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Edith Hamilton's Mythology

BY EDITH HAMILTON



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All references come from the Warner Books Edition of *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*, by Edith Hamilton, copyright 1969.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading

Political Views

Objective: Appreciating the moral and political views of ancient Greece

Activity

Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow:

PERICLES' FUNERAL ORATION

As political and military leader of Athens, 460-429 B.C.E., Pericles delivered this eulogy at a mass funeral of troops who had died of plague in the early years of the Peloponnesian War. It is reported to be one of the great proclamations of the civic, aesthetic, moral, and personal virtues of the Athenian city-state.

Our system of government does not copy the institutions of our neighbors. It is more the case of our being a model to others, than of our imitating anyone else. Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal before the law; when it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses. No one, so long as he has it in him to be of service to the state, is kept in political obscurity because of poverty....

We [obey] those whom we put in positions of authority, and we obey the laws themselves, especially those which are for the protection of the oppressed, and those unwritten laws which it is an acknowledged shame to break....

When our work is over, we are in a position to enjoy all kinds of recreation for our spirits...all the good things from all over the world flow in to us, so that to us it seems just as natural to enjoy foreign goods as our own local products....

Our love of what is beautiful does not lead to extravagance; our love of the things of the mind does not make us soft. We regard wealth as something to be properly used, rather than as something to boast about. As for poverty, no one need be ashamed to admit it: the real shame is in not taking practical measures to escape from it. Here each individual is interested not only in his own affairs but in the affairs of the state as well: even those who are mostly occupied with their own business are extremely well informed on general politics—this is a peculiarity of ours: we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all. We Athenians, in our own persons, take our decisions on policy or submit them to proper discussions: for we do not think that there is an incompatibility between words and deeds; the worst thing is to rush into action before the consequences have been properly debated...

I declare that our city is an education to Greece, and I declare that in my opinion each single one of our citizens, in all the manifold aspects of life, is able to show himself the rightful lord and owner of his own person, and do this, moreover, with exceptional grace and exceptional versatility.

Name: _____

Date: _____

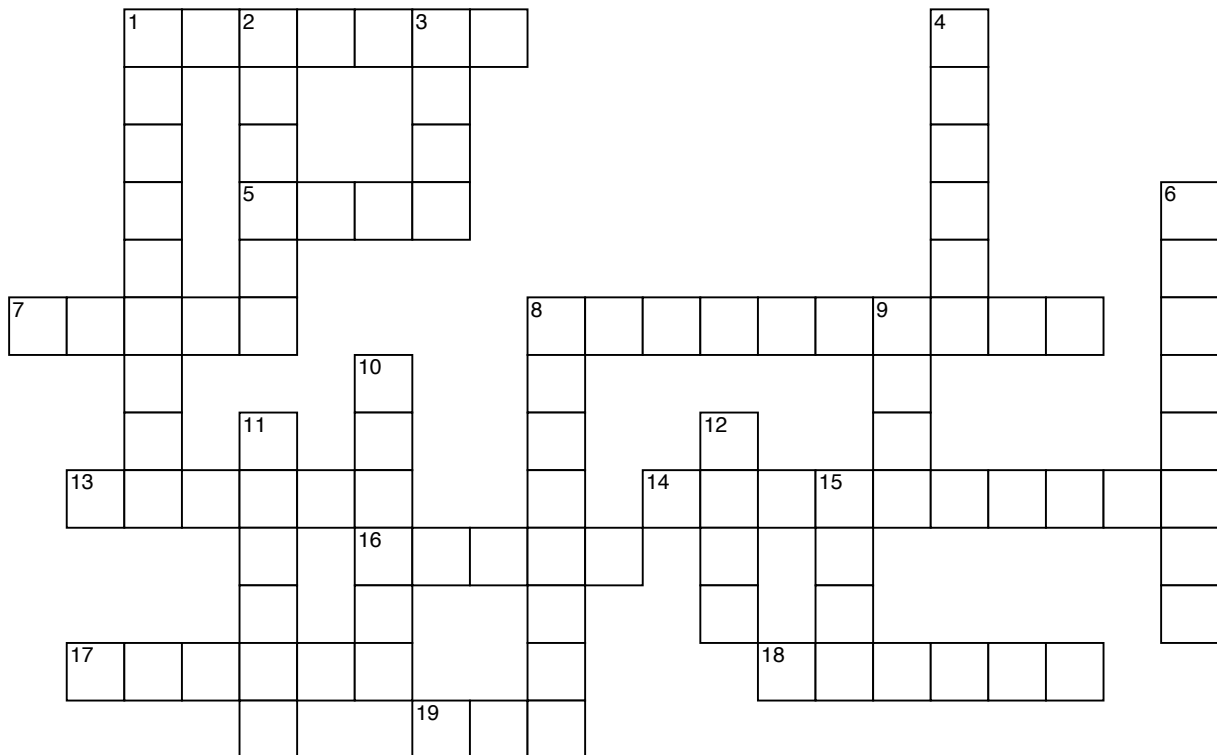
Chapter 1

Reading for Details and Character Comprehension

Objective: Identifying characters through their distinguishing traits

Activity

Greek culture began as early as the eighth century B.C.E., and it continued to flourish in art, architecture, and literature until the “Golden Age” of the fifth century B.C.E. People lived close to nature and had a strong connection to it, and this relationship, in conjunction with curiosity about the cosmos, the creation of man, and life after death, led to the birth of mythology. The Greek gods of Olympus are depicted as having human characteristics and emotions, while at the same time possessing immortality and divine powers. Hamilton gives detailed accounts of the Olympian gods, including gods of the water, earth, and underworld.



Across

- 1. Goddess of hunting
- 5. God of war
- 7. God of the underworld
- 8. Queen of the underworld
- 13. Goddess of the hearth
- 14. God of fire
- 16. God of love
- 17. Father of Zeus
- 18. Messenger of the gods
- 19. God of the shepherds

Down

- 1. Goddess of love and beauty
- 2. The elder gods
- 3. Goddess of the rainbow
- 4. God of art and truth
- 6. God of the vine
- 8. God of the Sea
- 9. Goddess of marriage
- 10. Three sisters; Incarnation of grace and beauty
- 11. Goddess of battle and wisdom
- 12. The mightiest god
- 15. Goddess of youth

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter 5

Theme

Objective: Extracting an intended theme or lesson from a story

Activity

The classical story of Cupid and Psyche deals with the hardships that true love must sometimes endure. Cupid's mother, Venus, is extremely jealous of Psyche, and she orders the mortal princess to complete a series of tasks. Successfully accomplishing the difficult chores, Psyche is once again united with her husband, only now as a goddess.

Every test Psyche undertakes has an ethical theme. Complete the chart on the following page by supplying the virtue or characteristic pertaining to the task. The first one has been done as an example.

Psyche and Venus compete in a battle of wills over Cupid. Write a brief paragraph comparing traits of the two women.

Cupid represents love and Psyche means spirit or soul. Based on these elements, what do you believe is the theme of the story? Support your answer.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Greek myths provide the foundation for a multitude of works of art, music, and literature. An example is the musical *My Fair Lady*, based on a play called *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw, who based his work on the Greek myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. *My Fair Lady* is a story about Henry Higgins, a professor of linguistics and a confirmed bachelor, and Eliza Doolittle, a common flower girl with ambitions of becoming a proper lady. Professor Higgins takes on the challenge of transforming Eliza, whom he perceives as a lowly creature hardly worth his attention, into a woman of class. She, in return, despises the professor because of his harsh treatment of her. Ironically, after months of working together, a mutual appreciation and deep love forms between them. Essentially, these stories are the same.

In your groups, answer the following questions:

1. Why does Pygmalion, who is a woman-hater, decide to construct a statue of a woman?

2. What reasons lead Pygmalion to fall in love with his creation?

3. Is the love Pygmalion feels for the statue Galatea complete? Why or why not?

4. Why does Venus show mercy on Pygmalion instead of seeking retribution for his earlier hatred of women?

5. Has Pygmalion's viewpoint on women as a whole changed, or is he only enamored with Galatea?

6. What similarities exist between the story of Pygmalion and Galatea and *My Fair Lady*? What are the differences?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters 13 – 14

Character Comprehension

Objective: Identifying the essential characters and events of the Trojan War

Activity

The beginning of Greek literature is marked by *The Iliad*, which cannot be accurately dated, and which is attributed to the poet Homer, about whom nothing is known except his name and that he was blind. In fact, many scholars believe Homer may have actually been a woman. *The Iliad* itself describes the events of a few weeks in the ten-year siege of Troy. The particular subject of the epic poem is the anger of Achilles; the crisis of the poem is the duel between Achilles and Hector. War and peace, with their corresponding aspects of human nature are implicit in every situation and statement of the poem.

The story of the Trojan War is a complicated tale full of numerous characters. Match the following descriptions to the appropriate characters.

- _____ 1. Patroclus
- _____ 2. Achilles
- _____ 3. Hecuba
- _____ 4. Odysseus
- _____ 5. Pandarus
- _____ 6. Paris
- _____ 7. Oenone
- _____ 8. Andromache
- _____ 9. Agamemnon
- _____ 10. Eris
- _____ 11. Briseis
- _____ 12. Thetis
- _____ 13. Priam
- _____ 14. Helen
- _____ 15. Hector
- _____ 16. Menelaus

- A. Queen of Troy
- B. Fairest woman in the world; cause of Trojan War
- C. Achilles' best friend; killed by Hector
- D. Husband chosen for Helen; King of Sparta
- E. Nymph abandoned by Paris
- F. King of Troy
- G. Achilles' mother
- H. Evil goddess of Discord
- I. Greatest Greek warrior and victor; weakness in the heel
- J. His judgment began the Trojan War
- K. King of Ithaca; feigned madness to avoid going to war
- L. Broke truce by shooting an arrow at Menelaus
- M. Maiden who was stolen from Achilles
- N. Hector's wife
- O. Greek commander who steals Achilles' prize of honor
- P. Prince of Troy; "Tamer of Horses;" lost to Achilles