus has figures sculpted in relief and display ornate detail. The carving is clean and precise, with deep folds and show partly drilled treatment of the hair. The variety of textures sculpted in stone on the human form, wings of the angels, and curls of the hair show the craftsmanship and ability of the artists. The deceased person is realistically represented and shows a gentlemen of nobility passing from this world to the next.

# Season Sarcophagus Lesson

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Written by Harmonie Jenkins

## Standards:

**1030-02** Student will analyze, reflect on, and apply the structures of art.

Student will choose and evaluate artistic subject matter, themes, symbols, ideas, meanings, and purpose.

Student will interpret and apply visual arts in relation to culture, history, and all learning.

## Purpose:

Students will invent possible stories that might explain what is going on in the carvings on the Season Sarcophagus. Students will discuss how an artist's work might be different if it is displayed publicly as opposed to being displayed at home. Students will begin to connect various kinds of art with particular cultures, times, and places.

## Objective:

Students will explain possible meanings or interpretations of the Season Sarcophagus.

Students will create a work of art that uses a similar subject matter, symbol, idea, and /or meaning found in the Season Sarcophagus. Students will make their own Sarcophagus.

## Materials:

- Each student will need a shoebox (let your class know this ahead of time so they have a few days to remember).
- Colored construction paper- lots of different colors
- Each student will need 12 - 2" x 6" pieces of different colored construction paper (teacher might want to cut these ahead of time- to save time).
- Glue
- Scissors
- Crayons or markers

Age: Elementary Students

Before you begin this lesson remember that our classes are full of students that come from diverse backgrounds. Death and the burial of the dead are sacred, with a multitude of different rituals that accompany it. To each of us death is dealt with in different ways. Be sure to clarify when discussing the Greeks, Romans, and the Egyptians rituals for the dead.

## Discussion and Activity

**Standard: 1030-03**

Season Sarcophagus - Show the slide (leave it up throughout the discussion).

What in the world is that? Where are they found? What are they used for? A Sarcophagus is a stone coffin located above ground and often decorated. The word sarcophagus comes from the Greeks. These stone coffins were used as burial tombs for the deceased. The sarcophagus was made out of limestone; the Greeks believed that limestone helped in the decomposition of the body. The sarcophagi were decorated and sculpted with great detail. The deceased person is depicted on this sarcophagus (or coffin), at the moment of his entrance into eternal life, along with other details about his life.

### **Standard 1030-04**

The pictures found all over the sarcophagus tell great stories of a person's life. They also show the journey the person will take into the afterlife. The Greeks and Romans believed that after a person dies they move on into the afterlife. We all have different beliefs about what happens to us after death, and for many people this is a subject that is very personal. The Greeks and Romans honored the dead by sculpting great coffins (sarcophagi) that told tales of this person's life and their journey after death.

### **Standard 1030-02**

Focus back on the slide.

Have students discuss what they think is going on in the different pictures on the sarcophagus. Explore the idea of symbols. In this piece of art work there is a great deal of communication going on through symbols. For example: The scroll in the deceased's left hand suggests that he was a scholar. The four cupids, one pair winged and one not, represent the four seasons and the inevitable passage of time. The flying draperies behind the winged cupids suggest movement and the journey into the afterlife.

Students will now create a work of art that uses a similar subject matter, symbol, idea, and/or meaning. They will be making their own personal sarcophagus.

1. Have students get their shoeboxes out.
2. Pass out construction paper (preferably already cut) 12 2" x 6" pieces of paper to each student, in a variety of different colors. Pass out crayons & markers.
3. Explain that they will be making a sarcophagus. The 2" x 6" pieces of paper are for them to draw different important things about themselves on. Example: one 2" x 6" paper could have a picture of their family, or their dog, or their favorite sport, or their best friend. The pictures need to be things that are important to them, things that mean a lot, things they enjoy doing. Encourage them to include things that are unique about themselves, or where they are from. Remind them that symbols can say more than words.
4. After their pictures have been drawn, ask them to really think about the order or the positioning of their pictures on their boxes. When they are ready they can glue the pictures on.

### **Standard 1030-01**

As a continuation to this activity ask your class to write a story that will go with their sarcophagus. A story that explores and explains the pictures they decided to put on their sarcophagus. The sarcophagi will be put on display around the room so everyone can check them out. After everyone has completed their stories each student will have the opportunity to share their work with the class. This is a wonderful way for the class to learn more about each other.

### Assessment/Evaluation:

The time and energy the students put into their work should be clear. Their writing sample should be evaluated according to their personal level.

## Head of Hermes

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Written by Douglas R. Allen



Greco-Roman

**Hermes of the Andros - Belvedere Type**, c.A.D. 160-190

Greek mainland marble, height 11 1/4 in. (28.6 cm)

Purchased with funds from the Marriner S. Eccles Foundation for the Marriner S. Eccles Masterwork Collection

Museum # 1991.016.001

Hermes was a Greek god, son of Zeus and Maia. He became a messenger for Zeus and the Herald of the gods. He was referred to in many ways, such as: the bringer of dreams and the patron of travelers. He was also known as the governor of the tongue and the guide of intelligent speech.

### Slide Description

The Museum's Hermes is a Roman version of the Greek funerary and votive statue known as the Hermes of Andros or the Hermes Belvedere type, a sculptural form that may have originated with the legendary fourth-century artist, Praxiteles. There is a unity of physical form and spiritual refinement in the sculpture. The face of this youth, with his solemn expression, firm, fixed gaze, and idealized features, exemplifies a balance of the inner qualities of the athlete or hero, who is patterned after the gods.

### Decoration

The marble sculpture of the head portrays detail in the curls of the hair showing variations and layering. The facial expression from the forehead to eye brows to the lip structure create serene expression for a heroic figure. Examining parts of the face one can see a believable three dimensional form representing the ideal of the individual.

## Head of Hermes Lesson

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Written by Harmonie Jenkins

### Standards:

The student will analyze, reflect on, and apply the structures of art.

The student will choose and evaluate artistic subject matter, themes, symbols, ideas, meanings, and purposes.

The student will interpret and apply visual arts in relation to cultures, history, and all learning.

### Purpose/Rationale:

Explore possible content and purpose in significant work of art. Describe why different cultures may have used different materials to create their art. Examine how a work of art or a craft can be connected to an ancient culture. Create works of art using the elements and principles.

### Objective:

Students will explore Hermes and his role in Greek mythology. Students will explore different elements used by sculptures, specifically marble. Students will create and sculpt their own head (using Hermes as their reference).

Materials/Preparation: Information on Greek mythology, piece of marble so the kids can touch it and get a feel for how difficult it would be to sculpt marble (nature or mineral stores sell pieces of marble). Clay that can be sculpted, and access to a kiln for firing (or buy clay that can be baked in the oven). Tools for sculpting, this could be their pencils or the tops of their pens, tooth picks, or their fingers. Have students bring in a mirror or a picture of himself or herself.

Age: All levels - discussion and art project can be adapted to any grade.

### Discussion and Activity:

#### 1. Introduction of Greek Mythology:

Mythology is an organized collection of stories (myths) by which we explain our beliefs and our history. Myths grew out of early people's need to understand and explain the world around them and their own existence, and therefore they recount the creation and tell of the gods and goddesses who control the fate of humans. Every culture has its myths, but the Greek myths are perhaps the best known in the western world. We commonly use "myth" interchangeably with legends, folktales, and fables- so teachers should be aware that there is a difference between these four types of story telling.

#### 2. Introduction of Hermes:

Hermes was a Greek god, son of Zeus and Maia. He became a messenger for the gods and guide of dead souls to the Underworld. He worked as a mediator between mortals and the gods and was known for his helpfulness to humankind. He was given many esteemed titles such as: the bringer of dreams and the patron of travelers. He was also known as the guide of intelligent speech.

3. Show the slide of the head of Hermes to the class. Discuss the detail and decoration of the marble sculpture. Hermes was believed to possess the features and form of an ideal individual. The details of the sculpture, from his perfectly layered hair to his intense expression, portray a heroic and helpful man. The sculpture is marble. Discuss how difficult it is to work with marble, pass around a piece of marble so students hopefully appreciate and realize the difficulty of sculpting and working with it. Artists work with tools (hammers, picks of all sizes depending on the detail) to chip and shape the marble. Natural marble is found in shades of red, green, white, and yellow.

Marble is a rock widely used in buildings, monuments, and sculptures. Marble is a type of metamorphic rock formed from limestone by heat and pressure in the Earth's crust. These forces cause the limestone to change in texture and makeup (if you have access show your class a piece of limestone). It is found in many countries, including China, Belgium, France, Great Britain, Greece, India, Italy, and Spain (grab a map)! Marble has long been highly valued for its beauty, strength,

and resistance to fire and erosion. The ancient Greeks used marble in many buildings and statues. This type of sculpting and marble work ties into Greek and Roman culture.

4. Questions to stir conversation:

Why do you think the Greeks and Romans made sculptures?

Who and why do you think certain people were sculpted?

Do you think people had to be important in order to be sculpted?

Could these statues be considered status symbols?

Were the Gods and Goddess the only ones to be sculpted?

It is amazing how well this sculpture has held up- proof of how strong and durable marble is. How and why do you think his nose is broken?

5. Have students sculpt a small version of their heads, using clay in place of marble.

Ask students to get out their mirror or picture of themselves. They can use their pencils, pen tops, toothpicks, or fingers. They should consider details, such as their eyes, mouth, nose, and hair.

OR/AND

6. Have students do a creative writing piece. Topics could be: How Hermes lost part of his nose; If I lived during the time of the Greek Gods and Goddesses; Or anything they can come up with.

Assessment/Evaluation: Their involvement in conversations. Time and energy they put into their sculptures. Their creative writing piece explores their knowledge of Greek mythology and art.

Adaptations:

Modify this lesson according to the level of your students. Take Greek mythology as far as you can. From my experiences students love it. They love listening to the different myths and the connections and explanations of events occurring in nature. An example would be: why the sun travels across the sky? Who is pushing or pulling it and why? The Greek myth of Apollo explains why and how the sun travels across the sky each day.

Be sure to clarify what myths are, and why people told them. Every culture has its myths. Teachers could explore different cultures to find myths. Ask your students if they have any they would like to share. This will allow the diversity of some of our classrooms to shine, allowing students to feel valued because they are able to share some of their culture and heritage. But be careful not to demean any child's beliefs.

Jane Yolen's retelling of Sky Dogs explains how horses came to one Native American tribe. Virginia Hamilton's collection of creation myths, In the Beginning: Creation Stories from Around the World; have an international view of mythology.

Integration:

Allow students to explore websites about mythology and the many Gods and Goddesses. Give them a list of sites they can choose from (just in case).

Two great websites are: mythweb.com and mythman.com, they are fun and interactive.



# Greek and Roman Art

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Evening for Educators

March 20, 2002, 5:30 - 8:30

## Polykleitan God or Athlete

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Written by Douglas R. Allen



Roman Imperial Period (c. A.D. 150-250)

### **Polykleitan God or Athlete**

Crystalline Greek mainland marble,

Height 9 3/8 in. ( 24.4 cm)

Purchased with funds from the Marriner S. Eccles Foundation for the Marriner S. Eccles Masterwork Collection.

Museum # 1989.005.001

The Greek artist, like the Greek philosopher, was deeply concerned with the idea of perfection. The human form was considered beautiful, balanced and harmonious. In a sculpture or a painting it was represented in this perfect human form. Art forms of Greek Athletes were seen in ultimate perfection and Olympians participated in their events unclothed.

Aesthetics, which was the beauty and emotional appeal of an object, was in the Greek mind and everything had an ideal form, which its beauty. Thus the Polykleitan God was sculpted as the ideal form.

### Slide Description

The fifth-century sculptor Polykleitos wrote a treatise on the subject of ideal human form. Through his text is lost to us, Polykleitos's ideas are demonstrated in his famous sculpture of the Doryphoros, the "spear carrier." It emphasizes strength, symmetry, agility, and attitude of complete confidence. This marble head is a fragment from a Roman version of the spear carrier and demonstrates how the concept of an ideal standard remained influential throughout ancient times.

### Description

The statue made out of marble portrays realistic form. The face emerges out of a marble stone which is left in its rock state in the back. The facial expression and lips are so believable as to contain the human spirit. This representation of a young man feels as if you could breath life into the stone sculpture.

# A Head Above the Rest Lesson

Written by Gail D'Haenens

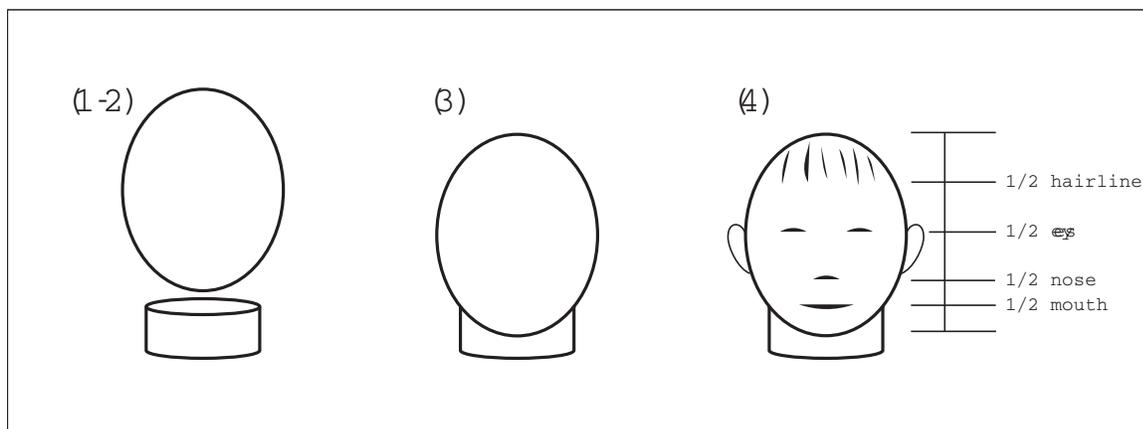
## Materials:

- oil, or water based clay, about 1 lb. per student
- sturdy cardboard, about 6"x6", 1 piece per student
- small tools for sculpting clay, (paper clips, pencils, plastic knife)
- smocks or old shirts, 1 per student
- damp paper towels
- damp cloth to wipe desks or work space
- marker to write children's names on cardboard
- model of a skull, if possible.
- 2 pencils, with wire wrapped around either end for cutting slabs of clay

The teacher should make a demonstration sculpture before the lesson. Show slide of Polykleitan God or Athlete. Present background information on sculpture.

## Demonstration:

1. Using about 1/2 of the clay, form clay into an egg-shape for the head.
2. Make a thick cylinder for the neck. Trim the cylinder so the head will fit on it.
3. Press the two parts together. Using your thumbs and forefingers, smooth the clay pieces together so they are one piece and do not come apart. Attach head to cardboard using extra clay.
4. Mark guidelines on the front of the face with a pencil: halfway between the top of the head and the chin - eye sockets, halfway between the eye sockets and chin - bottom of the nose, halfway between the bottom of the nose and chin - the mouth.
5. Using your thumbs, press into the clay to make the eye sockets. Add eyeballs and eyelids later.
6. Pinch clay forward for cheeks.
7. Make nose by making a coil for the center of the nose, a ball for the tip of the nose, and two smaller balls for the nostrils.
8. Roll two small coils for the lips, making upper lip look different than lower lip.
9. Form ears by shaping a piece of clay into a heart, cutting it in half with a plastic knife. Attach to either side of sculpture, smoothing the clay with your fingers.
10. Roll small balls of clay for eyes. Place in eye sockets. Partially cover "eyes" with two "flaps" of clay to create eyelids.
11. Add hair using coils or by using a paper clip to add texture.
12. Add details to make your sculpture look like a real person.



You could have students try to sculpt their own Polykleitan God or Athlete OR sculpt a self-portrait (you would need mirrors for each student) OR have them sculpt a portrait of a classmate. For younger children grades 1st - 3rd, show them the basics and let them experiment and create their own sculpture of a human head. Praise any effort at creating a human-looking head.

#### Clean-up:

Have students roll extra clay into balls and collect. If using water-based clay, store in airtight plastic bags, covered with damp paper towels. If students do not finish their sculpture, these should also be covered with damp paper towels. Wipe off desks, wash hands, put smocks where they belong. Make sure names are on cardboard .

#### Evaluation:

Have some students show finished sculptures. Praise all efforts. Ask if sculpting a head is easier or harder than drawing a face? Why? Ask the students which they prefer. Artists back then also had their preferences, some sculpted and some painted. Explain that this head was carved from marble, a very hard stone. The artist chipped away the stone with tools rather than forming features with his hands, as they did to create their sculpture today.

#### Extensions:

Language arts: Have children read age appropriate books about Greek myths, gods and goddesses and the ancient Greek Olympic games. Write their own Greek myth. It could be about their sculpture. Write a story from the perspective of the Polykleitan sculpture. What has he seen over the last 1800 years? Where did he “live”? What happened to him? Explain that the Romans also had gods and goddesses, some identical to the Greeks, but with different names. Have students read age appropriate books about Roman gods and goddesses.

Additional Art ideas: Using 6 inch pipe cleaners, 3-4 per student, have the students create a figure in motion from the pipe cleaners. Before beginning, have different students come to the front of the classroom and model different action poses. Students could also papier mache over their pipe cleaners to form a complete sculpture of the human body in motion.



The Doryphoros, “The Spear Carrier”



# Greek and Roman Art

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Evening for Educators

March 20, 2002, 5:30 - 8:30

## Greek Mythology and Art

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Written by Kathy Remington

Purpose: Interface art in a museum and classroom activities with Greek mythology.

Objectives:

To present information for better appreciation of art pieces from the Getty museum and other pieces from the same time period represented in the museum.

To present a variety of medium including sculpture, ceramic, frieze and painting.

To present background information and classroom activities to parallel Greco-Roman art pieces.

To stimulate student discussion regarding:

Why each particular god/goddess and hero might be the subject of the art piece?

What is the artist's purpose in creating the piece (if any purpose other than beauty)?

Why such gods/goddesses and heroes might be associated with supernatural powers?

Why these myths were created?

What do we learn about the society that invented such myths?

What symbols of these gods are used today? Are the meanings the same now as in the time of the ancient Greeks?

The Oral Tradition of the Greeks:

The stories or myths of gods and goddesses took a long time to evolve as religion evolved. Even at that, there are many different, even conflicting versions of the same story. There are two main reasons for this:

1. Stories were not written down at first. These myths were part of an oral tradition handed down by the great poets of the ages. Like any stories told verbally, variations are inevitable and even desirable. A bard in any given area of Greece, telling the story to the nobles of his area, would often include new details, which would appeal to the local audience. The fact that several areas in Greece claim to have the "real" entrance to Hades, for instance, is one example of this. Myths circulated for many generations before the advent of great writers such as Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Apollonius of Rhodes and Apollodorus.

2. The Greek people were a combination of many tribes and each of these tribes had distinctly separate cultures and separate gods within individually separate city states. As Greece became more unified, the gods slowly merged into the Olympian hierarchy. This process took a long time, and consequently there are remnants of older beliefs and stories.

All religions undergo a continual process of change, often incorporating older beliefs or including newer ideas as society changes. Even after the Olympians were established, new gods or demigods were incorporated into the religion. Dionysus is one such god. He was said to be the son of Zeus, but clearly his creation was a much older creation than Zeus' and much more long

lasting. Dionysus was the god of wine. The fact that the Greeks would insist on his presence indicates how much they appreciated wine. Dionysus was also a fertility god. People prayed to him when they wanted children and when they wanted crops to grow. Dionysus was still being worshiped during Christ's lifetime.

### The Greek Gods: The Olympians and their Children

<u>Greek Name</u>	<u>Latin Name</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
Zeus	Jupiter	God of Storms/Ruling God
Poseidon	Neptune	God of the Seas
Hades	Pluto	God of the Underworld
Hera	Juno	Goddess of Marriage/Wife to Zeus
Hestia	Vesta	Goddess of the Hearth
Ares	Mars	God of War
Athena	Minerva	Goddess of Wisdom & War
Apollo	Apollo/Sol/Phoebus	God of Sun/Twin to Artemis
Artemis	Diana	Goddess of the Moon/Hunt
Aphrodite	Venus	Goddess of Love/Beauty
Hermes	Mercury	God of Commerce/Speed
Hephaestus	Vulcan	God of the Forge/Fire
Eros	Cupid	God of Love/Son of Venus
Persephone	Proserpina	Unwilling bride of Pluto Goddess of Springtime
Dionysus	Bacchus	God of Wine/Theater
Demeter	Ceres (cereal)	Mother Earth Goddess/Harvest
Pan	Inuus/Faunus	Son of Hermes 1/2 goat; 1/2 man

The Olympians are a group of 12 main gods who ruled after the overthrow of the Titans. All the Olympians are related in some way. They are named after their dwelling place, Mount Olympus.

## The 12 Olympians

### **Zeus**

Zeus overthrew his Father Cronus. He then drew lots with his brothers Poseidon and Hades. Zeus won the draw and became the supreme ruler of the gods. He is lord of the sky, the storm god. His weapon is a thunderbolt, which he hurls at those who displease him. He is married to Hera, but is famous for his many affairs. His symbol is the eagle.

### **Poseidon**

Poseidon is the brother of Zeus. After the overthrow of their Father Cronus he drew lots with Zeus and Hades, another brother, for shares of the world. He is lord of the sea. He is widely worshiped by seamen. He marries Amphitrite, a granddaughter of the Titan, Oceanus. At one point he desires Demeter. To put him off Demeter asks him to make the most beautiful animal that the world had ever seen. So to impress her Poseidon creates the first horse. In some accounts his first attempts were unsuccessful and created a variety of other animals in his quest. By the time the horse was created his passion for Demeter has cooled. His weapon is a trident, which can shake the earth (earthquakes), and shatter any object. He is second only to Zeus in power amongst the gods. He has a difficult, quarrelsome personality.

### **Hades**

Hades is the brother of Zeus. After the overthrow of their Father Cronus he drew lots with Zeus and Poseidon, another brother, for shares of the world. He had the worst draw and is lord of the underworld, ruling over the dead. He is a greedy god who is greatly concerned with increasing his subjects. Once in his kingdom, no one can leave. Hades is also the god of wealth, due to the precious metals mined from the earth. He rarely leaves the underworld. He is unpitying and terrible, but not capricious. His wife is Persephone whom Hades abducted. Hades is also the name of his kingdom that has two other parts: the Elysian Fields for heroes, virgins and poets and Tartarus, a place of eternal suffering. Most of the dead reside in Hades proper. Hades does not live on Mount Olympus, but rather in Hades. He does not sit on one of the 12 thrones on Mount Olympus and is the 13th Olympian.

### **Hestia**

Hestia is Zeus' sister. She is a virgin goddess. She does not have a distinct personality. She plays no part in myths. She is the Goddess of the Hearth, the symbol of the home fire necessary for survival. Each city had a public hearth sacred to Hestia, where the fire was never allowed to go out. Since she tends the hearth, she does not sit on one of the 12 thrones of the Olympians and is the 14th Olympian.

### **Hera**

Hera is Zeus' wife and sister. She is the protector of marriage and takes special care of married women. She is a Mother Earth goddess. Hera's marriage was founded in strife with Zeus as he had many affairs with both mortals and lesser goddesses. Hera was often able to outwit Zeus in his extra marital affairs. Most stories concerning Hera have to do with her jealous revenge for Zeus's infidelities. Her sacred animals are the cow and the peacock. Her favorite city is Argos.

### **Ares**

Ares is the son of Zeus and Hera, but was disliked by both parents. He is the god of war, but represents the negative, cowardly side of war. Aphrodite (Venus) was his lover. His bird is the

vulture. His animal is the dog. His companions are Discord (Eris) and Strife. His sons are: Deimus (Terror) and Phobos (Fear) used today as phobia. He was the father of the fierce female fighters, the Amazons.

### **Athena**

Athena is the daughter of Zeus. She sprang full grown in armor from his forehead, thus has no mother. She is fierce and brave in battle representing the victorious side of war. She is a virgin goddess. Her city is Athens. Her tree is the olive. The owl is her bird.

### **Apollo**

Apollo is the son of Zeus and Leto. His twin sister is Artemis . He is the god of music, the god of healing, and the god of light. One of Apollo's more important daily tasks is to harness his chariot with four horses and drive the Sun across the sky. He is famous for his oracle at Delphi since he defeated the Python, a dragon who inhabited the oracle, preventing people from visiting it. People travel to the oracle from all over the Greek world to divine their future. Each person would ask the sibyls of the oracle one question, which would be answered in a riddle.

### **Aphrodite**

Aphrodite is the goddess of love, desire and beauty. In addition to her natural gifts she has a magical girdle that compels anyone she wishes to desire her. Aphrodite arose from the sea foam on a giant scallop and walked to shore in Cyprus. She is the wife of Hephaestus. The myrtle is her tree. The dove, the swan, and the sparrow are her sacred birds. The dove represents unity and peace.

### **Hermes**

Hermes is the son of Zeus and Maia. He is Zeus's messenger. He is the fastest of the gods. He wears winged sandals, the helmet of invisibility and carries a magic wand, the caduceus. He is the god of thieves and of commerce. He is the guide for the dead to cross the River Styx into the underworld. He invented the lyre, the pipes, the musical scale, astronomy, weights and measures, boxing, and gymnastics.

### **Artemis**

Artemis is the daughter of Zeus and Leto. Her twin brother is Apollo, the Sun god so it is logical that she is the virgin goddess of the Moon. She is the huntsman of the gods and uses silver arrows where Apollo uses golden arrows. All wild animals are scared to her, especially the deer. Her tree is the cypress.

### **Hephaestus**

Hephaestus is the son of Zeus and Hera. Supposedly he took Hera's side in an argument with Zeus and Zeus flung him off Mount Olympus. This made Hephaestus lame. He is the god of fire and the forge. He is the smith and maker of weapons for the gods. He uses a volcano as his forge. He is the patron god of both smiths and weavers. He is kind and peace loving. His wife is Aphrodite, who causes him much trouble.

### **Demeter**

Demeter is a Mother Earth goddess of corn, grain, and the harvest. She is the daughter of Cronus and Rhea, one of the original six Olympians. It is Demeter that makes the crops grow each year. The first loaf of bread from the harvest is dedicated to her. She is a Mother Earth goddess and an important fertility symbol. Demeter is intimately associated with the seasons. Her daughter

Persephone was abducted by Hades to be his wife in the underworld. In her anger at the loss of her daughter, Demeter laid a curse on the world that caused plants to wither and die. When the land became desolate, Zeus became alarmed and sought Persephone's return. However, because she had eaten 6 pomegranate seeds while in the underworld, Hades had a claim on her. Therefore, it was decreed that Persephone would spend six months each year in the underworld and six months with her mother. During her months of absence, Demeter grieves and withdraws her gifts from the world, causing fall and winter. Persephone's return to Earth brings the spring and summer. Demeter is also known for founding the Eleusinian Mysteries. These were huge festivals held every five years. They were important events for many centuries. Yet, little is known of them as those attending were sworn to secrecy. The central tenant seems to have been that just as grain returns every spring after its harvest and wintery death, so too the human soul could be reborn after the death of the body.

## **Dionysus**

Dionysus is the god of the vine and the theater. He invented wine and spread the art of tending grapes. He has a dual nature: on the one hand bringing joy and divine ecstasy, while on the other brutal, unthinking, rage. Thus reflecting both sides of wine's nature. If he chooses Dionysus can drive a man mad. No normal fetters can hold him or his followers. Dionysus is the son of Zeus and Semele. Zeus came to Semele in the night, invisible, felt only as a divine presence. Semele was pleased to be a lover of a god. However, when Hera found out, she visited Semele in disguise and convinced her she should make her husband prove his godliness. When Zeus next came to her Semele made Zeus promise to grant her one wish. She went so far as to make him swear on the River Styx that he would grant her request. Zeus was madly in love and agreed. She then asked him to show her his true form. Zeus, was unhappy, and knew what would happen, but having sworn the most holy of oaths, he had no choice. He appeared in his true form and Semele was instantly burnt to a crisp by the sight of his glory. Zeus did manage to rescue Dionysus and stitched him into his thigh to hold him until he was ready to be born. His birth from Zeus alone conferred immortality upon him. Dionysus' problems with Hera were not yet over. She was still jealous and arranged for the Titans to kill him. The Titans ripped him into pieces. However, Rhea brought him back to life. After this Zeus arranged for his protection and turned him over the mountain nymphs to be raised. His followers worship him in the forests.

Dionysus is also one of the very few that was able to bring a dead person out of the underworld. Even though he had never seen Semele he was concerned for her. Eventually he journeyed into the underworld to find her and brought her back to Mount Olympus. Dionysus is one of the most important gods in everyday life. He is associated with several key concepts. One is rebirth after death. Here his dismemberment by the Titans and return to life is symbolically echoed in tending vines, where the vines must be pruned back sharply, and then become dormant in winter for them to bear fruit. The other is the idea that under the influence of wine, one could feel possessed by a greater power. Unlike the other gods Dionysus was not only outside his believers, also within them. The festival for Dionysus is in the spring when the leaves begin to reappear on the vine. It became one of the most important events of the year. Its focus became the theater. Most of the great Greek plays were performed at the feast of Dionysus. During these festivals for 3-4 days, no one worked and all prisoners were set free.

## Symbols:

Eagle - The symbol of Zeus' freedom, might and power, but also his cruelty if necessary and harsh judgment and death to his enemies. What countries use the eagle as a symbol?

The Nazi party in Germany adopted the eagle as its symbol. Why? The eagle is on the presidential seal of the United States. What does America's national symbol, the eagle, tell the world about us?

Thunderbolt - Zeus is often shown carrying his thunderbolts made by Hephaestus (Vulcan= volcano) for him. If Zeus is a Storm god, how do you think the Greeks came to associate Zeus' anger with hurling thunderbolts (lightening) to Earth and causing thunder to rumble and roar?

Trident - The three pronged spear that Poseidon (Neptune) strikes on the ocean floor to cause earthquakes. Where do you see the trident today? What does tri (three) mean? What other words begin with the prefix: tri? Tricycle, triangle, trimester, triple, triplets.

Dove - the bird sacred to Aphrodite representing peace and unity. Does the dove still represent these qualities in our world today?

Laurel - the tree sacred to Apollo. When Apollo was chasing a nymph, Daphne through the forest, she called out to her father, the River god to save her. Suddenly her legs became a tree's trunk and her fingers became branches as she turned into a laurel tree. Previously in the Olympics or after battles in war, heroes wore laurel wreaths to signify their victory. The greatest poets in England, chosen to write for their nation, are called "Poet Laureates". (Also remember that only heroes, poets and virgins go to the Elysian Fields (Heaven) according to the Greeks.)

Caduceus - the staff carried by Mercury with two snakes entwined around it. The snake represents immortality in Eastern cultures. Scholars today believe that this god's origin was much earlier than the main Olympian gods and the caduceus is a remnant of this earlier religion. The sword is said to represent power and magic and the two snakes, wisdom and immortality.

Why do you think the medical profession of today uses the caduceus as a symbol?

Owl - the sacred bird of Athena, the goddess of wisdom. What does the owl symbolize today?

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## **Myths of Explanation, Heroes and Monsters**

### The Creation of Mankind

The Creation of Mankind by Prometheus (Forethought) and Epimetheus (After-thought) - Zeus gave Prometheus and his brother, Epimetheus, the task of populating the earth. Wise Prometheus modeled men with great care in the shape of the gods, but Epimetheus rapidly made all kinds of animals and without any foresight he lavished the best gifts upon them. When Prometheus had finished shaping man, he found that there were few gifts left. Animals could run faster, see, smell and hear better and had much more endurance than mankind. Besides, animals were snug in their warm coats of fur, while mankind shivered in the cold nights.

Prometheus was sorry for mankind and he went to Zeus and asked him if he might have some of the sacred fire for his poor creations. But Zeus said, “No, fire belonged to the gods alone.” Prometheus could not bear to see his people suffer and he decided to steal fire, though he knew that Zeus would punish him severely. He went up to Olympus, took a glowing ember from the sacred hearth, and hid it in a hollow stalk of fennel. He carried it down to earth, gave it to mankind, and told them never to let the light from Olympus die out. No longer did men shiver in the cold of the night and the beasts feared the light of the fire and did not dare to attack them.

A strange thing happened: as men lifted their eyes from the ground and watched the smoke from their fires spiraling upward, their thoughts rose with it up to the heavens. They began to wonder and think and were no longer earth-bound clods. They built temples to honor the gods and, wanting to share what they had with them, they burned the best pieces of meat on their altars.

Zeus was furious when he first saw the fires flickering on earth, but he was appeased when the savory scent of roast meat reached his nostrils. All the gods loved the smell of burnt offerings; it spiced their daily food of ambrosia and nectar. But Prometheus knew how hard men worked to make their living and thought it a pity that they burned up the best parts of their food. He told them to butcher an ox and divide the meat in two equal heaps. In one pile were the chops and roasts, hidden under sinews and bones. In the other were scraps and entrails, covered with snow-white fat and the choicest pieces of meat. Prometheus then invited Zeus to come down to earth and choose for himself which part he wanted for his burnt offerings. Zeus, of course, chose the best-looking heap with the choicest meats on a thin top layer and scraps and entrails underneath, but when he discovered that he had been tricked he grew very angry. Not only had Prometheus stolen the sacred fire and given it to men, he had also taught men to cheat the gods. He resolved to punish both Prometheus and his creations.

Cast in unbreakable irons, Prometheus was chained to the top of the Caucasus Mountains. Every day an eagle (some say a vulture) swooped out of the sky and ate his liver. At night his immortal liver grew anew, but every day the eagle returned and he had to suffer again.

#### Questions for Discussion:

From the myth above, what do you think the adjective form, Promethean might mean? (It means “boldly creative” since Prometheus challenged the gods in creating mankind and stealing fire for them. An example: The Internet is Promethean for this century.)

Why do you think we have many plays and stories about Prometheus?

Draw a picture of Prometheus from some part of the myth above.

Write a poem about Prometheus.

Many countries have myths about mankind stealing fire from the gods. Why do you think mankind always steals fire?

In an African myth, the animals help mankind by stealing fire and pass it from one animal to another causing each animal’s fur to be a lighter color on his/her underside (stomach and inside part of the legs). Do you like this explanation as to how mankind received fire better than the Prometheus myth? Why or why not?

#### Pandora and the Origin of Evil

Hephaestus (Vulcan) made Pandora in the likeness of Aphrodite. He carved her out of a block of white marble, made her lips of red rubies and her eyes of sparkling sapphires. Athena breathed

life into her and dressed her in elegant garments. Aphrodite decked her with jewels and fixed her red mouth in a winning smile. Into the mind of this beautiful creature, Zeus put insatiable curiosity and then he gave her a sealed jar and warned her never to open it.

Hermes brought Pandora down to earth and offered her in marriage to Epimetheus, who lived among the mortals. Epimetheus had been warned by Prometheus never to accept a gift from Zeus, but he could not resist the beautiful woman. Thus Pandora came to live among mortals, and men came from near and far to stand awestruck by her wondrous beauty.

Put Pandora was not perfectly happy for she did not know what was in the jar that Zeus had given her. It was not long before her curiosity got the better of her and she had to take a quick peek.

The moment she opened the lid, out swarmed a horde of miseries: Greed, Vanity, Slander, Envy and all the evils that until then had been unknown to mankind. Horrified at what she had done, Pandora clapped the lid on, just in time to keep Hope from flying away too. Zeus had put Hope at the bottom of the jar, and the unleashed miseries would quickly have put an end to it. They stung and bit the mortals as Zeus had planned, but their sufferings made them wicked instead of good, as Zeus had hoped.

#### Questions for Discussion:

Discuss the origin of evil according to the Bible (Adam and Eve). Why do you think that women are always the ones responsible for the problems brought into the world?

What would “Pandora’s box” mean today? (Something if opened will bring many problems into the world.)

What is the one thing still in the box? What does that mean in the story? —that Hope is still in Pandora’s box?

Why do you think there is evil in the world today?

#### King Midas and the Golden Touch

Bacchus, on a certain occasion, found his old schoolmaster and foster-father, Silenus, missing. The old man had been drinking, and in that state wandered away, and was found by some peasants, who carried him to their king, Midas. Midas recognized him, and treated him hospitably, entertaining him for ten days and nights with an unceasing round of jollity. On the eleventh day he brought Silenus back, and restored him in safety to his pupil. Whereupon Bacchus offered Midas his choice of a reward, whatever he might wish. He asked that whatever he might touch should be changed into gold. Bacchus consented, though sorry that he had not made a better choice. Midas went his way, rejoicing in his new-acquired power, which he hastened to put to the test. He could scarce believe his eyes when he found a twig of an oak, which he plucked from the branch, become gold in his hand. He took up a stone; it changed to gold. He touched a sod; it did the same. He took up an apple from the tree; you would have thought he had robbed the garden of the Hesperides. His joy knew no bounds, and as soon as he got home, he ordered the servants to set a splendid repast on the table. Then he found to his dismay that whether he touched bread, it hardened in his hand; or put a morsel to his lip, it defied his teeth. He took a glass of wine, but it flowed down his throat like melted gold.

In consternation at the unprecedented affliction, he strove to divest himself of his power; he hated the gift he had lately coveted. But all in vain; starvation seemed to await him. He raised

his arms, all shining with gold, in prayer to Bacchus, begging to be delivered from his glittering destruction. Bacchus, merciful deity, heard and consented. "Go," said he, "to River Pactolus, trace its fountain-head, there plunge yourself and body in, and wash away your fault and its punishment." He did so, and scarce had he touched the waters before the gold-creating power passed into them, and the river sands became changed into gold, as they remain to this day.

From BULFINCH'S MYTHOLOGY: THE AGE OF FABLE OR STORIES OF GODS AND HEROES by Thomas Bulfinch

### Questions for Discussion:

King Midas had to wash his hands in the river to get rid of the Golden Touch. This myth explains why we have gold in some of our rivers.

What other story do you know that is similar? (The Chocolate Touch)

Can you act out the story of King Midas without using any words? What gestures would you use to make sure the audience understands what you mean? What props do you need to complete this activity?

Do you know any business that uses King Midas' name as their logo? (Midas Muffler) Why is that a good name for a muffler (part of exhaust system that reduces the noise)? Perhaps the story below will help you answer this question.

Some say the god, Dionysus wanted to teach King Midas to think before wishing for something in order to make a better more thoughtful wish, so Dionysus gave King Midas donkey ears. King Midas was horrified at having donkey ears and indeed, he felt very stupid. To cover up this curse, King Midas began wearing a turban to cover up his donkey ears. Only his barber knew about the king's terrible secret. Finally the barber could not keep the secret any longer. He rushed into the forest, dug a hole and yelled into the hole, "King Midas has donkey ears." Then the barber rolled on the ground in the forest, doubled up with laughter. Even today if you go hiking or camping into the forest and are very quiet, you will hear the reeds whisper, "Midas has donkey ears."

### The Origin of the Seasons: Hades, Persephone and Demeter

Hades was the king of the Underworld, a gray and dreary place where all the souls of all the dead went to one of three kingdoms: Elysian Fields (heaven) for heroes, virgins and poets, Hades proper, and Tartarus (Hell) where evil people go. After death, the soul would cross the River Styx and pay the ferryman, Charon with a gold coin put under the tongue of the deceased by his/her relatives before the funeral. Upon arrival in Hades, the soul would pass through the gates of Hades, guarded by Cerberus, the furious, three-headed dog. Next, the soul would be judged by three judges and afterwards would drink of the River Lethe (the River of Forgetfulness). Hades was a gloomy, grumpy god. Mortals feared him so much that they did not dare mention his name for they might attract his attention and he might send for them. Sometimes Hades was called the Rich One because all the treasures under the ground belong to him. He was also called the Hospitable One because he always had room for one more in his kingdom.

Persephone was the daughter of Demeter, goddess of the harvest. Demeter loved her daughter so dearly Demeter could not bear to have her daughter out of her sight. When Demeter sat on her golden throne, her daughter was always on her lap; when she went down to earth to look after her trees and fields, she took Persephone. Wherever Persephone danced on her light feet, flowers sprang up. She was so lovely and full of grace that even Hades, who saw so little, noticed her and fell in love with her. He wanted her for his queen, but he knew that her mother would never consent to part with her, so he decided to carry her off.

One day as Persephone ran about in the meadow gathering flowers, she strayed away from her mother and the attending nymphs. Suddenly, the ground split open and up from the yawning crevice came a dark chariot drawn by black horses. At the reins stood grim Hades. He seized the terrified girl, turned his horses, and plunged back into the ground. Persephone's cries for help died out as the ground closed again as suddenly as it had opened. Demeter rushed wildly about in the meadow, looking in vain for her daughter, who had vanished without leaving a trace.

With the frightened girl in his arms, Hades raced his snorting horses down away from the sunlit world. Down and down they sped on the dark path to his dismal underground palace. He led weeping Persephone in seated her beside him on a throne of black marble and decked her with gold and precious stones. But the jewels brought her no joy. She longed for warm sunshine and flowers and her golden haired mother.

Demeter ran about searching for her lost daughter, and all nature grieved with her. Flowers wilted, trees lost their leaves and the fields grew barren and cold. Nothing could sprout and nothing could grow while the goddess of the harvest wept. People and animals starved and the gods begged Demeter to again bless the earth. But she refused until she found her daughter. Zeus came down from Mount Olympus since he knew that Hades had taken Persephone. Zeus asked Hades to give Persephone back. Hades said Persephone could come back to Demeter if she hadn't eaten anything in his kingdom. But Persephone had eaten a pomegranate with six seeds in it. Zeus said that Persephone had to live with Hades for six months of the year (winter and fall) and then six months with her mother (spring and summer). That's the origin of the seasons!

#### Questions and Activities:

Draw a picture of the kingdom of Hades. Include: the River Styx; the ferryman named Charon; the gates with Cerberus, the three headed dog; the palace of Hades with the thrones of Hades and Persephone; the three Judges; the Fountain of Forgetfulness where everyone drinks and the Three Kingdoms of Hades: Elysian Fields, Hades proper and Tartarus (with Prometheus and the vulture).

Why do you think all cultures need a story about what happens to us after we die?

What characteristics of Hades in Greek mythology are still in our idea of where we go after death today? (Three kingdoms, Hades = Devil, (Pearly) Gates, Judgment)

What other stories do you know about attempts to cheat Death? Why is it no one every wins?

What other stories do you know that have a "forbidden fruit" in it? (pomegranate, apple)

With a partner write another myth or fairy tale telling how the "Seasons" originated?

#### Orpheus and Eurydice

Orpheus was the son of a Muse, Calliope, a special goddess of epic poetry. When he was grown, he left his mother and went to live in his father's kingdom of Thrace to bring the joy of music to earth. His voice rang so pure and true that the fiercest warriors put down their swords and savage beasts lay spellbound at his magical songs. Trees pulled up their roots and moved closer to listen, and even hard rocks rolled up to him. Orpheus fell in love with Eurydice, a wood nymph, but at their wedding, Eurydice stepped on a snake and she fell to the ground, dead from its poisonous bite.

No more songs came from Orpheus' throat, no more tunes rang out from his lyre. All joy had gone out of his life. Orpheus had to have his Eurydice back. He did what no living man had ever done before: he went down to the kingdom of Hades to beg for the return of his beloved. If his music had the power to move hard rocks; it might also move the cold heart of Hades.

His silvery voice floated down through the dark like a gentle summer breeze and its magic moved the iron gates of Hades. They sprang open and let him in. Cerberus, the three headed watchdog, lay down at his feet and let him pass. The whole dark kingdom listened silently to Orpheus' music as he sang about his great love, begging to have his Eurydice back.

Hades, the pitiless king of the dead, sat on his black marble throne with Queen Persephone at his side. Tears washed down Persephone's cheeks. Her heart was so touched that she turned to her husband and begged him to let Eurydice go back to the sunny world above. Hades gave his consent with one condition: Orpheus must not look back at his bride before they reached the realm of the living. She would walk behind him, but if he turned and looked at her, she must return to the Underworld.

Overcome with joy, Orpheus started up the dark path, and as his music faded into the distance, gloom again descended over the Underworld. The way was long and as Orpheus walked on and on, doubt began to creep into his mind. Had Hades tricked him? Were the sounds heard behind him really Eurydice's footsteps? He had almost reached the upper world and could already see a dim light ahead, when he couldn't stand it any longer. He had to turn and see if she really was there. He saw her sweet face, but only for an instant, and then he heard her whisper, "Farewell." Orpheus knew he had lost Eurydice forever.

Orpheus never again found joy on earth. He wandered into the wilderness to grieve in solitude. He sang, but now his songs were so mournful that tears trickled down the cheeks of wild animals and all the trees wept. Finally the people and animals couldn't stand his mournful songs anymore. They tore him to pieces and threw his body into the river. The river stopped its gurgling to listen, for the haunting voice of Orpheus still issued forth from his dead lips as he floated down to the open sea.

#### Questions for Discussion:

What is the purpose of this particular myth? Does it explain anything important? (This myth means that love is stronger than death and also that music has power beyond the grave.)

Do you think music is immortal (lasts forever)? Think about classical music you have heard at home or at school. How is it possible that music makes you feel a certain emotion? What are some emotions that you feel when you listen to music? Do you think the feelings you have about a particular musical composition were felt by others before you; even perhaps by the composer him/herself? (The teacher may want to play several musical compositions from various time periods: classical, romantic, impressionist, contemporary and compare the feelings of the class.)

Eurydice was a wood nymph. How many different nymphs are there? Draw a picture of a nymph you have created. Tell about your nymph and what she does. Why do you think this story about Orpheus and Eurydice was a favorite among the Greek people? (We all want to be with the people we love after we die.)

#### Echo and Narcissus

Echo was a cheerful, happy nymph who chattered and prattled all day long. She never kept quiet. One day Hera, the wife of Zeus came down from Mount Olympus to search for her husband, Zeus. Echo annoyed Hera so much with her silly chatter that Hera put a curse on Echo that she could only repeat the final words of others.

Echo fell in love with Narcissus, a handsome young man who spent most of his time hunting in the forest where she lived. Echo followed Narcissus as he walked through the forest. Near nightfall, Narcissus bent down to drink from a lake and suddenly, stopped and stared, for in the mirroring surface of the water he saw the handsomest face he had ever seen. He smiled and the handsome face smiled back at him. He was spellbound by the beautiful stranger in the water. He did not know that it was his own image that he had fallen in love with and he sat smiling at himself, forgetting to eat, forgetting to drink, until he wasted away and died. Hermes came and led him down to the realm of the dead, but where he had been sitting the lovely Narcissus flower sprang up. Echo stood beside the flower and grieved and pined until she too faded away. Nothing was left of Echo, but her voice, which to this day can be heard senselessly repeating the words of others.

#### Questions for Discussion:

The myth explains the origin of the echo and a flower, the narcissus. Why do you think the Greeks would make up such stories? (To explain the origin of things around them.)

Knowing what you do about this myth, where do you think the Narcissus grows best?

What is a nymph? How is a nymph different than a fairy or siren?

Choose something from the natural world around you and make up a story about how that object came to be. Suggestions: stars, moon, sun, flowers, bird, animal, cave, mountain

Why would the words narcissistic and narcotic come from this young man's name?

What is this story telling us? (That we shouldn't talk too much and think before we speak - Echo.

That we should not be egotistic or self-centered - Narcissus.)

What story can you think of that has a message for our society today?

## Heroes and the Hero Cycle

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Each society has a need to create heroes who embark upon adventures, which reflect the hopes and desires of that society. Though the characteristics of the hero may vary, the need for literature dealing with heroes remains constant. Heroic literature is a specialized type of literature concerned with the adventures of a central figure who is somehow greater than ordinary mortals. This "hero" is set apart from and above, the average person because of his almost superhuman courage, bravery and cleverness. In fact, Hesiod, an ancient Greek writer, defined the word hero as a person whose status is between that of an ordinary mortal and that of the gods. Thus heroes are almost a link between human beings and the gods. They represent the ideal for their society. For this reason, a great body of literature is collected about their exploits. By recounting the adventures and triumphs of hero, the society reaffirms its own values and allows the listeners of readers to identify with, and perhaps to emulate, the deeds of the hero. Heroic literature instills a sense of pride and imprints a value system on the society or audience.

The later Bronze Age was the age of heroes in Greece. This was an age when the Greek city states were becoming a power to reckon with in the Mediterranean area. In many ways, the age of heroes was a celebration of the conquests of that time. The greatest heroes were Theseus, Perseus, Hercules, Jason, and Odysseus. In each case, the hero was responsible for destroying the enemies of the Greeks and helping to unify the countryside; therefore, each was a type of founding father.

There are no unified sources for the stories of Greek heroes. All of the literary sources were taken from an oral tradition. Even at the time of writing, one must assume that each poet select-

ed details, which suited his temperament and purpose from the numerous accounts available to him. Therefore, although the stories agree in the general plot, there are innumerable variations in detail and emphasis. In addition, none of the writings are strictly historical. They are works of the creative imagination. This, however, does not mean that we cannot find historical validity in the accounts. One example of historical validity is when Heinrich Schliemann, an archeologist, followed the directions of Homer and discovered the ruins of the buried city of Troy.

It becomes obvious after reading much of the heroic literature of the ancient Greeks that a literary formula of heroism emerged which reflects not only what the Greeks demanded in their stories of heroes, but what qualities of manhood they valued. (The following is background information for the teacher about the hero cycle and its application and refers to heroes whose stories will be told upon further reading of this document.)

### The Hero Cycle:

From a synthesis of major scholars of world mythology, we can derive the following milestones in the life of the hero. Scholars have named these the Hero Cycle.

Miraculous Birth - The birth of a hero is enshrouded in mystery and intrigue. Often a trick was required to suppress the identity of the child and thus save his life.

Strange Destiny -The Greeks believed their heroes were fated to have a special destiny intertwined with the interests of the Olympians. In the case of Perseus, his birth was the result of a divine oracle. In the case of Jason, not only was there an oracle, but a goddess actually advised him directly and watched over him to ensure his safety and success.

Extraordinary Feat - According to the classical tradition, in order to prove his status as hero and thus claim his throne, the young man had to undertake a dangerous quest on behalf of his people. Sometimes the aim was to save the people from a terrible plague or tyrant; sometimes it was for material gain. Usually the successful completion of the quest fulfilled both objectives. Quite often, the task was set by the usurper who considered the hero's quest an impossibility. This added a strong element of adventure to the narrative, as well as reinforcing the difficulties in obtaining success. For the Greeks, the quest meant a challenge to overcome or a goal to be achieved. The hero's quest was vitally important to the culture and to the people. Through the story the audience is able to identify with his character and to reaffirm cultural values. After the object of the quest was attained, many of the heroes found themselves confronted with an arduous journey back to their homeland. In many cases, they met new adventures and hardships. For instance, Jason found the journey home even longer than the journey to Colchis. Obviously, this was an opportunity for the early poets to expand upon the tale of the hero, as well as, to explain the almost legendary travels of early explorers. In addition, to the Greeks, the homeland was a very important part of their life. A person was identified by his lineage in a particular area and by his ties to one city state. Greece was still very much a tribal society and one of the worst punishments a person could undergo was to be exiled from his home. Thus the tale of the hero's difficulties in returning would be very compelling and significant to the Greeks.

Pinnacle of Power - The hero gained the rewards of his labors. This usually meant that the hero became the king, although in the case of Hercules, he merely gained fame and honor.

Fall from Power- It was a feature of these legends that this height of power was very short-lived. Perhaps the poets who had created heroes felt compelled to destroy them as well: Theseus inad-

vertently caused the death of his own father; Jason was exiled; Perseus killed his grandfather in error; and Odysseus was responsible for the death of all his men.

Spiritual Death or/and Physical Death - Soon after the hero's fall from power comes either spiritual death or physical death or both. After their fall all heroes suffer spiritual death, but metaphysically and mystically rather than religiously. The hero has not lived up to his own expectations of what he should have been.

Resurrection and Rebirth- The hero has a chance for resurrection and rebirth if he can "rise again." This may be seen even in modern day heroes such as President Clinton who has suffered a type of "spiritual" death, but seems unable to resurrect himself and has not been reborn in the eyes of the public. If the hero suffers physical death first, before spiritual death, then he may become a martyred hero, as in the cases of Christ, Martin Luther King and JFK. Eastern philosophers and stories from Asian countries often share a belief in reincarnation. In such stories the hero is reborn into another body to live another lifetime.

### Theseus and the Minotaur

King Minos, the King of Crete had a curse put upon his family. One of his sons was a monster, half man and half bull. The minotaur only ate human flesh and ravaged the countryside eating all the people. To solve this problem, King Minos had his clever inventor, Daedalus construct a labyrinth under the palace at Knossos to cage the minotaur. As long as the minotaur was given victims to eat, he was quiet and did not cause trouble. When he was hungry, he bellowed so loudly that the whole palace shook and no one could eat, sleep or even think.

King Minos had to make war with all the neighboring islands so he could feed the prisoners of war to the minotaur. When one of the king's sons visited Athens and was accidentally killed, King Minos used this as an excuse to threaten to attack the city of Athens unless seven Athenian maidens and seven Athenian youths were sent to Crete to be sacrificed to the minotaur every seven years.

To save his city, King Aegeus, the King of Athens had to consent for King Minos was much stronger than he was. The people of Athens were upset, for while King Aegeus was childless and had nothing to lose, they had to see their sons and daughters sacrificed to the cruel minotaur.

Two times seven years had passed and the king was growing old. For the third time a ship with black sails of mourning was due to depart, when word came to the king that a young hero, Theseus from Troezen, was making his way to Athens, destroying all the monsters and highway men he met on the road. When King Aegeus heard this, his old heart beat faster. He had left a baby son in Troezen with the words, "Should my son grow up strong enough to lift this boulder under which I hide my sword and golden sandals, send him to me, for then he will be the worthy heir to my throne."

Theseus, the young hero arrived in Athens and went straight to the king's palace. Tall and handsome, he stood before Aegeus with the very same sword and golden sandals that Aegeus had left in Troezen many years before. The king was overjoyed until his newly found son volunteered to go with the next ship to be sacrificed to the minotaur. The king begged Theseus not to go, but Theseus was determined. The king made his son promise that if he was successful: "he would return with white sails—even though the ship left with black sails. Theseus promised.

The ship sailed to Crete and the fourteen young Athenians were locked in a dungeon to await their doom. However, King Minos had a lovely daughter, Ariadne, as fair a maiden as eyes could see. She could not bear the thought that handsome Theseus should be sacrificed to the ugly minotaur. She went to Daedalus and begged for his help. Daedalus, the creator of the labyrinth, gave Ariadne a magic ball of golden thread and told her that at midnight, when the minotaur was fast asleep, she must take Theseus to the labyrinth. The magic ball of thread would roll ahead of him through the maze and lead him to the monster, and then it was up to Theseus to overpower the beast.

Ariadne went to Theseus' prison and whispered to him that if he would promise to marry her and take her back with him back to Athens, she would help him. Theseus promised so Ariadne led him to the entrance to the labyrinth, tied the end of the magic thread to the gate and gave him the ball of thread. As soon as Theseus put the ball on the ground, it rolled ahead of him through dark corridors, up stairs, down stairs and around winding passageways. Holding on to the unwinding thread, Theseus followed it wherever it led him, and before long he heard the thunderous snoring of the minotaur, surrounded by skulls and bleached bones, lay the monster fast asleep.

Theseus sprang at the minotaur. It roared so loudly that the whole palace of Knossus shook, but the monster was taken by surprise, and so strong was Theseus that, with his bare hands, he killed the cruel minotaur. Theseus quickly followed the thread back to Ariadne, who stood watch at the gate. Together they freed the other Athenians and ran to their ship in the harbor.

Theseus' heart was filled with joy. He had killed the terrible minotaur and all he could think about was how his father would reward him and how grateful the people of Athens would be. He would be the greatest hero Athens had ever known! The group went ashore for the night. Ariadne fell into a heavy slumber and while she slept, Theseus led the others back to the ship and they sailed off without her. Poor Ariadne wept bitterly when she awoke and found herself deserted. She cursed Theseus for breaking his promise to her.

Theseus forgot about hoisting the white sail to signal his success. All he could think about was the glory that awaited him. When King Aegeus saw the black sailed ship returning from Crete, he threw himself into the sea in despair. Today we call this sea, the Aegean Sea. Theseus inherited his father's throne and became the King of Athens, but it was a hollow victory. Theseus was a great hero, but his tragic flaw was breaking his promises.

#### Questions for Discussion:

Scholars have discovered that the people of Crete were strong bull worshippers. If you go to Knossus, be sure to see the remains of the famous labyrinth. Do you think this myth is true due to the facts that there is a labyrinth built under the ruins of a palace and the people of Crete were bull worshippers? Why or why not? The Greeks believed that every person had a tragic flaw that could lead to that person's downfall. What was the tragic flaw of Theseus? (promise breaker) Why do you think Theseus didn't keep his promises? The Greeks thought that arrogance or hubris was the greatest tragic flaw of their heroes. Even Shakespeare agreed with this. Do you think arrogance is the flaw we need to guard against the most today?? If not, which flaw do you think we should beware of the most? Do you think breaking one's promises is related to arrogance? Make a clay model of the labyrinth with the minotaur inside. (Many say the labyrinth is a replica of the cross-section of the human brain.)

## Jason and the Golden Fleece

In Iolcus, a city in northeastern Greece, at the time when the wife of King Aeson was about to give birth to a child, a mutiny occurred in the royal household and Aeson was deposed by his brother, Pelias. Unable to bring himself to kill his own brother, Pelias had Aeson and his wife imprisoned in a heavily guarded room. When Aeson's wife finally bore a child, they named it Jason and had it smuggled out of the palace in a closed casket, using the ploy that the baby had been stillborn. Pelias was then more at ease because he had no fear of anyone in the original royal line challenging his right to the throne.

Jason was taken to the mountains by loyal servants and given to the wise old centaur Chiron to be raised and educated in the noble arts of his class. Thus Jason grew strong and became skilled in music and song, as well as in the art of warfare. When he reached maturity, Chiron told him of the events surrounding his royal birth and sent him to reclaim his rightful throne.

On the way to his home, a fateful event occurred. When approaching a river, Jason met an old crone attempting to ford the swift current. Being strong and courteous, he instructed her to climb up on his shoulder so that he could carry her across. As they forded the river, she clung to him so tightly that he almost lost his balance. He saved himself and the crone, but lost one of his sandals in the process. Upon reaching the shore, Jason set the old woman down and continued on his way, unaware that he had aided both the divine Hera and an oracle, which stated that Pelias would eventually be deposed by a man wearing only one sandal. Previously, Pelias had angered Hera by denying her proper sacrifice. The return of Jason to claim his rightful throne provided Hera with the opportune moment to begin to fulfill the oracle.

When Jason reached the market place in Iolcus, wearing the single sandal, Pelias was terrified. Realizing the danger he was in, Pelias planned to get rid of the stranger. He demanded an audience with Jason and asked him what he would do in his place if an oracle had stated that the king would be killed by one of his own citizens. Jason quickly replied, for Hera had put the words into his mouth, that he would send that person on a quest for the Golden Fleece. Pelias was pleased with this answer because he felt that such a quest could end only in death for the hero who undertook it. He told the youth about the oracle and demanded that Jason undertake the task. Finding out who Jason was, Pelias promised Jason the throne only if he returned with the Golden Fleece.

The Golden Fleece was a legend even in the time of Jason. It was reputed to be the hide of a huge ram placed in a sacred tree in Colchis and guarded by a huge, ever-watchful serpent. By bringing back the Golden Fleece to Greece, Jason would bring fame and fortune to himself. In preparation for his quest, Jason sent out runners to every city in Greece, asking for courageous men to join him in his adventure. At the same time, he had a great ship built for the voyage, which he named the Argo. Soon he had assembled a great band of fifty men, including such famous heroes as Hercules and Orpheus. Never before in history had so many illustrious men gathered together in order to seek personal fame and glory. The quest would be difficult and dangerous, for although some contacts with the Black Sea area had been made by merchants, knowledge of the area was sparse and the people living on the shores of the vast sea were known to be hostile.

Upon completion of the ship, Jason and the "Argonauts" set sail toward the narrow entrance to the Black Sea by following the east coast of Greece. When the wind grew tired and died down,

the Argonauts put out their oars and rowed with all their might. Orpheus beat out the time with his lyre and the ship cut through the waves like an arrow. One after the other the heroes grew tired and pulled in their oars. Only Heracles and Jason were left rowing, each trying to outlast the other. Jason finally failed, but just as he slumped forward, Hercules' huge oar broke in two, so equal glory was won by both.

The Argonauts landed at a wooded coast so Hercules could cut himself a new oar. While Hercules searched for a suitable tree, his young friend, Hylas went to a pool to fill his jar with fresh water. When the nymph of the pool saw the handsome boy bending down, she fell in love with him. She pulled him down with her to the bottom of the pool and Hylas vanished forever without leaving a trace.

Hercules went out of his mind with grief when he could not find his friend. He ran through the woods, calling for Hylas, beating down whatever was in his way. The Argonauts waited and waited, but Hercules did not return. In desperation, they sailed without him until they came to a country ruled by a king who was known for his knowledge and wisdom. They went ashore to ask the way to Colchis, but the king was so weak that he could barely answer their questions. Whenever, food was set before him, three disgusting Harpies, fat birds with women's heads, swooped down and devoured all food. No one in his kingdom could drive the Harpies away.

The Argonauts felt sorry for the starving king. They told him to have his table set and when the Harpies swooped down again, the Argonauts drove off the Harpies never to be seen again. The king was so grateful that he told the Argonauts how to make it through two moving rocks that blocked passage into the Black Sea. The rocks rolled apart and clashed together, crushing whatever came between them. But if a ship could move as fast as a bird in flight, it might get through. The king gave Jason a dove and told him to send the bird ahead of the ship. If the dove came through alive, they had a chance, he said. If not, they had better give up and turn back.

The Argonauts left king and sailed toward the clashing rocks. From afar they could hear the din and the heroes trembled, but as the rocks rolled apart, Jason released the dove and the bird flew between them like a dart. Only the very tips of its tail feathers were clipped off when the rocks clashed together. Orpheus played his lyre and the men rowed as fast as they could toward the clashing rocks. The Argo shot ahead like an arrow when the rocks rolled apart, and only the very end of its stern was crushed as the huge rocks clashed together. Again the rocks rolled apart and then stood firmly anchored. The spell was broken, and from then on ships could safely sail in and out of the Black Sea, thanks to the Argonauts.

When the Argonauts landed in Colchis, the king was not happy. Of course, he did not want Jason to have the Golden Fleece. He decided to give Jason a test that he didn't think Jason could pass. He said to Jason, "Tomorrow, between sunrise and sunset, you must harness my fire-breathing bulls, plow up a field and plant it with dragon's teeth. The king knew that no mortal man could withstand the breath of the fire-breathing dragon. However, the king didn't know that Hera was helping Jason.

Hera knew that the king's daughter, Medea, who stood at her father's side with modestly downcast eyes, was the only one who could save Jason. She was a lovely young sorceress and Hera asked Aphrodite to send her little son, Cupid, to shoot one of his arrows of love into Medea's heart, which he did. Cupid shot an arrow into Medea's heart just as she lifted up her eyes, saw

Jason and fell madly in love with her. Her golden eyes gleamed; never had she seen anyone so handsome. She just had to use her magic and save him from her cruel father; there was nothing she would not do to save Jason's life. Medea made a magic salve so powerful that for one day neither iron nor fire could harm the one who was covered with it. It would protect Jason from the fire breathing dragons and from any sword.

In the dark of the night, Medea sent for Jason. She blushing told him that she loved him so much she would betray her own father to save him. She gave him the magic salve and told him to go up to the fire-breathing bulls without fear. Jason took the young sorceress in his arms and swore by all the gods of Olympus to make her his queen and love her to his dying day.

When the sun rose in the morning, Jason went straight up to the fire-breathing bulls. They belched and belched flames at him, but with Medea's salve he was invulnerable and so strong that he harnessed the bulls and drove them back and forth until the whole field was plowed. Then he planted the dragon's teeth, and immediately a host of warriors sprang up from the furrows. He threw a rock among them and watched from afar as they killed one another. Before the sun had set, they all lay dead.

Jason had fulfilled his task, but the king of Colchis had no intention of keeping his part of the bargain. He called his men together and ordered them to seize the Argo and kill the foreigners at daybreak. In secrecy, Medea went to Jason and told him that he must take the Golden Fleece, now rightfully his, and run from Colchis before dawn. Under cover of night she led him to the dark grove where the Golden Fleece, shining like the sun, hung on a branch of a tree. Around the trunk of the tree lay coiled the never-sleeping dragon. But Medea chanted incantations and bewitched the dragon. She stared at it with her golden eyes and it fell into a deep magic sleep. Quickly Jason took the Golden Fleece and ran with Medea to the waiting Argo, and quietly they slipped out to sea.

At daybreak when the king's men were to attack the ship, they found it was gone. So were the Golden Fleece and the king's daughter, Medea. Red-faced with fury, the king set off in pursuit with his great fleet of warships. He wanted the Golden Fleece back and he wanted to punish his daughter. The fastest of his ships, steered by one of his sons, soon overtook the Argo. The Argonauts thought themselves lost, but again Medea saved them by using her magic. She engineered her own brother's death so that her father would have to stop the chase and bury her brother. She saved the Argonauts, but had committed a terrible crime against her own family.

The Argo, continuing the journey, had to pass through dangerous and bewitched waters. Soon they came to the island of the Sirens. The Sirens were half birds, half women, not loathsome like the Harpies, but enchanting creatures. They sat on a cliff, half hidden by sea spray, and sang so beautifully that all sailors who heard them dived into the sea and tried to swim to them, only to drown or pine to death at the Sirens' feet. When the alluring voices of the Sirens reached the ears of the Argonauts, Orpheus grasped his lyre and sang so loudly and sweetly that all other sounds were drowned out, and not one of the Argonauts jumped overboard.

After a while the Argo had to sail through a narrow strait, that was guarded by two monsters. On one side, lurked the monster Scylla. From her waist up she looked like a woman, but instead of legs, six furious, snarling dogs grew out from her hips and they tore to pieces whatever came close to them. The monster, Charybdis lived on the other side of the strait. She was forever hungry and sucked into her gullet all ships that ventured with her reach.

Helplessly, the Argo drifted between the two monsters, and the Argonauts again gave themselves up for lost, when up from the bottom of the sea rose the playful Nereids, sea nymphs . They had come with orders from Hera to lift up the Argo and throw it out of danger to the open sea beyond. Poseidon called for the West Wind and the Argo sped homeward under full sail.

A loud cheer rang out from the valiant crew when they sighted the shore of Greece. They had been away for many long years and were homesick. But as the Argo neared the port of Iolcus, the ship was hailed by a fisherman, who warned Jason that the evil king had heard of his success and planned to kill Jason and keep the Golden Fleece. Jason was downcast at his uncle's treachery, but Medea, her eyes flashing asked to be set ashore alone. Once again she wanted to save his life.

Disguised as an old witch, she entered Iolcus, saying that she had magic herbs to sell that would make old creatures young again. The people crowded around her, wondering from where the witch had come. King Pelias himself came out of his palace and asked her to prove that what she said was true, for he felt he was growing old. "Bring me the oldest ram in your flock and I will show you the magic of my herbs," said Medea. An old ram was brought to her and she put it into a caldron full of water. On top she sprinkled some of her magic herbs, and the water in the caldron boiled and out of the steam and bubbles sprang a frisky young lamb. The king was excited and asked Medea to make him young again. She answered that only his daughters could do that, but she would gladly sell them her magic herbs. But the herbs she gave them had no magic at all, and so King Pelias found his death in the boiling caldron at his own daughters' hands.

The throne of Iolcus was Jason's, but again Medea had committed a terrible crime. She had tricked innocent daughters into killing their own father. The gods turned from her and she changed from a lovely young sorceress into an evil witch. The people of Iolcus refused to accept her for their queen and took another king in Jason's stead. With the loss of his throne, Jason also lost his love for Medea. He forgot that he had sworn to love her until his dying day and that she had committed her crimes for his sake. He asked her to leave so he could marry the Princess of Corinth and inherit her father's kingdom.

Medea, scorned and furious, turned more and more to evil sorcery. To revenge herself on Jason, she sent a magic robe to his new bride. It was a beautiful gown trimmed in silk and jewels, but the moment the bride put it on she went up in flames and so did the whole palace. Then Medea disappeared into a dark cloud, riding in a carriage drawn by two dragons.

Jason found no more happiness, for when he broke his sacred oath to Medea, he lost Hera's good will. His good looks left him and so did his luck and his friends. Lonesome and forgotten, he sat one day in the shade of his once glorious ship, the Argo now rotting on the beach of Corinth. Suddenly the sacred piece of oak in the prow broke off, fell on Jason and killed him.

The Golden Fleece was hung in Apollo's temple in Delphi, a wonder for all Greeks to behold and a reminder of the great deeds of Jason and the Argonauts.

#### Activities and Discussion:

Draw a picture of Jason and the dragons.

Draw the one of the monsters discussed in this story.

Write a story about what happened to Medea after she left Jason.

Write a poem about the Golden Fleece.

Create a skit about what you would do if you had the magical Golden Fleece?

## Perseus and Medusa, the Gorgon

King Acrisius was the king of Argos and he had one beautiful daughter, Danae. Nevertheless, the king wanted a son to inherit his throne so he went to the oracle. (The oracle was a hole in the ground near Delphi, Greece where fumes would escape. There, priestesses would inhale the fumes and answer anyone's question regarding the future in a riddle.) The oracle told King Acrisius that his daughter would have a son, but that her son would kill him. King Acrisius put his daughter, Danae in a sealed chamber that had only one skylight in the roof. He thought that she would remain unwed and childless since no man would see her. Zeus came to Danae in the form of a shower of gold and she gave birth to a son, Perseus. When King Acrisius found out he was afraid to kill his grandson, but he put Danae and Perseus in a chest and threw it into the sea. If they drowned, King Acrisius said it would be Poseidon's fault.

Poseidon gently steered the chest to the shore of an island, and a fisherman who was casting his nets hauled it in. Great was his surprise when he saw what the chest contained. When Danae had told him her story, he took her and baby, Perseus to his hut and cared for them as if they were his own, for he was a kind old man and had no children of his own.

In his humble hut Perseus grew into a fine and valiant youth, proud of being the son of Zeus and the beautiful Danae. But Danae's beauty attracted the eye of the ruthless king of the island. He wanted her for his queen, but Perseus stood in his way. The scheming king decided to get rid of Perseus, and he let it be known that he was going to marry a princess from a neighboring island. All the men in the kingdom had to bring the king gifts, but Perseus was too poor and he had nothing to give. So he offered his services to the king instead. This was just what the king had expected. "Slay the monster Medusa and bring me her head," he said. No man who had ever set out to kill Medusa had come back and the king was sure that now he was forever rid of Perseus.

Medusa was one of three horrible Gorgon sister, so gruesome that all living creatures turned to stone at the sight of her. Medusa lived on an island far out at sea at the edge of world, but nobody knew just where. Perseus bid his mother goodbye and set out to search for Medusa. He went over land and over sea asking his way, but nobody could tell him where the Gorgons lived. As he stood at the crossroad wondering which way to go, Athena and Hermes suddenly appeared. Zeus had sent them to help him. They could tell him the way to the island of the Gorgons, but he needed more help than that. Athena lent him her shield, polished as brightly as a mirror and her magic sword that could cut through the hardest metal. Hermes lent him his cap of invisibility, his magic sandals that could enable Perseus to fly, and a magic bag to hold the head of Medusa (since her blood was so poisonous, it could eat through anything).

Perseus put on the magic sandals and the cap of invisibility and flew to the edge of the world where Medusa lived. Looking into his shield's reflection to protect him from Medusa's glance, he approached Medusa with her yellow fangs hanging from her grinning mouth. With writhing snakes for hair and her scales on her lower body like a dragon, she was a fearful sight. Perseus took heart since he knew he was invisible. However, even though he was invisible, Medusa could still smell Perseus. Slowly, he got closer and closer and finally with one deft stroke, he cut off her head. Out from the monster's severed neck sprang a beautiful winged horse, Pegasus. Perseus grabbed her severed head and put it in his bag and jumped onto Pegasus to fly away.

When he arrived back at the island, his mother was being forced to marry the evil king, Polydectus. Perseus came just as the wedding was about to begin. "Here is the head you wanted!"

he shouted and he pulled Medusa's head out of the bag. Startled, the king and his men looked up and there they sat, turned into statues of stone, some of them with their mouths still open in astonishment.

The people of the island rejoiced at being rid of the tyrant, Polydectes. Perseus did not keep Medusa's head. It was much too dangerous. So he gave it to Athena when he returned the four magic objects. Perseus thought his grandfather, King Acrisius would be happy to see him now that he was a hero for capturing Medusa's head. He sailed for Argos, but when the old king heard that his grandson was coming to see him, he fled from his city. He stopped at some athletic games being played in a city by the sea. As the oracle would have it, Perseus had also stopped to rest in this seaport and had entered the discus throwing contest. His discus went wild and was hurled into the crowd, hitting an old man on the head and killing him. It was Perseus' grandfather. The words of the oracle had come true. Perseus became the king of Argos and the great grandfather of another hero, Hercules. When Perseus died, Zeus made him a constellation along with Pegasus, the winged horse.

#### Questions for Discussion:

Who helped Perseus on his quest to kill Medusa? What 4 magic objects did the gods give him? Draw a picture of Perseus and Medusa. Did you include any magic objects? Why do you think Medusa is female and not male?

Write a story about where you would travel if Pegasus came to visit you for one week.

Find the constellation where Pegasus and Perseus are in the sky. Draw a picture of the shape the stars make for them.

#### Hercules or Heracles?

Hercules or Heracles, as the Greeks called him, was the great grandson of Perseus on his mother's side. His father was Zeus so Hera hated Hercules, since she wanted all of Zeus' attention herself and for her own children. When Hercules was a baby, Hera sent two spotted serpents into his cradle, but little Hercules simply grasped them in his powerful hands and squeezed the life out of them.

Hercules was very strong especially as he grew older, but his tragic flaw was that he didn't know his own strength. Zeus sent him away from the cities and into the forests where he could wrestle and fight with wild beasts. Soon he had rid the countryside around Thebes of lions and wolves and stories of his strength spread far and wide. The King of Thebes was so impressed with Hercules that he gave Hercules his daughter to marry. They were happy and had several children. But Hera still wanted to hurt Hercules. She put a curse on him to make him go insane. He thought his wife and children were wild animals and he killed them accidentally. When he regained his sense, he was horrified and went to the oracle of Delphi to learn what he must do to atone for his crime. He was told that he must serve his cousin, Eurystheus for 10 years and complete 10 (later 12) Labors for the gods to forgive his crime. Hera was pleased because Eurystheus was a weak and cruel man who hated his strong cousin, Hercules. He would think of the most difficult tasks for Hercules to perform with her help. A summary of Hercules' most famous labors:

#### The Nemean Lion- 1st Labor

In the valley of Nemea lived a monstrous lion whose hide was so tough it could not be pierced by any weapons. It was one of the most horrible monsters and Zeus had let it live to challenge future

heroes. Hercules chased it out of its lair, seized it in his bare hands and squeezed it to death. He skinned the beast with its own claws and with the impenetrable skin of the Nemean lion slung over his head and shoulders, he reported back to Eurystheus, his first labor completed. For the rest of his life, Hercules wore the skin of the Nemean lion as protection, usually with his face appearing out of the lion's jaws.

#### The Hydra- 2nd Labor

In the swamps of Lerna there lived a nine-headed Hydra. This monster was so poisonous that the fumes from its breath alone were enough to kill whatever came close to it. Hercules filled his enormous lungs with air, held his breath and ran at the Hydra. Swinging his club, he knocked off its heads and one after the other they rolled to the ground. But no sooner had he cut off one head than a new one grew in its place. Hercules called his nephew to bring a firebrand (branding iron) and sear their necks so no new heads could sprout. Hercules killed the hydra and dipped his arrows in the Hydra's blood, making them so poisonous that a mere scratch from them was deadly. Eurystheus said that since Hercules had the help of his nephew this labor would not count and he would have to add another labor (11 Labors).

#### The Stables of King Augeas - 6th Labor

Eurystheus ordered Hercules to clean the stables of King Augeas. This king had huge herds and his stables and barnyards had not been cleaned for years. Heaps of dung rose mountain high. No man alive could clean his stables in a year, thought Eurystheus. But Hercules with tremendous strength changed the course of two rivers. The waters flooded through the stables and barnyards and washed them clean in less than a day. Again, Eurystheus said that since the waters of the two rivers had washed the Augean stables clean and not Hercules by himself, Hercules would have to add yet another labor (12 Labors).

#### The Girdle (belt) of the Queen of the Amazons- 7th Labor

The Amazons were a tribe of wild and warlike women who rode better and fought harder than any men. Eurystheus was sure that even Hercules would be overwhelmed by the furious women. But when Hercules arrived, the proud queen was so taken by the sight of his bulging muscles that she gave him her belt (girdle) without a fight. She would have married him, except Hera, in the disguise of an Amazon, spread the rumor that Hercules had come to kidnap the Amazon Queen, Hippolyta. Thinking their Queen was in danger, the Amazons attacked Hercules. In the fight Hercules escaped, but the beautiful Amazon Queen was killed.

#### Cerberus, the Guardian of Hades- 12th Labor

For his last Labor, Hercules had to capture Cerberus, the snarling, three-headed watchdog of Hades. Hercules searched far and wide until at last he found an entrance to the Underworld and walked toward the gates that Cerberus guarded. The monstrous dog's three heads growled and lashed out with his spiked tail, but Hercules threw his arms around him and squeezed him until his three tongues hung out. Whining, Cerberus let Hercules drag him to the upper world back to Eurystheus. Once Eurystheus caught one look at Cerberus, he ordered Hercules to take the monster back to Hades. This was the end of Hercules 12 Labors. When he died, Hercules was allowed to come to Mount Olympus and live with the Olympians. Hercules was also made into a constellation.

#### Questions for Discussion:

Which labor did you like the best and why? Draw a picture of Hercules completing this labor.

Why is there confusion about if Hercules had to do 10 or 12 Labors?

Tell how this story about Hercules is different than the Disney version of Hercules. Why do you think Disney changed the story about Hercules?

What does Herculean mean? Write three (3) sentences using this word.

What does Amazon mean? Do you know of any other things named Amazon? (Amazon books, the Amazon River in Brazil). Why do you think the things you have listed were named Amazon?

Which hero story did you like best? Why?

Discuss how each of the heroes above fit into the Hero Cycle.

Write about a modern day hero. How does the hero you have chosen fit into the Hero Cycle.

Joseph Campbell, a famous mythologist, says we are all heroes, that we all have times in our lives when we rise to power and then crash and burn, and then have to pick ourselves up and rise again. We all make mistakes and hopefully, have to learn from them. Fit yourself into the Hero Cycle. Where are you in the Hero Cycle? Draw a lifeline of your life so far and mark the milestones you have reached in the Hero Cycle.

Like so many heroes, Hercules' tragic flaw was arrogance because he was such a great hero. Write about your own tragic flaw and how you are overcoming it.

## The Trojan War

The cause of the Trojan War did not originate among the mortals on earth. It began during a wedding feast on Mount Olympus. All of the gods and goddesses were invited except Eris, the goddess of quarrels. Angry at being excluded, she devised an ingenious plan to promote discord at the festivities. She arrived unexpectedly and placed on the table a golden apple engraved with the words: "For the most beautiful." Immediately Hera, Aphrodite and Athena turned to Zeus and demanded the golden apple. Zeus wanted no part of the contest, which included his wife, daughter and Aphrodite, a powerful goddess. He searched for an unsuspecting mortal to be the judge.

Paris was a shepherd near Troy, but he was really the son of Priam, king of Troy. At his birth, Priam had received a prophecy that this child would destroy the city of Troy, so Paris had been left on a hillside to die of exposure. But a prophecy cannot be altered and Paris was found and raised by a kindly shepherd. Zeus noticed Paris tending his sheep and decided to choose him to judge the Beauty Contest, among the three main goddess: Hera (Juno), Athena (Minerva) and Aphrodite (Venus). Each goddess promised Paris a gift if judged the most beautiful: Hera promised Paris ultimate power, Athena promised Paris ultimate wisdom and Aphrodite promised him the most beautiful woman on Earth, who was Helen of Sparta. Unfortunately, she was already married to Menelaus, King of Sparta. Paris, nevertheless, chose Aphrodite as the contest winner.

Paris pretended to make a friendly visit to King Menelaus' palace. Cupid, the son of Aphrodite shot an arrow at Helen to make her fall in love with Paris. Paris took Helen (now Helen of Troy), the "face that launched a thousand ships" back to Troy. King Menelaus of Sparta found his wife was missing and learned she had been taken by Paris to Troy. King Menelaus began gathering Greek heroes to sail to Troy (near Istanbul today) to begin the Trojan War that lasted ten years.

The Spartans and the Greeks sailed to Troy. Heroes included Achilles, his best friend Patrocles, and Odysseus. Heroes on the Trojan side included Hector, Paris' older brother. In the ninth year of the war, Achilles became angry with Agamemnon, the brother of Menelaus and refused to fight, sulking in his tent.

(Achilles' mother was a lesser goddess, who had dipped him in the River Styx and made him invincible to any weapon or wound except for his heels where she had held him. When Achilles left for the Trojan War, his mother had made him magic golden armor that protected his heels.)

Nevertheless, with Achilles off the field, the Greeks started losing the war. Achilles' best friend, Patrocles came up with a plan. He asked Achilles if he could wear Achilles' armor and go onto the field. Thinking Achilles was on the battlefield with them, the Greeks would start winning again and Achilles would still not have to fight. Achilles agreed and helped Patrocles put on his magic armor.

On the battlefield, Hector, the main Trojan hero found Patrocles who he thought was Achilles. Hector killed Patrocles and put on Achilles' magic armor. When Achilles found out that his best friend was killed and he had lost his magic armor, he rushed out and in a rage killed Hector. Achilles dragged Hector's body behind his chariot for forty days. The protocol of war dictated that when a major hero died, all fighting stopped for the funeral and a period of mourning. Since Achilles had not observed this, the gods became angry. Zeus gave his permission for Aphrodite to help avenge Hector's mistreatment. Aphrodite guided an arrow shot from Paris' bow to strike Achilles' heel and kill him.

The Greek army fell into despair with Achilles' death. However, clever Odysseus thought of a solution - the Trojan Horse. The Greeks built a huge horse from some of their ships and hid Greek soldiers inside. The rest of the Spartans and Greeks sailed away in the night. One man was left to tell the Trojans that the Greeks had left in defeat. His job was to persuade the Trojans to pull the horse inside the walls of Troy. The Trojans pulled the horse inside Troy and had a big celebration. That night when all were asleep, the Greeks crept out of the Trojan Horse and opened the gates of Troy. The Spartans and Greeks had sailed back to Troy in the darkness and were waiting to come through the gates of Troy to surprise the sleeping Trojans. The Greeks burned Troy to the ground and won the Trojan War. No one knows what happened to Paris and Helen. Of the royal house of Troy no one but Aphrodite's son, Aeneas his father, and his young son remained alive. The goddess returned to take them out of the smoking ruins and lead them to safety. It was foretold that Aeneas would wander from land to land and that his descendants should build the mighty city of Rome.

### Questions for Discussion

In this myth, Paris has a choice. He could choose wisdom, power or love. He chose love. Do you think he made the right choice?

What started the Trojan War? Why do you think women, again are the cause of problems in the world?

What is special about Achilles? Where is your Achilles tendon?

What do you think "Achilles heel" means today? (weakness)

Example: His Achilles heel was his inability to work with people.

Who thought of the Trojan Horse? Who were the soldiers inside it?

Check on a map where Troy is today vs. where Greece is. The Greek ships held about 15-20 men.

Do you think it was dangerous sailing from Greece to Troy for one thousand ships?

What does a "Trojan Horse" mean today? (something that destroys from the inside out) Why do you think a type of computer virus is named the Trojan Horse.

The only surviving Trojans had descendants who started what great city? (Rome)

## The Iliad and the Odyssey

The Iliad, supposedly written by Homer, who was a Greek poet, who lived between 1200 and 850 B.C. Many scholars believe that the poem was composed over several centuries and therefore could not be attributed to one poet. Recent scholarship, suggests that the poem is too unified not to have been the work of a single genius. The Iliad is narrative poetry, telling a story in rhythmic language. Narrative was probably the earliest form of one of humanity's earliest arts:

- Minstrels sang of (supposedly) historical events, and words in rhythm and sometimes in rhyme helped them remember what they sang
- Minstrels also sang of contemporary events, no doubt exaggerating and embellishing for the benefit of the audience
- Others learned these "newspaper" songs, memorizing easily because of the rhythm and the rhyme and performed them for other audiences
- Minstrels became professionals paid for their services, and were expected to deliver inspiring stories. By the time of Virgil in the first century B.C., poets were highly trained and respected members of society; they worked in a written language that inherited the tradition of being elevated above "everyday" talk (prose).

In this folk epic, the history of the culture is magnified to heroic proportions with ambitious effort to give the nation of Greece a cultural history and sense of continuity. It was probably composed about a century after the unification of related, but often warring, tribes that finally settled in the Greek peninsula, the nearby islands and along the coast of what was called Asia Minor (now Turkey). The Iliad deals with events leading up to the Trojan War and the action of the Trojan War that lasted ten years. Its true title is: "The Song of Ilion." Why song? The answer may be that in those days, poets could remember the lines better if they were sung. Since there was a lack of written language, the folk epic marks the beginning of literature. A bard or minstrel was a professional hired and paid by the powerful rulers and their court to present their "history." Naturally that history was about the exploits of powerful rulers who were also brave warriors.

Romans also inherited from the Greeks that desire to cultivate the arts of civilization. These included the pleasurable pursuits of good food, wine, mineral baths and massage, as well as, the elegant prose essay, historical writings and poetry that was both heroic and lyrical.

The Odyssey also by Homer deals exclusively with the return of the hero Odysseus (Ulysses). One might argue that the defeat of Troy was the object of his quest since he engineered that victory with the Trojan Horse, but because he had offended Poseidon, he was forced to wander for ten years before arriving home back in Ithaca. The Odyssey is the story of his ten year adventure.

### Activity and Discussion:

Find out all that can be found about Odysseus' difficulties with the following in his efforts to return home: The Lotus Eaters, Polyphemus (the Cyclops), Aeolus, Circe, Tartarus, the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, Calypso. In many ways Odysseus met all of the trials of Jason and Perseus, but all on the way home. After having considered the difficulties of the return home, compare the qualities of character displayed by Odysseus with the qualities of the other heroes.

Objectives for Core Standards of Visual Art included in this art gallery tour:

**Standard: 1100-01:** Students will develop skills vital to making art by composing pictures and rendering structure, value, scale, shapes, gesture, texture, depth and color in a picture.

**Standard: 1100-02:** Students will develop observations skills vital to looking at and discussing aesthetic form by describing the use of repetition and emphasis in works of art, by telling how elements are used to create unity, and by relating colors in a composition.

**Standard: 1100-03:** Students will study events leading to the development art and develop skills vital to analyzing and evaluating works of art.

**Standard: 1100-0302:** Students will develop skills necessary to critique works of art by:

Describe how elements such as line, shape, color and texture are used.

Explain how principles such as emphasis, repetition, and contrast affect composition.

Interpret the feeling, mood or idea communicated in the work.

Explain why a work is considered a success, according to what you have learned in art.

**Standard: 1150-01:** Students will develop skills vital to appreciating and discussing the role they may play in viewing art forms, distinguishing between the various art forms, and explaining ways in which people value art.

**Standard: 1150-0101:** Students will describe the differences in the role of observer, participant and critic as each relates to the visual arts.

**Standard: 1150-02:** Students will develop observation skills vital to looking at and discussing aesthetic form by identifying ways in which artists use elements of design and artistic techniques to create mood or feeling in their work.

**Standard: 1150-0201:** Students will look at works of art and identify how the artist: used emphasis in the work, created movement through repetition, created movement through overlapping, created balance, used elements to give unity, created a mood or feeling with color, used all of the space effectively, maintained aesthetic proportions, created a balance between simplicity and detail.

**Standard: 1150-03:** Students will develop skills for analyzing and evaluating works of art and studying the artists who produced them by using non-technical methods to describe works of art to tell how they were created; by identifying themes, styles, symbols and techniques used by artists; and by identifying common art terms and major periods of art history.

**Standard: 1150-0303:** Students will explain how an artist's work is a form of non-verbal communication.

**Standard: 1150-0304:** Students will describe differences among works of art by identifying subject matter, color usage, feelings or mood and what is seen in the work.

**Standard: 1150-0306:** Students will point out examples of experimentation, imagination and creativity in works of art.

**Standard: 1150-0309:** Students will identify examples of symbolism used in art and describe logical interpretations of their usage.

**Standard 1150-0312:** Students will describe examples of the five major uses of art: philosophy of religion, utility, historical use, ornamentation (decoration) and self-expression.

**Standard: 1150-0313:** Students will describe art forms in terms such as realistic or abstract, geometric or organic, figural, natural, still life, cityscape, landscape and non-objective.

**Standard: 1150-0315:** Students will participate in the process of looking at and talking about works of art and the cultures that produced them. This would include discussing the artist and his culture; the tools that artist used; the mood, feeling, or message of the work; the effect of elements and principles of design evident in the work; and the styles or techniques used.

Sources:

Teacher Created Materials, Inc. "Ancient Greece Thematic Unit"

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/Hercules/bio.html>

<http://www.track0.com/canteach/elementary/theme17.html#unitedstates>

<http://www.loggia.com/myth/myth.html>

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/Olympics/>

<http://hsa.brown.edu/~maicar/Biographies.html>

[http://www.math.utk.edu/~vasili/GR\\_link/Greek\\_myth/greek\\_myth.html#GreekMythIntro](http://www.math.utk.edu/~vasili/GR_link/Greek_myth/greek_myth.html#GreekMythIntro)

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Thebes/3867/theoi.html>



# Greek and Roman Art

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Evening for Educators

March 20, 2002, 5:30 - 8:30

## Knucklebones: A Game of Skill

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Knucklebones was a popular game of skill in ancient Greece for both children and adults. Sometimes knucklebones were given as a reward to well-behaved children. The game of knucklebones was similar to our game of jacks, except that it was played without a ball. The Greeks used bleached knucklebones or neck vertebrae, probably from a lamb or sheep. These were roughly 1 inch (2.5 cm) cubes with bony protrusions. Sometimes five bones were used. At other times, nine were used.

The object of the game is to toss one bone into the air, pick up the others, and then catch the first bone before it falls, all with one hand.

Knucklebones was also a dice game played with only four bones. The pieces always had four flat sides plus two ends. When used as dice, the best throw -when each die landed differently - was called "Aphrodite," after the goddess of love and beauty. The worst throw - when they all landed alike - was called "the dog." Scenes showing people playing knucklebones are frequently found on pottery and on wall paintings.

### MATERIALS YOU WILL NEED:

The neck of a chicken, turkey, or other fowl, pebbles, and empty can and laundry bleach.

### TO MAKE YOUR KNUCKLEBONES

1. Boil the fowl neck until the meat can be picked off easily.
2. Pull off the meat. Then separate the bones from each other at the natural joints.
3. Clean the bones.
4. Place the bones to soak, covered with bleach, for several hours or overnight.
5. Wash and dry the bones. Use as many as you like - up to ten.
6. Chicken bones tend to be too light. To weight them, glue a tiny stone inside each bone before playing.

### TO PLAY THE GAME

1. To determine which player goes first, each player in turn tosses all the bones at once to see how many he or she can catch on the back of his or her hand before they fall. The player who catches the most goes first.
2. To play, toss all the bones onto a smooth, hard surface such as the floor or a table.
3. Throw one bone up into the air. With one hand, pick up one of the bones lying on the floor. Then catch the airborne bone before it falls.
4. Continue to toss and pick up bones one by one. Put them aside until all have been gathered.
5. Proceed to toss and pick up bones by twos, then threes, and so on, until at last you toss and gather the all the bones at once. If the tossed bone falls before you complete your move, you lose and the next player goes. Whoever picks up all the bones first wins.