

Unit Plan Unit Overview

Unit Title: **Enduring Heroes**

Unit Summary

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

Subject Area and Grade Level

Creative Writing, Mythology, 6 – 8

English/Language Arts Iowa Core:

CC.7.W.4. Production and Distribution of Writing
Produce **clear and coherent writing** in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CC.7.R.I.10
By the end of the year, read and comprehend **literary nonfiction** in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

CC.8.R.L.9 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:
Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from **myths**, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new.

CC.8.W.7 Research to Build & Present Knowledge: Conduct short research projects to **answer a question** (including a self-generated question), **drawing on several sources** and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

Iowa Core 21st Century Skills:

Technology Literacy

Concept 3: Research and Information Fluency

Grades 6-8: Plan strategies utilizing **digital tools** to gather, evaluate, and use information.

AASL Common Beliefs

Inquiry Provides a Framework for Learning.

AASL Standards:

2.1.1.

Continue an **inquiry-based research process** by applying critical-thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation, organization) to information and knowledge in order to construct new understandings, draw conclusions, and create new knowledge.

2.1.6

Use the **writing process**, media and visual literacy, and technology skills to **create products** that express new understandings.

Student Objectives/Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Describe, analyze and interpret myths from different cultures and time periods, particularly ancient Greece
- Use an effective writing process to produce an original myth that incorporates the structure of myths
- Conduct research to develop generalizations and insights about myths and their role in society
- Create a digital product to share with intended audience.

Curriculum-Framing Questions

Essential Question

- What is a hero?

Unit Questions

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

Assessment Summary

- Journal writing is used throughout the unit to respond to informal questions as well as Curriculum-Framing Questions. Questioning is also used throughout the unit to spark discussion, monitor learning, and promote higher-order thinking.
- The unit begins with tapping students' prior knowledge about mythology with the Venn diagram assessment.
- Students use the writing self-assessment form to set goals for their writing and to think about their myths before meeting with their writing group.
- Peer conferencing and student-teacher conferences are conducted to assess student work along the way and give students an opportunity to revise and edit work before turning in a final product.
- A project rubric is used by students and the teacher to guide and assess student work.
- A reflection is given at the end of the unit to allow students to reflect on the unit and their understanding of a hero's journey and how it relates to them personally.

Instructional Procedures

1. Heroes in History and Myth

Introduce the unit by posing the Essential Question to students, What is a hero? Have students record their own ideas in a journal. Then, hold a whole-class discussion around the question asking students to give examples of heroes in their lives. Use chart paper to record all definitions.

Begin to generate a list of contemporary heroes. Explain to students that they will be learning about classical and contemporary heroes and reexamining their definition as they read about the heroes of the past and present.

Briefly review different kinds of traditional stories—myths, tall tales, fables, and family stories.

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

Select some Greek myths about heroes. Be sure that the stories you select are age and reading-level appropriate

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

Next, look back at the class's original definition of a hero. Referring to the list of the Greek heroes' characteristics, discuss what the stories reveal about Greek culture, and discuss whether the Greeks would have a different concept of what a hero is than we do.

Have students write their own definition of a hero in their journals. Have students share their definitions in pairs and then ask students to come to a consensus on a definition of a Greek hero as a class. Record the definition on the chart paper. Keep this definition visible throughout the unit.

2. Heroes of the Past and Present

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

Discuss how the characteristics of Greek heroes differ from the heroes that we admire today.

Add to the list of contemporary heroes.

Have students record their thoughts to the following question in their journals, Why have our definitions of what a hero is changed over time?

3. Heroes in Our Times

Have students name personal heroes and explain how their heroes' character traits match up with the list the class created about the Greek heroes. Have students record these traits in their journal.

Allow students to investigate at least three contemporary heroes. Have the class compare the heroes they studied, and revisit and alter, if necessary, their contemporary definitions of a hero.

Discuss the changing definition of hero across time and culture. Add to the list of heroes. Review the list and discuss the different types of heroes on the list. The list may include celebrities. Discuss the difference between a hero and a celebrity and how a celebrity might be a hero.

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

Have students consider the following:

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

Tell students they can also choose someone from their personal life as well.

*Show students how they can use the Web sites listed in the Resources section for selecting and researching heroes.

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

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

Explain that if students choose a hero in their personal life, an interview may be necessary to gather the needed information.

4. *Examining a Myth*

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

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

Have students analyze myths, using the framework from the book [The Hero's Journey: A Guide to Literature and Life](#), by Reg Harris and Susan Thompson.

As the class deconstructs the myth, discuss some of the common characteristics of myths.

5. *Creating a Modern Day Myth (Digitally)*

After students have an understanding of how myths are written, explain the process for writing their own modern myth using their chosen character. It should follow the pattern of the hero's journey and include the characteristics of myths that have been discussed.

Have students choose an audience for their myths, such as younger students, family, or senior citizens. Before they begin storyboarding their myth, ask students to fill out the goals section of the writing self-assessment.

When students finish drafts of their myths, ask them use the writing self-assessment to think about their work in preparation for meeting with their writing groups. Have students write, peer conference, and revise the myths before putting them into digital format. **Conduct individual student conferences to give feedback and suggestions throughout the project.**

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

6. Discovering Your Journey

As a final reflection activity, ask students to think about their own lives and a situation when they took the hero's journey. Explain that students are to consider a challenge or a change that they have faced. If this is difficult, they can write about a friend or family member who experienced the hero's journey. Have each student write a short reflective piece about their hero's journeys in their journals. Ask them to consider the Essential Question again, What is a hero? and describe how their thinking has changed since the beginning of the unit.

Accommodations for Differentiated Instruction

Special Needs Student

- Use myths that are written at an appropriate reading level
- Create a limited list of contemporary heroes, and preselect reading and research materials

Nonnative Speaker

- Allow the student to read and research in the student's first language but require the writing to be done in English

Gifted/Talented Student

- Have the student write a myth by rewriting a Greek myth and placing a contemporary hero in the Greek myth that would represent the modern day equivalent

Lesson based upon:

Intel® Teach Program

Essentials Course

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