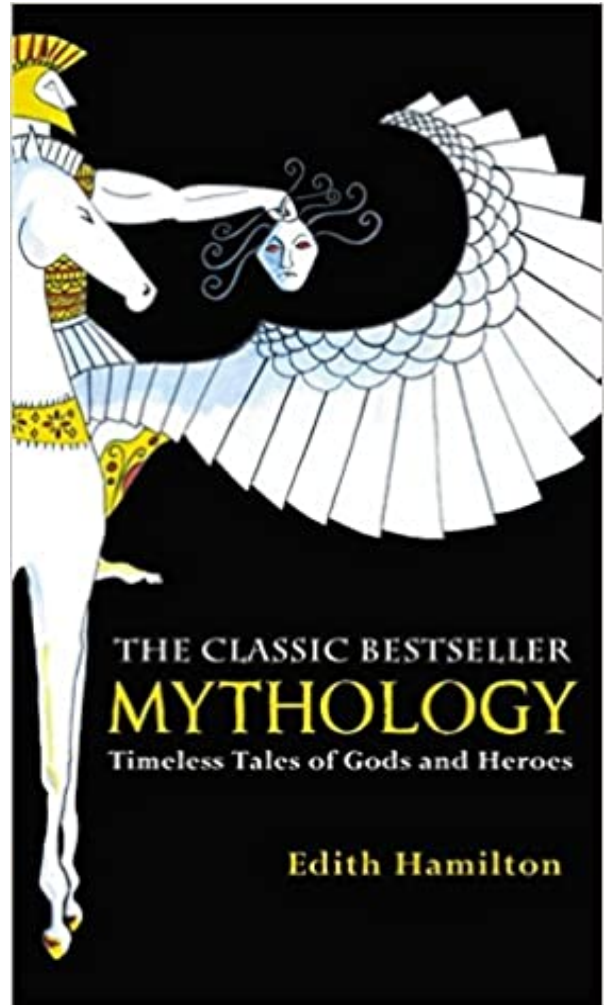


Summer Assignment / Edith Hamilton's MYTHOLOGY

English I Honors (Grade 9)

Many times, the terms “folk tale,” “fairy tale,” “legend,” and “myth” are used interchangeably. Folk tales or fairy tales are purely imaginative, fictional stories intended to amuse, entertain, or teach. Legends are usually true stories of events in history but exaggerated for dramatic or humorous effect. Myths are imaginative stories resulting from man's attempt to understand the phenomena of nature or to explain cultural customs and rituals. Mythology is a way to explain things in the world that had no explanation before.

Your summer reading assignment is **Edith Hamilton's *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*** (1942). It has been established as a popular classic, a valuable tool, and a necessary reference work that is essential for any well-read student. Much of the literature you will read in school will contain allusions to Greek or Roman mythology. For example, a character in a novel may be described as narcissistic, as an Adonis, or as undertaking Herculean tasks; all of these are references to myths. Recognizing the myth leads to greater understanding of the character. As Western culture traces its political, philosophical, and social roots back to Greek culture, mythological stories also serve as the subject for works of art, commercial products and advertisements, comic books, and much more. The book is long, but you do not need to read from cover to cover; skip around to the stories that interest you most and complete the activities below.



REQUIRED ACTIVITIES

- Reading Guide: *Character Chart*
- Creative Writing: Poetry*
- Read “Magical Musings: Harry Potter in Greece?” blog post and complete Open-Ended Response

READING GUIDE: CHARACTER CHART

OLYMPIAN GODS & GODDESSES				
Greek name	Roman name	Realm	Symbol(s)	Facts / Characteristics
Zeus				
Hera				
Poseidon				
Hades				
Athena				
Apollo				
Artemis				
Aphrodite				
Hermes				
Ares				
Hephaestus				
Hestia				
Demeter				
Dionysus				

CREATIVE WRITING: POETRY

A biographical poem, or biopoem, uses a simple but specific structure to describe the most important facts about someone. Below write a biopoem about one of the gods, goddesses, or other mythological figures you have read about. You may choose any character from Greek mythology (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 with symbols representing . 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.*

The Wireless Wizarding Network



Magical Musings: Harry Potter in Greece?

Devina

Unknown publication date, circa 2004

In answer to the obvious question: No, Harry Potter is not in Greece. He hasn't ever gone there and as far as I know, J.K. Rowling isn't planning to send him there. This article is all about the influence of Greek mythology on Harry Potter. There are scattered references that I picked up and may give us some indications of where the story is going.

The first obvious inference is Fluffy. The adorable three-headed dog that we met in the first book, guarding the entrance to the maze that led to the Philosopher's Stone (Or the Sorcerer's Stone, as some know it). Hagrid mentions that he got Fluffy (whatever possessed him to call it "Fluffy"?) from a 'Greek chappie.' As some might know, Cerberus was a three-headed dog in Greek mythology that prevented souls from escaping Tartarus, the underworld at the Styx. Fluffy can definitely be that three-headed dog even though Cerberus was supposed to have a serpent in place of a tail and lion-like manes bristling with snakes. Hagrid also mentioned that music puts Fluffy to sleep. Orpheus played his lyre when he went to Tartarus to get his dead wife, Eurydice, back. Cerberus let him through after listening to his music. Note that a lyre was used in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* to put Fluffy to sleep.

Another thing connecting Cerberus to Harry Potter: wolfsbane/monkshood/aconite. It is believed that when the deadly white foam from Cerberus's jaws met with grass, the plant of aconite would grow. Anyways, since Fluffy, uh, I mean, Cerberus was a guard to prevent the dead from escape, could that mean Fluffy has a new job coming up as the Azkaban guard? Azkaban is literally described as Hell, and Cerberus, I mean, Fluffy can be the guard. Although the problem of the music needs to be sorted out!

Many people think that the Sphinx comes from Egypt. That's true, but the Sphinx, in Greek mythology, is a monster with the head and breasts of a woman, the body of a lion, and the wings of a bird. Her name means "throtter." This is just a reference to the many influences of Greek mythology in the books.

Hermione, in Greek mythology, was the daughter of Helen of Troy (the face that launched a thousand ships) and Menelaus, king of Sparta. Although she was betrothed to Orestes, king of Mycenae, after the Trojan War Hermione married Neoptolemus, the son of the Greek hero Achilles. Orestes later killed Neoptolemus and became Hermione's second husband. Although this might seem far-fetched, maybe Hermione Granger has two men fighting over her? Viktor Krum and Ron Weasley? No killings here, just a parallel comparison of what's possible.

Luna Lovegood, one of the new, yet important characters was introduced in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Her name 'Luna' means 'the Moon.' And it is also the Latin name for the Greek Goddess Selene, who was basically the Moon. The Moon gives light in the darkness, which implies that Luna might be the one to shine in the latter books when darkness, i.e. evil, prevails. Watch out for a central part played by Luna in the future books.

We can also take the example of Minerva McGonagall. Minerva is the Latin translation of Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and knowledge. It's very appropriate that Minerva, a.k.a. Athena, is a wise teacher who guides Harry along the way.

Of course, Remus, in Roman mythology, had a twin brother, Romulus, and many people speculated that Remus Lupin had a twin brother, until Rowling put rest to those rumors herself.

Cassandra Trelawney was Sibyl Trelawney's ancestor. J.K. Rowling has chosen these names with great care. Cassandra, in Greek mythology, was the daughter of King Priam and Queen Hecuba of Troy. The god Apollo, who loved Cassandra, granted her the gift of prophecy, but when she refused to return his love, Apollo made the gift useless by decreeing that no one would believe her predictions. As for Sibyl: Sibyl, in Greek and Roman mythology, was any woman inspired with prophetic power by the god Apollo. The sibyls prophesied in a frenzied trance. Whenever Sibyl Trelawney makes a true prophecy (and of these we have read of two) she goes into a weird trance.

Severus Snape = Perseus Evans. Perseus was a famous Greek who killed the Gorgon Medusa. Medusa was a Gorgon who had snakes for hair and anyone who looked into her eyes turned to stone. And in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, who can overlook a giant snake who can kill people by them looking at the Basilisk's eyes and managed to petrify ('turn to stone') so many people? Medusa = Basilisk? Hmm, food for thought. However, it was Harry, not Snape, who killed the Basilisk, but besides that, the comparison is too hard-hitting to miss. Another thing about Perseus, he was incidentally (ok, not incidentally, Zeus planned it all – the scheming old Immortal! You might be interested to know, Zeus was the father of Perseus as well as Heracles) the great-grandfather of Heracles or Hercules (which implies that Perseus was Heracles' great-grandfather and half-brother!). Yup, Perseus's granddaughter was Alcmena, the mother of Heracles.

I think of Harry as an equal to Heracles. I mean, Heracles was the savior of the Immortals, as Harry is the savior of the wizarding world. However, Snape is not all that old to be Harry's great-grandfather, he was as old as his parents, nor is he his half-brother or anything of the sort (at least, I hope not! Who wants to be Snape's brother?). But this leads me to think that perhaps Snape is related to Lily and Harry in some way. Yet another thing about him, he rescued Princess Andromeda and married her. Remember Andromeda? And I mean the Andromeda of the Harry Potter world. She was the mother of Nymphadora Tonks. I am not implying Snape married her, that's not possible anyway, since Nymphadora mentioned her father was a Muggle.

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OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE

Directions: After reading Edith Hamilton’s non-fiction book, *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes* (1942)—as well as Devina’s *The Wireless Wizarding Network* editorial, “Magical Musings: Harry Potter in Greece?” (c. 2004)—answer the question that follows. Be sure to use specific examples to demonstrate your understanding and incorporate textual evidence from both the book and the article to support your ideas.

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Question

1. Devina’s blog post was written before the final two books of the *Harry Potter* series were published. Even if you have not read the *Harry Potter* books specifically, how does knowledge of allusions to Greek mythology help readers to better understand the complexity of characters and foreshadowing of plot events in literature?

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