

Puzzles in Mythology and Writing – lesson plan

Overview: Myths of the past gave answers to puzzles that our ancient ancestors could not solve. Often the myths were puzzles themselves, hinting at feelings and fears hidden in the hearts of the people of the time. Students explore the puzzles in mythology, in literature, and make some of their own.

Objectives: Students will

- (1) learn about Greek mythology through creation of their own puzzle
- (2) examine how puzzles are used in literature
- (3) enjoy the puzzles their fellow students created, enhancing their knowledge of the subject matter
- (4) use their puzzle to enhance their fiction writing

Materials:

- (1) The book, *Erec Rex: The Dragon's Eye*

Teaching Plan:

Making Puzzles: Each student should invent a puzzle, with Greek mythology as the subject matter. It can be a riddle, a brain teaser, a word game, an anagram, a crossword or any type of puzzle that can be solved on paper.

The students should choose the topic for their puzzle (such as Artemis, the Garden of the Hesperides, Jason and the Argonauts, etc.) then do research to come up with facts for their puzzle.

When their puzzles are done, they should recopy them neatly, using rulers for straight edges if necessary. The answers should be written on a separate sheet.

After the puzzles are turned in, make copies of each for each student. They may solve them in class, or do them at home for fun. Students should save the copies of their puzzles for later.

Reading: Students should read *Erec Rex: The Dragon's Eye*, Chapter Ten, pages 142 – 144.

After reading, discuss:

- How did Bethany figure out the answer to the question in the film?
- Why did the other kids not figure out the answer?
- When you read a puzzle in a story, do you stop and try to figure out the answer yourself?
- There is another hidden puzzle in this story (and many more in the book!) Can you find it? (Answer: the characters names Renwo Tneconni and Koorc, spelled backward are Innocent Owner and Crook!)

Reading: Students should read *Erec Rex: The Dragon's Eye*, Chapter Sixteen, pages 238 – 243.

After reading, discuss:

-There are two puzzles in this reading. One was the riddle; the other was the way Erec and Bethany had to get the sprites to show them the passageway. Which was trickier?

-What kind of person would be able to figure out how to work with the water sprites? Would Balor Stain have thought of the answer? Do you think the puzzle was designed to make certain types of people win? What other way could a puzzle be set up so a certain type of person would win?

-Did you try to solve the riddle before you read the answer? How far did you get?

-At the end of the book Aoquesth asks Erec a riddle. Can you remember what the riddle is? What was the answer?

Puzzles in Writing:

-Students should look at the mythology puzzles they created, and think of how their puzzle could fit into a story. The puzzle may need to be changed to work. For example, an anagram may be changed completely so that only one of the questions in it are used.

Then the students will now write a short story centered around their puzzle. Be creative! It may be a mystery story with the puzzle leading to the answer. Or the puzzle may be something that the characters must solve to get what they want. Anything is fair game. See how the puzzle can add interest to your stories.

Assessment:

Students are evaluated on the puzzles which are handed in for originality, presentation and mythology research used in the puzzles. They are also evaluated on their short story for creativity, mythology research, and writing skills.

Extensions:

Art can be expressed in many ways. Can a puzzle be art? Can art be a puzzle? Explore this as students do an art exploration. Students sketch the same drawing on two different pages, then paint or color the two in differently. Then, laying one sheet on top of the other, cut both pictures into the same jigsaw pattern. Mix the pieces, and make new pictures with pieces from each original pattern. Glue them onto another paper or cardboard.

Riddles can be silly and fun, like the poem riddle Kaza Kingsley wrote on page 242 of *Erec Rex: The Dragon's Eye*. Students can write their own poem riddle – they can be as goofy as they like and enjoy playing with words.

Math puzzles can be fun. Students can make their own math puzzles, from Sudoku to math crosswords to an invention of their own.

Suggested Reading:

D'Aulaires Book of Greek Myths, by Ingri D'Aulaire, Edgar Parin D'Aulaire
Mythology, by Lady Hestia Evans

Ancient Greece Literature-Base Activities for Thematic Teaching Grades 4-6, by
Linda Quick

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