



Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes

Edith Hamilton

Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

Introduction

Mythology describes an ancient world connected to nature. Homer's *Iliad*, the oldest written record of Greece, dates to a millennium before Christ. The *Odyssey*, a higher level of attainment, appeared shortly before the Theogony of Hesiod in the ninth or eighth century B.C. Subsequent bodies of classical myth include the Homeric Hymns and the works of Pindar, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, and the Alexandrian Poets. Much of classical mythology, however, comes from Ovid and Virgil, Latin writers during the early Roman Empire. They preceded Apuleius, Lucian, Apollodorus, Pausanias, Catullus, and Horace.

Part I

Chapter 1

Ancient Greeks believed the universe created the Titans, the elder set of gods. Cronus ruled all nature until his son Zeus, chief of the Olympian gods, usurped his powers. Seated on Mount Olympus, the Olympians included Zeus's siblings—Poseidon, the sea god, Hades, lord of the underworld, and Hestia, goddess of the hearth. Hera, Zeus's wife, and Zeus's children controlled smaller spheres: Ares (war), Athena (wisdom, war), Apollo (sun, healing, prophecy), Aphrodite (passion), Hermes (travelers), Artemis (wild animals), and Hephaestus (fire). Lesser gods functioned below them: Eros, god of infatuation, the Graces and Muses, Demeter and Dionysus, harvest deities, and Aeolus, king of the winds.

Chapter 2

Conflicts among the gods afflicted the human

world. Demeter, who ruled over nature's bounty, lost her daughter Persephone to Hades. Dionysus, god of the vine, wandered from Lydia to Phrygia, Persia, Bactria, and Arabia. He interacted with human beings, especially Ariadne, whom he crowned with stars.

Chapter 3

The birth of the gods demonstrates the savagery of early times: Cronus, threatened by his children, devoured all but Zeus, whom his mother Rhea hid until he could supplant Cronus. After the establishment of gods, humanity devolved over five ever-worsening eras, ending with the iron race, who knew only "toil and sorrow."

Chapter 4

The earliest heroic stories feature Prometheus, who suffered for stealing fire from heaven to warm and protect humanity. Less majestic were Narcissus, Hyacinth, and Adonis, who turned into flowers.

Part II

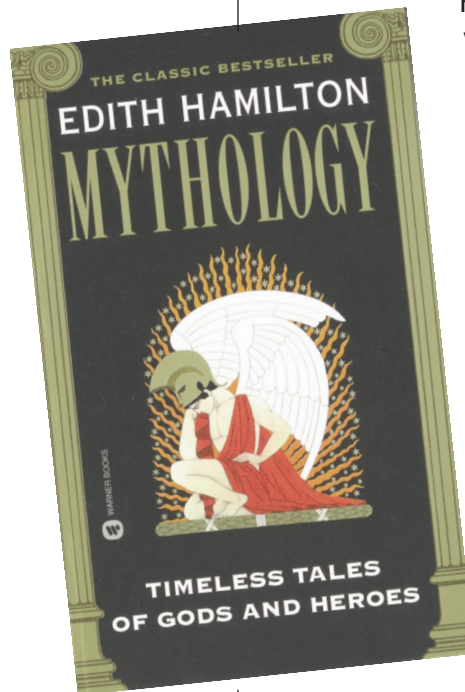
Chapter 5

The stories of love, some of the most beloved myths, begin

with Cupid and Psyche, the pair whose love was nearly extinguished after Psyche disobeyed Cupid's wish to remain anonymous.

Chapter 6

The tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe ends with the death of both lovers after Pyramus misconstrued the fate of his beloved and killed himself. Orpheus's wife Eurydice died soon after their marriage. Even though he sang his way into the underworld and brought her back to earth, he turned too quickly to gaze at her and lost her a second time. A happier story is Pygmalion's love for his statue of Galatea. Through Venus's intervention, the stone figure came to life and returned his love.



Zeus intertwined a married couple, Baucis and Philemon, as trees so they would never part.

Chapter 7

The tale of Jason, captain of the *Argo*, describes the first European explorer. With a hand-picked crew aboard the *Argo*, he sought the golden fleece to combat Pelias, who snatched Jason's inheritance. Battling Harpies, clashing rocks, and the entrancing Medea, Jason traveled east to fulfill his quest. On his return, he lost a young bride and two sons to Medea, who escaped without punishment.

Chapter 8

Phaëthon, child of the sun god, came to ruin by driving his father's flaming chariot. Daedalus, the ill-fated inventor, escaped a desert island by creating wings from feathers and wax. His son Icarus proved too immature for flight and drowned in the sea after he soared too high and overheated his fragile wings in the sun's heat.

Part III

Chapter 9

Four key adventurers preceded the Trojan War—the height of mythological heroism. The first, Perseus, outwitted Medusa, the snake-headed gorgon.

Chapter 10

Theseus marked a trail through the labyrinth to slay the Minotaur, a man-beast that demanded annual blood sacrifice.

Chapter 11

Hercules, wily warrior in twelve daunting battles, concluded with a journey to the underworld to capture Cerberus, the three-headed guard dog.

Chapter 12

Atalanta, a great female warrior, competed successfully in a race against men until she was lured by golden apples. Her punishment was marriage to Melanion, who ended her free-spirited womanhood.

Part IV

Chapter 13

The chief episode in Greek pre-history is the Trojan War, which arose from a quarrel among Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite. Paris, a young Trojan prince, decided which of the three was the fairest

by selecting Aphrodite, who promised him Helen, the loveliest mortal woman, as a bribe. The abduction of Helen incited war between the Greeks and the Trojans. Combat raged on Troy's outskirts. In the ninth year, Hector, Troy's most valiant warrior, fought Achilles, savage leader of the Greeks. Through repeated interventions of the gods on both sides, Achilles won, but suffered the loss of Patroclus, his beloved friend.

Chapter 14

To conclude the war, Odysseus devised a trick: he had a large wooden horse left as a gift before Troy. Against the advice of a priest and Cassandra, the Trojans dragged the statue inside and rejoiced that their enemies had returned home. That night, Greeks crept out of the statue, slew the citizens, and burned the city. All adult royal males except Aeneas died in the fray. Greek victors selected Trojan women as war prizes and tossed royal children over the wall; their deaths ended the line of Trojan kings. Helen, the cause of the war, reunited with her husband Menelaus.

Chapter 15

Victorious Greeks set sail for home. Odysseus left with the others, but winds, spiteful gods, shipwreck, and Circe's subtle enticements kept him at sea for another decade. On his arrival home, he found his wife, Penelope, surrounded by greedy suitors, who wallowed in the splendors of his palace and vied to marry the queen. Disguised as an old man, Odysseus plotted with his swineherd and Odysseus's son Telemachus to kill the suitors. Odysseus at last found peace with his wife, who had spent two decades weaving and raveling to postpone remarriage.

Chapter 16

Aeneas, Venus's son, bore the holy task of reestablishing Trojan gods and ideals in a new home place. He faced dangerous waters, suffered detainment through shipwreck on the African shore and a dalliance with Queen Dido. His path took him to Hades to consult his father's spirit. Following omens, Aeneas found Latium, the new homeland. He fought Turnus for Lavinia, future mother of the Roman people.

Part V

Chapter 17

The noble houses of mythology provided an interwoven saga of fate and retribution, pride and loss. The House of Atreus, Greece's most famous, encompassed Tantalus, the resident of Hades racked by unending thirst and hunger, and Niobe, the boaster whose tears turned into a cataract over stone. Agamemnon, Greece's commander in chief during the Trojan War, sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia so that favorable winds would carry his ships toward Troy. After a decade, Agamemnon's wife, Clytemnestra, Helen's twin sister, seethed with hate toward him and murdered him on the day he returned. The joyous welcome, twisted into mayhem, ruined Orestes, Agamemnon's son, who had to kill his mother to avenge his fallen father. For the sin of matricide, Orestes wandered the earth and fought the furies, who possessed his soul in retribution. Apollo interceded and dispelled the curse of Atreus's house.

Chapter 18

The house of Thebes, the second troubled noble family, produced Oedipus, the most woeful Greek. Fated to kill his father and marry his mother, he fled and inadvertently carried out the crimes he longed to avoid. When his eyes opened to his villainess, he scratched them out with the brooch of his dead wife/mother and, led by his daughter/sister Antigone, wandered in darkness. Oedipus's sons, drawn into a war against their Uncle Creon, died in combat. For the crime of burying Polyneices, her fallen brother, Antigone hanged herself.

Chapter 19

In the third saga, Procne's husband Tereus ravished her sister Philomela and cut out her tongue. To reveal the crime, Philomela wove a tapestry for Procne, who stabbed and hacked her own child and fed him to Tereus as recompense for his crime. The gods changed Procne and Philomela into a nightingale and sparrow and the king into a hawk.

Part VI

Chapter 20

Among the lesser myths, Midas obtained the golden touch and later was crowned with ass's ears. Danaus's fifty daughters fled to Argos after murdering their husbands. Their punishment in Hades forced them eternally to fill leaky jars with water.

Chapter 21

Another sinner, Arachne, pitted her weaving against that of Minerva. After winning their contest, Arachne hanged herself. Minerva turned her into a spider. Also reduced to an element of nature were Orion and the Pleiades, who became star patterns.

Part VII

Introduction

The doughty Teutons recorded vigorous adventure tales in the *Edda* around 1300.

Chapter 22

Sigurd, hero of Wagner's operas, braved a ring of fire to rescue Brynhild, a spirit whom Odin punished for disobedience. When her lover betrayed her and married Gudryn, Brynhild plotted to have him killed, then killed herself.

Chapter 23

Odin came to power much as Zeus did—by overpowering a savage forebear.

Genealogies

The appendices of the collection begin with the Titans and their children, who became the Olympian gods and goddesses. The second family tree reveals the descent from Zeus and Io to Perseus, Andromeda, and Hercules. The third summarizes Achilles's ancestry. The last and most complicated delineates relationships between Oedipus, Agamemnon, Menelaus, Theseus, Hector, Aeneas, Clytemnestra, and Odysseus.

Timeline of Greek Mythology

- 900-800 B.C. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
- 800-700 B.C. Hesiod's *Theogony*
- 620-560 B.C. Aesop's *Fables*
- 524-456 B.C. Aeschylus's *The Persians*, *The Seven Against Thebes*, *The Suppliants*, *Oresteia*, and *Prometheus Bound*
- 518-438 B.C. Pindar's *Odes*
- 496-406 B.C. Sophocles's *Ajax*, *Antigone*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Electra*, *The Trachiniae*, *Philoctetes*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*
- 485-406 B.C. Euripides's *The Cyclopes*, *Alcestis*, *Medea*, *The Heracleidae*,

- Hippolytus, Andromache, Hecuba, The Suppliants, Heracles, Ion, The Trojan Women, Electra, Iphigenia in Tauris, Helena, The Phoenician Women, Orestes, The Bacchae, and Iphigenia in Aulis*
- 451-385 B.C.** Aristophanes's *The Acharnians, The Knights, The Clouds, the Wasps, Peace, The Birds, Lysistrata, Thesmophoriazusae, The Frogs, The Ecclesiazusae, and Plutus*
- 270 B.C.** Theocritus's *Idylls*
- 235 B.C.** Apollodorus's *Argonautica*
- 150 B.C.** Moschus's *Europa*
- 100 B.C.** Bion's *Lament for Adonis* and *Bucolica*
- 87-54 B.C.** Catullus's "*Peleus and Thetis*"
- 70-19 B.C.** Virgil's *Eclogues, Georgics, and Aeneid*
- 65-8 B.C.** Horace's *Satires, Satires II, Epodes, Odes, Epistles, Ars Poetica, Carmen Saeculare, Odes II, and Epistles II*
- 1st Cent. A.D.** Apollonius's *Argonautica*
- A.D. 43-18.** Ovid's *Amores, Heroides, Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris, Metamorphoses, Tristia, Fasti, and Epistulae ex Ponto*
- A.D. 125-171** Apuleius's *On the God of Socrates, On Plato and His Dogma, Florida, Apologia, and Metamorphoses*



Author Sketch

A noted feminist and suffragist, Edith Hamilton created a unique literary contribution from a life-long study of the Bible and the lore of ancient Greece and Rome. She has been called a "citizen of two worlds, the ancient and the modern." The granddaughter of an Indiana pioneer and eldest of four, she was the sister of Alice Hamilton, an expert in industrial medicine and the first woman to serve on the staff of the Harvard Medical School; noted painter Norah Hamilton; Margaret Hamilton, who succeeded Edith as headmistress of Bryn Mawr School; and Arthur Hamilton, professor of romance languages at the University of Illinois. Among her

kin were accomplished cousins—painter Jessie Hamilton; Dr. Allen Hamilton, a Fort Wayne physician; and Dr. Holman Hamilton, history professor at the University of Kentucky.

Hamilton possessed a different kind of genius from her relatives in that she interacted with ease and sensitivity to her own time and to that of early Mediterranean civilizations. Edith Hamilton was born August 12, 1867, in Dresden, Germany, and grew up in Fort Wayne, Indiana. From early childhood, she was talkative and loved to tell stories and read Sir Walter Scott, Thomas De Quincey, Thomas Babington Macaulay, and Robert Bulwer-Lytton. Her American parents, Gertrude Pond and Montgomery Hamilton, a native of northern Ireland, possessed wealth and enthusiasm for educating young girls and introduced her to Latin at age seven, when she began to read Julius Caesar's *Gallic Wars*. Bored by classical histories of her day, she revealed a scholarly bent in the comment, "What the Romans did has always interested me much less than what they were, and what the historians have said they were is beyond all comparison less interesting to me than what they themselves said." Just as some children read fables and fairy tales, she memorized classic-inspired poems by Keats, Byron, and Shelley, and immersed herself in works composed in ancient languages.

After home-schooling their daughter through the first decade of her education, the Hamiltons, an upright but only mildly prim Presbyterian couple, sent her to Miss Porter's Finishing School for Young Ladies in Farmington, Connecticut. There the Victorian prudery of the headmistress failed to inhibit Edith's desire for knowledge. Hamilton earned B.A. and M.A. degrees in Latin and Greek from Bryn Mawr in two and a half years. Fluent in German and French, she began a year's post-graduate study on a Mary E. Garrett European fellowship as the first female student (along with her sister, Alice) at the universities of Leipzig and Munich, receiving a doctorate in classical literature. In Germany's sexist atmosphere, she endured ostracism and ridicule and had to sit at a small desk alongside the teacher. Hamilton ignored the chancellor's barbed comment about "the woman question," following instead the advice of her mentor, Professor Williamowitz-Mollendorff, who encouraged her to write about the contributions of the ancients to the Western world.

On her return to the United States, Hamilton found her father's fortune depleted. To support her family, she had to earn a living by teaching, one of the few professions open to women. For the next twenty-six years, while caring for her brother and mother and Doris Fielding Reid, her adopted child, she served as headmistress of Bryn Mawr School and prepared 400 girls each year for entrance to Bryn Mawr College. While disciplining students for pranks, counseling failing seniors, teaching Latin, battling patriarchal administrators, and resting a few months each summer on the shore of Sea Wall, Mt. Desert Island, Maine, Hamilton submitted articles to education journals. In this early stage of her writing, she stressed a belief that public education was a great idea, but that teaching the same lessons to all types of learners was counterproductive. She subscribed to the Greek system which dominated Periclean Athens, an educational philosophy that produced unparalleled brilliance by educating the individual capabilities of each student.

It was not until her retirement to New York's Gramercy Park in 1924, after Doris Reid accepted the vice-presidency of a Washington investment house, that Hamilton began a literary career, which she wittily referred to as *le sale métier d'écrivain*—the writer's dirty trade. Although addicted to murder mysteries, she disdained modern writing and pursued her love of the ancients. Seated in an armless rocker, she wrote in longhand on a lapboard. To inaugurate her career, she made her first pilgrimage to Egypt and Greece and wrote buoyantly of the experience: "the pyramids, immutable, immovable, are the spirit of the desert encased in granite."

With the assistance of Edith Isaacs, Rosamond Gilver, and John Mason Brown, Hamilton published four articles on Greek drama in *Theatre Arts Monthly*, then in 1930, composed the opening chapters of *The Greek Way*. The latter proved so popular that, 27 years later, it was named a Book-of-the-Month Club selection for its clear delineation of the influence of the Greek ideal on modern thought. In 1932, she followed with *The Roman Way*, and produced English translations of three Greek tragedies in 1937. After another three years' work, in 1942, she produced her masterpiece, *Mythology*, an immediate bestseller.

The classics were not Hamilton's only interest. Although she lacked a reading knowledge of ancient Hebrew, she perceived the modern reader's need to understand the Bible in non-scholarly terms. She wrote *The Prophets of Israel* in 1936 and, in 1949, followed with an expanded version, *Spokesmen for God: The Great Teachers of the Old Testament*, and *Witness to the Truth: Christ and His Interpreters*. The clarity of her writing caused one reviewer to marvel at the work's natural approach and tone.

Hamilton, who moved to Washington, D.C., in 1943, remained immersed in editing, translating, and composing scholarly essays, reviews, and stories for *The Atlantic*, *National Geographic*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Reader's Digest*, *The Saturday Review*, and *Theatre Arts Monthly*. She continued writing about the ancient world, producing, at age ninety, *The Echo of Greece*, a study of Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Demosthenes, and Alexander the Great. At ninety-four, she collaborated with Huntington Cairns to complete a new edition of Plato's dialogues.

After her official retirement in 1958, Hamilton ceased to write, lecture, or translate. In place of scholarship, she traveled to Spain and France and spent a year in China, where she rented a houseboat. To questions about her serenity and longevity, she credited her Presbyterian beliefs: "I am a convinced Christian. ... It all turns on the immortality of the soul." She returned to the lecture hall in 1960. Still planning a book on Plato and essays on Goethe and Corneille, after partial recovery from a stroke in 1961, she died of heart failure at her Washington home on May 31, 1963.

Critic's Corner

Although critics have castigated Hamilton for bowdlerizing Greek literature to rid it of cannibalism, incest, perverse sexual acts, infanticide, and other evidence of savagery, and for oversimplification of the complexities of classical philosophy, her *Mythology* remains a classic reference work. It is found on recommended reading lists compiled by librarians and educators. Remarkably unpedantic

in its vigor and intense attention to detail, the retelling of classic lore maintains a lyric flow and beauty that appeals to readers young and old.

Hamilton's lengthy career brought distinction. At the age of ninety, she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters and received from King Paul of Greece the Gold Cross of the Greek Legion of Benefaction. On August 5, 1957, her first visit to Greece since 1929, she was named the greatest female classicist and, at the base of the Acropolis, accepted a laurel wreath from George V. Allen, U.S. Ambassador to Greece, and a scroll lettered in ancient Greek granting her honorary Athenian citizenship.

Hamilton delivered a stirring tribute to ancient Greece, concluding that "the Greeks have been outstripped by science and technology, but never in the love of the truth, never in the creation of beauty and freedom." The gala concluded with a performance of her version of Prometheus Bound. More honors filled her old age: the Constance Lindsay Skinner Award, a National Achievement Award, an invitation to address the Institute of Contemporary Arts, and honorary degrees from Yale and the universities of Pennsylvania and Rochester.

Other Works by Edith Hamilton

Agamemnon (trans.) (1937)
The Collected Dialogues of Plato (with Huntington Cairns) (1961)
Echo of Greece (1957)
The Ever-Present Past (1964)
The Great Age of Greek Literature (1943)
The Greek Way (1930)
The Prophets of Israel (1936)
Prometheus Bound (trans.) (1937)
The Roman Way (1932)
Spokesmen for God: The Great Teachers of the Old Testament (1949)
A Treasury of Edith Hamilton (1969)
The Trojan Women (trans.) (1937)
Witness to the Truth: Christ and His Interpreters (1949)

Related Reading

Richard Adams, *Watership Down*
Beowulf

John Bierhorst, *The Mythology of North America*
Ray Bradbury, *The Electric Grandmother* and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*
Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch's Mythology*
Bernard Evslin, *The Adventures of Ulysses*
Susan Feldman, *The Storytelling Stone*
John Gardner, *Grendel*
Norma Lorre Goodrich, *Medieval Myths*
Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*
Roger Lancelyn Green, *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table*, *Tales of Ancient Egypt*
Robert Heinlein, *Job: A Comedy of Justice*, *Methuselah's Children*, and *Stranger in a Strange Land*
Frank Herbert, *Dune*
Kalakaua, *The Legends and Myths of Hawaii*
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*
Lois Lowry, *The Giver*
Alice Marriot, *Plains Indian Mythology*
Herbert Mason, trans., *Gilgamesh: A Verse Narrative*
Eugene O'Neill, *Morning Becomes Electra*
Paul Radin, *The Trickster*
Ayn Rand, *Anthem*, *Atlas Shrugged*, and *The Fountainhead*
Donna Rosenberg, *World Mythology*
Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias" and *Prometheus Unbound*
Irving Stone, *The Greek Treasure: A Biographical Novel of Henry and Sophia Schliemann*
Derek Walcott, *Omeros*

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Kerr, Frances Willard. "Author Receives Plaudits: Alternates Writing with Travel," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 13, 1958.
Kunitz, Stanley. *Twentieth Century Authors*. New York: Wilson, 1955.
Matthews, Virginia. *Interview with Edith Hamilton*.

Publisher's Weekly, March 17, 1958, p. 26.

Reid, Doris Fielding. *Edith Hamilton: An Intimate Portrait*. New York: Norton, 1967.

Stoddard, Hope. *Famous American Women*. New York: Crowell, 1970.

Who's Who of American Women. Detroit: Gale, 1959.

General Objectives

1. To define myth
2. To describe the Greek concept of creation
3. To characterize Titan and Olympian gods and their powers
4. To acknowledge the role of fate in classical mythology
5. To define heroism
6. To analyze subtle symbolism
7. To contrast characters in their responses to pain, fear, isolation, challenge, jealousy, deception, curiosity, and longing
8. To narrate examples of gallantry, savagery, nobility, and greed
9. To characterize anthropomorphism
10. To define attitudes toward nature
11. To comprehend reverence for creativity
12. To contrast concepts of godliness
13. To contrast degrees of civilization and socialization
14. To point out human efforts to circumvent chance
15. To particularize settings in terms of place, historical institutions, and social and religious expectations
16. To delineate the roles of male and female
17. To link mythological terms with modern vocabulary
18. To discuss the significance of myths to the humanities

Specific Objectives

1. To discuss the beginnings of the Trojan War
2. To describe Odysseus's return home
3. To explain why Oedipus is doomed to wander
4. To contrast various pairs of lovers
5. To note why Aeneas sails to a new land
6. To denote the valiance of Jason, Diomedes, Achilles, Theseus, Hercules, and other adventurers
7. To characterize Odin, the chief Norse god
8. To describe the settings of Mount Olympus,

Valhalla, Hades, Corinth, Sparta, the Underworld, Colchis, Ithaca, and Troy

9. To evaluate the Greek concept of the sin of pride
10. To characterize negative themes, particularly revenge and madness, as they apply to Agamemnon's family
11. To account for Hamilton's reputation as a classicist
12. To account for harpies, gorgons, chimaeras, cyclopes, hydras, a flying horse, naiads, and centaurs
13. To enumerate the contributors to the canon of classical mythology, notably Hesiod, Homer, Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Virgil, and Ovid
14. To account for variances in different nations' mythic outlook
15. To define myth, legend, tall tale, folklore, fairy tale, epic, tragedy, comedy, exemplum, beast fable, satire, and oral tradition

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*, present the following terms and applications:

Allegory: a literary work that functions on two or more levels of meaning by comparing objects to symbols beyond the scope of the work. The structure of myths often applies to identifiable human behaviors and motivations. For example, the myth of Pandora shows a curious, disobedient woman as responsible for unleashing evil on mankind while, paradoxically, rescuing hope. Similarly, in the story of Echo, Narcissus personifies self-absorption, so much so that he withers away from his own admiration of self.

Epic: a long, formal poem narrating the story of a race or nation facing a threat to its existence or value system; for example, the enslavement of the Hebrew people and their rescue by Moses in Exodus, the Jewish epic found in the Torah. The epic of Odysseus focuses on the interplay between gods and human agents. Derived from scraps of folk stories, visions, tales, hymns, myths, legends, rituals, sagas, song lyrics, genealogies, and poems, the segments of Homer's post-Trojan War epic form a unified history of the strivings of one man

to overcome adversity. Significant to the quest are his faults and weaknesses, particularly boasting to Polyphemus, the one-eyed giant who devours Odysseus's men while detaining them in a cave.

Episode: a coherent event, digression, or incident in a narrative or serial that stands out on its own merit; for example, the twelve individual labors of Hercules, which form the series of hardships he must overcome and puzzles he must solve to free himself from a tormentor. Some episodes take on a life of their own, as with the arrival of the Trojan Horse in Troy and the subsequent destruction of the city. Other episodes, such as Aeneas's war against Turnus, make sense only in the larger scope of the quest.

Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about mythology, deities, art, architecture, the Trojan War, Norse and world mythology, and other subjects and issues deriving from the text, consult these sources:

Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God, Myths to Live by, The Power of Myth, and Transformations of Myth Through Time*

C.W. Ceram, *Gods, Graves and Scholars: The Story of Archeology*

Bernard Evslin, *The Greek Gods*

Michael Macrone, *By Jove! Brush Up Your Mythology*

Albert Manguel, *The Dictionary of Imaginary Places*

Colin McEvedy, *The Penguin Atlas of Ancient History*

Kenneth McLeish, *Greek Art and Architecture, Alarion*

Donna Rosenberg, *Mythology and You and World Mythology*

Diane Sylvester and Mary Wiemann, *Mythology, Archaeology, Architecture*

Edward Tripp, ed., *Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology*

Michael Wood, *In Search of the Trojan War*

J.E. Zimmerman, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*

Also, consult these web sites:

"The Encyclopedia Mythica," www.pantheon.org

"Mythweb," www.mythweb.com

"Myth*ing Links," www.mythinglinks.org

The Importance of Setting

The milieu of mythology is as diverse as the imaginations of the multiple creators. Some stories identify with particular places. The most easily identified is the Trojan War, which begins in the Greek Peloponnesus with the abduction of Helen, wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta. The vengeance exacted on Paris for violating the guest code takes lengthy preparation and the selection of a leader, Agamemnon. As the retrieval of Helen gains momentum, great men who had been her suitors arrive from the various *demes* of Greece and offer fighting forces and ships for the voyage. When the time is right, Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia on the island of Aulis and sets out across the Aegean for Troy.

The actual locale of the Trojan War is the northwestern tip of the Asian half of Turkey. At the entrance to the Bosphorus Straits, the Trojans fight for their lives against an implacable foe. At war's end ten years later, Greek soldiers are eager to bear their treasures and captured women back home. Two departees, Aeneas and Odysseus, wander the Mediterranean to identifiable places and mythic sites. Aeneas finds a suitable homeland near Rome; Odysseus eventually arrives home at Ithaca after searching the underworld and enduring fantastic ordeals from wind, sea, clashing rocks, a whirlpool, and enchanted isles.

Other bodies of lore make little connection with real geographical locales. Stories about Artemis take place in the forest, a generic locale that could occur on any of several continents. Orpheus claims his dead wife in the lowest circle of the Underworld and returns to earth at an undelineated spot. Myths of Poseidon and Aeolus center on the sea and sky. Depictions of the war between Titan and Olympic forces occur on a universal plane between forces too mighty to be limited to city or state.

The absence of clearly defined setting is a natural happenstance in mythology. To apply stories to the world in general, plots like the abduction of Persephone could take place in any flowery meadow. Similarly, the romance of Hephaestus and

Aphrodite requires no definable place on the globe. Other myths are so closely allied with the eastern end of the Mediterranean that local people can point out the spot where Icarus fell from the sky on disintegrating wings, where Aeneas first set foot in Italy, where Ariadne gave Perseus a ball of twine, or where Prometheus was chained to a rock and his liver pecked out by an eagle. Such localizing characterizes the origination of myth in real communities by actual storytellers.

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* should include these aspects:

Themes

- power
- rebellion
- escape
- jealousy
- love
- rescue
- warfare
- pride
- sin
- ruin

Motifs

- coping with the aftermath of war
- taking responsibility for actions
- planning a self-directed future
- coping with the gods' animosity
- righting wrongs done to family or ancestors
- claiming inheritance or power
- seeking a quest

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in Hamilton's collection of myths. Explain each. Part, chapter, and page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. Mankind's chief hope of escaping the wrath of whatever divinities were then abroad lay in some magical rite, senseless but powerful, or in some

offering made at the cost of pain and grief.

(Introduction, p. 14)

(Hamilton describes the active forms of worship, ceremonies rich in symbolism and commitment that humans employed to propitiate divine powers. The pagan qualities permeate terrible scenes, notably, Agamemnon's slaughter of his daughter Iphigenia to gain favorable winds for the voyage to Troy. The necessity for such suffering is inherent in primitive worship because unsophisticated people believed that the gods demanded dramatic demonstrations of obedience and fealty.)

2. In Mesopotamia, bas-reliefs of bestial shapes unlike any beast ever known, men with birds' heads and lions with bulls' heads and both with eagles' wings, creations of artists who were intent upon producing something never seen except in their own minds, the very consummation of unreality. (Introduction, p. 16)

(Hamilton expands on the application of imagination to divinity in Mesopotamia, the fertile realm between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which is modern Iraq. Wall sculpture of mythic beasts was a focus of their architecture and worship. In contrast, the Greeks were the first ancient people to make gods in their own image.)

3. The winged steed Pegasus, after skimming the air all day, went every night to a comfortable stable in Corinth. (Introduction, p. 17)

(The story of Pegasus connects to an identifiable place on the map, the Greek city of Corinth, which was southwest of Athens. Corinth occupied a strategic point on the isthmus that joined the northern half of Greece with the Peloponnesus, a huge land mass that contained the city-state of Sparta.)

4. [Zeus] is represented as falling in love with one woman after another and descending to all manner of tricks to hide his infidelity from his wife.

(Part I, Chap. 1, p. 27)

(Significant to Greek mythology is the anthropomorphism or human traits and faults in deities. Hamilton clarifies that Zeus is not omnipotent or omniscient, as is the god of the Judeo-Christian faith and of Islam, and that he shares the same weaknesses that challenge and stymie humans.)

5. It was a simple matter to adopt the Greek gods because the Romans did not have definitely per-

sonified gods of their own. They were a people of deep religious feeling, but they had little imagination. (Part I, Chap. 1, p. 45)

(Hamilton summarizes the difference between the Greeks and Romans in simple terms—the Romans were great borrowers because they lacked the imagination to create. Thus, the Roman gods reprise Greek divinities with some changes to adapt them to a different place, time, and people. Two, Apollo and Pluto, retained their former names.)

6. We hold it firmly for an undoubted truth that our soul is incorruptible and immortal. We are to think (of the dead) that they pass into a better place and a happier condition. Let us behave ourselves accordingly, outwardly ordering our lives, while within all should be purer, wiser, incorruptible. (Part I, Chap. 2, p. 64)

(Hamilton, a devout Christian, cites the Greek biographer Plutarch on the necessity for right behavior to prepare the soul for life in the hereafter. The similarity to Christian beliefs is obvious.)

7. [Thisbe] saw his sword fallen from his hand and beside it her cloak stained and torn. She understood all. (Part II, Chap. 6, p. 107)

(The moving tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe is a powerful image of doomed love. William Shakespeare reprised the account as comedy in the last act of A Midsummer Night's Dream (ca. 1593). The story also lies at the heart of his tragedy of young love, Romeo and Juliet (ca. 1593), which ends in the blunder that causes the deaths of two young newlyweds in Verona, Italy.)

8. The ties between guest and host were strong. Each was bound to help and never harm the other. (Part IV, Chap. 13, p. 188)

(Hamilton simplifies a central principle that undergirded Greek ethics: hosts were honor-bound to accept visitors and to respect their privacy, safety, and belongings. Guests traveled under the same code of behavior that required respect of the host's home, family, and property. Paris, the instigator of the Trojan War, arrived as a member of the royal family of Troy and stayed in the Spartan palace of Menelaus and Helen. His abduction of the queen was a felony of the highest proportions among honorable Greeks. A terrible war was necessary to right the prince's infraction and restore Sparta's queen to her husband and people.)

9. The result of this new determination and new vision was the stratagem of the wooden horse. It was, as anyone would guess, the creation of Odysseus' wily mind. (Part IV, Chap. 14, p. 104)
(Odysseus—the favorite of Athena, goddess of wisdom—is the Greek hero who combined mental and physical supremacy. His genius ended the ten-year war by trickery. Instead of expending more men and supplies on fighting, he portrayed the Greek force as quitters. The Trojans, who were eager for relief from combat, joyfully celebrated the wooden statue “without investigating it.” Their error in judgment derived, perhaps, from a terrible longing for peace.)

10. Oedipus took the matter in hand with energy. He sent for Teiresias, the old blind prophet, the most revered of Thebans. (Part V, Chap. 18, p. 271)
(Oedipus's first inkling that he brought a plague on Thebes derived from his question to Teiresias, the famed blind seer. The tradition of blindness in a prophet touches much of world mythology. The implication was that Teiresias sacrificed temporal vision for a vast understanding of all events in time, both past and future. Oedipus made the fatal error of dismissing the seer's charge as a symptom of old age and wandering mind. Ironically, when Oedipus finally acknowledged the terrible sin he had committed, he ripped out his own eyes. Hamilton deduced, “The black world of blindness was a refuge; better to be there than to see with strange shamed eyes the old world that had been so bright.”)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. Why did Clytemnestra murder her husband after his ten-year absence at the Trojan War?
(The grim irony of Agamemnon's victorious return home is the ten-year hatred that his wife harbored after Agamemnon killed their daughter Iphigenia at Aulis. One of Agamemnon's war prizes was the Trojan prophetess Cassandra, who foresaw that the queen and her lover Aegisthus lay in wait behind cheering crowds and smiles of welcome.)

As Agamemnon disappeared into the palace, Cassandra foresaw that "It is a house God hates, where men are killed and the floor is red with blood."

The killers made no effort to conceal their vengeance. When Clytemnestra emerged from the palace, she displayed crimson stains on her dress, hands, and face, attesting to her part in regicide. Steady and self-assured, she saw herself as an executioner and avenger for the murder of her daughter. Her haste to make an end of Agamemnon impeded certain knowledge that "this death, too, like all the others, would surely bring evil in its train.")

2. What were Hercules's heroic traits and weaknesses?

(A central figure in ancient lore and art, Hercules, Zeus and Alcmena's son, was Greece's greatest hero. He was self-confident and strong on a par with the gods, but not overly intelligent. His fury overshadowed his heroism and resulted in a life of expiation of "one unfortunate deed after another." Edith Hamilton stresses the unfortunate truth that he was a mighty fighter, but "he could never have thought out any new or great idea.")

In childhood, Hercules strangled two serpents that menaced him in his crib. In his youth, he murdered his music teacher out of rage, but with no evil intent. In young manhood, he killed the lion of Cithaeron and dressed himself in its skin as a token of his he-man status. In the challenge of the twelve labors, he performed unheard-of feats again and again until he breached even the Underworld in search of the three-headed dog Cerberus. The most moving exploit was a challenge to Death, which Hercules won to return the deceased queen Alcestis to her husband and realm.

Such daring sets up Hercules for a terrible demise. It is fitting to the myth that such a hero would die an agonizing death, which happened after his wife Deianira poisoned his robe to punish him for loving Iole. In a protracted scene of suffering, Hercules, impervious to outside aggressors, is forced to kill himself on a pyre.)

3. Why did Aeneas survive the fall of Troy?

(At the bidding of Augustus, Rome's first emperor, Virgil created a connection between Rome and the

magnificent history of Troy. He composed the Aeneid to describe the flight of Aeneas from the burning city to reestablish the Trojan gods in a new land. As an emissary of the gods, Aeneas set sail from Troy with a small band of survivors and followed dreams and signs around parts of the Mediterranean before arriving at Alba Longa.

The journey, like that of Odysseus, was long and filled with diversions and false starts. To complete the god-imposed task, Aeneas visited his father Anchises in the Underworld, where he viewed a "magnificent company ... of Future Romans, the masters of the world." His father pointed out the names and deeds of each and instructed Aeneas on how to found a new and lasting homeland. After a protracted war against local powers, Aeneas was allowed to complete his mission by creating the realm in which was born Romulus, the first king of Rome.)

4. How did Daedalus exemplify the golden mean?

(One of the treasured Mediterranean stories is the myth of Daedalus, a skilled inventor and engineer who built a labyrinth in which to hide the Minotaur of Crete. King Minos imprisoned Daedalus because he assumed that the architect of the labyrinth had divulged the secret to Theseus. To escape, Daedalus ruled out travel by sea or land and determined to fly away on man-made wings.

Daedalus was careful to explain to his son Icarus that the two must fly a middle course, neither too high nor too low. Icarus, who was young and willful, grew cocky with his power over the air. He disobeyed his father and flew too high. When his wings fell off, he "dropped into the sea and the waters closed over him." The sin of daring to go too high from earth cost Icarus his life and caused Daedalus a severe grief. The allegory suits the ancient belief that one goes safest in the middle course.)

5. What female characters display heroism?

(The Greek concept of heroism was not limited to males. Although men predominate, the stories of Atalanta and Penthesilea indicate strength, courage, and daring in women as well. Atalanta disappointed her father because she was not a son. She grew up wild as the foster daughter of a bear and lived with hunters. An excellent archer, she killed two centaurs and joined the Calydonian boar hunt.

By her own plan, Atalanta agreed to marry any man who could beat her in a foot race. Swift runners failed to outpace her, but Melanion tricked her with three golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides. One by one, he tossed them on the path and into the grass. According to Edith Hamilton, "She saw the gleam through the green and she could not resist it." The story ends with a bittersweet reminder that she gained a lover, but lost her free roaming days in the wild and athletic victories over male competitors.

Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons of the Caucasus, ruled in the city of Themiscyra. Spotty stories of invasions and exploits treat the Amazons as any other fighting force. After Theseus captured the queen, her troops failed to rescue her. In the Trojan War, they fought on the home side. Penthesilea fell in combat with Achilles. The death of the young, beautiful queen was no failure, for she had challenged the best of the Greeks.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretive Level)

6. Why are Nausicaä and the Phaeacians important to Odysseus's adventures?

(Homer concludes Odysseus's early adventures with his shipwreck off Phaeacia, where he alone survived turbulent waters. Nausicaä, a princess of marriageable age, located the famed sailor while washing clothes at the shore. To the "wild-looking naked man" who stepped out of the underbrush, she offered a calm greeting, inviting him to rinse his salty body with oil and offering him a tunic and robe from the royal store of garments.

As was the custom in the ancient world, the princess extended the hospitality of the palace. Odysseus, admiring her good sense and composure, followed her to the royal household and joined the evening meal. He recounted his misadventures and explained how he came to the island without ship or sailors. The king and his courtiers were so moved that they "would sent him home that very day and every man present would give him a parting gift to enrich him.")

7. Why does Odysseus's return require additional slaughter?

(After fighting at Troy and making his way about the Mediterranean, Odysseus had no easy return to Ithaca. As though testing his great brain, the gods filled his home with suitors vying for the

hand of his wealthy wife, Penelope. Forewarned by Athena and disguised as an aged wanderer, he fooled the assembled suitors in his usual tricky style.

The homecoming concluded with Odysseus single-handedly winning an archery contest with the king's bow and turning his arrows against the men who had defiled his home and eaten his stores. Even then, Odysseus had to convince Penelope of his identity. A match for her wily husband, she explained to her son, "we two have ways of knowing each other." Thus, the homecoming ended with a tender reunion and dancing, "till the great house around them rang with their footfalls.")

8. Why is the story of Pygmalion and Galatea set on Cyprus?

(Pygmalion, Cyprus's gifted young sculptor, had a dangerous flaw. Against the tenets of the goddess Venus, he "was a woman-hater." He spurned young women, kept to himself, and worked at his statue of Galatea, whom he came to love as if she were a real girl. Because of the absence of passion for real women, "no hopeless lover of a living maiden was ever so desperately unhappy as Pygmalion."

The myth ends on the feast day of Venus, whose homeland was Cyprus, the island where she originally washed up from the sea. At the processional, fragrant with incense and marked by white heifers with gilded horns, Pygmalion joined the throng of disappointed lovers to petition the goddess for a true love. Instead of asking humbly, the sculptor insisted on one ideal—a girl like his statue. Venus "favored his prayer" by igniting her flame three times into a blaze, an accepted sign of consent. On return to the studio, he found the statue turned into the maiden Galatea, whose warmth and heightened pulse signaled the metamorphosis. The two produced a son, Paphos, whose name was given "to Venus' favorite city."

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. What do myths say to modern readers?

(Edith Hamilton expresses the universality of myths by describing human traits, such as love, vulnerability, and longing. She emphasizes the cost of human frailties, particularly hubris, the Greek word for pride. Readers can identify with characters who lust for riches and power and who

overextend themselves to the detriment of friends, family, and nation. By recognizing the faults of Tantalus and Pandora, Achilles and Psyche, readers can study the results of unbridled lust, curiosity, anger, and disobedience.

From early times, the Greeks recognized the value of human stories about faults. Their outdoor dramas returned to the old myths for familiar episodes that would instill pity and fear in viewers. Their songs, poems, fables, and tales enriched world literature with countless plots revised and repeated in literature, art, drama, and dance. Because the myths carry an undying kernel of warning and advice, they remain precious in current times.)

10. How does Edith Hamilton honor ancient authors?

(Retold with flavor, excitement, and Doric simplicity, Edith Hamilton's rendition of classic Greek, Roman, and Norse myths retain their instructive and ethical value while providing pleasurable reading. Since 1942, her carefully arranged and indexed work has aided students throughout high school and followed them to college. Scholars, teachers, and librarians prize her book for its accessibility and simplicity. Because she made mythology understandable to readers, she achieved her aim: "My hope is that those who do not know the classics will gain in this way not only a knowledge of the myths, but some little idea of what the writers were like who told them—who have been proved, by two thousand years or more, to be immortal.")

In her introduction, the author names the writers who collected and refined Greek lore. She speaks warmly of Homer's verse and declares, "The first written record of Greece is the Iliad." She exalts his "humanized world" and explains that the Greek epicist, out of respect for verse, intentionally killed off the priest in the Odyssey, but spared the poet, who "had influence with heaven."

Edith Hamilton's list of ancient authors expands to Hesiod, the writers of Homeric Hymns, and Pindar as well as the playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes. She speaks highly of Lucian, Pausanias, and Apollodorus and the Romans Ovid, Apuleius, Virgil, Catullus, and Horace. Her generous list includes mythographers

of various times, places, styles, and genres, but stresses that "the best guides to a knowledge of Greek mythology are the Greek writers, who believed in what they wrote.")

Questions 11-13 (Creative Level)

11. Read a representative sample of poetry and prose from ancient Greece or Rome. Choose for memorization a series of lines that characterize the search for excellence and right thinking, as found in Hesiod's *Works and Days* and Pindar's *Odes*.

12. Prepare a web site or storyboard with simplified myths for children. Illustrate each with appropriate clothing, ships, houses, and other details.

13. Explain in an oral essay how myths reflect universal truths about foolishness, jealousy, vengeance, and wanderlust.

Across the Curriculum

Art

Make a bulletin board that identifies the Titan, Olympian, and Norse gods. Beside each deity, draw a symbol to identify the appropriate province, such as a sun by Apollo, flame by Hephaestus, and bow and arrow by Artemis. Include all Roman and Greek names for deities, as in Hera/Juno, Zeus/Jupiter/Jove, and Hades/Pluto/Dis.

Design an Eighth Wonder of the World, such as a lighthouse marking the African shore where Aeneas was shipwrecked, a sphinx to honor Oedipus's end to Thebes's plague, a coliseum to depict Atalanta's race, a model of the *Argo* on the spot where Jason discovered the Golden Fleece, a stained glass mural depicting Arachne's battle with Minerva, a maze to commemorate Theseus's defeat of the Minotaur, or an ornate aviary to memorialize Procne, Philomela, and Tereus.

Create a bulletin board contrasting classical myth with stories by Aesop, J.J. Reneaux, Hans Christian Andersen, Beatrix Potter, Lewis Carroll, Gayle Ross, the Grimm brothers, Marie de France, Jonathan Swift, Virginia Hamilton, Baron Munchausen, Diane Wolkstein, Rumi, Pauline Johnson, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Isak Dinesen, Joseph Bruchac, Louise Bennett, Charles Perrault, Scheherazade,

Joel Chandler Harris, Zora Neale Hurston, Frankie and Doug Quimby, and native Americans such as Scott Momaday.

Drama and Speech

Prepare a dialogue dramatizing the role of a minor character, such as Hebe, cupbearer of the gods.

Draw stage settings for an enactment of poignant scenes, such as Iphigenia's death.

Improvise conflicting versions of the same story, such as alternate tellings of Persephone's abduction and of Phaëthon's command of the chariot of the sun. Lead a group discussion of reasons for variations.

Listen to recordings of world myths and legends, such as shark stories of Hawaii or Cherokee explanations of the rabbit's short tail. Explain in a paragraph the meaning of oral tradition and how retellings brought refinement and added texture to ancient literature.

Role-play the last two days of the Trojan War. Recount the attempted intervention of Laocoön, the dispersal of women, and the murder of Troy's royal children. Note why the gods allow Aeneas's band to survive and relocate.

Ethics

1. Compare the moral implications of important events, such as the Minotaur's thirst for blood, Psyche's viewing of Cupid, Hercules's accidental killing of a young servant, Oedipus's murder of Laius, Antigone's decision to bury her brother, Cephalus's jealousy, Circe's hold on Odysseus, and Jupiter's decision to turn Baucis and Philemon into trees.

2. Using incidents from myth, comment on the need to seek vengeance on an aggressor and wrongdoer. Draw examples from Odysseus's return to Ithaca, Achilles's dishonor of Hector's corpse, Medea's hatred of Jason, and Minerva's punishment of Arachne.

3. Analyze the connected crimes and betrayals that haunt the House of Atreus. Determine why the

story ends with Orestes and Electra.

History and Social Studies

1. Discuss with a small group why Edith Hamilton pursued her interest in classical literature for nearly ninety years.

2. Organize a discussion of the term "classical." Explain what qualities cause a piece of literature to survive for centuries.

3. Compare mythological heroes and monsters with such American legends as Frankie and Johnny, Daniel Boone, Sacajawea, Jim Bowie, Joe Magarac, Calamity Jane, Bigfoot, Sasquatch, John Henry, Pocahontas, Johnny Appleseed, Pecos Bill, Mike Fink, Davy Crockett, Barbara Allen, Rip Van Winkle, the Devil and Daniel Webster, and Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox.

4. Write a research paper on the importance of Heinrich Schliemann's work to a serious study of mythology. Include a detailed map of his most famous digs at Hissarlik.

5. Using desktop publishing, compose an annotated timeline of the ancient Mediterranean world. List dates and locales of each significant event, including discoveries in astronomy, medicine, mathematics, physics, geography, agriculture, warfare, city planning, metallurgy, and navigation.

6. Divide the class into small groups to study the geography and history of ancient Greece and the culture that produced storytellers such as Hesiod and Homer. Explain why Catullus, Virgil, and Horace were influenced by Greek poets.

Language Arts

1. With a group, list vocabulary terms which require explanation and pronunciation.

2. Characterize Norse wisdom and its touches of humor.

3. Contrast the style of language used in Edith Hamilton's prose and in lines she quotes from ancient plays and myths. Explain why she chooses to let the original versions speak for themselves. Discuss what these versions have lost through

time and translation into modern language, such as alliteration, puns, meter, and other stylistic details.

4. Explain to a small group why the Greeks chose pride, vengeance, deception, and love as important themes in poetry, epic, song, and drama. Note how their attitudes toward these sentiments reflect our own needs to be proud, to seek revenge, to trick, and to love.

5. Compose a first person account of a voyage with Odysseus, Jason, or Aeneas; a fight with Medusa; or a flight alongside Daedalus. Comment on phenomena such as the Symplegades, Scylla and Charybdis, the Minotaur, and the Sirens.

6. Write a theme in which you explain the role of a minor character, such as Nessus, Arion, Hydra, Hecuba, Charon, Echo, Pandora, or Ascanius.

7. List and discuss universal themes that permeate mythology, particularly the destructive nature of pride, which the Greeks called hubris.

8. Using reference works on mythology such as Robert Graves's or Thomas Bulfinch's mythology, draw a character web representing the interconnectedness of the Titan and Olympian gods and the human beings with whom they interacted; for example, Zeus and Leda, parents of two sets of twins—Helen, Clytemnestra, Castor, and Pollux.

9. Sample the literary style of world mythology, fable, and legend. Discuss your findings with a group.

10. View films based on updated versions of mythology, such as *My Fair Lady* and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. Compare classical themes in each movie. Discuss why pride is important to the characters of each.

11. Locate evidence of current interest in mythology by summarizing reviews of mythology collections and commentaries by Joseph Campbell and Donna Rosenberg or by discussing Ray Bradbury's *The Electric Grandmother* or *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.

12. Compose a short segment describing a story from mythology that you would like to rewrite or

add to. For example, add a happy ending to the story of Echo and Narcissus, a new direction to the flight of Daedalus and Icarus, or alter the love affair between Aeneas and Dido.

Psychology

1. Account for the brutality and savagery of Greek myths—for instance Cronus's devouring of his children, Clytemnestra's murder of her husband and Cassandra, Oedipus's incestuous relationship with Jocasta, and Tereus's removal of Philomela's tongue.

2. Characterize in a theme the motives and intentions of various characters, especially those of Pandora, Prometheus, Sigurd, Niobe, Ariadne, Polyneices, Pyramus, Leto, and Hero and Leander.

Religion

1. Read Chapter XXXIX, "The Ritual of Osiris," from Sir James George Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Compare the various interpretations of the complex myth with those surrounding the Greek god Dionysus. Discuss why the concept of life, death, and regeneration were important to primitive agricultural people.

2. Select a scriptural account of creation to tell to a group. Use gestures, props, and kinetic and sound enhancements to your storytelling. Compare the story with the Greek myths of creation.

Science

Compare mythological monsters that pervert nature, particularly the griffin, sphinx, harpy, hydra, cyclops, Cerberus, and Argos.

Student Involvement Activities

1. Write a group of headlines covering the news from the ancient world. For instance, "Atalanta Finishes Last," "Odysseus Cleans House," "Pandora Lets Curiosity Get Out of Hand," and "Midas in a Touchy Mood."

2. Lead a debate about whether Achilles deserves the acclaim of a hero. Contrast his behavior with more noble characters, particularly Hector, Patroclus, Diomedes, Perseus, Aeneas, Sigurd,

Jason, and Theseus.

3. Make an oral report on a myth not mentioned in the book. Consult Virgil's *Aeneid* for the episode in which Ascanius is turned into Cupid, Aeneas and Dido celebrate a bizarre forest wedding scene, Aeneas confronts Creusa's spirit in Hades, or Aeneas meets Venus, his mother.

4. Describe aloud Hercules's boldness. Name in order his labors and how each differed from the others in use of strength, cunning, supernatural powers, and intelligence.

5. Discuss Odysseus's homecoming and his wife's readiness to accept him as husband and king of Ithaca. Note Odysseus's relationship with Telemachus, who grew to manhood during his father's absence, and with Eumaeus, the king's trustworthy swineherd.

6. Create a list of images from mythology that appeal to the five senses, such as the red drops that fall from Hyacinth's wounds, the call of the Sirens, Pygmalion's touch on the blushing statue, the dreary landscape Eurydice faces in Hades, and the exertion of Atalanta to beat the other contenders in the foot race.

7. Compose a series of epitaphs for various female characters, such as Iphigenia, Clytemnestra, Antigone, Cassandra, Dido, Arachne, Thisbe, Deianira, and Brynhild.

8. Explain in a short speech the effect of terror, shock, alienation, loneliness, separation, loss, torture, hunger, disease, pain, uncertainty, and fatigue on classical heroes. Discuss why suffering is an important part of the myths about Prometheus, Hercules, Hector, Sigurd, Phaëthon, Tantalus, Polyneices, and Midas.

9. Describe the importance of fate to mythology, as is indicated at the birth of Oedipus and Paris. Explain why Greeks consulted oracles, yet tried to escape dire prophecies.

Alternative Assessment

1. Compose a scene in which artists capture one of the following events: the judgment of Paris,

Atalanta's footrace, Odysseus's sojourn with Circe, the arrival of the Trojan horse, Orestes's reunion with his twin sister, Tereus's cruelty to his sister-in-law, the death of Narcissus, Europa's seduction, Aeneas's descent into Hades, or the final resting place of Medusa's head.

2. Summarize the heroism of Jason, Sigurd, or Aeneas.

3. List the Olympian gods and explain the powers of each.

4. Cite human errors and faults in these characters: Teiresias, Antigone, Adonis, Glaucus, Pandora, and Orpheus.

Vocabulary

A. Underline a word in parentheses to complete each phrase in the following sentences.

1. The name of [the great city] was (**Athens, Corinth, Troy, Ithaca, Thebes**) and even today no city is more famous.
2. The (**Minotaur, Sphinx, Cyclops, Harpy, Gorgon**) was a monster, half bull, half human, the offspring of Minos' wife Pasiphaë and an especially beautiful bull.
3. (**Poseidon, Circe, Pegasus, Boreas, Aeolus**), the North Wind, fell in love with [Orithyia], but her father, Erechtheus, and the people of Athens, too, were opposed to his suit.
4. Simonides of Ceos was a noted (**aloof, shrouded, hovering, lyric, rune**) poet, who told the story of the Danaë in the wooden chest.
5. Nothing grew; no seed sprang up; in vain the oxen drew the (**hubris, javelin, fleece, Argo, plowshare**) through the furrows.
6. There is a prophecy in the Elder Edda, singularly like the Book of (**Iliad, Metamorphosis, proverbs, Hades, Revelation**), that after the defeat of the gods, there would be a new heaven and a new earth.
7. Both set up their looms and stretched the (**shuttle, warp, Symplegades, crest, sacrifices**) upon them.
8. [Iphigenia] had been serving the goddess thus for many years when a Greek (**galley, helm, skein, pyre, buckler**) put in at that inhospitable shore, not under stern necessity, storm-driven, but voluntarily.
9. As the bronze man lifted a pointed (**mammoth, crag, Erebus, anemone, lyre**) to hurl it at the *Argo* he grazed his ankle and the blood gushed forth until he sank and died.
10. Cassandra, one of Priam's daughters, was a (**Myrmidon, Titan, prophetess, nymph, discus-thrower**).

B. Make sentences from the following pairs of terms:

1. Theseus (prominent) _____

2. anger (impious) _____

3. chasm (yawning) _____

4. stone (swaddling) _____

5. Delphi (oracle) _____

6. warrior (Amazon) _____

7. sanctuary (sacrilege) _____

8. Laestrygons (cannibals) _____

9. Arcadian youth (chivalry) _____

10. Lesser Bear (constellation) _____

11. Wagner (opera) _____

12. abyss (immeasurable) _____

13. Demeter (pomegranate) _____

14. Hestia (hearth) _____

15. Zeus (amorous) _____

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Quotation Completion (30 points)

Supply a word to complete each of the following statements. Choose your answers from the list that follows. Place them in the blanks provided at left.

Agamemnon	Harpy	Medusa	Polyphemus	Teiresias
Argo	Hephaestus	Nausicaa	pomegranate	Theseus
Cassandra	hope	Odysseus	priestess	trees
centaur	huntress	oracle	raft	voice
Circe	Leda	Pegasus	shield	weaving

1. Echo wasted away until only her _____ remained.
2. People consulted Apollo's _____ for advice and healing.
3. Jason's ship, the _____, carried him across the Black Sea.
4. When Venus appeared to Aeneas, she was disguised as a _____.
5. Philomela depicted of Tereus's torture in her _____.
6. _____, the winged horse, sprang from Gorgon's blood.
7. Odysseus blinded _____ with a hot spike.
8. Hades bound Persephone to him by making her eat the seed of a _____.
9. Helen was one of the two sets of twins born to _____ and Zeus.
10. _____ lured Odysseus into spending a year on her enchanted island.
11. _____ sensed that Clytemnestra was about to harm Agamemnon.
12. The _____ named Chiron taught both Achilles and Aesculapius.
13. After releasing evils on the world, Pandora managed to save _____.
14. Menelaus's brother was _____, leader of the Greek forces and father of the doomed Iphigenia.
15. Odysseus lost his mariners after they killed the sacred _____ of the sun god.

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- ____ 1. Hephaestus was called Vulcan by the Romans.
- ____ 2. Cupid accidentally burned Psyche with oil from a lamp.
- ____ 3. Odysseus returned to Ithaca disguised as a swineherd.
- ____ 4. Medea loved her children too much to murder them.
- ____ 5. Atalanta lost a race because she stopped to gather golden apples.
- ____ 6. Achilles mourned the death of his best friend Patroclus, who was killed for abducting Helen from Sparta.
- ____ 7. The Amazons were great female warriors led by Queen Penthesilea.
- ____ 8. Orpheus lost his way into Hades and never found Eurydice.
- ____ 9. None of Odysseus's mariners survived the voyage from Troy to Ithaca.
- ____ 10. In Hades, Aeneas spoke with his father's spirit.

Part III: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| ___ 1.turned into a weeping cataract. | A. Daphne |
| ___ 2.was crowned with ass's ears. | B. Niobe |
| ___ 3.used a golden bough to persuade Charon to row him over the Styx. | C. Ariadne |
| ___ 4.survived the sirens. | D. Artemis |
| ___ 5.was goddess of wild animals. | E. Prometheus |
| ___ 6.held a golden balance to decide Hector's fate. | F. Aeneas |
| ___ 7.asked Daedalus to show her the way out of the labyrinth. | G. Odysseus |
| ___ 8.was turned into a laurel tree. | H. Midas |
| ___ 9.was the goddess of the rainbow and one of the gods' messengers. | I. Iris |
| ___ 10.stole fire from the gods and gave it to human beings. | J. Zeus |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain the importance of the Muses.
2. Describe how Odysseus rid his palace of suitors.
3. Explain the difference between Titan and Olympian deities.
4. Discuss why Galatea is changed into a human girl.
5. Give evidence of savagery in early myths.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Match the following quotations with names of speakers from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- | | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|----------|------------|------------|
| A. Achilles | C. Venus | E. Medea | G. Oedipus | I. Theseus |
| B. Orestes | D. Agamemnon | F. Jason | H. Baucis | J. Aeneas |
- ___ 1.The bulls, the dragon-men, the serpent warder of the Fleece, I conquered them. I made you victor.
- ___ 2.O dearest of friends, for want of you I cannot eat, I cannot drink.
- ___ 3.Comrades, you and I have had long acquaintance with sorrow. Evils still worse we have known. These also will end.
- ___ 4.Do you remember the last bit of embroidery you did before you went to Aulis? ... I will describe it to you.
- ___ 5.All true! Now shall my light be changed to darkness. I am accursed.
- ___ 6.Do you see that black water which falls from the hill yonder? It is the source of the terrible river which is called hateful, the river Styx.
- ___ 7.Since we have lived so long together, let neither of us have to live alone.
- ___ 8.Keep all the wealth you have taken, the flocks and the tawny herds of cattle and the fields, but the sovereign scepter and the throne release to me, so that no evil quarrel will arise from them.
- ___ 9.All I want is for you to be my friend and brother-in-arms.
- ___ 10.If I must slay the joy of my house, my daughter. A father's hands stained with dark streams flowing from blood of a girl slaughtered before the altar.

Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each of the following questions.

1. Who received Helen as a bribe?
2. Whom did Antigone bury?
3. What does Daedalus build to enable him to escape with his son Icarus?
4. What animal does Thisbe see drinking at the river?
5. Who is Death's brother?
6. By what name did the Romans worship Dionysus?
7. Who taught Aesculapius and Achilles?
8. Who was Zeus's mother?
9. Whom did Aeneas defeat in a great battle in Italy?
10. What instrument did Orpheus play for the lord of the Underworld?
11. What did Perseus use as a mirror when he beheaded Medusa?
12. Which goddess turned Pygmalion's statue into a woman?
13. How many young men launched a war against the gates of Thebes?
14. Who was Oedipus's real mother?
15. What fifty women killed their husbands?

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline a word or phrase from the list below to complete each of the following statements.

1. Psyche disobeyed her husband by (opening a box of ills, looking at him, separating grains, riding a winged horse.)
2. Odysseus's son (Diomedes, Philemon, Telemachus, Icarus) grew up to be brave and true.
3. Early in his life, Paris's parents knew that he (would bring trouble to Troy, had hidden Helen from Menelaus, wanted to sail with the Argonauts, would kill his father.)
4. One of the figures in Hades was Tantalus, who (was unable to quench his thirst, rolled a rock uphill, filled a leaky jar with water, stole Cerberus.)
5. Hercules grieved over (the dead Nemean Lion, the loss of the golden apples, his losses during the Trojan War, Deianira's death.)
6. Ajax killed himself because he did not receive (fire from heaven, blessing by the Muses, Achilles's armor, the prophetess Cassandra.)
7. (Phaëthon, Bellerophon, Endymion, Otus) was unable to guide the sun-god's chariot.
8. A judgment of the gods freed Orestes from (the Tarpeian Rock, madness, Hercules's vengeance, daily attack by an eagle.)
9. The Bacchanals were women who honored (Creon's coronation, the coming of spring, Dionysus, the Delphic Oracle.)
10. A dove leads Jason's expedition through (Charybdis, Scylla, the Sirens, the clashing rocks.)

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Compare Aeneas's bravery with that of Odysseus.
2. Discuss the importance of vengeance in mythology.
3. Explain why Sigurd is killed.
4. Relate a myth of young love.
5. Summarize ancient creation lore.

Answer Key

Vocabulary Test

- A.**
- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Troy | 6. Revelation |
| 2. Minotaur | 7. warp |
| 3. Boreas | 8. galley |
| 4. lyric | 9. crag |
| 5. plowshare | 10. prophetess |

B. Answers will vary.

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Quotation Completion (30 points)

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. voice | 9. Leda |
| 2. oracle | 10. Circe |
| 3. <i>Argo</i> | 11. Cassandra |
| 4. huntress | 12. centaur |
| 5. weaving | 13. hope |
| 6. Pegasus | 14. Agamemnon |
| 7. Polyphemus | 15. oxen |
| 8. pomegranate | |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F |
| 2. F | 7. T |
| 3. F | 8. F |
| 4. F | 9. T |
| 5. T | 10. T |

Part III: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. J |
| 2. H | 7. C |
| 3. F | 8. A |
| 4. G | 9. I |
| 5. D | 10. E |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. C |
| 2. A | 7. H |
| 3. J | 8. F |
| 4. B | 9. I |
| 5. G | 10. D |

Part II: Short Answer (30 points)


- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| 1. Paris | 9. Turnus |
| 2. Polyneices | 10. lyre |
| 3. wings | 11. shield |
| 4. lioness | 12. Venus |
| 5. sleep | 13. seven |
| 6. Bacchus | 14. Jocasta |
| 7. Chiron | 15. Danaïds |
| 8. Gaea | |

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. looking at him | 6. Achilles's armor |
| 2. Telemachus | 7. Phaëthon |
| 3. would bring
trouble to Troy | 8. madness |
| 4. was unable to
quench his
thirst | 9. Dionysus |
| 5. Deianira's
death | 10. the clashing rocks |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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