



Athens and the Olive Tree

6_A

Introducing the Read-Aloud

10 minutes

What Have We Already Learned?

Review with students what they have learned about the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece. You may wish to show students images 2A-1 through 3A-9 and ask them the following questions:

- What were the names of some of the gods and goddesses you have learned about? (Apollo, Poseidon, Hermes, Zeus, etc.)
- Who were the king and queen of the gods? (Zeus and Hera)
- Where were the Olympian gods and goddesses believed to live? (Mount Olympus)
- What are some of the powers the gods and goddesses were believed to have? (controlled the sea, invented hunting, etc.)

Making Predictions About the Read-Aloud

Ask students to think about what they have learned about the gods and goddesses of the ancient Greeks. On Poster 1, show the location of the city-state of Athens in relation to Sparta, which they just heard about. Remind them that they heard about Athens previously when they learned about where the sculptor Myron was from. Ask students to predict how the city-state of Athens got its name.

Purpose for Listening

Tell students to listen to find out if their predictions are correct about how the city-state of Athens got its name.



Athens and the Olive Tree

◀ Show image 6A-1: Athenians beginning construction of city

1 or perfect

Far from the city-state of Sparta, another group of Greeks found the **ideal**¹ place to build yet another new city-state. “That high hill will be the perfect place to build a city around,” these Greeks said. “There is also a good harbor for boats just a short distance away.”²

2 [Point to Image Card 3 (Fishing Boat and Harbor) on the Civilization Chart.] What is a harbor? Why did the ancient Greeks want to build their city-state near a good harbor?

Almost all Greek cities were built around high hills. That way, if an enemy tried to attack the lower areas of the city, the people would climb up and gather on the high hill behind the city walls, where it would be harder for the enemy to reach them.



◀ Show image 6A-2: Poseidon showing off the greatness of the sea

Now that this group of Greeks had found just the place they were looking for, they needed a name for their city. One of the Greek stories tells us that while the Greeks were trying to decide on a name for their new city, an amazing thing happened: two of the gods appeared to the people and spoke to them.

3 What was Poseidon the god of?

The first appearance came when the Greeks were gathered at the nearby harbor. The huge, muscular figure of Poseidon rose up from the sea.³ All around him, dolphins leaped and played in the waves, and seabirds circled in the air around his towering head and shoulders that seemed to almost reach the clouds.

4 Mortals are humans who do not live forever. The gods were believed to be immortal, meaning they would live forever.

“Hear me, little mortals!” Poseidon boomed,⁴ and even those farthest from the shore could hear his loud voice. “You would be wise to honor me above all the gods and goddesses, for as Lord of the Sea, I can bring you good luck in your fishing.”⁵

5 What does it mean to honor someone? Would good luck in fishing be important to the ancient Greeks?

He lifted his vast hands and said, “Look!” Hundreds of fish leaped from the waves and sank back again.⁶ Lowering his hands, Poseidon, who was the god of the seas and of all that crosses the seas, including ships, continued, “I can also bless the safety of your fishermen while they ride upon my waves, and see to it

6 If Poseidon’s hands are vast, are they massive or small?

7 or very quickly

8 What are merchants?

9 or overflowing with joy

10 [Point to Image Card 9 (Apollo's Temple) on the Civilization Chart.]



← **Show image 6A-3: Athena addressing the people; presenting an olive tree**

11 A blessing is a divine, or holy, gift.

12 Who do you think was speaking?

13 Were your predictions about who was speaking correct?

that the ships in which your merchants trade move **swiftly**⁷ and smoothly to distant shores and back home again.⁸ I, Poseidon, will do all these things for you, and more, if you will honor me.”

The people were **overjoyed**⁹ to hear his words, and turning to one another, they said, “How wonderful! We shall tell Poseidon that we will pray to him above all the other gods.”¹⁰

But, according to the story, before they could say this to the god of the sea, another voice called out to them, “Hear me, O people, for I, too, offer you a gift and a **blessing**.”¹¹ This time it was a female voice they heard, speaking in calm, clear, intelligent tones.¹²

All the people turned in the direction of this new voice and saw before them Athena, the goddess of wisdom and of war.¹³ Athena told the people, “The gift I offer you is this.” She, too, lifted a hand; but instead of anything as dramatic as hundreds of fish leaping up, all that appeared on the ground was one, single, graceful tree. It grew high and wide on the very spot where a moment before the ground had been empty.

“This is an olive tree,” Athena said.

The people did not want to be rude to the goddess, but they whispered to one another, “She offers us one tree? It is very pretty to look at, but it is nothing compared to Poseidon’s blessings.”¹⁴

14 What are blessings? Which blessing do you think is better?



← **Show image 6A-4: Many uses of the olive tree**

15 Remember, when Hermes found them, the goddesses Athena and Demeter were walking through the olive tree groves.

Hearing all, Athena smiled and said, “Let me tell you about this tree. One day soon, all of these lands around you—even the rocky hills beyond that are hard to farm—will be covered in groves and groves of these olive trees.¹⁵ From these trees will come the wealth of your city, for you will eat the fruit you pick from these trees and never go hungry. The oil you squeeze from the fruit will be so delicious that its flavor will improve anything you cook with it. Fill a lamp with the olive oil, set a dry rope wick in it, and

16 or set fire to it

ignite it,¹⁶ and you will have light in the darkest hour of the night. Mix other sweet-smelling herbs into the oil and rub it onto your skin, and you will be healthier and cleaner and smell sweeter. And because the oil will stay fresh in jugs and bottles for a long time, you can ship it to other lands far and near, for many people will want to have these blessings of the olive for themselves.”

17 What is shelter?

“The tree itself will be a blessing, too, for in its shade you will find shelter from the heat of the summer sun and from the cold rains of winter.¹⁷ The wood of this tree will be fine for carving, so you will never lack for bowls, plates, or furniture. The tree will live for hundreds of years, and if a fire burns it down, it will grow again from the stump that is left behind.”

18 or pointed to

19 Which gift do you think these Greeks will choose?



Athena continued, “And I tell you this as the goddess of war: The olive branch will become the symbol of peace. Pray to me when you are in danger, and I will protect you.” Athena gestured to¹⁸ the olive tree and said, “Here, then, is food, fortune, and protection that will be the great blessings of your people forever—if you choose to honor me.”¹⁹

← **Show image 6A-5: People choosing Athena as their patron**

The people thought about what Poseidon and Athena had offered and came to a decision. They told the god of the sea, “Great Poseidon, you have offered us wonderful things. We will always offer prayers to you and be grateful to you for the riches of the sea—however much you choose to share them from your great and generous heart. But we will be the people of Athena and her olive tree.”²⁰

20 Were your predictions about how Athens got its name correct? Olive trees still grow in abundance in Greece today.

21 or our loyalty and love

To Athena, the people said, “To show our devotion to you,²¹ we will name our new city ‘Athens’ in honor of you and your blessings.”

And that, the story tells us, is how these Greeks came to call their city Athens.

Comprehension Questions

10 minutes

1. *Literal* Where does the name Athens come from? (from the goddess Athena) [Ask a volunteer to locate Athens on Poster 1.]
2. *Literal* Describe the ideal place the ancient Athenians found for their city. (near the sea with a harbor for trade and fishing; near a high hill for safety)
3. *Literal* According to the legend, which god first appeared to the Athenians when they were trying to find a name for their city? (Poseidon, god of the sea) What blessings did he offer the ancient Greeks? (good luck in fishing; safety for fishermen and merchants; and swift travel for their ships)
4. *Inferential* How did the people feel about Poseidon's offer? (overjoyed) Why? (They would be able to safely catch plenty of fish and travel safely and swiftly on the seas when trading.)
5. *Inferential* Who appeared before the Athenians before they decided to accept Poseidon's offer? (Athena) What was she the goddess of? (wisdom and war) What blessings did she offer the Athenians? (the olive tree and all of the blessings that come with it)



◀ **Show image 6A-4: Many uses of the olive tree**

6. *Inferential* What were all of the benefits of the olive tree that Athena went on to describe? (olives to eat; olive oil for cooking; filling a lamp with oil and igniting the wick to provide light; keeping skin healthy; trading; wood from the trees for shade and building)
7. *Evaluative* Which blessing did the Athenians choose? (Athena's olive tree) Do you think they made the right choice? Why or why not? (Answers may vary.)

[Please continue to model the *Think Pair Share* process for students, as necessary, and scaffold students in their use of the process.]

I am going to ask a question. I will give you a minute to think about the question, and then I will ask you to turn to your neighbor and discuss the question. Finally, I will call on several of you to share what you discussed with your partner.

8. *Evaluative Think Pair Share:* If you were to write a story about a god or goddess who wanted a city to worship him or her, what gift or blessing would that god or goddess offer to the people of that city? (Answers may vary.)
9. After hearing today's read-aloud and questions and answers, do you have any remaining questions? [If time permits, you may wish to allow for individual, group, or class research of the text and/or other resources to answer these remaining questions.]

Word Work: Ideal

5 minutes

1. In the read-aloud you heard, "Far from the city-state of Sparta, another group of Greeks found the *ideal* place to build yet another new city-state."
2. Say the word *ideal* with me.
3. If something is ideal, it is perfect, and you wouldn't want to change it in any way.
4. The new park was ideal; there was a lake, a shady picnic area, and a brand-new playground.
5. Have you ever experienced something you thought was ideal? Try to use the word *ideal* when you tell about it. [Ask two or three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase the students' responses: "_____ was ideal because . . ."]
6. What's the word we've been talking about? What part of speech is the word *ideal*?

Use a *Making Choices* activity for follow-up. Directions: I am going to say several things. If what I say is ideal, say, "That is ideal." If what I say is not ideal, say, "That is not ideal."

1. a rainy day when you're planning to go to the park (That is not ideal.)
2. a home run for your team when the bases are loaded (That is ideal.)
3. a perfect score on your spelling test (That is ideal.)
4. losing your favorite toy (That is not ideal.)
5. making the most delicious dinner (That is ideal.)



Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day



Athens and the Olive Tree

6_B

Extensions

20 minutes

Civilization Chart (Instructional Master 1B-1, optional)

Show students Image Card 14 (Olive Tree Uses), and ask them what they see in the image and what they remember about the importance of the olive tree to the ancient Greeks. Ask students which square the Image Card should go in. Have a volunteer place the Image Card in the “Jobs” square.

Show students Image Card 15 (Athens), and ask them what they see in the image and what they remember about Athens. Ask students which square the Image Card should go in. Have a volunteer place the Image Card in the “City-States” square.

Point to Image Card 6 (Gods/Goddesses) in the “Religion” square. Ask students which gods in the story offered gifts to the Athenians in exchange for their worship, and what these gifts were.

Review with students what is already on the Civilization Chart, and have them discuss what they remember about each image.

➤ Above and Beyond: You may wish to have some students complete Instructional Master 1B-1 on their own by drawing pictures and/or writing words in each square.

The Parthenon

Tell students that the Athenians showed their devotion to the goddess Athena by building a magnificent structure called the Parthenon (PAHR-thuh-nahn). Show students Image Card 16 (Parthenon), and tell them that this structure was a temple built on the high hill in Athens. Tell them that this temple had a statue of Athena in it, just as all of the temples of the gods and goddesses had statues. Tell them that they will hear more about this statue in the next lesson. Place Image Card 16 on the Civilization Chart in the “Religion” square.

Ask students if they have ever seen a building that looks similar to the Parthenon. Show them Image Card 17 (Lincoln Memorial), and tell them that the style of the Parthenon can be seen in many U.S. government buildings today, such as the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Place Image Card 17 on the Civilization Chart in the “Contributions” square.