

Chinese and Greek Mythology

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Unit Topic: Compare and Contrast

Grade: 6th-8th

Subject: English Language Arts

Unit Time Frame: 2-3 days

Essential Questions

1. How does mythology between culture compare?
2. What are the purpose of myths in each culture?

Background

This lesson should coincide with when Social Studies is studying Greek or Roman history and mythology.

Website for Background of Chinese Creation Myth

<http://www.ancient-origins.net/human-origins-folklore/pangu-and-chinese-creation-myth-00347>

Website for Background on Greek Creation Myth

<http://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/greek-mythology>

Learning Objectives

Students will compare and contrast myths from different times and places, identifying, where they occur, universal mythic patterns and character types such as the Voyage of the Hero, the Creation Story, the Cosmic Flood, the Battle of Good and Evil, Apocalyptic myths, myths of Dying and Reborn Gods, the Trickster, the Great Mother Goddess, etc.

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STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.6

Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.10

By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.7

Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.5

Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.9

Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

Unit Summary

-Students will review background information about creation myths for both cultures and the purpose for myths

-Students will read the creation myth of the Chinese and Greek perspective

-Students will create a compare and contrast venn diagram with partners

-Students will then discuss in groups their findings

-Students will research other creation stories (i.e. religious, cultural, etc) of their own heritage/culture and share with the class.

-Students will create their own creation story

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Formative and Summative Assessments

Formative

Observation of students throughout the class

Venn Diagram

Group discussion

Summative

Write own Creation Myth

Chinese Creation Myth

Pangu and the Creation of the World

This myth is similar to many creation myths worldwide, in which the world is formed out of a the body of a primal being.

In the beginning there was darkness everywhere, and Chaos ruled. Within the darkness there formed an egg, and inside the egg the giant Pangu came into being. For aeons, safely inside the egg, Pangu slept and grew. When he had grown to gigantic size he stretched his huge limbs and in so doing broke the egg. The lighter parts of the egg floated upwards to form the heavens and the denser parts sank downwards, to become the earth. And so was formed earth and sky, Yin and Yang.

Pangu saw what had happened and he was pleased. But he feared that heaven and earth might meld together again, so he placed himself between them, his head holding up the sky and his feet firmly upon the earth. Pangu continued to grow at a rate of ten feet a day for 18,000 years, so increasing the distance between heaven and earth, until they seemed fixed and secure, 30,000 miles apart. Now exhausted, Pangu went back to sleep and never woke up.

Pangu died, and his body went to make the world and all its elements. The wind and clouds were formed from his breath, his voice was thunder and lightning, his eyes became the sun and moon, his arms and his legs became the four directions of the compass and his trunk became the mountains. His flesh turned into the soil and the trees that grow on it, his blood into the rivers that flow and his veins into paths men travel. His body hair became the grass and herbs, and his skin the same, while precious stones and minerals were formed from his bones and teeth. His sweat became the dew and the hair of his head became the stars that trail throughout heaven. As for the parasites on his body, these became the divers races of humankind.

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Greek Creation Myth

Gaia the earth goddess was formed from a raging chaos, which existed before time began. She gave birth to Uranus, the sky, who covered her completely with his starry mantle. The two of them became the first husband and wife. They bore many children, most of which were terrible monsters; creatures with 100 arms and the Cyclops, mighty giants with one eye each. Uranus feared these powerful creations and hid them deep in the earth. This caused Gaia great pain, as she loved her children. She became angry and plotted to destroy her husband. Finally Gaia gave birth to several gods and goddesses who were not fearful monsters. Among them was Kronos who was strong enough to overthrow Uranus. Gaia made him a sickle fashioned from the hardest rock she knew and gave it to her son with instructions. Kronos hid in his mother's shadow until night fell, and Uranus the sky came to earth. When Uranus was resting at last, Kronos sprang from his hiding place and killed his father with one stroke. Thus Kronos became king of the sky in his father's place. He married Rhea, an earth goddess, and had many more children. He created the first race of men, made of gold. This was called the Golden Age, when men didn't have to work, and there was no suffering or death. But Kronos was also cruel and feared his children. After each was born he ate it whole with the clothes and all, so he would never be overthrown. Rhea was horrified by this and with the help of her mother Gaia, managed to give birth to her son Zeus in hiding on the island of Crete. She gave her husband a stone wrapped in baby clothes, which he ate in one gulp. Zeus grew quickly to be the most powerful god ever. When he had grown, he returned with an army of Gaia's monsters and the rest of the gods to overthrow Kronos. The war was terrible and went on for years and years and years; all the men of the golden age were killed. Zeus freed his brothers and sisters and built the palace of Olympus, where he ruled the earth, and all gods and men. He then married his sister Hera and they had many children. Zeus had many other women in secret and they had children too; soon the world was filled with other gods. Eventually Zeus decided to create a second race of men to worship the Olympians; these were made of silver. The silver men were foolish and had no respect for the gods. This was the Silver Age, in which nothing was sacred- it did not last long. The irreverent silver men angered Zeus, who hid them away deep in the far corners of the underworld. To replace them, Zeus created a third race of men. They were made of bronze, and this began the Bronze Age.

The bronze men were aggressive and warlike. They destroyed each other with such venom that Zeus quickly hid these away in the underworld too. Zeus then made a race of heroes, who were the subjects of most of the countless myths in the Hellenic tradition. This was the heroic age, and there were many great men and women born of it. When a hero died, he was given a special place in the underworld, called the Blessed Isles, where it is always light and beautiful. The men of the heroic age, too, passed away and gave rise to men of today. The race that lives now is the iron race; which is said to be the hardest of all. Men of the Iron Age must toil all their lives and suffer and die. But the iron men are the strongest of all and will survive the Olympian gods.

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Create Your Own Creation Myth

We have read two different creation myths in class. You have also researched creation stories that are part of your religion, culture, etc. Now it is time for you to come up with your own creation myth. Your myth needs to include how the universe started, where did light and darkness come from, what formed Earth, wind, water, etc. This is meant to be fun. You are more than welcome to do this as a graphic story, meaning illustrated.

Resources

<http://www.livingmyths.com/Chinese.htm>

http://www.bigmyth.com/download/GREEK_CREATION.pdf

http://www.evc-cit.info/language_arts/learning_outcomes/English/engl028.html

chrome-extension://bpmcpldpdmajfigpchkicefoigmkfalc/views/app.html

<http://www.ancient-origins.net/human-origins-folklore/pangu-and-chinese-creation-myth-00347>

<http://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/greek-mythology>