

## 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Lesson Plan — It's Greek to Me: Greek Mythology

### Overview

This series of lessons was designed to meet the needs of gifted children for extension beyond the standard curriculum with the greatest ease of use for the educator. The lessons may be given to the students for individual self-guided work, or they may be taught in a classroom or a homeschool setting. Assessment strategies and rubrics are included at the end of the unit. The lessons were developed by Lisa Van Gemert, M.Ed.T., the Mensa Foundation's Gifted Children Specialist.

### Introduction

Greek mythology is not only interesting, but it is also the foundation of allusion and character genesis in literature. In this lesson plan, students will gain an understanding of Greek mythology and the Olympian gods and goddesses.

### Learning Objectives

After completing the lessons in this unit, students will be able to:

- understand the Greek view of creation.
- understand the terms Chaos, Gaia, Uranus, Cronus, Zeus, Rhea, Hyperboreans, Ethiopia, Mediterranean, and Elysian Fields.
- describe the Greek view of the world's geography.
- identify the names and key features of the Olympian gods/goddesses.
- create their own god/goddess.
- create their own myth explaining a natural phenomenon.

### Materials

- *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths* by Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire
- *The Gods and Goddesses of Olympus* by Aiki
- *The Mighty 12: Superheroes of Greek Myths* by Charles Smith
- *Greek Myths and Legends* by Cheryl Evans
- *Mythology* by Edith Hamilton (which served as a source for this lesson plan)
- A paper plate for each student
- Internet access to look up relevant sites

### IMPORTANT NOTE

Do not give student(s) the filled-in copy of the Gods/Goddesses chart. That is your answer key.

## Lesson 1. Greek Creation Mythology

Although when we think of mythology we think of a collection of stories, there is a beginning to them. Understanding the beginning of the story, the creation of the world, gives us a framework to build upon as we learn about the different myths.

The short answer to how the Greeks viewed the creation of the world is this:

Scary old gods came first; they got stomped down by their kids, who were better looking, younger gods. These gods created humans. Humans and gods fought for supremacy, and the humans won a few rounds but eventually got trounced and became more and more miserable.

Now, the longer answer:

In the beginning, the universe was without form. It was not nothing; there was matter, but it was unorganized, shapeless, mixed up and dark. This was called Chaos.

After Chaos, more divinities, or gods, came into being.

Gaia, the Earth, held up Uranus, the sky. Gaia and Uranus had a bunch of kids. First they had a bunch of monsters including the Cyclops, and then they created the Titans as the second generation. Uranus hated all the Titans and was actually quite ugly about it – but there are only a couple of Titans that you need to remember: first, Oceanus, the god of the sea, and then Cronus, the strongest and best one of all. Gaia was pretty ticked at Uranus for being a jerk, so she helped Cronus overthrow him.

So, let's keep this straight. Cronus is Uranus's son. Cronus became the king (bye-bye Uranus), and married his sister, Rhea – another Titan. It's like a soap opera. This was called the Golden Age because men, who had been made by a Titan named Prometheus, were living in harmony. Everything was hunky dory.

It didn't last, though, because Cronus heard a prophecy that one of his sons would dethrone him, so every time his wife, Rhea, had a baby, he swallowed it. Rhea got a little sick of seeing all of her children swallowed alive, so she tricked Cronus when her sixth child, Zeus, was born; she wrapped up a rock to look like a baby and had Cronus swallow that instead. Zeus rescued his previously swallowed siblings, and all was right with the world.

## World View

The Greek view of the world was a little different than ours. The Greeks believed that the world was flat, but circular, like a paper plate.

At the center of the Universe was Greece.

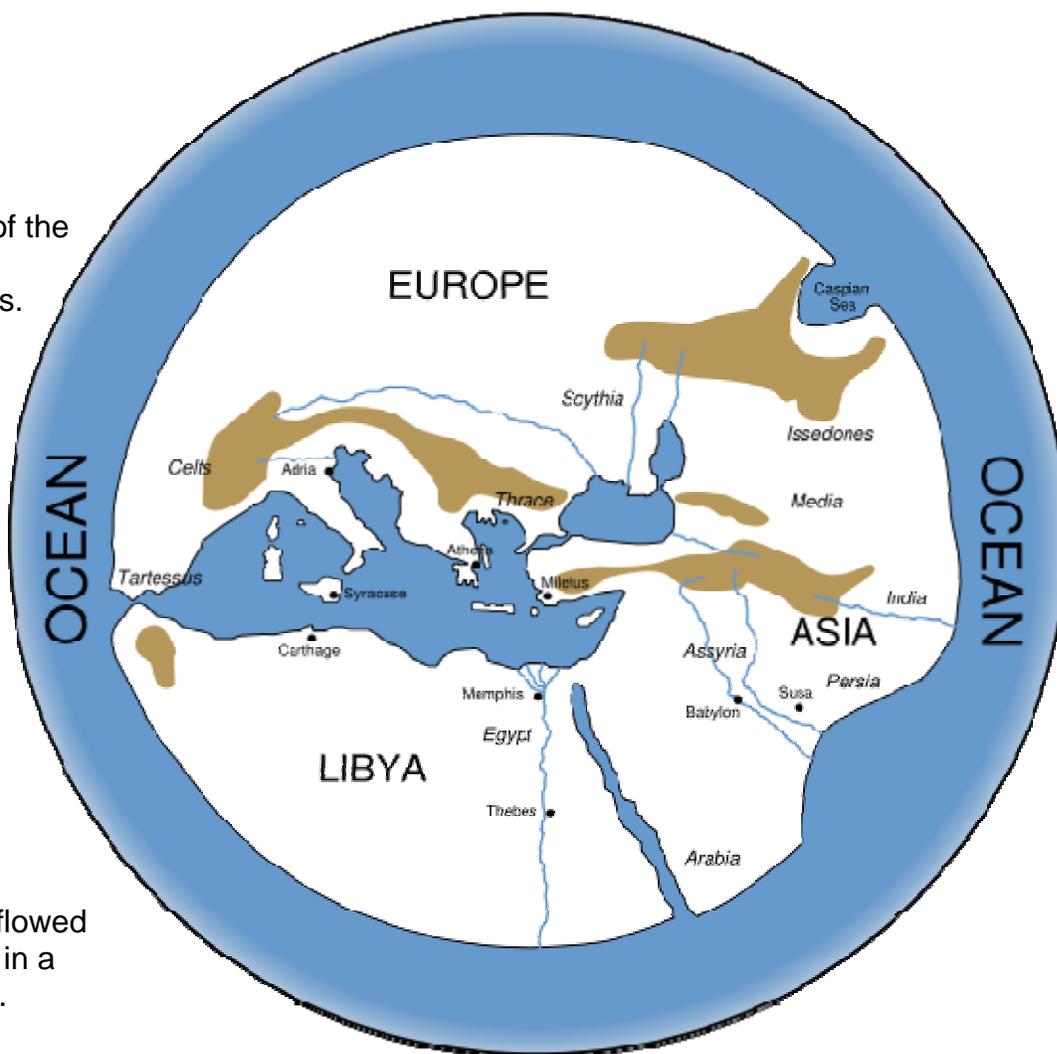
Their world was divided by the Mediterranean, which means "Middle of the Lands" in Latin.

The river Ocean flowed around the world in a clockwise motion.

In the north lived the Hyperboreans – an extremely happy people for whom life was sweet. When the old people became tired of living, they threw themselves into the sea. This was a land of constant vacation where people were said to live for 1,000 years.

In the south lived the Ethiopians. In Greek drama, mention is often made of various gods being in Ethiopia, meaning really far away. So, if I say I parked in Ethiopia this morning, would that mean I'm close to my office or far away? The Ethiopians were said to be on good terms with the gods and liked to entertain them.

To the west were the Elysian Fields. This was the closest the Greeks got to the idea of heaven; only the best and brightest of the dead people got to go there.



## To Do

1. Read *The Gods and Goddesses of Olympus* by Aiki.
2. Draw your own representation of the Greek view of the world on the paper plate using colored pencils and the map on the previous page as a guideline. Be sure to include the Ethiopians, the Hyperboreans, and the Elysian Fields on your map.
3. Write a one-paragraph essay comparing the Greek view of the world to the contemporary view of it, including at least two points of comparison and two of contrast. You can follow the guideline below.

## Directions for Paragraph

Begin with a topic sentence. Here is an example:

*The Greek view of the world both resembles and differs from the contemporary view.*

Next, list two ways the views are similar. Here are examples:

- *The Greek view resembles the contemporary view in that \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *Additionally, the views are similar because \_\_\_\_\_.*

Next, list two ways the views are different. Here are examples:

- *However, the Greek view is not the same as the contemporary view because the Greeks believed \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *The Greeks also thought \_\_\_\_\_.*

Last, you will state a conclusion. Here's an example:

*Therefore, even though the views have similarities, they differ in important ways.*

## Lesson 2. The Olympian Gods

Use the information you find in this lesson to begin to fill in the gods and goddesses chart at the end of this lesson; you will also need to do your own research to complete it.

Now that you understand the way that the Greeks viewed the beginning of the world, you are ready to learn about the Olympian gods.

First, we have to explore exactly what we mean by “Olympian gods.” Mount Olympus is a real mountain in the north of Greece. Gradually, it became associated less and less with an actual mountain and more with an imaginary place high above the earth. According to the ancient Greeks, the gate to Olympus was made of clouds and it was guarded by four goddesses, the Seasons. Each god had his or her own dwelling place, but Olympus was home base.

There were up to 14 gods considered Olympian gods. Seven of them were Zeus and his siblings, and seven others were children of Zeus. Sometimes only 12 will be listed. The Greeks and Romans shared mythology, so you will find two names for most gods.

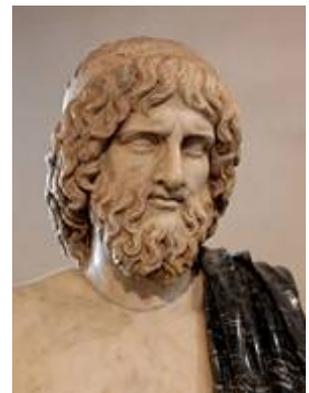


### Zeus

Zeus was the king of the hill. He was dominating, powerful and had a soft spot for pretty women. He could be terrifying when angry. His symbols were the thunderbolts, or lightening bolts made for him by the Cyclopes (his uncles); the eagle; and the scepter, or rod. Please copy this information onto your chart.

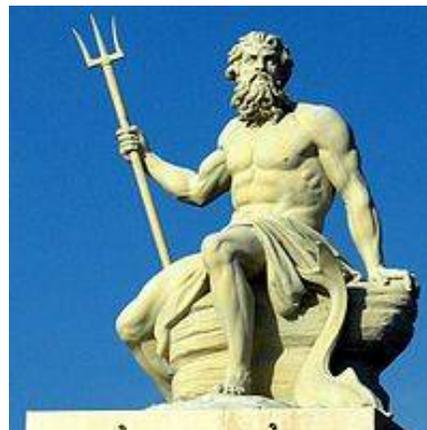
### Hades

Hades, or Pluto, was the god of the underworld and of the dead. He was called the same names by the Romans, but they also sometimes called him Dis or Dis Pater. He was Zeus’s brother and married Persephone after kidnapping her against her will. He was gloomy and frightening.



## Poseidon

Next, we have Poseidon, or Neptune, as the Romans called him. He was Zeus's brother, and he was the god of the sea and also earthquakes. He often is shown with a three-pronged spear called a trident that was made for him by his nephew, Hephaestus, and/or a fish.



## Hera

Our first goddess is Hera. She sits on the right side of Zeus and is his wife. Of course, she's his sister, too, but that's the way it was on Olympus. Hera's Roman name is Juno, and she is the queen of the gods. She is the guardian of marriage and was well-loved by the Greeks; it's kind of sad that she's the goddess of marriage but her own marriage was so bad. She was often jealous of her husband's girlfriends and did mean things to them, even the ones who didn't want anything to do with him, but she could be tender and loving as well. The peacock was her symbol. In fact, the circles in a peacock's tail are said to be the eyes of her 100-eyed servant, Argus.

## Athena

Next is Athena, or Minerva, the daughter who sprang fully formed from the head of Zeus after a major headache. She is the goddess of wisdom and war and also the protector and namesake of the city of Athens. She preferred reason to violence unless she was pushed. She turned Arachne into a spider for bragging that she could spin better than Athena. She was very competitive and is often pictured with her helmet and a spear. She carried Zeus's shield, called the aegis. The owl was her bird. Can you see it in her hand?



## Apollo

Apollo was a twin. His Roman name was the same as his Greek name. He was the god of the sun or light, poetry, music and medicine and was famous for his oracles (wise women to whom he gave his power to predict and interpret the future). He was very proud and also protective of his mother and sister. His symbols were the gold bow and arrows, and he often appears golden and shining. He wears a laurel wreath in memory of Daphne, who didn't want to be his lover and prayed to Mother Earth for help escaping him; she was turned into a laurel tree.



## Artemis

Artemis was Apollo's twin. Her Roman name was Diana, and she was the goddess of hunting, chastity and the moon. She protects women and small children, is fiercely independent and particularly dislikes men. In pictures, she is seen accompanied by three hunting hounds, a bow and a fawn.

## Ares

Ares or, as he is known by his Roman name, Mars, was the god of war. He would fight on both sides, if possible. He was young, strong and handsome, and liked to dress in battle clothes even when he wasn't fighting.

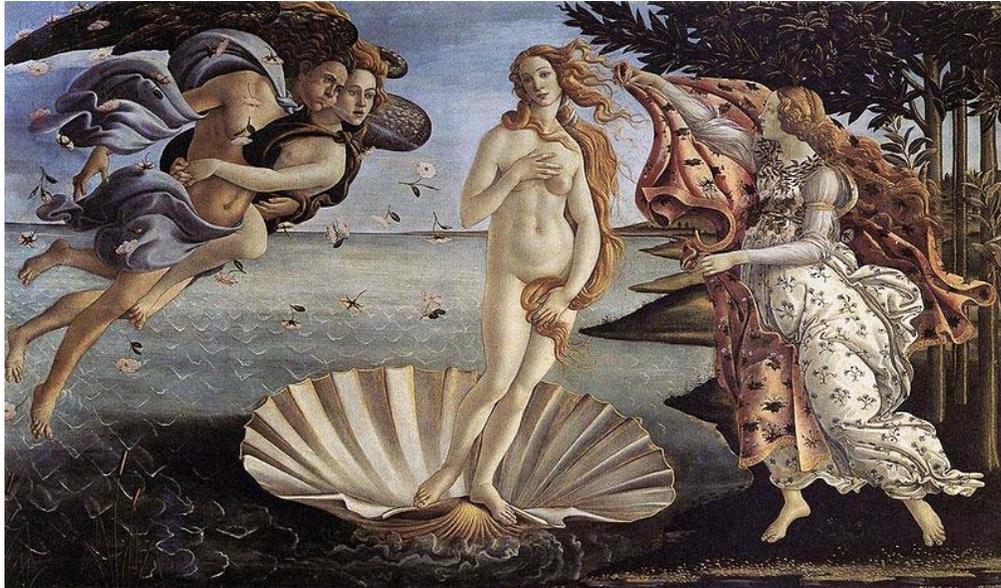


## Hephaestus

Hephaestus, or Vulcan, was born lame and was further crippled when he was thrown from Olympus by his mother, Hera, in a rage. He was the only Olympian with a disability. He was unhappily married to Aphrodite and worked as a blacksmith in the gods' forge.

## Aphrodite

Hephaestus's wife, Aphrodite, whose Roman name was Venus, was the goddess of love and beauty. She was born out of sea foam when the blood of Uranus dropped into the ocean. She was the mother of Eros and was irresistibly charming, fickle, vain and competitive. Her symbol was a cestus, or magic belt, that made everyone fall in love with the wearer; sometimes she would lend it to humans. This is a famous painting of the birth of Venus, or Aphrodite, by Botticelli.



## Hermes

Hermes, or Mercury, was the god of science and invention, but he is best known as the messenger of the gods. He is often pictured with a winged helmet and sandals. He is said to have invented the alphabet, boxing and gymnastics! In this painting by Goltzius, you can see his helmet with wings; he's not wearing his famous sandals, though.

## Hestia

Hestia was Zeus's sister and the goddess and protectress of hearth and home. She is also known by her Roman name, Vesta. She was gentle and kind and was very popular with the Greeks. She didn't have a lot of adventures, so she's rarely pictured in art.





## Demeter

Demeter was the goddess of the crops and the harvest. She is also known as Ceres (Roman) and sometimes Deo. Her symbols include a torch, a crown, a scepter and stalks of grain. She is often portrayed with her daughter, Persephone, who was kidnapped by Hades and taken to the underworld. By the time she was rescued, she'd eaten six pomegranate seeds, so she couldn't escape the underworld entirely. Her mother was so frantic that winter draped the land and no crops would grow. A deal was struck, and Persephone was allowed to return to her mother for half of the year. So each year, when she returns to the underworld, fall comes, then winter – but when she returns to her mother, spring and summer come again.



## Dionysus

Dionysus was the partier of the mountain retreat. He was Zeus's son by another woman, who was driven crazy by Hera and her jealousy. Dionysus went all around teaching people how to make wine and having a good time. Eventually, Hestia gave up her throne for him, and he lived on Olympus. He was the god of wine, of course, and also vegetation.

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Now, use at least two sources in addition to what you read here to fill in your chart completely. Write down the sources you used on the back of the chart.

## Book suggestions

- *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths* by Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire
- *The Mighty 12: Superheroes of Greek Myths* by Charles Smith
- *Greek Myths and Legends* by Cheryl Evans

If your library doesn't have these, check around Dewey Decimal Number 398.2. That's where Greek mythology is.

## Web references

- <http://greece.mrdonn.org/myths.html>
- <http://www.mythweb.com/>
- <http://mythman.com/>
- <http://www.loggia.com/myth/content.html>
- <http://www.pantheon.org/areas/mythology/europe/greek/articles.html>

## Olympian Gods & Goddesses Chart

GREEK NAME	ROMAN NAME	REALM	SYMBOL	FACTS / CHARACTERISTICS
1. ZEUS				
2. HERA				
3. POSEIDON				
4. HADES				
5. ATHENA				
6. APOLLO				

### Greek Mythology-2.6

## Olympian Gods & Goddesses Chart, continued

GREEK NAME	ROMAN NAME	REALM	SYMBOL	FACTS / CHARACTERISTICS
7. ARTEMIS				
8. APHRODITE				
9. HERMES				
10. ARES				
11. HEPHAESTUS				
12. HESTIA				
13. DEMETER				
14. DIONYSUS				

### Greek Mythology-2.7

### Lesson 3. Mythology biographical poem

A biographical poem, or biopoem, uses a simple but specific structure to describe the most important facts about someone. Your assignment is to write a biopoem about one of the gods or goddesses you have studied. You may choose any god or goddess (except Aphrodite, because she's the example below). The blanks on this page are for your rough draft. When you're done, copy your final version onto a separate sheet of paper and decorate it, if you would like. Please attach this sheet to your final draft.

Follow this format exactly, please:

Greek Name \_\_\_\_\_,  
*I am* (list four traits) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.  
*I am [a relative] of* (1-3 people) \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Lover of* (1-3 things or people) \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Who feels/protects* (1-3 things) \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Who needs* (1-3 things) \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Who fears* (1-3 things) \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Who gives* (1-3 things) \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Resident of* \_\_\_\_\_,  
Roman Name \_\_\_\_\_.

**Example** (you may not use this goddess):

*Aphrodite,  
Goddess of Love, Desire, Beauty and Fertility.  
A daughter of Zeus and Dione; wife of Hephaestus.  
Lover of sons Aeneas and Cupid and brother Ares.  
Who protects sailors.  
Who needs a chariot.  
Who fears War, Athena and Hera.  
Who gives Helen to Paris, a magic belt to Hera, and Medea to Jason.  
Resident of Mt. Olympus.  
Venus.*

## Lesson 4. Olympians Quiz

Time to test yourself – and beware! Answers may be used more than once!

- A. Zeus  
D. Hades
- B. Hera  
E. Athena
- C. Poseidon  
F. Apollo

1. This god's Roman name is Neptune. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name the goddess of war. \_\_\_\_\_
3. His symbol is the thunderbolt. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Her Roman name was Juno, and her symbol was the peacock.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Name the god of the underworld. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Name the twin of Artemis. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Name the goddess of wisdom. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Name the very jealous wife of Zeus. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Name the god of the sun, poetry, music and medicine. \_\_\_\_\_
10. His Roman name is Jupiter. \_\_\_\_\_
11. This god is anti-social and doesn't like people. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Name the wealthiest god. \_\_\_\_\_

- A. Artemis                      B. Aphrodite                      C. Hermes                      D. Ares  
E. Hephaestus                      F. Hestia                      G. Demeter                      H. Dionysus

13. Name the goddess of hunting and twin of Apollo. \_\_\_\_\_
14. Name the goddess of hearth and home who gave up her throne for Dionysus.  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. Name the mother of Persephone; her Roman name is Ceres.  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. This god's Roman name is Bacchus. \_\_\_\_\_
17. His symbols are winged sandals and a winged helmet.  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. Name the only handicapped god. \_\_\_\_\_
19. This god's Roman name is Mars, and he is the god of war.  
\_\_\_\_\_
20. Her Roman name is Vesta. \_\_\_\_\_
21. Her Roman name is Diana. \_\_\_\_\_
22. His symbol is fire and a hammer, and his Roman name is Vulcan.  
\_\_\_\_\_
23. His Roman name is Mercury, and he is the messenger of the gods.  
\_\_\_\_\_
24. Name the god of wine. \_\_\_\_\_
25. She was the goddess of love and beauty. \_\_\_\_\_

26. If you could have dinner with one god or goddess, who would it be and why?

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27. Which god or goddess do you think would make the best president and why?

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28. Imagine that Zeus has come to you and said that Olympus is lacking a god or goddess, and he needs you to help. Invent a new Olympian and describe him or her below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Roman Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Connection to Olympus (related to another god or goddess? Married to a god or goddess?):

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Powers: \_\_\_\_\_

Symbol: \_\_\_\_\_

Personality traits: \_\_\_\_\_

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Friends: \_\_\_\_\_

Enemies: \_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson 5. Putting It All Together

Myths are a way of understanding the world. This lesson has been about Greek mythology, but every culture has myths. Myths define social customs and beliefs, explain natural and psychological phenomena, and provide a way for people to discuss things that cause anxiety.

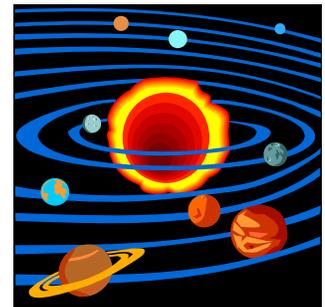
Mythology is all around us. Here are just a few examples of places we find myths today:

- Days of the week – Wednesday (Woden or Odin – Norse god); Thursday (Thor – Norse god); Friday (Freya – Norse goddess); Saturday (Saturn – Roman god who ruled before Jove)
- Cars – Toyota Avalon and Cressida, Cadillac El Dorado, Honda Odyssey, Mercury
- Shoes – Nike
- Tires – Midas
- Astronomy – constellations like Orion, the Argo, all of the planets and the Pleiades. The Milky Way itself was supposedly the road over which the stars traveled to Jupiter’s palace.
- NASA – the first part of U.S. space program was Project Mercury, named after the messenger of the gods because the project’s purpose was to send a message to the Soviets that America was in the space race. The Gemini Project was next; Gemini is Latin for “twins,” and the project was called this because the capsule held two astronauts. Apollo astronauts rode on Saturn rockets.

Myths also make great stories. They come up in literature all over the place, from really serious stuff like Dante to comic strips. Myths inspire music; actually the word *music* comes from the mythological muses who inspired art of all kinds. Painters like Michelangelo and Botticelli were inspired by myths. Even children’s movies are a good place to look for myths; you will find them everywhere, including *Snow White*, *Star Wars*, and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Can you find at least three examples of mythology connections in the world?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



## Lesson 6. Create Your Own Myth

Hopefully myths inspire you, too, because you are about to create your own myth! As you know, myths were often used to explain natural phenomena. Your challenge is to create your own myth to explain some natural phenomenon or land formation. It could be anything from the origin of hurricanes to how the Grand Canyon or a mountain range was created. You will tell this myth in a story format.

Here are the guidelines:

1. Your story must involve at least two Olympian gods or goddesses. It may contain other gods or goddesses as well.
2. Your story must explain some natural phenomenon (such as a weather event) or some geological feature (a mountain range, a large valley, a sea, an ocean, a polar ice cap, etc.).
3. Your story should be at least 350 words.
4. Your story must have a clear beginning, middle and end.
5. Your story should clearly show that you know something about Greek mythology. You will do this by including details about the Olympian gods and goddesses that show you know their powers, symbols and personalities.

Here are some ideas to get you thinking:

- Where did the Rocky Mountains come from?
- Where did the Mississippi River come from?
- What made the North and/or South Pole(s)?
- Why is Earth the third planet from the sun?
- Why is it dark at night?
- What is in the middle of the earth?

## Assessment

### Lesson 1.

#### Greek Map of the World Rubric

Contains all required elements properly labeled	/60
Neatly done	/15
Demonstrates insight into Greek mythological world	/15
Commendable use of color	/10
<b>Total</b>	<b>/100</b>

#### Greek World Comparison Paragraph Rubric

Strong topic sentence	/10
Correct format	/10
Contains two similarities	/20
Contains two contrasts	/20
Strong concluding sentence	/10
Logical, thorough argument	/30
<b>Total</b>	<b>/100</b>

### Lesson 2.

#### Olympian Gods & Goddesses Chart Rubric

All fields completed thoroughly	/70
Used at least two sources in addition to the provided information	/30
<b>Total</b>	<b>/100</b>

## Lesson 3.

### Mythology Biographical Poem Scoring Rubric

Contains all required elements	/60
Correct format	/20
Neatly written or typed	/10
Demonstrates insight into god or goddess	/10
Creativity	/maximum 7 point bonus
<b>Total</b>	<b>/100 (+ up to 7)</b>

## Lesson 4.

### Olympians Quiz Scoring Rubric

Matching section	/25
Creation of god or goddess	/20
Question 26 & Question 27	/5
<b>Total</b>	<b>/50</b>

### KEY: Olympians Quiz: Matching

- |       |       |
|-------|-------|
| 1. C  | 14. F |
| 2. E  | 15. G |
| 3. A  | 16. H |
| 4. B  | 17. C |
| 5. D  | 18. E |
| 6. F  | 19. D |
| 7. E  | 20. F |
| 8. B  | 21. A |
| 9. F  | 22. E |
| 10. A | 23. C |
| 11. C | 24. H |
| 12. D | 25. B |
| 13. A |       |

**Lesson 6.**

**Create Your Own Myth Scoring Rubric**

Explains natural phenomenon or geological formation	/15
Includes at least two gods or goddesses	/20
Meets minimum word length	/10
Has clear beginning, middle and end	/5
Demonstrates depth of understanding of Greek mythology	/15
Writing is clear, focused and conveys the story in an interesting way	/15
<b>Total</b>	<b>/80</b>

## ANSWER KEY: Olympian Gods & Goddesses Chart

GREEK NAME	ROMAN NAME	REALM	SYMBOL(S)	FACTS / CHARACTERISTICS
1. ZEUS	Jupiter	Supreme ruler of the gods; lord of the sky; rain god	Thunderbolts or lightning, eagle and scepter (rod)	Dominating, powerful, and had a soft spot for pretty women.
2. HERA	Juno	Queen of the Gods; protector of marriage	Peacock	Wife of Zeus; well loved by the Greeks; often jealous of husband's girlfriends, but she could be tender and loving.
3. POSEIDON	Neptune	God of the sea and earthquakes	Trident (three-pronged spear)	Did not mix with mortals, and he was anti-social.
4. HADES	Pluto	God of the underworld and of the dead	Cornucopia and scepter	Very wealthy; rarely visited Olympus; married to Persephone.
5. ATHENA	Minerva	Goddess of wisdom and war	Shield, helmet, and spear	Daughter of Zeus who sprang out of his head fully formed; the owl is her bird.
6. APOLLO	Apollo	God of sun or light, poetry, music and medicine	Gold bows and arrows	Famous for his oracles and very proud and protective of his mother and sister; wears a laurel wreath in memory of Daphne; has a twin named Artemis.
7. ARTEMIS	Diana	Goddess of hunting, chastity and the moon	Three hunting hounds, bow and fawn	Protects women and small children; she is fiercely independent and particularly dislikes men.

## ANSWER KEY: Olympian Gods & Goddesses Chart, continued

GREEK NAME	ROMAN NAME	REALM	SYMBOL(S)	FACTS / CHARACTERISTICS
8. APHRODITE	Venus	Goddess of love and beauty	Girdle and mirror	Born out of sea foam; wife of Hephaestus; mother of Eros; interesting, charming, fickle, vain, competitive.
9. HERMES	Mercury	God of science and invention	Helmet and winged feet	Said to have invented the alphabet, boxing and gymnastics.
10. ARES	Mars	God of war	Spear and helmet	Would fight on both sides; young, strong, prime of life; likes to dress in battle clothes.
11. HEPHAESTUS	Vulcan	God of fire	Ax and tongs	Son of Zeus and Rhea; only god with a handicap; married to Aphrodite.
12. HESTIA	Vesta	Goddess of hearth and home	Hearth and its fire	Zeus' sister; protectress of hearth and home; very popular.
13. DEMETER	Ceres	Goddess of earth and crops	Torch, crown, scepter and stalks of grain	Often portrayed with her daughter, Persephone, who spends three months a year in the underworld, at which time it becomes winter.
14. DIONYSUS	Bacchus	God of wine and vegetation	Grapes, wine cups or wineskins, a pinecone-headed staff called a thyrsus	Went around teaching people how to make wine and party; Zeus's son.