

Teacher's Guide for CALLIOPE, *Epic Heroes*

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Prior Knowledge:

- Before reading the articles, hold a discussion about what makes a hero. What qualities would a hero possess? Who decides if someone is a hero?
- Probe the students to see if they have knowledge of an epic.

The *Iliad* (page 4)

- The *Iliad* is very long in its entirety. Page 4 gives a synopsis. Ask the students to put into their own words the information provided on this page.

The Gates of Troy (pages 5-8)

- What is the theme of the *Iliad*?
- What is the theme of the *Odyssey*?
- At the beginning of Book XXII, Hector has mixed feelings about fighting. Explain this statement.
- Explain why Achilles and Hector are compared to a falcon and a dove.
- Why did Zeus use a balance scale?
- Describe how Athena influenced the outcome of the epic.

What is an Epic? (pages 9-11)

- Why did a bard speak to a Muse at the beginning of a piece of art?
- Explain how epics began.
- Using your own words define an epic.
- Pages 9 and 10 provide information about the style of an epic. In order for students to understand all the material you might consider one of the following suggestions.
 1. As a whole class, make a long list on the chalkboard or on chart paper of the elements of an epic.
 2. Divide the class into groups. There are 8 paragraphs on these two pages. Assign 1 or 2 paragraphs to each group. Ask the groups to summarize their information. They will then make a presentation to the rest of the class.

Heracles and the Cattle of Geryon (pages 12-16)

- Why does Heracles appeal to the oracle of Delphi?
- Describe 2 ways in which Hera interferes with the life of Heracles.
- After reading the information about Heracles, enjoy acting out the play.

The Story of the Mahabharata (page 18)

- Retell the story of the *Mahabharata* using your own words.

Heroes of the Mahabharata (pages 19-22)

- Outline the type of written material contained in the *Mahabharata*.
- Describe the two opposing sides of the conflict.
- On page 20, it states that Arjuna is “Unlike other heroes...”. Explain what this means.
- How does Krishna influence Arjuna?
- Explain how Mahatma Gandhi interpreted the *Bhagavad Gita*.
- Describe one of the main themes of the poem.
- Relate how the eldest Pandava brother earns his way to heaven.
- In your own words, explain the purpose of the *Mahabharata*.

Beowulf and the Three Monsters (pages 25-27)

- Tell why it would be important for a king to provide a mead hall.
- Why do you think that Grendel began to harass the Danes?
- Beowulf lived far away from Heorot Hall. Why do you think that he came to the help of the Danes?
- Was Beowulf foolish or brave to enter the mere? Explain your answer.
- In a paragraph, write about your opinion of this selection of *Beowulf*.
- Creative Writing: Write another episode for Beowulf. Accompany your story with pictures.

El Cid (pages 30-33)

- El Cid’s career and life seemed to waver back and forth especially in his dealings with Alfonso. Create a chart to show these changes in his life. Use headings such as Date, Who, Location, Event.
- Chose one of El Cid’s events in his life and describe how he might be feeling about the changes.

The Epic of Mali (pages 34-38)

- What prediction was made for Sundiata?
- Creative Writing: Pretend that you have a griot. In several paragraphs, relate what this person would say about you. Or, you pretend to be a griot and recount the story of a classmate.
- Summarize the life of Sundiata.
- How did Balla Fesseke help Sundiata?
- What was the secret of Sumanguru’s power?

A Continuing Tradition: The African Griot (pages 38-39)

- What is a griot?
- Explain “oral history”.
- What are the roles of a modern griot?

La Araucana: A Powerful American Epic (pages 42-43)

- Alonso de Ercilla y Zuniga was obviously impressed by the Araucaian Indians. The article tells us that these people steadfastly defended their country. Pretend to be a member of these people. Choose one of the following: Create a diary depicting daily life. Describe the foreigners who came to your country and your reaction to them. Relate battles that you fought to defend your land.

From Past to Present (pages 48-49)

- Could you write a modern epic? Discuss the requirements that would be necessary to make a story an epic. Groups of students might put their creative ideas together and create an epic.