

**Grade 6 Language Arts
Summer Project
E. Yialias**

Dear Incoming Students,

Welcome to Sixth Grade! I am looking forward to meeting you in September. Our first Language Arts Unit is about Greek Mythology and its influence on contemporary literature. During this unit, we will be reading **D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths** and a variety of informational and literary articles. Copies of this book will be provided in class, however if you **wish to annotate directly in your own copy**, this title is available for purchase at Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble.

In this Summer Project packet, I have provided the following:

- Informational Article
- Three (3) Greek Myths
- Post-Reading Graphic Organizers
- Rubric

Please follow the directions outlined below to complete the project properly.

Daily independent reading during the summer is strongly recommended. I have provided a list of "Recommended Titles" from which you may select.

Happy Summer Reading!

-E. Yialias

Summer Project Directions

1. First, read the **provided informational article**, "Greek Mythology: An Introduction" **before** reading the Greek myths. This article will provide background and focus for reading the myths.
2. Independent Reading: Select **two myths** from the packet to **read and annotate**.
3. After completing your Independent Reading of the two myths, complete the writing tasks provided for each.
4. Remember to write **well-organized responses** that provide **supporting text-based details** from the myths you have selected.
5. Submit your completed Summer Project **by Monday, September 12, 2016**.

Summer Reading: Recommended Titles of Greek Myth Anthologies

You may go to your local library or bookstore to select books about Greek myths. The book list below includes a few of the recommended titles within a wide range of Lexile reading levels. Select two (2) books that you can read independently. Read every day!

- The Gods and Goddesses of Olympus* by Aliko.
- Mythology: The Gods, Heroes, and Monsters of Ancient Greece* by Lady Hestia Evans
- The Mighty 12: Superheroes of Greek Myths* by Charles Smith
- Greek Myths and Legends* by Cheryl Evans
- Favorite Greek Myths* by Mary Pope Osborne
- The Random House Book of Greek Myths* by Eric A. Kimmel and Pep Montserrat
- Treasury of Greek Mythology: Classic Stories of Gods, Goddesses, Heroes & Monsters* by Donna Jo Napoli
- DK Readers: Greek Myths* by Deborah Lock
- Usborne Book of Greek Myths* by Anna Milbourne and Louie Stowell
- Mythology* by Edith Hamilton

Informational Article Greek Mythology: An Introduction

Thousands of years ago, a civilization flourished in Greece whose accomplishments remain with us today. They first came up with the idea of democracy, designed tools that helped make life better and even figured out how to sail ships by looking at the stars. The ancient Greeks told stories to help explain how different parts of the world worked. Today we call them "myths." They're a lot like fairy tales, such as Cinderella or Little Red Riding Hood—or even like stories you read today about Batman or Spiderman. To the Greeks, they were very important, and they held wise lessons for those who heard them.

Ancient Greek myths are wonderful stories that teach a life lesson or explain an event in the universe. Today, science can explain where rain comes from or why the seasons change, but many thousands of years ago, humans did not have this knowledge. Humans wanted to understand the world around them, so they created gods and goddesses who ruled the universe, and invented stories that answered their questions.

Greek myths were intended to provide a colorful explanation for things that went on in the world. For example, they explained thunderstorms as the god Zeus hurling lightning from his throne in the heavens. Or whenever winter came, they said it was Demeter, the goddess of nature, who was sad because her daughter had gone away from her. Other myths were stories of heroes or kings. They were supposed to be entertaining, but also to give lessons about how to do the right thing or how to live a good life.

Greek myths featured 12 major gods (and a lot of minor ones) who ruled the world from their home on the top of Mount Olympus. Their leader was Zeus, the king of the gods. Each of them controlled a single part of the world. For example, Poseidon was god of the sea, while Hermes was the god of travelers and thieves. The Greek gods were often petty and immature. They would get angry over little things or take what they wanted without asking other people. To the Greeks, that helped explain why life wasn't always fair, or why bad things sometimes happened to people who had done nothing wrong.

The Greeks had their share of mythic heroes, just as we have heroes like Spiderman today. They weren't gods (though many of them had parents who were gods), but rather men who fought to rid the world of monsters and other plagues. They were often aided by the gods, who gave them gifts such as magical swords, but in the end had to stand on their own and do their deeds without anyone helping them.

Monsters in Greek mythology fell into two categories. Some stood as obstacles to the heroes and their deeds—abominations that needed to be destroyed. The bull-headed Minotaur and the terrible Medusa are good examples of such monsters. Other Greek monsters were not slain by heroes, but rather existed eternally as part of some ongoing threat. The magical Sirens, who lured sailors to their deaths by wrecking their ships, are examples of this kind of monster.

Some Greek myths ended sadly. The heroes would eventually die or learn their lessons too late. Many times, they were killed by things that they should have seen but didn't, or by flaws that they couldn't recognize until it was too late. Death is a part of life, and the Greek stories tried to show the sad times with their characters as well as the happy ones.

