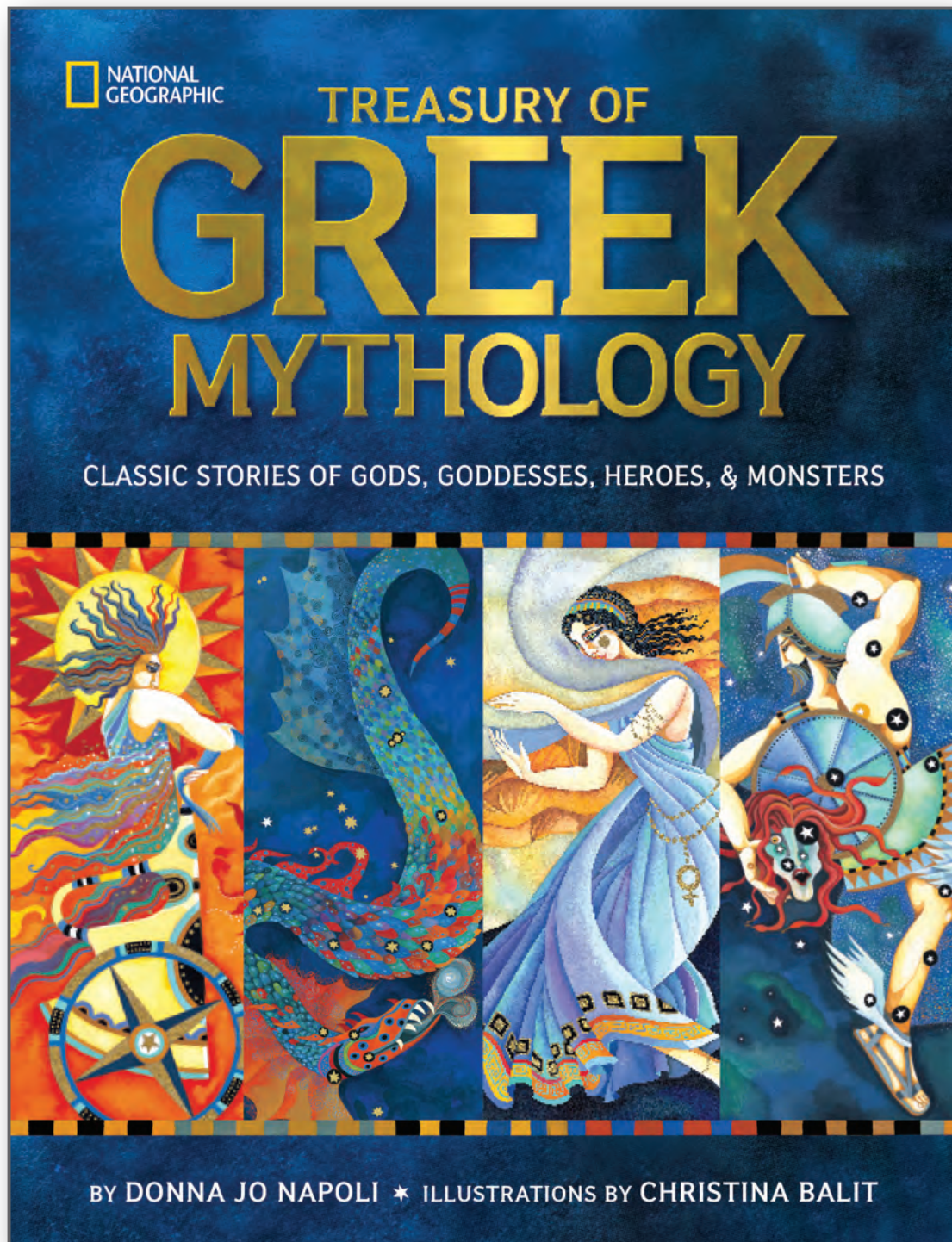


# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENTS AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



# Treasury of Greek Mythology

*Classic Stories of Gods, Goddesses,  
Heroes, & Monsters*



Written by Donna Jo Napoli  
Illustrated by Christina Balit

*Treasury of Greek Mythology offers timeless stories of Greek myths in a beautiful new volume. Brought to life with lyrical text by award-winning author Donna Jo Napoli and stunning artwork by award-winning illustrator Christina Balit, the tales of gods and goddesses, heroes and monsters will fascinate and engage children's imaginations.*

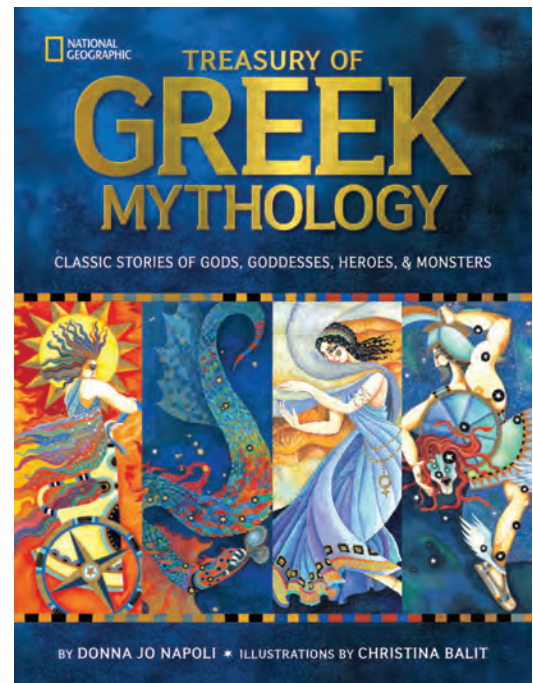


*Donna Jo Napoli*

## A CLASSROOM GUIDE

Introducing your students to the classic tales of Greek mythology and their amazing cast of characters is one of the lasting gifts of teaching. These stories are replayed in all of the arts and many forms of popular culture. Your students will come across them again and again, and they'll recall what they learned in your classroom. Greek mythology is a part of our heritage. The stories belong to us, and connecting to them enriches our lives and our understanding of the world in which we live.

In *Treasury of Greek Mythology*, Donna Jo Napoli makes the tales inviting by her presentation (with each major character covered in short chapters); approachable in its format (with aspects of each tale highlighted in call-outs and sidebars); easy to relate to with contemporary language ("Zeus ... freed them. Poseidon sized things up: Zeus was a force to be reckoned with – that was the guy to follow."); and memorable with Christina Balit's glorious illustration.



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Ages: 8-12 • 192 pgs • 9" x 11-3/4"





## LANGUAGE ARTS – PLAY-WRITING AND PERFORMANCE

Use this book throughout the course of a semester or the full school year rather than treating mythology as a unit to be covered in a set period of time. Make Greek mythology a part of every week. Dip in and out of the subject, so that students are not overwhelmed by so many characters and their intricate relationships. Study the gods, goddesses, heroes, and monsters in portions so that your students will enjoy meeting them and will remember them.

Start with some of the individual stories. It's easy to pick up the book at any point because there is a brief review of the background at the beginning of each character's chapter. Once your students are familiar with a number of the characters and comfortable in "their world," go back to the first three or four chapters and read about their beginnings and the creation of the world.

You'll find a wide range of activities in this guide, some for entire-class participation, others for pairs or groups of students, and several for individuals. The activities cover the gamut of the Language Arts: play-writing and performance; comparative literature; poetry appreciation; reading for details; reading comprehension; literary criticism. There are also opportunities for research and for art projects.

You will also see connections to the Common Core State Standards for the activities and discussion questions. The standards and a key to the standards are described at the end of the guide.

Supporting features such as the map, timeline, family tree, and cast of characters can be excellent foundations for extension activities.

From 1953 to 1957, in the early years of television – an innovative news program took viewers from their living rooms back into history to view important events as if they were there. The newscaster/host stepped right into the action to interview people who participated in The Boston Tea Party, the writing of the Declaration of Independence, or VJ Day, to name a few. With actors in the roles and a script that kept everything in the present tense, these shows engaged families in history in new ways.

Have your students create mini plays based on the tales in *Treasury of Greek Mythology*. Perform the plays in class. During the performances, have a student acting as a TV reporter interrupt the action to interview the participants. An example of what the reporter can say is:

"We are here in ancient Crete where Zeus and his brothers and sisters are at war with their father Cronos, King of the Titans, over who will rule the world, and YOU ARE THERE! Let's interrupt the fighting for a moment and get Zeus' point of view." Then the reporter can do the same and interview Cronos.

The reporter can conclude with: “This is (reporter’s name) reporting from ancient Crete and YOU WERE THERE.”

If you have the facility, video tape the performances so that they can be enjoyed by other classes in your school. If not, take them on the road and perform them live.

W 6.1, 6.3, 6.4, 6.6; SL 6.4, 6.5, 6.6

Staying with our TV theme, play instant and spontaneous games of Jeopardy whenever the moment seems right. Ring a bell or hum the theme song (we all know it!) and then provide answers about the gods, goddesses and heroes from the “Cast of Characters” section of the book. Students can answer in the same manner as the game show: in the form of a question.

Pick any character and give a clue. (See the categories on the review pages at the end of the book.) If it is answered correctly on the first try, the student gets 10 points. If it takes another clue s/he gets 8 points; another, 6 points, etc.

Continue through the characteristics listed in the character review pages. Students accumulate points throughout the semester or school year. Characters can be repeated as more students read more. At the end of year, those students with the most points win a prize. Perhaps there’s a Greek restaurant in your town that might donate a free lunch to your winning students?

RL 6.3, 6.7

Here are some sample clues:

1. He was the god who ruled the oceans.
2. His parents were Cronos and Rhea.
3. His symbol is the trident.
4. The Romans called him Neptune.

(The correct response is: Who is Poseidon?)

Have your students meet the Gods, Goddesses, and Heroes of Roman mythology. Begin by asking them do some research and contribute their findings to a classroom reference chart that pairs the Greek characters with their counterparts in the Roman tales. The following websites will be useful.

<http://greece.mrdonn.org/greekgods/index.html>

[http://www.pantheon.org/miscellaneous/roman\\_vs\\_greek.html](http://www.pantheon.org/miscellaneous/roman_vs_greek.html)

[http://www.hipark.austin.isd.tenet.edu/mythology/gkgods\\_heroes.html](http://www.hipark.austin.isd.tenet.edu/mythology/gkgods_heroes.html)

**LANGUAGE ARTS:  
WRITING – FINE ARTS**

**LANGUAGE ARTS –  
COMPARATIVE  
LITERATURE; SOCIAL  
STUDIES: THE GREEK  
MYTHS AND STORIES  
FROM OTHER CULTURES**

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0197622.html>

When your chart is complete, post it. Then each student should pick one of the pairs. S/he should read the Greek and Roman versions of his or her character's stories and write an essay comparing and contrasting the two versions.

RL 6.3; RH 6.7; W 6.1, 6.7

The Olympians are really the world's first superheroes. Many comic book artists credit their own creations of heroes and their powers with inspiration from the Greek myths. Have your students make their own comic books either starring one of the Greek gods, goddesses, or heroes or featuring a character of their own imaginations with characteristics of the Olympians. You might want to partner students for this project – with both developing the story, but one illustrating and other writing the words.

RL 6.3, 6.6; W 6.3, 6.4, 6.6

1. Ancient stories were often created to help people understand the world around them. Natural events could be frightening without an explanation, and stories helped people make sense of what they observed and experienced everyday. For example: Why is the day divided into daytime and nighttime? (See the story of Helios.) What is a rainbow? (See Apollo.) Why do we have seasons? (Read the story of Persephone in the chapter about Demeter).

Have the students keep track of the stories that explain natural phenomena. Then have each pick one of these stories and find a tale from another culture that offers an explanation of the same thing. Or they might prefer to create their own *pour quoi* story. What do all the stories have in common? Which ones come closest to what we now know to be scientific explanations?

RL 6.1, 6.3, 6.7, 6.9; W 6.1, 6.3, 6.4, 6.7, 6.9

2. *“Around the world, stories of the creation of life appear. Usually the sun plays an important role in these stories, which is no surprise, given how important the sun is to life on earth. Greek mythology is different in a strange way though: Daylight appears early in the creation story, but daylight is not connected to the sun, at least not initially.”* (From the story of Gaia, page 15) Have students research creation stories from different cultures and find characteristics that they share with the Greek myths.

RL 6.7, 6.9; RI 6.6, 6.7, 6.9

3. Every culture has a body of stories that explore and sometimes guide human behavior. These “moral” tales have lessons embedded in them or, as in fables, are stated outright. Find examples of such lessons among the stories in *Treasury of Greek Mythology*. Ask your students to rewrite the lessons as if Aesop were creating the tales: brief stories with stated moral or behavioral

lessons. To get you started, look at the story of Uranus and note how his actions led to the birth of the Cyclops and other monsters. Read the section about Andromeda in the chapter about Perseus. In the description of her mother, Cassiopeia, we learn that she is boastful, and there are dire consequences to that. RL 6.1, 6.3; W 6.3, 6.4, 6.7

1. In a footnote in the story of Apollo, we learn that *“Apollo is god of many things, including music, poetry, and other arts. He often walked with the Muses – nine graceful daughters of Zeus and the Titan Mnemosyne.”*

Over the centuries, the muses have inspired poets, painters, playwrights, composers, and other artists. In much the same ways, the myths themselves have inspired artists. We continue to see their influence in popular fiction, movies, and television. Your students, too, can create works based on these tales.

Divide your class into groups of six to work together to write a book, a screenplay, a piece of music, or to create a series of paintings inspired by one of the Greek tales. They should present their work to the class and talk about how the story led to their creation.

W 6.1, 6.3, 6.4, 6.8, 6.9; SL 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5

2. Donna Jo Napoli often offers bits of wisdom in her telling of the myths. For example: *“Cruelty is the snake that bites its own tale”* (page 24) in the story of Cronos and *“the war amounted to old against young, and the young gods won, as they had to. That is the nature of things”* (page 32) in the story of Zeus. As students read the book, have them keep a running list of these *“wise sayings.”* Then the class should create a book titled *Wisdom from Olympians* – with students writing personal stories about how they came to know the truth of the saying. W 6.3, 6.4; SL 6.1, 6.2, 6.5

The poets and poetry lovers in your class will find many beautiful turns of phrases and uses of descriptive language throughout *Treasury of Greek Mythology*. Have the class find as many uses of descriptive language as they can. Students can take turns reading phrases aloud enjoying, the sounds they make. They can discuss what they think the phrases mean.

One example is the romantic description of how beauty makes us feel in the chapter about Gaia: *“Eros was beautiful, but not ordinary beautiful. Eros’ beauty made the others quiver. It made them dream of being enveloped in warm caresses. Of getting drunk on thick creamy honey. Of swooning from ambrosia....”* (page 15).

Another is the alliterative phrase that closes the chapter about the Goddess of the Moon: *“Selene silver sweet, and soft, and sad.”* (page 117).

RL 6.1, 6.4, 6.5; SL 6.1



## LANGUAGE ARTS – CREATIVE WRITING: THE GREEK MYTHS AS MUSE

## LANGUAGE ARTS – DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE: POETRY OUT LOUD

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Donna Jo Napoli tells us “Gaia was generous, as a mother should be,” (page 14) and she provides examples throughout the myths of this quality. Have the class compare Gaia to other mothers in the Greek tales, then with mothers from other books they’ve read.  
RL 6.1, 6.2, 6.7, 6.8
2. Historians use the expression “necessity is the mother of invention” to explain the impetus for progress – whether political, social, economic or technological. The phrase also fits several of the stories of Greek mythology. The lack of order in the world led Gaia as a mother force to create Earth, the Sea, and the Heavens. Need also motivated Hephaestus and Hera. Discuss with the class other examples of “necessity” being a creative force in the myths, in literature, and in history.  
RL 6.4, 6.5; SL 6.1
3. After the war between the Titans and the Gods, “...Zeus appointed Poseidon ruler of the seas. Poseidon knew his brother felt the seas were an inferior realm to rule. Ha again! Nothing could have pleased Poseidon more.” (page 43) The seas play a big role in many of the Greek myths. Talk about why the seas were so important to the people of Greece.  
RL 6.1, 6.5; SL 6.1, 6.3
4. Read the story of Achilles in Helen. Have your students discuss what it means to have “an Achilles heel.” Each student should talk about his or her own weakest point.  
RL 6.4; SL 6.1, 6.5
5. Finally, have the class decide who was the greatest hero in Greek mythology. Who is the most evil? Who is kindest? Who is the most interesting?  
SL 6.1

(Key: RL – Reading Literature, RI – Reading Information, RH – Reading History, W – Writing, SL – Speaking and Listening)

**RL**

6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

6.3: Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

6.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

6.5: Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

6.6: Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

6.7: Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

6.9: Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

**RI**

6.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

6.7: Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

6.9: Compare and contrast one author’s presentation of events with that of another

**SL**

6.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher- led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.



6.3: Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

6.5: Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

## W

6.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

6.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

6.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

6.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

6.7: Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

6.8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.

6.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.



This guide was created by Clifford Wohl, Educational Consultant