

Teacher's guide for CALLIOPE: *Mythical Monsters*

February 2008

Introduction

Before beginning this unit, give students the opportunity to browse through an atlas. Explain that they will be reading about mythical creatures from cultures around the world. The atlas can be used to locate the places where these creatures originated. Demonstrate how to use the index, grids, and map coordinates to locate geographical areas in an atlas. As you are reading, give students opportunities to practice these skills.

Cause and Effect

Read the first four paragraphs of *The Snaky Medusa* (p. 4-8). Ask students to explain why Acrisius locked Danae in the tower. Explain that this is an example of cause and effect. A cause is a person or event that makes something happen. An effect is the resulting change. Ask students to fold a sheet of paper lengthwise and label the columns *cause* and *effect*. Ask them to read the rest of the story and record other examples of cause and effect. Demonstrate using the example discussed above:

Cause

The oracle tells Acrisius he will be killed by a son of Danae.

Effect

Acrisius locks Danae in a tower.

Conclude this activity by recording all cause and effect relationships on a large chart.

Drama

Divide the class into four groups. Assign each group a scene from the play, *Theseus and the Minotaur* (p. 12-18). Each group will be responsible for presenting their scene to the rest of the class. Let the group members assign speaking parts, find props, create scenery, and design costumes.

Writing

Write another scene for *Theseus and the Minotaur*. Imagine that Theseus has returned to the island of Naxos to visit Ariadne after many years. What would they say to one another?

Timeline

Read *Fatal Enchantment* (p. 24-27). Discuss the origins of mermaids. Have perceptions and beliefs about mermaids and mermen changed throughout history? Ask students to work individually or in pairs to create a timeline that summarizes how mermaid lore has changed over time.

Scientific Explanations

Read *Making up Monstrous Myths* (p. 28-31). Scientists believe that many myths were inspired by the remains of ancient creatures. Label a large chart with *mythical creature* and *scientific discovery*. Add one or two entries to the chart such as:

Mythical Creature

Thunderbird
Griffins

Scientific Discovery

pteranodon or *Hesperonis*
Protoceratops

Ask students to work in pairs or individually to complete charts using other examples from the article. Transfer information to class chart.

Read *Meet Nessie* (p. 40-42). List the reasons scientists have given to disprove Nessie's existence. Do you agree with the scientists? Why or why not? In your opinion, which one of these reasons makes the strongest case?

Identifying Similarities and Differences

Read *Gold-Digging Ants* (p. 32-33). The first half of the article discusses a myth about a monstrous insect. The second half recounts a discovery made by explorers in the Himalayan mountain range. It is believed that this modern discovery may explain the origins of the ancient myth. As a class, complete a Venn Diagram showing the similarities and differences between the giant ant myth and the marmot discovery. For example, both stories have gold in common. In the ant myth, the ants are guarding the gold. In the marmot story, the marmots are defending their homes which happen to contain gold dust.

After completing the diagram, ask students whether or not they think the Himalayan marmots were the origin of the giant ant myth.

Conflict Resolution

Read *Two Japanese Monsters* (p. 34-35).

Discussion questions for A Kappa with a Request:

- What kind of reputation did the Kappa have?
- How do you think it got this reputation?
- Why did the Kappa ask the priest for help?
- How did the priest respond?
- Did the priest put himself in danger to help the Kappa?
- Did the priest need to kill the serpent? Could he have found another solution?
- What would you have done if the Kappa asked for your help?
- How did the Kappa repay the priest's kindness?
- Do you think he kept his word?

Discussion questions for An Oni's Bargain:

- Who was Tametomo?
- Why did he go to the Oni's cave?
- What did Tametomo promise the Oni?
- What did the Oni agree to do?
- Did the Oni complete their task?
- Why or why not?
- Why didn't Tametomo want the Oni to finish the staircase?
- What do you think he would have done if they had finished?

Should Tametomo have made a promise that he didn't plan to keep?
Did the Oni keep their promise?
What other ways could Tametomo have solved the problem with the Oni?

Art

Read *Hagrid's Wee Beasties* (p. 36-37). Discuss the unique beasts found in J. K. Rowling's books. How do you think she created these fantastic animals? Do they have anything in common with mythological creatures? Has she added characteristics to make them unique? If possible, show the class a copy of one of the bestiaries mentioned in the article. Browse through the magazine and look at examples of mythical monsters such as the Hippocampus on page 8.

Ask students to create and draw their own mythical monster by adding unique elements to one of the mythical creatures in this issue. They should think of a name for their new monster and write a description. Combine all drawings into a "bestiary" for your classroom library.

Point of View

Read *Rooting for Monsters* (p. 46-48). Do your feelings about monsters change when considering their point of view? Pretend that you are one of the monsters from this issue and write a short autobiography. What are your strengths and weaknesses? What are your hobbies? Who are your friends? How do strangers react to you? What makes you happy? What makes you sad? Where do you like to go on vacation? What do you want people to know about you?