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PREREADING ACTIVITIES

Story Themes

Several themes of “Prometheus” are listed below. They will help you prepare activities which will stimulate students’ interest and involvement in the story.

- 1.) People tend to care deeply about those for whom they have taken responsibility.
- 2.) Gifts often come at a price.
- 3.) It is sometimes necessary to defy authority in order to stand up for what you believe.
- 4.) Things that are important in our lives require careful attention.
- 5.) A person who chooses to defy authority must be willing to suffer the consequences.

Spotlight on Vocabulary [Guided Practice]

Objective:

The learner will demonstrate an understanding of ten vocabulary words by showing which word belongs in each of ten sentences.

Skill level:

Knowledge/recall; application

Description:

This exercise introduces students to ten words in the story which may be new to them. First students preview the words and their definitions. Then they use the words to complete ten sentences.

The sentences discuss topics familiar to most students, so they can see how the new words fit into their existing web of knowledge. The goal of the exercise is to help students read the story more easily. Complete mastery of the vocabulary words at this stage is not expected.

Suggestion:

If prereading vocabulary work is kept short, word study can build interest without dampening enthusiasm. Exposure to these ten selected words will give students a head start toward understanding the story. A *postreading* vocabulary check and suggestions for further vocabulary study are provided for use *after* students have read the story.

Setting the Stage [Anticipatory Set]

Objective:

The learner will demonstrate an understanding of the harshness of life faced by characters in the myth by reacting to a similar, modern-day situation. The learner will also consider Prometheus’ traits and predict whether or not he will prove likeable.

Skill level:

Application; analysis; evaluation

Description:

In part 1, students imagine that some of their neighbors have lost their jobs and homes. Then they are asked to view the situation from three perspectives: that of a person who doesn’t care, one who cares but doesn’t do anything, and one who cares and helps.

In part 2, students are given a list of Prometheus’ character traits and asked to describe how each trait can be both positive and negative. From their examples, students will predict whether Prometheus will be a likeable character.

Suggestion:

Have students discuss the positive and negative side of common character traits.



POSTREADING ACTIVITIES

It Happened Like This

[Check for Understanding]

Objective:

The learner will demonstrate comprehension of the story by correctly answering ten multiple-choice questions.

Skill level:

Knowledge; comprehension

Description:

This exercise tests recall of important facts in the story. Students identify, from three choices, the answer that correctly completes each of ten sentences.

Suggestion:

Page number references on the response key show where the answer to each question can be found. These page numbers can be given to students who are taking an open-book test. The page numbers are also helpful when discussing the quiz after papers have been corrected.

Vocabulary Review

[Check for Understanding]

Objective:

The learner will demonstrate an understanding of ten words by identifying the correct synonym for each.

Skill level:

Knowledge

Description:

This exercise tests mastery of the ten words introduced in the **Spotlight on Vocabulary** exercise. The words are presented in the context of sentences taken directly from the story. Students identify, from three choices, the correct synonym for each word.

Suggestion:

Results of the vocabulary check will show which words students find most difficult. You may wish to provide further reinforcement for problem words.

Literary Focus: It's Alive!

[Guided or Independent Practice]

Objective:

The learner will demonstrate an understanding of personification by analyzing passages from the myth in which ideas or things take on human qualities.

Skill level:

Analysis

Description:

Students complete a chart by analyzing passages from the myth which contain examples of personification. For each example they are asked to identify what is personified and which human traits are taken on.

Suggestion:

Discuss the use of personification in the myth. Help students realize that personification can help make writing more colorful and interesting. Have them find examples of personification in other myths they have read. Also, students might enjoy writing passages in which common items in the classroom or at home are personified.

The Reading-Writing Connection:

Unlocking Passages

[Guided or Independent Practice]

Objective:

The learner will demonstrate an ability to make inferences by answering questions based on quotations from the story.

Skill level:

Comprehension; application; analysis

Description:

First students read a quotation; then they answer three questions about the quote. The first question requires an inter-

continued



pretation of the quote. The second question requires an inference. The third question, to be answered in a journal entry, asks students to relate the quotation to their personal experience.

The questions are intended to lead students to greater understanding and appreciation of the story. The questions also allow students to bridge the gap between their own knowledge and story concepts. Quotation 1 concerns Prometheus' love for the humans he has created and set upon the earth. Quotation 2 concerns Zeus' urge to destroy those who do not give him proper respect. Quotation 3 concerns the unwillingness of Zeus to forgive Prometheus and Zeus' subsequent punishment of the human race.

Suggestion:

Make the questions the subject of a small-group or class discussion.

Writing Corner: Get the Picture
[Extending Students' Thinking]

Objective:

The learner will demonstrate an understanding of the use of imagery in the myth by writing sentences which contain images pertaining to each of the senses.

Skill level:

Comprehension; application

Description:

First, students imagine that they are one of the humans in the myth who lives in a cave. They are then to write five images—one for each sense—describing life before having fire. Next students write five images describing life after acquiring fire. In a final step, students use their

images to write a description of life before and after having fire.

Suggestion:

Ask for volunteers to share their descriptive writing and have students identify examples of imagery found in the writing samples.

One Step Further
[Extending Students' Thinking]

Objective:

The learner will demonstrate an ability to interpret, compare, contrast, and/or create by participating in discussions, preparing reports, or completing special projects.

Skill level:

Application; analysis; synthesis; evaluation

Description:

Students choose from an array of suggested follow-up activities which will help them process the story and respond creatively to the story's conflicts and themes. The activities encourage students of varying abilities to employ higher-level thinking skills.

Suggestion:

You may wish to use this page as a teacher reference and assign projects to individuals or groups. However the page may also be reproduced so that students can select their own topics.

Although the suggested activities are divided into categories such as **Class discussion** and **Written or oral reports**, most of the topics can be adapted for use in many ways.

Name _____

PROMETHEUS



SPOTLIGHT ON VOCABULARY

Study the words and meanings shown in the box.
Then complete each sentence below by writing the
correct word on the line.

deceptive—misleading; false
defied—challenged or disobeyed
destined—certain; predecided
hovered—waited (especially at one
place in the air)
humility—modesty; freedom from pride

provocation—cause or reason
soothed—calmed; comforted
stern—strict; harsh
tactic—plan; approach
tend—watch over; care for

1. Our new boss is so _____ that she forces you to make up an hour of work if you're fifteen minutes late.
2. A _____ T.V. offer led Jon to believe he could receive free magazines, but of course he never did.
3. She seems _____ for success because she has common sense and works hard.
4. The band members' latest _____ to get new uniforms is to ask for donations after every show.
5. The teenagers _____ the curfew by staying out later than they should have.
6. The helicopter _____ over the scene of the accident, waiting to transport victims.
7. Without _____, the bully picked a fight with a terrified classmate.
8. After the meet, Tomas showed _____ by refusing to brag about his win in front of the other swimmers.
9. The teacher's calm voice _____ the frightened child.
10. It was Marie's job to _____ the animals and see that they were fed and exercised.

Name _____

PROMETHEUS



SETTING THE STAGE

These questions will help you get ready to read “Prometheus.” Prepare to discuss the questions by jotting down your answers on the lines.

1. In the myth, you will read that humans had a very tough life. Imagine a similar situation in modern life. It is winter. Some people in your neighborhood have lost their jobs and their homes.

What opinion would the following people have about their unfortunate neighbors? Write several sentences from the viewpoint of each of these people. Be sure to give reasons for their opinions and actions.



- a. Person who does not care about the neighbors:

- b. Person who cares but does nothing to help:

- c. Person who cares and does help the neighbors:

Now share your work with other classmates. You might also discuss whether or not people in categories *a* and *b* are ever justified in their opinions and actions.

continued

Name _____

PROMETHEUS

2. Below are some traits of Prometheus, the main character in the myth. As you read the traits, give an example to show how the trait can be positive. Then indicate how the trait can be negative. The first one is done for you.

POSITIVE SIDE	TRAITS	NEGATIVE SIDE
<i>will stick to something and see that it is done</i>	strong-willed	<i>may insist on doing something stupid</i>
	rebellious	
	daring	
	accepts fate	
	unremorseful (shows no regret for deeds)	
	prefers to be alone	

Now that you've finished your checklist, weigh the positive and negative traits. Predict whether or not you'll like Prometheus and explain your feelings.

Name _____

PROMETHEUS



IT HAPPENED LIKE THIS

Write the letter of the best answer on the line.

- _____ 1. As the story opens, we learn that humans
- enjoy being teased by Zeus.
 - curse Prometheus for creating them.
 - must endure cold weather and darkness.
- _____ 2. Prometheus wants to give fire to humans so they will
- be better equipped to survive.
 - worship him more than they worship Zeus.
 - set the earth on fire and destroy one another.
- _____ 3. Zeus disagrees with Prometheus because he
- worries that humans might burn themselves.
 - thinks there isn't enough fire to share with the whole human race.
 - believes that fire would give humans power, envy, and greed.
- _____ 4. Zeus has refused to provide humans with more comforts since Prometheus
- stole from Zeus' water supply to give humans water.
 - tricked Zeus into taking the poor part of animal sacrifices.
 - sparked the war between the Titans and Zeus.
- _____ 5. Prometheus disobeys Zeus by
- throwing water on Zeus' own fire.
 - taking a burning coal from the gods' central fire.
 - asking the Sun to give fire to humans.
- _____ 6. Prometheus gives fire to the humans and then
- tells them they must now worship him for his help.
 - asks them to hide the gift from Zeus.
 - shows them how to build, tend, and put out one.
- _____ 7. When Zeus discovers what Prometheus has done, he sends Hephaestus to
- make a chain that will hold Prometheus to a rock forever.
 - start an earthquake and destroy life on earth.
 - take back fire from the human race.

continued

Name _____

PROMETHEUS

- _____ 8. Zeus also commands that every day through eternity
- a. Prometheus' hands will be burned with a torch.
 - b. a vulture will tear out Prometheus' liver.
 - c. Hephaestus will pound another spike into Prometheus' body.
- _____ 9. Prometheus reveals that he has
- a. an important secret.
 - b. the power to break free.
 - c. one last gift to humans.
- _____ 10. Prometheus accepts his fate because he
- a. loves Zeus and regrets defying him.
 - b. believes Zeus is punishing him for his own good.
 - c. expected to be punished but feels pleased that he helped humans.



Name _____

PROMETHEUS



VOCABULARY REVIEW

These sentences are taken from the story. Circle the answer that comes closest in meaning to each word in **dark type**.

1. "Zeus was a great provider, but he was also a **stern** punisher."
a. careless b. strict c. smart
2. "But Prometheus wasn't willing to give up so easily. He stepped in front of Zeus and tried another **tactic**."
a. plan b. answer c. plea
3. "Zeus picked the **deceptive** bundle of fat and bones."
a. misleading b. huge c. smelly
4. "They need very little **provocation** to become boastful toads."
a. praise b. time c. cause
5. "If we give them fire. . . . Well, forget about **humility** or devotion. With fire, they'll think they're gods."
a. humbleness b. courage c. happiness
6. "Don't be frightened,' Prometheus **soothed** them."
a. begged b. comforted c. asked
7. "This fire can change your whole life. But you must learn how to **tend** it. You must feed it many twigs or it will die."
a. pray for b. care for c. look for
8. "The bird gave a hungry cry as it **hovered** overhead."
a. soared b. flapped c. waited
9. "Thetis' son was **destined** to be greater than his father, no matter who his father was."
a. said b. certain c. trying
10. "Yes, he would lie here in pain for years upon years. But he had **defied** the gods and given his beloved humans a future."
a. disobeyed b. outwitted c. hurt



Name _____

PROMETHEUS



LITERARY FOCUS: IT'S ALIVE!

In the myth of Prometheus, fire—among other things—comes alive through *personification*.

Personification means giving human qualities to objects, animals, or ideas. Read this example from the myth:

“ ‘Fire fears water and will fade at its touch.’ ”

Here, fire takes on a human quality. It feels an emotion—fear.

Study the following passages which contain personification. Then fill in the chart. Tell what is personified. Then write how it is like a human. Give the traits or qualities it has taken on.

PASSAGE	THING(S) PERSONIFIED	HUMAN QUALITIES OR TRAITS
1. “ ‘Soon one human would have more than the next. Envy and greed would be born.’ ” (page 24)		
2. “ ‘The bed is ready,’ Prometheus murmured. ‘Now for my sleeping coal.’ ” (page 26)		
3. “The flames grew fatter.” (page 26)		
4. “The hungry flames cracked and smacked as the fat oozed down.” (page 26)		

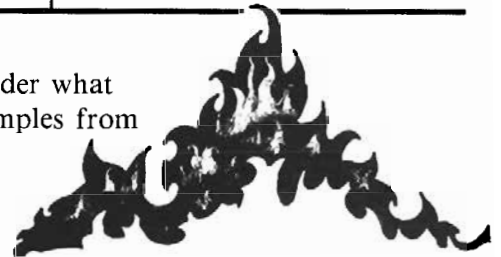
continued

Name _____

PROMETHEUS

PASSAGE	THING(S) PERSONIFIED	HUMAN QUALITIES OR TRAITS
5. “ ‘But you must learn how to tend [fire]. You must feed it many twigs or it will die.’ ” (page 26)		
6. “ ‘But don’t feed it too much or it will devour everything in sight. Even you!’ ” (page 26)		
7. “ ‘But when the day comes that Zeus gives in, both I and the secret shall be set free.’ ” (page 29)		

Discuss your answers with your classmates. Also, consider what Zeus and Prometheus themselves might personify. Give examples from the myth to support your opinion.



Name _____

PROMETHEUS



THE READING-WRITING CONNECTION: UNLOCKING PASSAGES

Answer the questions about these quotes taken from “Prometheus.” (Go back to the story if you need more clues.) Write your response to part *c* of each question on a separate sheet of paper.

1. “Perhaps Prometheus loved the human race so much because he had created them. From a mix of earth and water, he had molded human shapes in the image of the gods. Then he blew the breath of life into those bodies. Finally he set humankind free to roam the earth.” (page 21)

a. What does this passage mean as used in the story?

b. Do you think Prometheus would have gone to such lengths to provide for humans if they had been created by Zeus?

c. **Journal writing:** Describe something or someone you took care of and loved very much.

2. “If humankind didn’t pray to Zeus and fear his power, he would destroy them.” (page 23)

a. What does this passage mean as used in the story?

continued

Name _____

PROMETHEUS

b. Why do you think it is so important to Zeus that humans worship and fear him?

c. **Journal writing:** Why do some people seem to need praise or worship? Write about someone you know who needs or demands to be treated in this way.

3. “No, Zeus wouldn’t soon forget or forgive Prometheus’ plan. In fact, since that time Zeus had angrily denied humans most comforts.” (page 24)

a. What does this passage mean as used in the story?

b. Suppose Prometheus had not tricked Zeus before. Do you think Zeus would be more willing to give humans fire? Explain.

c. **Journal writing:** Write about a time when you or someone you know found it difficult to forgive someone for playing a trick. Describe what you think makes the forgiving difficult.

Name _____

PROMETHEUS



WRITING CORNER: GET THE PICTURE

Descriptions that call up a picture or feeling are called *images*. Images appeal to your sense of sight, sound, touch (feel), taste, or smell.

In “Prometheus,” the story becomes more vivid through the use of images. This is because *imagery* gets you involved in the story. It helps you imagine more easily.

Read this image from the myth:

“After a quick glance around, he reached into the fire and brought out a coal.

‘A jewel fit for my humans,’ Prometheus whispered to himself.”



In this passage, the image describing fire appeals to your sense of sight. Instead of a mere lump of coal, you can almost see a glimmering, glowing jewel.

Now imagine you are one of the humans living in a cave. Think about what your life would be like *before* having fire. Write five images—one for each sense—that describe your life. Use complete sentences when you write your images.

1. **Sight image:**

2. **Smell image:**

3. **Sound image:**

4. **Taste image:**

continued

Name _____

PROMETHEUS

5. **Touch image:**

One day Prometheus steals fire from Olympus and gives it to you and other humans. How does your life change? Write five images to describe your life now that you have fire.

1. **Sight image:**

2. **Smell image:**

3. **Sound image:**

4. **Taste image:**

5. **Touch image:**

Using your images, write a description of life before and after fire is introduced. Try to make your description as colorful and vivid as possible.

PROMETHEUS



ONE STEP FURTHER

Class discussion

1. About fire, Zeus tells Prometheus, “ ‘Each gift comes at a price. That is fate.’ ” Later on, Prometheus remembers this when a man burns his tongue. What other price will humans pay for receiving fire? What price does Prometheus pay? In your view, is the price worth it for humans and for Prometheus?

2. Prometheus is famous for his quick wit and trickery. Find examples of his craftiness in the myth. Is this a good quality in Prometheus? Why or why not?

3. Reread the first three paragraphs of the myth. What descriptive words tell about the setting? How do these words help set the mood (overall feeling) of the story?

4. Zeus claims that one of the humans’ worst qualities is pride. He says that “ ‘they need very little provocation to become boastful toads.’ ” Explain what you think this means. Do you think Zeus is right? Why or why not?

5. Read the “Insights” section following the myth to find out more about Prometheus. Does this information confirm or change your opinion about his character? Explain.

6. Discuss the traits of Zeus and Hephaestus. What is your opinion of these two gods now that you have read the myth? Which one is more to blame for the harm done to Prometheus? Explain.

Written or oral reports

1. Below is a list of people who have disobeyed the law in order to help others. Pick one of these people, learn more about him or her, and compare to Prometheus.

- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Jesus Christ
- Harriet Tubman
- Nelson Mandela
- Joan of Arc

2. Many authors, musicians, and artists have been inspired by the story of Prometheus over the centuries. Find another work about Prometheus and report on it to the class. Tell how it relates to the myth of Prometheus. Some suggestions to look at, read, or listen to include

- Prometheus in Chains on Mount Caucasus*, a painting by Peter Paul Rubens
- “Prometheus,” a poem by George Gordon, Lord Byron
- Promethee*, an opera by Gabriel Faure
- Creatures of Prometheus*, a ballet by Ludwig van Beethoven
- “Prometheus’ Poem of Fire,” a symphonic poem by Alexander Scriabin

3. Read other Greek myths about the creation of humans. How do these myths differ? Which do you prefer? Why?

4. Read other stories about the creation of the human race. You might want to read the biblical account. Also, look at the Nordic, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Egyptian, Mayan, Aztec, or Navajo stories.

Creative writing activities

1. Imagine you are Prometheus. You want to ask Zeus face-to-face to give fire to humans. But before you visit him, you want to write a letter about this. Write the letter, telling Zeus why he should give fire to the humans. Give reasons that will convince Zeus to agree with you. (Offer different reasons than the ones stated in the myth.)

2. As Prometheus steals the coal from the gods’ central fire, he refers to it as “a jewel fit for my humans.” Write a poem about Prometheus’ gift of fire based on this jewel image.

continued

PROMETHEUS

3. Imagine you are seeing fire for the first time as Prometheus gives it to you. Write a brief account of this episode from your point of view.

4. Write your own sequel to Prometheus' story. Answer some or all of the following questions: How long is Prometheus chained to the mountain? Who sets him free? Do Prometheus' predictions come true?

Artistic activities

1. Make a collage of the gifts Prometheus gave humans. You may want to include the gifts of life and fire, but show other gifts as well.

2. Cave-dwellers once drew pictures on the walls of their caves to show important events in their lives. Imagine you live in a cave. Sketch several cave-drawings which tell the story of Prometheus giving fire to humans.

3. Draw a scene from the myth which includes Prometheus and Zeus. Show these two characters as you think they might look and act.

4. Make a clay sculpture of one of the characters from the myth. Give a title to your sculpture, and display it for the rest of the class to see.

Small-group discussion

1. In the myth, Prometheus knows what his fate will be when he gives fire to humans. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of knowing your fate? How would it affect your actions and outlook? If you had the choice, would you choose to know your fate or not? Explain.

2. Review Hephaestus' actions in the myth. Then list alternatives Hephaestus could have taken. Also, give the consequences for each alternative.

