

NINE MUSES

T E A C H E R ' S G U I D E

PERFECTION LEARNING®

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TO THE TEACHER



Nine Muses is designed to be used in language arts, literature, and drama classrooms. Each play is one-act and royalty-free. True to the classics yet with a contemporary spin, the collection provides humor and relevancy that will connect its universal themes with young readers and actors. Because the student book includes extensive background information, it can stand on its own as a unit on mythology.

This teacher's guide extends the student book by offering suggestions for **Teaching**, **Discussing**, and **Producing** the plays.

Teaching

The Teaching section looks at the play through three different lenses: as mythology, as literature, and as theatre. A chart of the literary and theatrical elements covered can be found on page 6 of this Teacher's Guide. Share these concepts with students whenever it is appropriate—before reading, after reading, or at various stages along the way.

Discussing

The Discussing section provides thought-provoking questions as well as multi-modal activities that can be used in a number of ways. For example, discussion questions that emphasize critical thinking skills could be the basis for literary circles, essay tests, or debate topics. Additional resources for teaching the plays are also listed in this section.

Producing

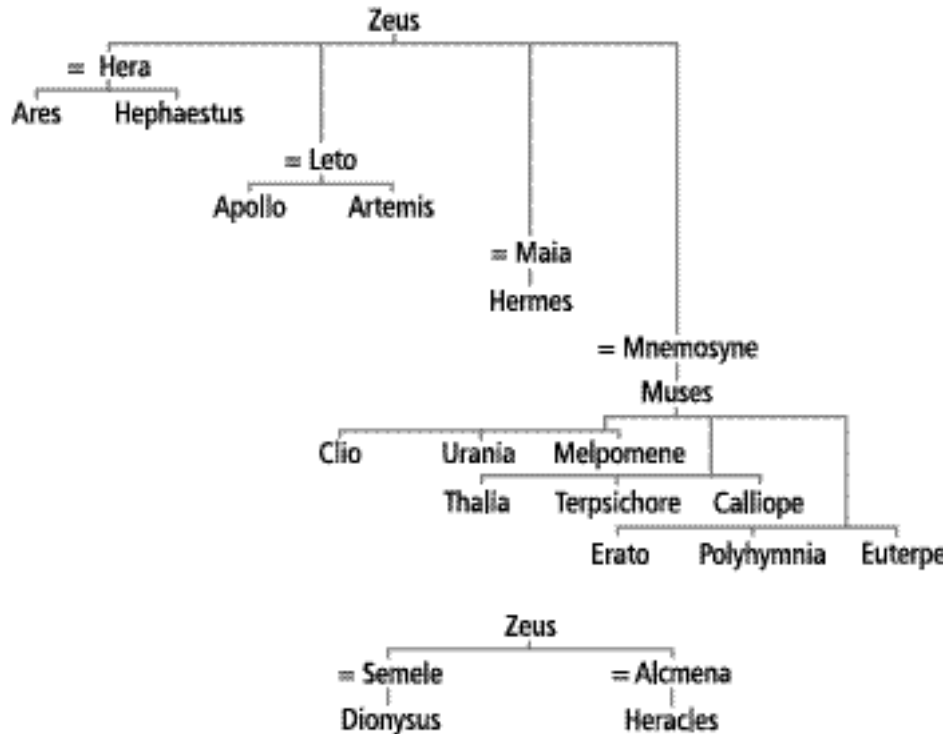
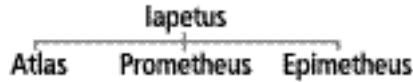
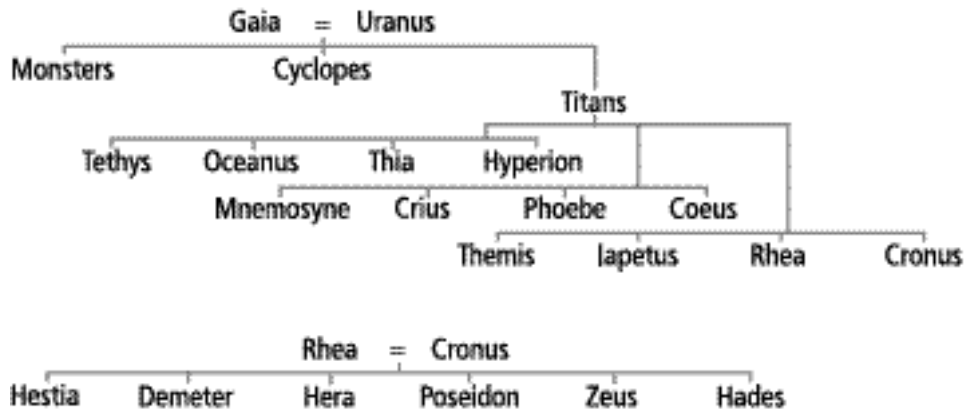
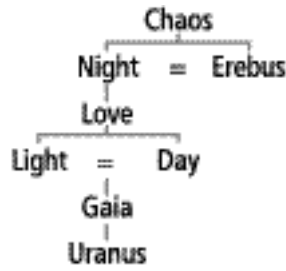
The Producing section presents simple staging suggestions using everyday materials, basic stage layouts, and casting options for each play.

Reproducibles

You will find several useful reproducibles at the back of this book. They are designed to help students with various stages of play production, including costumes, makeup, and so forth.

How you use the student book and teacher's guide will of course depend on your purpose and your students' prior knowledge of mythology. However, you may wish to start by having students read the essays "What Is Mythology?" (page 5) and "From Chaos to Olympus" (page 7) in the student book. Handing out copies of the family tree on the opposite page may help students keep track of the Olympians and their offspring.

THE FAMILY TREE OF GODS AND GODDESSES



NINE MUSES SKILLS CHART



This Teacher's Guide introduces three literary and theatrical elements for each play as shown in the chart below.

TEACHING *NINE MUSES*

PLAY TITLE	MYTH	LITERATURE	THEATRE
<i>Pandon</i>	Origin Stories	Ambiguity	Masks
<i>Phaeton and the Sun Chariot</i>	Hubris	Anachronism	Freeze
<i>Demeter and Persephone</i>	Nature Gods	Personification	Tragedy
<i>Orpheus and Eurydice</i>	The Quest	Symbolism	Music
<i>Eros and Psyche</i>	Taboo	Folktales	Conventions
<i>The Apple of Discord</i>	Pantheon of Vanity	Epic	Theatricalism
<i>Odysseus and the Sirens</i>	The Hero's Test	Conflict	Suspension of Disbelief
<i>Proteus</i>	Testing Heroes	Humor	Chorus
<i>Prometheus Unbound</i>	Culture Hero	Myth and Legend	Greek Trilogy

TEACHING *EROS AND PSYCHE*

The Play as Mythology: Taboo

In mythology, many rules forbid people to do certain things, resulting in such warnings as “don’t tell anybody about this,” “don’t do that,” and “don’t look at me.” In ancient Irish Celtic stories, such rules with supernatural origins are called *geasa*, and breaking a *geas* results in calamity or death. Native Americans also had many prohibitions, and misfortune was said to be certain for those who broke them. In Polynesian tradition, things forbidden are called *taboo*—or *tabu*—a term now widely used in other cultures. The taboo motif in European folktales includes forbidden foods, flowers, lovers, and the setting of time limits.

In Greek myths, taboos are whims of the gods. Classical gods even make rules for other gods, such as “you can’t marry a mortal.” Since these deities tend to be very much like human beings, some of their rules don’t hold up very well. They get broken, and breaking a rule made by a deity can be a dangerous business. Punishment usually follows.

The Play as Literature: Folktales

Myths deal with goddesses, gods, and the human heroes and heroines they influence. Another kind of story passed down orally from very early cultures is the *folktale*, told for entertainment. These include tall tales and legends that fictionalize actual people or events, animal stories, and fairy tales, among others. In European cultures, we find many folktales with themes that overlap Greek myths, although it’s hard to say which came first.

The most familiar European folktales were written down and published by Charles Perrault in the 1600s and by the Grimm Brothers in the early 1800s. Since then, these tales have often been retold and rewritten—generally with decreasing emphasis on violence. Many common themes appear in folktales from all over the world. These include the forbidden object or act, a secret name, marriage to a beast, the youngest of three daughters being the best or most beautiful, evil sisters, and the ordinary woman raised to royal status.

The Play as Theatre: Conventions

Students are accustomed to movies and television, in which special effects seldom leave much to the imagination. For example, in a television production of *Eros and Psyche*, Zephyr and Eros’ servants would be *really* invisible, with all kinds of extremely convincing effects to demonstrate their presence. Psyche would really appear to fly through the air when carried by Zephyr, and household objects would float around the palace when carried by the servants.

Often, plays don’t even try for such illusions. Instead, playwrights depend on *conventions*—rules that the audience accepts in place of illusions. In *Eros and Psyche*, Zephyr and Eros’ servants are dressed in black to suggest invisibility. The audience sees the actors, but pretends along with them that they are invisible.

DISCUSSING EROS AND PSYCHE

Musing About the Myth

Have students share their responses to the Musing question that appears on page 116 in the student book: *Gods and mortals aren't supposed to fall in love, but in legends and myths they sometimes do. As you read, think about the spoken and unspoken rules that influence relationships. What are the consequences of breaking such rules?*

1. Both *Orpheus and Eurydice* and *Eros and Psyche* feature trips to the Underworld made for the sake of love. What are some similarities and differences in these quests?

Encourage students to review Orpheus and Eurydice before answering. They may note that Orpheus goes to Hades to retrieve his dead wife. In hopes of getting her husband back, Psyche goes to carry out a task assigned by Aphrodite. They each have to get past one of the guardians of the Underworld and also deal with Persephone. Orpheus has a somewhat easier time with the Underworld's queen, since she's charmed by his music. Both are successful in their quests but make a mistake at the end of them. Orpheus' error results in permanent death for Eurydice. Psyche's error puts her into a deep sleep, but Eros is able to bring her out of it. Both couples are finally together permanently, one pair dead and the other immortal.

2. In this Greek myth, Psyche is not actually married to a monster, although she believes she is. In the folktale *Beauty and the Beast*, Beauty is married to a monstrous-looking creature. Discuss the differences in these two situations.

Students may observe that Eros seems to

believe that it's better for Psyche to think he's a monster than to know he's a god—since it is forbidden for gods and mortals to marry. But in traditional myths and folktales, actually being married to a monster would be too horrible. If there is a monster, he or she is transformed into a handsome prince or princess.

In more recent versions of the Beauty/Beast story, Beauty has to recognize the goodness at the heart of the monster. Then he might be physically transformed, but it's recognized that he was good all along. Or he might not change at all (as in a popular television series of the 1980s).

3. Was it a good decision for Eros to refuse to let Psyche know who he was?
Ask students to support their answers from the text. After Psyche sees Eros, he leaves, saying, "There can be no love where there is no trust." Some students may feel that he was the first one lacking in trust. Others may feel that he was right to try to protect her.
4. If she had known, do you think she would have been able to keep the secret?

Since Psyche was easily influenced by her sisters' words, some may feel that she wouldn't have kept the secret if she had known it.

5. What purpose do you think taboos serve?

Students may offer that in some instances, taboos keep people from doing things that are destructive to themselves or others.

6. Various kinds of monsters appear in myths and folktales, including dragons and sea-serpents; the three-headed dog



Cerberus; and mixed creatures such as the bird-women Sirens, the bull-man Minotaur, and the woman-animal-bird Sphinx. What is a monster like in traditional stories?

Answers will vary. Traditionally, monsters are negative forces in one way or another—representing something wicked that the average person can't overcome. A monster might be a super-powerful, and probably supernatural, beast.

7. What part do monsters play in stories?

They capture the reader's attention because they are larger than life and capable of creating drama when they kill for sport, guard great treasures, and hold prisoners. Also they help create heroes, because people who slay monsters generally become heroes.

8. What are some monsters in stories we tell today?

Students may observe that in more recent stories, the monstrous-looking being isn't necessarily evil. And handsome people who are evil are also referred to as monsters. A list of contemporary monsters might include people who put the innocent to death or bring destruction for the sake of their own power. But we do still tell stories about giant beasts that have to be controlled or slain.

9. Some kinds of stories have been told by different cultures all around the world. For example, the basic Cinderella story—in which a young heroine is mistreated by a stepmother and stepsisters but ends up marrying a prince—turns up in Chinese, Native American, and African tales as well as

in the European variations. Why do you think that people from such different backgrounds tell similar stories?

Students may offer that the idea of fate rewarding a person who is good has wide appeal. It takes many forms in myths and folktales. And the situation of a young woman mistreated by her stepfamily must have been widespread enough to attract sympathy in many different cultures.

10. In this story, Psyche broke the “don't look” rule. How would the story go if she hadn't?

Answers may vary, but if Psyche hadn't broken the rule, there wouldn't be a story. Further, Psyche and Eros might never have truly understood each other.

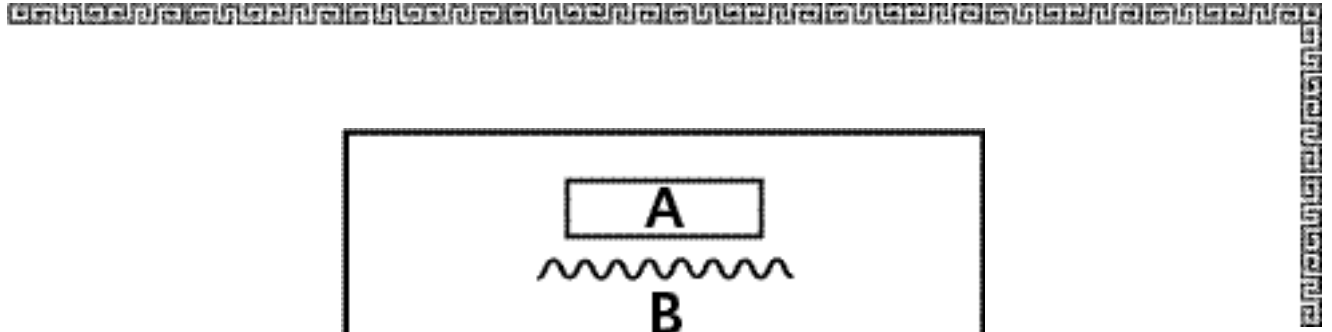
Activity

In the Playwright's Postscript, the playwright mentions some tasks forced upon Psyche by Aphrodite. Except for Psyche's descent into the Underworld, none of these are in the play. Have students work in groups of four to six to dramatize each of these episodes.

Connections

The Playwright's Postscript mentions this story's resemblance to the story of *Beauty and the Beast*, which was turned into a Disney movie in 1991. Jean Cocteau also made a wonderful movie version in 1946. Students might also note similarities between *Eros and Psyche* and the story of Cinderella (the wicked sisters, for example), also made into a Disney movie in 1950.

PRODUCING *EROS AND PSYCHE*



Suggested Stage Plan

- A. Bench
- B. Curtain to conceal the bench

Scenery

As the opening stage directions indicate, the only scenery needed for this play are two stools, and also a bench concealed by an upstage curtain. During the play, the curtain opens to reveal Eros asleep on the upstage bench. If possible, the bench might be placed on a forward-sliding platform so when the curtain is opened, Eros' "bed" can move downstage and closer to the audience.

Doubling *Eros and Psyche*

Actors sometimes play more than one part in a play. This is called *doubling*. *Eros and Psyche* has a cast of 16 speaking parts (Cerberus has three heads). The play can easily be performed by 9 actors if doubled (or tripled) along these lines.

FEMALE

1. Erato
2. Psyche
3. Aphrodite
Servant
4. Opal
Cerberus Head
5. Beryl
Cerberus Head
6. Oracle
Gatekeeper
7. Persephone
Servant

MALE

1. King
Zephyr
Cerberus Head
2. Eros