

Theseus & Orpheus

two Greek heroes' adventures, as scripted by teacher Corbett Harrison

Teacher Instructions: The fourth page of this packet is a sketching sheet with five boxes in which to sketch. The sketching sheet should be the only page in this packet that students should be given a copy of.

The teacher will read the script below and share the stories here. When prompted by the script, students are to take one or two minutes to create sketches in the appropriate boxes of the sketch sheet.

Instructions to read to your students:

I'm going to share two stories from Greek mythology today, and at certain points I'll stop and ask you to sketch a simple picture of what you see in your mind as it relates to these stories. Stick figures are, of course, acceptable. You'll be writing a poem today, and these pictures should help you create a better poem.

Script for the first picture:

Theseus was a great Greek hero who went on many adventures. He was the adult hero who defeated the Minotaur, if you have heard that story, but today I want to tell you about Theseus when he was very young.

Picture this. Theseus is thirteen. It is his birthday. He lives alone with his single mother in the countryside forty miles outside of the city of Athens. Theseus has never known his father, and his mother has never talked of him. Before the birthday celebrations, his mother asks him to do something he has never been asked to do before. He follows her up the hill behind their house to a rather large boulder that Theseus has played on and around many times when he was younger. Theseus' mother asks him to turn the boulder over. Theseus asks her why, but she simply repeats that he is to turn the boulder over. Theseus hunkers down, gets a grip with both hands, but the boulder does not lift no matter how hard he tries. His mother thanks him for trying, and they head down the hill to celebrate his thirteenth birthday.

Please take a moment to sketch the scene on top of the hill.

Script for the second picture:

By his fourteenth birthday, Theseus had completely forgotten what had happened on top of the hill when he turned thirteen. But when his mother asked him to climb the hill again, it all came back to him. He tried to lift the boulder again, he failed, and another year passed before he was asked to try again.

When he was fifteen, he managed to lift the boulder almost an inch off the ground, but he could not turn it over.

When he was sixteen, he almost got the boulder two inches off the ground.

At seventeen, he made it to four inches off the ground, and he held it there as long as he could, trying to get enough of a second wind from the lift to turn the rock, but it was too heavy.

Ask your students: "Why do you think his mother is asking him to do this?" and let your students make a few guesses after talking it over with a partner.

On Theseus' eighteenth birthday, he successfully turned the boulder over. Beneath the boulder he found a piece of old canvas. Inside the canvas, he found two gifts from his long-absent father. These gifts told Theseus, without words of any kind written anywhere, that he was supposed to go on a journey, and that he was supposed to find his father. The gifts were two symbols that unquestionably told Theseus he was old enough to go on his first quest.

Ask your students: "What two gifts do you think Theseus received?" and let your students make a few guesses after talking it over with a partner.

Theseus' father had left him a pair of sandals and a sword. The sandals were no ordinary sandals. They were remarkable...well-crafted, and they fit perfectly. Keep in mind, this was probably the first pair of shoes Theseus had ever owned. As a boy, he was most likely barefoot until this moment in his life. And the sword! Oh, it had to have been made by a craftsman. It was engraved beautifully, with intricate patterns, and it fit perfectly in Theseus' hand.

The next morning, Theseus stood on the road that ran by his countryside home, and he took the first few steps of his journey. Please take a moment to sketch the scene as Theseus left his home on his quest.

Script for the third picture:

Your next picture will actually be about another hero on a quest; this second hero's name is Orpheus.

Just so you know what happened to Theseus, well, he found his father on that first quest he took. Interestingly enough, his father was King of nearby Athens, and he was under a spell by a witch named Medea when Theseus found him. Medea ordered Theseus to be killed when the boy finally met his father, and his father almost allowed it to happen. Only when Theseus pulled his sword out to defend himself against the king's guards was the spell of Medea broken. The king recognized the sword that he had placed underneath a boulder eighteen years before, and the memory was enough to break the spell the witch had over him. Medea fled from the city, and Theseus and his father ruled Athens together for many years.

But it's time to hear about our second hero: Orpheus. While Theseus took a weapon on his life quest, Orpheus took something very different: a musical instrument. Orpheus used his musical instrument on his journeys like Theseus used his sword.

You see, Orpheus had been blessed with the gift of music by the god Apollo. Orpheus was amazing with his musical instrument—a lyre, it was called. Orpheus could mesmerize wild animals with his musical gift, and it was said he could make stones turn over when he played the right notes. At one point in his travels, Orpheus played his music in the underworld, where he had been challenged to en-trance the souls of the dead with his music. That's a famous story of Orpheus, but it's not the story I want you to sketch today.

Long before he went to the underworld, Orpheus joined up with a team of heroic men who helped Jason of Argos find the Golden Fleece, which was a magical item that—coincidentally—happened to be under the spell of the same witch—Medea—who had charmed Theseus' father. To get his hands on the Golden Fleece, Jason knew he'd need a powerful group of soldiers to help him, so he put out the call for all heroic men to join him. Hercules showed up for that

quest. So did many other muscle-bound men. It must have been humorous to see Orpheus standing in the line with these thick-armed men. He brought no sword; instead, he held his lyre. Jason took him along.

During one leg of the journey, the storms raged against Jason and his Argonauts and their ship. Jason's muscled soldiers tried to row into the storm, but the seas were too strong, and they pushed the boat back. Then Orpheus walked to the bow of the boat, and armed only with his harp, he lulled the ocean to sleep with his music.

Please sketch a scene of Orpheus using his music as his weapon against the world.

Script for the fourth picture:

Orpheus was a fairly young hero when he joined Jason on his adventures for the Golden Fleece. It was probably his first adventure since leaving his boyhood home.

At eighteen, like Theseus, Orpheus must have stood on the road that ran by his house, ready to embark on his first real journey into life. Like Theseus, he was probably wearing his first real pair of sandals, but unlike Theseus, he entered the world without a sword.

Ask your students: "Be creative, and think about what besides sandals and his instrument might Theseus have left home with?" and let your students make a few guesses after talking it over with a partner.

Please draw a fourth sketch. In this sketch, show Orpheus standing on the road at age eighteen, ready to begin his adventures. If you think he should have something in addition to his musical instrument, please include it in your sketch.

Script for the fifth picture:

I'm going to have you listen to a song that might remind you a little of the picture of Orpheus you just drew.

This song is called, "I've Got a Name," and it was first sung in the 1970's by a man named Jim Croce. The song could be about anyone, but I want you to think about how it could be about Orpheus.

Play the song for you students. You might show the lyrics on the overhead as students listen, so they can make no mistake about the words.

Jim Croce sings about taking three things on life's journey in this song. What are those three things? (**Answer:** a *name*, a *song*, and a *dream*) Like Orpheus, none of these are weapons.

Think about yourself when you are ready to begin your life's journey away from your childhood home. What three things will you carry with you?

Please use the fifth box to sketch a picture of yourself, standing at the beginning of your road of life. What will you carry with you? Represent two or three things in your picture.

Sketch your pictures in these boxes:

First picture:

Second picture:

Fifth picture:

Fourth picture:

Third picture: