



# Arachne the Weaver

4<sub>A</sub>

## Introducing the Read-Aloud

10 minutes

### Where Are We?

Remind students that the myths they will hear over the next several days originated, or were created, in ancient Greece. Have students locate Greece on a world map or globe. Ask students what kind of story they are about to hear if this story is a Greek myth; that is, what kinds of characters or plots can they expect?

### What Have We Already Learned?

Remind students that they heard about several Greek gods and goddesses in the previous read-aloud. Show students Flip Book images from the previous myth, “Demeter and Persephone,” and ask them to retell it. Then, using the Greek Gods Posters, have students name each of the Greek gods they heard about in the previous lesson. You may also wish to have students share facts about the Greek gods from their Greek Myths Journals. Have students share what each Greek god was supposed to be the god of. Ask: “What does it mean in Greek mythology to be the god of something?” Ask students what the ancient Greeks believed made a god or goddess different from a human being.

### Essential Background Information or Terms

#### *Meet the Characters*

**Note:** You may wish to add to the Character Chart as you introduce the characters in this read-aloud. Share the title of today’s read-aloud with students.



#### ← Show image 4A-1: Arachne weaving

Ask students what Arachne does if she is a weaver. (She weaves, or combines strands of thread or yarn in an alternating pattern in order to make cloth.) Ask them what tools she might use. (loom)

Ask students to point to Greek Gods Poster 7 (Athena). Tell students this myth tells the story of an encounter between Arachne—a mortal woman—and the goddess Athena.

Have students share the characteristics of Greek myths. (They are fictional stories that try to explain events or things in nature, teach moral lessons, and entertain listeners.) Tell students that today's myth is a story that was told to explain how one animal in nature was first created.

### **Purpose for Listening**

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Tell students to listen carefully to the read-aloud to hear which animal in nature this myth is about.



## Arachne the Weaver

### ← Show image 4A-1: Arachne weaving

Long ago, there lived among the Greeks a young woman named Arachne [uh-*RAK*-nee], who was a very gifted weaver. A weaver weaves or spins threads or yarns together to make cloth. Arachne wove upon a wooden frame called a loom.<sup>1</sup> She did not just weave solid colors; she wove tapestries, wonderful woven pictures that people would hang on their walls as art.<sup>2</sup>

1 [Point to the loom.]

2 What is a tapestry?

3 or great works

People came from distant lands to see these masterpieces<sup>3</sup> in Arachne's studio. A visitor might comment, "This is amazing! Why, look at the leaves on this tree. They look so real that you almost expect them to move in the breeze. And this deer in the meadow looks as if he is going to turn and bound<sup>4</sup> away."

4 or jump

The visitors would tell Arachne, "You are the finest weaver in all the world!" But then they would add, "Except, of course, for the goddess Athena, who invented weaving!" Athena was actually the goddess of all handicrafts, not just weaving.

5 or pleased by the attention and compliments

6 Why do you think Arachne began to get annoyed?

7 Do you think this bragging might cause a problem for Arachne?

At first, when people compared Arachne's work to that of Athena's, Arachne was **flattered**.<sup>5</sup> But as years passed, she began to get annoyed. She would say, "I'm sure Athena is very talented, but look, did you see this one over here?"<sup>6</sup> As still more years passed, whenever people compared her to the goddess, Arachne would angrily say, "I don't care if Athena invented weaving. I think I am the best weaver in the world!"<sup>7</sup>



### ← Show image 4A-2: Athena transformed into an old woman

Word of this eventually reached the ears of the goddess Athena on Mount Olympus. She decided to visit Arachne's studio to learn if Arachne was truly saying such things. However, Athena did not want Arachne to recognize her, so with her magic, Athena changed her own appearance from a beautiful, athletic young woman. Now, with a wave of her hand and a puff of smoke, gone was the young

8 Here the word *lean* means to rest against someone or something for support. The word *lean* can also mean physically thin, strong, and healthy.

9 Does this mean Arachne's work is good or bad?



← **Show image 4A-3: Arachne challenging Athena**

woman, replaced by a woman so old and bent with age that she had to lean on a walking stick to get around.<sup>8</sup> Of course, inside that body was still the goddess Athena, but no one would have recognized her.

In this disguise she went to visit Arachne, commenting, “Your work is extraordinary, my dear.<sup>9</sup> I am certain that you are the finest weaver in the world—except, of course, for the goddess Athena.”

Hearing this, Arachne, thinking she spoke to a bent, old woman, angrily exclaimed, “I am sick of hearing about Athena. I say that I am the best weaver in the world!”

Well, there was a puff of smoke, and when it blew away, who did Arachne see standing there with her but the beautiful goddess Athena. Arachne was afraid of what the goddess might do to her, but she took a deep breath and said, “I meant what I said. I am prepared to prove that I am the best. I have two wooden looms for weaving. You use one, and I shall use the other. Let us see once and for all who is the best.”



← **Show image 4A-4: Athena and Arachne in a weaving contest**

So the goddess and the young woman chose their colors and started to weave. When at last they stopped, Arachne grinned, for she truly believed she had won. She pointed out all the wonderful features<sup>10</sup> of her work to the goddess.

“Look,” she said, “see how real the stream looks tumbling down this hillside, and how the water reflects the colors of the sunlight, as real water would do. And if you move over here to look, the colors actually change, the way real sunlight would change.”

At last she turned to see Athena's tapestry.

← **Show image 4A-5: Arachne overcome by grief at the sight of Athena's superior tapestry**

Arachne saw at once that the work of the goddess was even finer than her own. Athena had woven a stream, but hers seemed to ripple and move. She had woven clouds that appeared to float lightly in the sky, and above it all she had woven the gods in all of their majesty.<sup>11</sup>

10 or parts



11 Do you recognize any of the Greek gods in Athena's tapestry?

Upset and embarrassed, Arachne turned and ran from the room. Athena caught up with her, asking, “Where are you going?”

Arachne exclaimed, “I thought I was the best, but you are **superior**;<sup>12</sup> and no matter how long and hard I work at it, I will never be as good as you are. I shall never weave again.”<sup>13</sup>

Then Athena grew **stern**.<sup>14</sup> “Everyone is born with some special gift or talent, if only he or she can figure out what it is and how to use it. You must not waste this skill of yours. We shall see to it that you *shall* weave again.”

← **Show image 4A-6: Athena changing Arachne into a spider**

She reached out and touched Arachne’s shoulder with the tip of one finger. Instantly, Arachne began to change shape. She grew smaller and smaller, and her body rounder and rounder. Her legs and arms grew longer and thinner until, after about five minutes, Arachne had turned into the very first spider in the world. Today we call all the members of the spider family **arachnids** [uh-*RAK*-nids], and that is why some people say all spiders are the children of Arachne the Weaver.

12 or far better

13 Were your predictions about whether her bragging would cause a problem for Arachne correct? Why or why not?

14 or harsh and firm



## 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 the 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. *Evaluative* What animal in nature is this Greek myth about? (spiders, arachnids) Do you think there were arachnids in ancient Greece? Why or why not? (Yes, because the ancient Greeks told stories about them.)

2. *Evaluative* According to this myth, who created the very first spider in the world? (the goddess Athena) Do you think that is really how the very first spider was created, or is this story fiction? (This story is fiction.)
3. *Inferential* Who are the main characters in this myth? (Arachne and Athena) Which of these characters is a god or goddess? (Athena) How do you know? (She has special powers and lives on Mount Olympus.)
4. *Evaluative* Imagine you are Arachne. How would you have felt if people always compared your work to Athena’s? Would you have been flattered? (Answers may vary.)



← **Show image 4A-5: Arachne overcome by grief at the sight of Athena’s superior tapestry**

5. *Inferential* How does Arachne feel when she sees Athena’s superior work? (She is upset and embarrassed and refuses to weave again.)



← **Show image 4A-6: Athena changing Arachne into a spider**

6. *Inferential* How does this story conclude, or end? (with Athena turning Arachne into a spider) Why does Athena turn Arachne into a spider and not some other kind of animal? (Because Arachne was a weaver and spiders weave webs. Athena wanted to ensure that Arachne would continue to weave.)
7. *Evaluative* Do you think there are lessons to be learned from this myth? If so, what are they? (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 couple of questions. I will give you a minute to think about the questions, and then I will ask you to turn to your neighbor and discuss the questions. Finally, I will call on several of you to share what you discussed with your partner.

8. *Evaluative Think Pair Share:* In the read-aloud, you heard Athena say, “Everyone is born with some special gift or talent, if only he or she can figure out what it is and how to use it.” What is your special gift or talent? (Answers may vary.) Have you figured out how to use it? (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 questions.]

### Word Work: Flattered

5 minutes

1. In the read-aloud you heard, “At first, when people compared Arachne’s work to that of Athena’s, Arachne was *flattered*.”
2. Say the word *flattered* with me.
3. If you are flattered, you are pleased by the attention or compliments of others.
4. Juanita was flattered by the praise she received from her teacher for her performance on the multiplication test.
5. Have you ever felt flattered? Try to use the word *flattered* when you tell about it. [Ask two or three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase the students’ responses: “I felt flattered once when . . .”]
6. What’s the word we’ve been talking about? What part of speech is the word *flattered*?

Use a *Synonyms* activity for follow-up. Directions: A synonym is a word that is the same as, or similar to, another word. What are some synonyms for *flattered*? (Answers may vary, but may include *praised, complimented, admired, etc.*)



**Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day**



# Arachne the Weaver

4<sub>B</sub>

## Extensions

20 minutes

### Greek Myths Journal (Instructional Master 4B-1)

Tell students that they will be continuing their journal to help them remember important information they learn in this domain about the Greek gods and Greek myths. Have students share which gods and/or goddesses they heard about in today's read-aloud. (Athena) Ask students to share any other characters they heard about in today's read-aloud. (Arachne)

Show students Instructional Master 4B-1. Tell them that for today's journal entry, they should write "Arachne the Weaver" on the title blank. They should then write two to three sentences about one of the characters to help them remember who she is, what she does in today's myth, and why she might have been important to the ancient Greeks. After writing two to three sentences, students may also draw a picture in the rectangle to illustrate the information.

### Spin a Story

**Note:** Before this extension, prepare five sheets of plain paper. Four of the five sheets should be of equal length and width, with the width of the fifth sheet being the combined width of two sheets.




Remind students that Arachne was a weaver. Ask students to share what Arachne wove. (tapestries) Then have students share what a tapestry is. (a woven image that can be hung on walls) Tell students that as a class, they are going to make a tapestry that retells the myth of Arachne the Weaver. Divide the class into five groups. Tell the class that there will be five parts to this tapestry and that each of the five groups will be responsible for drawing one part.

Tell students that Group One will draw the beginning scene of the myth, Groups Two through Four will draw scenes from the middle of the myth, and that Group Five will draw the ending scene of the myth.

Ask students what events Group One should include. (Arachne weaving beautiful tapestries on a loom while many visitors flatter her by saying she weaves like the goddess Athena)

Tell Group Two that they will draw Athena disguising herself as an old woman after she hears about Arachne’s boastful words declaring herself the best weaver in the world.

Tell Group Three that they will draw a surprised Arachne, who discovers that the old woman is really the goddess Athena.

Tell Group Four that they will depict Arachne and Athena during the weaving contest.

Ask students to share what Group Five should draw. (Arachne’s tapestry and Athena’s superior tapestry in the background; Athena changing Arachne into a spider—after Arachne declares she will never weave again—so that Arachne will always continue to use her special gift.)

Tell students that in the next lesson they will put all of their drawings together to create a classroom tapestry of the myth “Arachne the Weaver.” As students create their illustrations, encourage them to use richer and more complex language, including, if possible, any read-aloud vocabulary.

## ↔ Vocabulary Instructional Activity

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### *Word Work: Features*

1. In the read-aloud you heard, “She pointed out all the wonderful *features* of her work to the goddess.”
2. Say the word *features* with me.
3. The word *features* means interesting or important parts of something else.
4. This new book has many nice features, such as beautiful pictures, a helpful table of contents, and a list of all the maps included in it.
5. [Hold up an item in your classroom that has many different features, such as a globe, a laptop computer, an encyclopedia, or a dictionary.] What are some of the important or interesting features of this \_\_\_\_\_? [Ask two or three students to describe the important or interesting features of the object you are displaying. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase the students’ responses: “One of the more interesting/important features of \_\_\_\_\_ is . . .”]
6. What is the word we’ve been talking about?

Use a *Drawing* activity for follow-up. Directions: Think of an item you own, or wish you owned, and draw a picture of it. Be sure to draw one or more of your favorite features of this item. After you finish drawing your object, write a sentence about one of its features you think is the most interesting or most important. Be sure to use the word *features* in your sentence.