



The Twelve Gods of Mount Olympus

1
A

Introducing the Read-Aloud

10 minutes

Where Are We?

Show students a world map or globe; ask a volunteer to locate Greece. If students cannot locate it, point to the country of present-day Greece. Tell students that this is Greece today, and that even though it occupies a very small area now, it was once the center of a very large civilization. Show students Poster 1 (Map of Ancient Greece) from *The Ancient Greek Civilization* domain. Tell and/or remind students that the area on the Poster from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea—including Crete—represents ancient Greece, a civilization from a very long time ago.

What Do We Know?

Ask students to share what they have already learned about the ancient Greek civilization. You may wish to refer to the Civilizations Chart from *The Ancient Greek Civilization* domain to help students remember the various components of this civilization.

Domain Introduction

Tell students that, like people in many civilizations, the ancient Greeks told stories orally, or by word of mouth. Share that these stories usually had supernatural beings or heroes as the main characters, and the plots usually explained events in nature or taught people how to behave. Explain that in ancient times people did not have the knowledge that people have today. Tell students that, as a result, these stories, which were later written down, were first thought to be factual, but it is now known that they are fictional, or not true. Share with students that we call such oral stories myths.

Students who participated in the Core Knowledge Language Arts program in Grade 1 will have heard about myths in the *Astronomy*

domain and learned how many different ancient peoples told myths about the stars and constellations they saw in the sky. You may wish to solicit their knowledge of this topic to share with the class.

Tell students that over the next couple of weeks, they are going to hear many well-known Greek myths, or myths that originated in ancient Greece. Share with students that these myths include several fascinating characters, many of whom are gods and goddesses who were worshipped by the ancient Greeks. Students who participated in the Core Knowledge Language Arts program in Grade 1 will remember that gods and goddesses are beings believed to have supernatural powers and were worshipped by others. Remind students of this definition. Ask students to share the names of any gods and/or goddesses they remember from *The Ancient Greek Civilization* domain. You may wish to prompt them with the following questions:

1. Of gods and goddesses, which are male beings and which are female beings? (Gods are male beings, and goddesses are female beings.)
2. Where did the Greek gods and goddesses live, according to the ancient Greeks? Show me the location on *The Ancient Greek Civilization* Poster 1. (The Greeks believed that the most powerful of these gods and goddesses lived in a palace on the very top of Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece.)
3. Who did the ancient Greeks believe ruled these gods and goddesses? (a king named Zeus and a queen named Hera)

Meet the Characters

Explain that before each read-aloud students will have an opportunity to meet the characters in the story by looking at a few images and hearing the characters' names.

Note: As you take students through the *Meet the Characters* section of *Introducing the Read-Aloud* in each lesson, you may wish to create a Character Chart similar to the one that follows and fill in relevant information about the characters as they are introduced. You may wish to add to the chart throughout the domain and use the chart for reference. Please note that most of the characters'

names are not decodable for students in Grade 2 and students should not be expected to be able to read the names. You may have some students who can read some of the names or who may enjoy recognizing them as a result of the repetition throughout the domain as they see the names, listen to the stories, and view the illustrations of characters. You will need to add additional rows to the chart for each lesson’s read-aloud.

| Character Name | Description of Character (god, goddess, mythological creature, human) | Role in the Story |
|----------------|---|--|
| Leonidas | human | son traveler to Olympia |
| Cyrus | human | father and potter traveler to Olympia |



← **Show image 1A-4: Olympians on their thrones**

Tell students that the first myth they will hear is called “The Twelve Gods of Mount Olympus.” Remind students that the image shows some of the Greek gods and goddesses. Tell students that in today’s story they will hear the names of each of these gods and goddesses and learn a little about them. Ask a student to point to Zeus and Hera on their thrones. Ask students if they remember from *Ancient Greek Civilizations* if the gods and goddesses all have the same powers.



← **Show image 1A-2: Leonidas and his father preparing the cart**

Tell students that in today’s story, they will hear about Cyrus and his son Leonidas who are going to the footraces at Olympia to sell their pottery.

Purpose for Listening

Tell students to listen carefully to find out the twelve main gods and goddesses the ancient Greeks worshipped.



The Twelve Gods of Mount Olympus

← Show image 1A-1: Leonidas waking up

Leonidas woke up early on the day of the footraces. Still lying in bed, he could hear his father, Cyrus, outside **tending**¹ the horses. “He’s probably feeding them,” Leonidas thought to himself. “And then we’ll harness them to the cart and make our way to Olympia.”² Olympia was the site of the day’s footraces in honor of Zeus, the leader of all the Greek gods and goddesses. Leonidas and his father would take their pottery to sell to the people at the races, and when they had sold all they could, they would watch the races.³

Leonidas knew that if he asked, his father would tell him again how the gods and goddesses came to be, and why he and the other Greeks honored them with races, festivals,⁴ and feasts. It was his favorite story, and he loved to hear his father tell it.

But first, Leonidas had to get out of bed and get dressed; otherwise, he wouldn’t get to hear that story or see the races at all. After breakfast he went outside to help his father, Cyrus, who had just finished harnessing the first of their two horses to the cart.

← Show image 1A-2: Leonidas and his father preparing the cart

“Good morning, father,” Leonidas said.

“Good morning, son! We’re almost ready to go. Will you help me harness this last horse?”

Leonidas nodded, and together, as the sun burnt away the morning fog, father and son harnessed the second horse. Once they double-checked that the horses were **securely**⁵ fastened to the cart, Leonidas and Cyrus finished storing their pottery safely in the cart. Then, taking their seats on a wooden plank⁶ at the front of the cart, they started their journey to Olympia.⁷

1 or caring for

2 If Leonidas and his father are going to harness the horses, they are going to attach straps and bands to them to have control over them as the animals pull the cart.

3 Pottery is the name for vases, pots, bowls, or plates shaped from moist clay and hardened by heat. Many groups of people have made pottery, e.g., Native Americans, Mayans, Aztecs, etc.

4 or celebrations



5 or tightly

6 or thick board

7 [Point to the wooden plank in the next image.]



← **Show image 1A-3: Leonidas’s father pointing to Mount Olympus⁸**

8 How do you think Leonidas feels about going to Olympia to see the races held in honor of Zeus?

After they’d traveled some miles down the road, Leonidas asked, “Father, will you tell me again the story of the gods and goddesses?”

9 A sanctuary is a holy place. The Olympian gods being celebrated in this sanctuary were the gods and goddesses whom the Greeks believed lived on Mount Olympus.

“Of course, son. As you know, we’re going to Olympia for the footraces held in honor of Zeus. Olympia is the home of an important **sanctuary** devoted to Zeus, where we celebrate him and the other Olympian gods and goddesses with sporting competitions.⁹ The twelve gods of Mount Olympus are the most powerful of all of the many gods, and Zeus is their leader. Of course, Mount Olympus is actually far away, but this is a beautiful valley, beloved to them and perfect for the games.”

10 Wares are goods. What wares did Cyrus and Leonidas have in their cart?

Their cart went over a bump, and Cyrus turned around to check their wares briefly before continuing the story.¹⁰ “These gods and goddesses can sometimes be just like you and me: they can feel happy or sad, jealous and angry, or generous and loving. Unlike you or me, they have special powers to control things like the seasons and the weather, when and where there is war, and sometimes, with whom we fall in love! And unlike you and me, the gods are immortal—that means they never die.”



← **Show image 1A-4: Olympians on their thrones**

11 or humans who are born and later die

Cyrus paused before continuing on with Leonidas’s favorite part of the story. “That’s how the gods are different from mortals¹¹ on Earth, but do you know how to tell them apart from one another?”

Leonidas did know, but he wanted his father to continue telling the story, so he said, “Yes, Father, but tell me anyway!”



← **Show image 1A-5: Zeus and Poseidon**

Cyrus continued on, saying, “Well, as I said before, Zeus is the leader of all the gods and protects all of us here on Earth. He has a voice like rolling thunder and controls the wind, rain, and lightning, which he also uses as his weapons. He has two brothers, Hades and Poseidon, and together they rule over the whole world. While

12 Who can point to the trident in the illustration?

Zeus controls the heavens, Poseidon controls the sea and rules over it with a trident.¹² When he strikes the ground with his trident, the earth shakes, and when he strikes the seas with it, the waves rise up as tall as a mountain. Zeus and Poseidon are two of the twelve gods who live on Mount Olympus and have thrones there.”

Leonidas and his father came to a fork in the road and turned left. They could now see other carts ahead of them in the distance—other vendors looking to sell their wares at the footraces in Olympia.



← **Show image 1A-6: Hades in the underworld on his throne**

“And what about Hades, Zeus’s other brother?” Leonidas asked.

“While Zeus rules the heavens, and Poseidon rules the sea, Hades rules the underworld, or the land of the dead. Hades has a helmet that makes him invisible, so that no one, friend or foe,¹³ can see him coming. Hades’ throne is in the underworld, where he lives,” Cyrus said.

“He sounds scary,” Leonidas shivered. “Who else lives on Mount Olympus?”

13 or enemy



← **Show image 1A-7: Demeter and Hera**

“Well,” Cyrus said, “Zeus also has a sister who has a throne on Mount Olympus. Demeter is the goddess of the harvest and grain; she looks after all of the fields and crops on Earth. Zeus’s wife, Hera, also lives on Mount Olympus; she is the queen of the gods and goddesses and is the goddess of women’s lives. Hmm, how many is that?” Cyrus turned and asked his son.

Counting on his fingers, Leonidas said, “Zeus, Poseidon, Demeter, and Hera. Just four . . . who are the other gods and goddesses who live on Mount Olympus?”



← **Show image 1A-8: Hephaestus, Aphrodite, Athena, and Ares**

“Well, there’s Hephaestus, god of fire and the blacksmith of the gods; Aphrodite, goddess of love; Athena, goddess of wisdom; and Ares, god of war.”



← **Show image 1A-9: Apollo, Artemis, Hermes, and Dionysus**

“Then there are the twins: Apollo, the god of light and music, and his sister Artemis, the goddess of the hunt. There’s Hermes, the messenger of the gods, and finally, Dionysus, the god of wine and the youngest of all the gods. Even though these are the most powerful of all the gods and goddesses, Zeus is the strongest of all. And it is he whom we honor today.”



← **Show image 1A-10: Leonidas and his father arrive at the races**

Cyrus stopped the cart; they had finally reached Olympia. **Spectators** and vendors moved all around them as the athletes stretched in preparation for their races.¹⁴ Leonidas knew that many miles away was cloud-covered Mount Olympus. As the midday sun shone through some of the clouds, Leonidas imagined he could see the briefest **glimpse**¹⁵ of a palace with twelve golden thrones.¹⁶

14 Spectators are observers. There are three types of people at the sanctuary of Olympia: spectators observing the races; vendors selling their wares; and athletes competing in the races.

15 or passing view

16 What does Leonidas think he glimpsed at the top of Mount Olympus?

Discussing the Read-Aloud

15 minutes

Comprehension Questions

10 minutes

If students have difficulty responding to questions, reread pertinent passages of the read-aloud and/or refer to specific images. If students give one-word answers and/or fail to use read-aloud or domain vocabulary in their responses, acknowledge correct responses by expanding students’ responses using richer and more complex language. Ask students to answer in complete sentences by having them restate the question in their responses.

1. *Literal* What is the setting for this story? (ancient Greece; Olympia)
2. *Inferential* Why were Leonidas and his father tending to and securely harnessing the horses? (They were preparing them for the journey to the sanctuary at Olympia.)



← **Show image 1A-3: Leonidas's father pointing to Mount Olympus**

3. *Literal* Leonidas and Cyrus were going to the sanctuary at Olympia to sell their pottery and be spectators at the races held in Zeus's honor. What story did Cyrus tell Leonidas during their journey? (He told Leonidas all about the Olympian gods and goddesses, what their special powers were, and how the Greeks held the races in honor of Zeus.)
4. *Evaluative* How were the gods and goddesses similar to humans? (They were believed to have many different emotions.) How were they different? (They were believed to have special powers and to be immortal, or to never die.)



← **Show image 1A-4: Olympians on their thrones**

5. *Inferential* Which gods or goddesses can you remember from the read-aloud? (Answers may vary.) [Tell students that you will review all twelve later.] What are some of their special powers? (Answers may vary.) [Tell students that you will review all of them later.]
6. *Literal* Where did the Olympian gods and goddesses supposedly live? (in a palace on Mount Olympus)
7. *Evaluative* What did Leonidas think he glimpsed as he looked at Mount Olympus in the distance? (the twelve thrones of the Olympian gods) Do you really think he saw this? 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:* You heard that Greek myths are fiction, or stories that are not true. How do you know they are fiction? (Answers may vary, but may include that the gods and goddesses possess supernatural powers; the ancient Greeks created the stories to explain events in nature that they could not explain; etc.)

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 questions.]

Word Work: Spectators

5 minutes

1. In the read-aloud you heard, “*Spectators* and vendors moved all around [Leonidas and his father] as the athletes stretched in preparation for their races.”
2. Say the word *spectators* with me.
3. Spectators are observers, or people who watch an event.
4. The spectators waited in their seats for the basketball game to begin.
5. Have you ever been a spectator or seen spectators? Try to use the word *spectators* when you tell about it. [Ask two or three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase the students’ responses: “I saw spectators once when . . .”]
6. What’s the word we’ve been talking about? What part of speech is the word *spectators*? (noun) How do you know it is a noun? (It refers to people.)

Use a *Brainstorming* activity for follow-up. Directions: We will brainstorm situations where spectators might be present. [As students brainstorm, make sure they use the word *spectators*.]



Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day



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1
B

Extensions

20 minutes

Greek Gods Posters 1–12

Show students the twelve Greek Gods Posters one by one, in numerical order. As you show students each poster and share the name of each god or goddess, have them share distinguishing characteristics and/or things they learned about each from today's read-aloud. Then display the posters around the room where students can clearly see them and where they can be referred to throughout the domain.

Greek Myths Journal (Instructional Master 1B-1)

Tell students that they will be keeping a journal to help them remember important information they learn in this domain about the Greek gods and Greek myths. Share with students that at the end of this domain, they will staple all of their journal pages together and take them home to share with family and friends. Tell students that page one of their journals will be about Zeus, the king of the gods.

Show students Instructional Master 1B-1. Share with them that on the left-hand side of the master is an illustration of the Greek god Zeus. Tell students that they will write "Zeus" on the title blank and then two to three sentences on the lines next to the illustration to help them remember who the Greeks believed Zeus was and why he was important. If students need help with their journal entry, reread key passages. If time allows, have students color the picture and share their journal entries with a partner.

Remember to save students' journal entries throughout the domain.

Take-Home Material

Family Letter

Send home Instructional Masters 1B-2 and 1B-3.