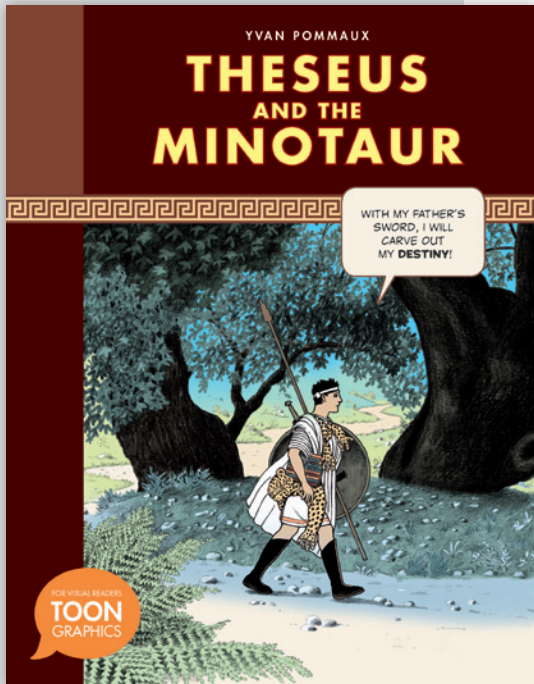




Theseus and the Minotaur

CCSS-aligned Lesson Plan & Teacher's Guide

TOON GRAPHICS FOR VISUAL READERS



Theseus and the Minotaur:

by Yvan Pommaux
A TOON Graphic
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THE TOON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH TEAM:

Hsin Yu Chao, an illustrator and comic artist in her native Taiwan, is currently pursuing a master's degree in Arts Administration at Teachers College, Columbia University. Chao has worked for numerous galleries as well as for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Sasha Steinberg, who holds a BA in Comparative Literature from Vassar College and an MFA in Cartooning from the Center for Cartoon Studies, was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to study political art in Russia.

TOON Graphics are comics and visual narratives that bring the text to life in a way that captures young readers' imaginations and makes them want to read on—and read more.

The very economy of comic books necessitates the use of a reader's imaginative powers. In comics, the images often imply rather than tell outright. Readers must learn to make connections between events to complete the narrative, helping them build their ability to visualize and to make “mental maps.” A comic book also gives readers a great deal of visual context that can be used to investigate the thinking behind the characters' choices.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE ARTIST'S CHOICES

Look carefully at the artwork: it offers a subtext that at first is sensed only on a subliminal level by the reader and encourages rereading. It creates a sense

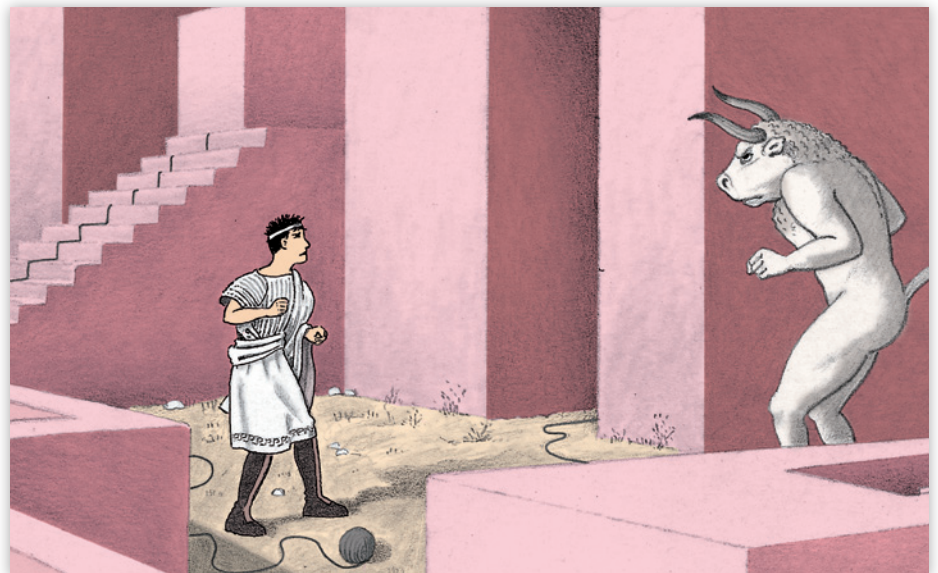
of continuity for the action, and it can tell you about the art, architecture, and clothing of a specific time period. It may present the atmosphere, landscape, and flora and fauna of another time or of another part of the world.

Facial expressions and body language reveal subtle aspects of characters' personalities beyond what can be expressed by words.

READ AND REREAD!

Readers can compare comic book artists' styles and evaluate how different authors get their point across in different ways. In investigating the author's choices, a young reader begins to gain a sense of how all literary and art forms can be used to convey the author's central ideas.

The world of TOON Books, TOON Graphics, and of comic book art is rich and varied. Making meaning out of reading with the aid of visuals may be the best way to become a lifelong reader, one who knows how to read for pleasure and for information—a reader who *LOVES* to read.





LITERACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In addition to providing students with the tools to master verbal literacy, each TOON Graphic offers a unique focus on visual learning. The 21st Century has seen a shift where literacy has been redefined to include visual literacy. Our unique lesson plans and teacher's guides help instructors and students alike develop the vocabulary and framework necessary to discuss visual expressions, structure, and meaning in the classroom.

For schools that follow the ELA Common Core, TOON Graphics lesson plans offer examples of how to best utilize our books to satisfy a full range of state standards. The Common Core's learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade, and were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live. Though this book can be used in any grade, we focused this lesson plan on state standards for grades 4 and 5. Questions included in this guide fulfill the following standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Literature (RL).4-5.1-10

Students build skills in reading and comprehending literature independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Informational Text (RI).4-5.4, 9

Students determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. Students integrate information from several texts in order to speak knowledgeably on a subject.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.1

Students engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.2

Students summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.4

Students report on a topic or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.1

Students write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.2

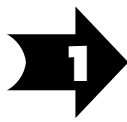
Students write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.7

Students conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



- Black = potential questions for course plans
- Gray = feedback for teachers.



Verbal Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and example in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*



Characters

- ◆ Look at the promise that Theseus makes to his mother on page 20. Does he keep his promise throughout the story?

Theseus promises to use his “brains as well as [his] sword.” Point to the battles on pages 22-23 as examples of Theseus using his brains (literally, in the case of the white bull!). When and how does Theseus fail to keep his promise?

- ◆ Theseus’s mother believes that he is the son of both King Aegeus and the god Poseidon. What evidence is given to show that Theseus is indeed the son of a god?

On page 11, we are told that Aethra “thought [Theseus] was so handsome that he must be the son of both a god and a king.” Ask students if this makes sense. Is there really a connection between beauty and power? Why might Ancient Greeks have told stories to connect the two? Is there more specific evidence that Theseus has both Aegeus and Poseidon as a father (pages 20, 30)? How would this be possible? What does that idea tell you about Ancient Greek understandings of biology?



◆ Which two traits does Theseus learn to value above everything else at the end of the story (page 49)? What leads him to value these so highly?

On page 49 we learn that, after the events of the story, Theseus decided to “value wisdom and humility over bravery and courage.” This, the text explains, was the beginning of “democracy” as we know it. How is Theseus’s decision to reject bravery a direct response to the events of the story? What are the positive and negative results of Theseus’s bravery throughout the story? Ask students if they agree with his ultimate decision.

◆ How do other rulers like Minos and Aegeus compare to Theseus? What are their values? What lessons do you think the Ancient Greeks could have learned from each king?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.6

Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6

Describe how a narrator’s or speaker’s point of view influences how events are described.

Have students look at King Minos’s decisions on pages 13 and 19 (where he decides not to sacrifice the white bull and to tax Aegeus with the lives of seven young Athenians a year.) Why does Minos make these decisions? Likewise, for Aegeus, have students examine pages 17 and 25 (where he decides to send first Androgeos and then Theseus to their deaths). What motivates these decisions? Are we supposed to respect these Kings and their ruling styles? Or are they meant to demonstrate how not to behave?

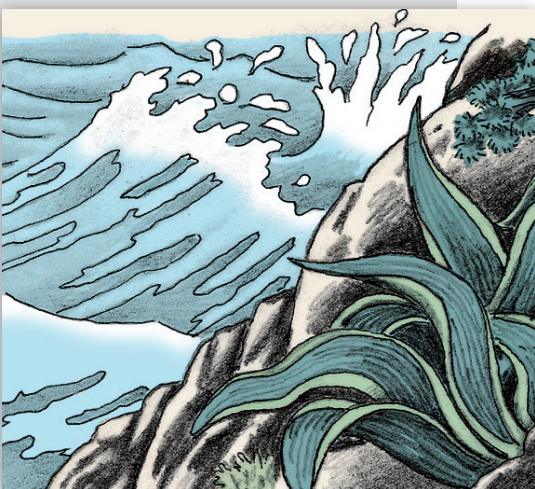
Ancient Greek World

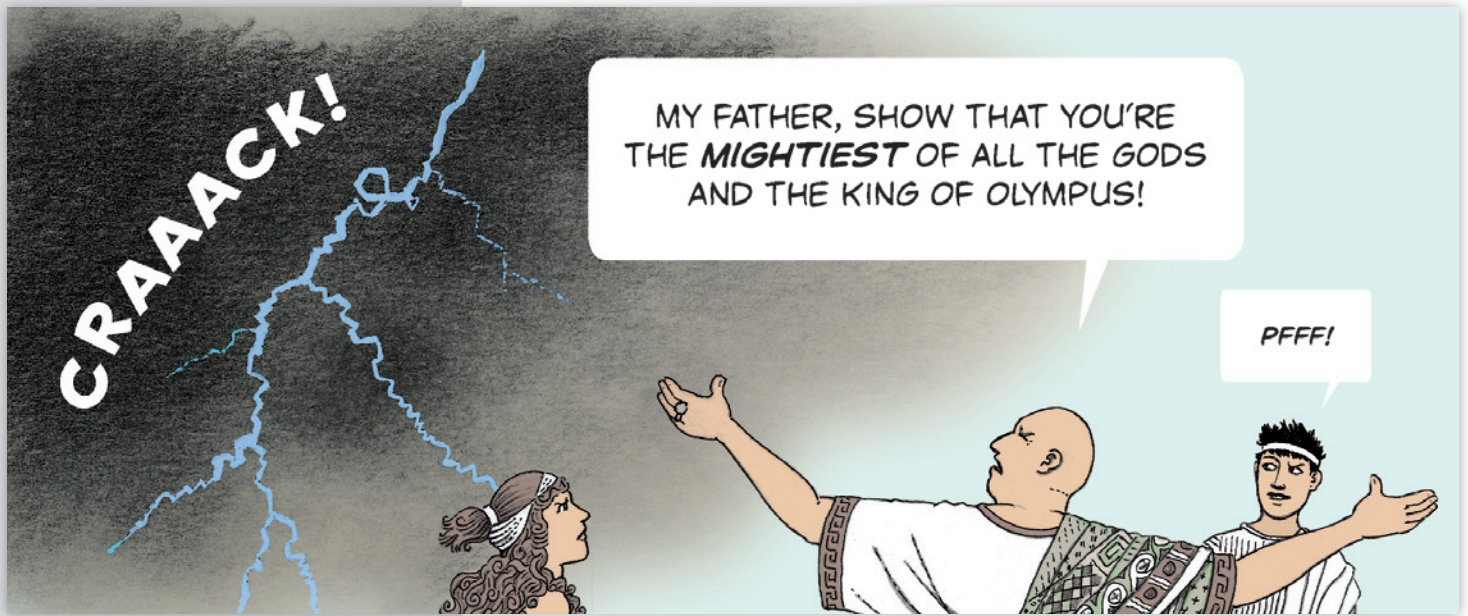
◆ What does “fate” mean? How does it affect the lives of specific characters (Minos, Ariadne, Theseus)? In what ways do characters try (and fail) to avoid their fates? What would fate have meant to the Ancient Greek world? What does it mean today?

See page 17 for a specific mention of the word “fate” (in connection with Minos). Is fate decided by the gods or does human action affect it (the idea of “sealing one’s fate”)? How do the fates of women in this story compare with the fates of men? Do Ariadne, Pasiphaë, and Aethra have a say in their fates? What happens to Pasiphaë and Aethra (the mothers) in the end of the story? Their stories are not told. What does this tell us about the roles of men and women in Greek society? How is fate connected to parentage and legacy (see the relationship between Aegeus, Poseidon, and Theseus)? Is Theseus’s fate determined by his fathers?

◆ Based on specific events and references in the story, what does the myth of Theseus tell you about the role of the “sea” in ancient Greece?

See, for example, page 10 (when Aethra is impregnated by the sea), page 13 (when Poseidon makes a sacrificial bull jump from the waves), pages 29-31 (when Theseus dives into the water and is assisted by dolphins), and page 46 (when Aegeus throws himself into what is now called “The Aegean Sea” [page 49]). What are the various mythological powers of the sea? Why might the Ancient Greeks have held these beliefs?





CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, concepts from the ancient world).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, concepts from the ancient world).

◆ Ask students about the relationship between the humans and the gods. Who is in charge? Which humans are obedient and which humans try to outsmart the gods? Are they successful?

See pages 10 and 13, where Poseidon is able to control the world based on his passions and rages. See also page 45, where Dionysus does the same. What do these moments tell us about the way the Ancient Greeks thought of the gods? Note that in the latter case, Theseus (unlike Minos on page 13), heeds the “great god’s” demand. Would this have been an Ancient Greek indication of a “good person”? How does it compare with today’s standards for good behavior?

◆ Who is responsible for the Minotaur? Why are seven young Athenians sacrificed in the labyrinth each year? How does Theseus come to meet (and defeat) the Minotaur?

Ask students to identify some of the circumstances and conflicts that set the stage for Theseus’s epic battle with the Minotaur. See pages 13-19 for the history of the Minotaur, and the back-and-forth power struggle between Minos and Aegeus that sets the stage for Theseus’ adventure. Whose “fault” is the Minotaur? Whose “fault” is the loss of Athenian lives. Students may conclude that both Minos and Aegeus are deeply responsible (with their intertwining competitiveness) for the disasters in this book. What lesson would Ancient Greeks have taken from this story of warring leaders?





Visual Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5
Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

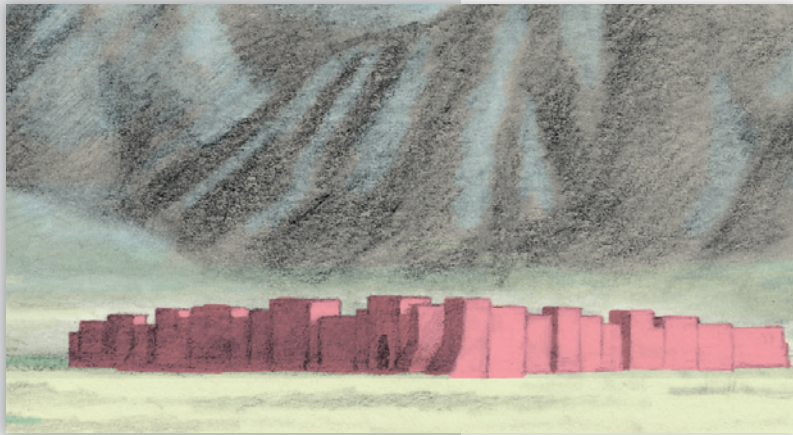
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7
Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5
Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, stanzas, etc. fits together to provide the overall structure of a story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*



Color

◆ Pay attention to the color themes throughout the book. What do you see? What colors play an important role in the book? Why do you think the artist used them?

Note the background colors of tan and blue indicate whether the action is taking place in Athens/Troezen or Crete.

◆ When does the artist use the color pink (or pinkish red)? What could this color symbolize?

Note that the colors pink/red only occur in connection with the Minotaur (and his territory: the labyrinth) or with the death of characters (page 18 - Androgeos's death, pages 19, 26, 27 - the black-sailed boat, page 22 - the bull's death, pages 33-38 - the Minotaur and his labyrinth, page 46 - King Aegeus's death). Ask students about the link between colors and emotions.

◆ See if you can find all the uses of the color black. When and where does it appear in the story? How does the color black make you feel? How might the color black be related to death or fate?

Note that the artist rarely uses black, and when he does, it is outlined or accented with a light color. The use of black seems very purposeful: King Aegeus's clothes, the night sky, the black-sailed boat, shadowy trees and leaves on page 32, and the crows. The use of black is connected to death and fate. King Aegeus is fated for sorrow and ultimate death, the black-sailed boat indicates the fate of being eaten by Minotaur, and the trees, leaves, and crows of Crete symbolize Theseus' own dangerous fate (of facing death in the labyrinth). Ask students why the color black is connected to death in so many cultures?



Visual Parallels

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and example in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

◆ Compare the verbal and visual expression of Theseus's growing up process (pages 10-12) with that of the Minotaur (pages 13-15).

There are strong visual similarities in these two stories. The composition of princess Aethra drifting in the waves (page 10) is very similar to that of the white bull emerging from the waves (page 13). Likewise, the way Theseus is held as a baby (page 11) mirrors the way the Minotaur is held (page 15).

There is a real parallel between the two characters. Both are the secret sons of the two warring kings, born in part through the passions of Poseidon. Both are used by their fathers in revenge games against each other, and come face to face in battle on pages 40-43, when the strands of their two fates finally intertwine. The parallel emphasizes the animalistic nature of human violence, which is typically described as "bravery" or "courage." It also brings out the humanity of the Minotaur; we see how human-like he is and how he was once treated like a little boy but slowly (and perhaps through force) developed into a fierce beast.



◆ Note that the Minotaur is always nude in the story while Theseus wears clothes and usually animal furs (leopard?). What do you think is the reason that they are depicted in this way?

We can attribute this difference to the typical power hierarchy between humans and animals. Because the Minotaur is a hybrid, and half-human, he is classified as lower, and less advanced than human beings, therefore nude. Theseus, by contrast, who is not only human but actually part god, gets to wear clothes, and sometimes even the skin of "lesser" creatures. Ask students where else can they find power hierarchies of clothed/nude in the history of art and storytelling. Some teachers may wish to introduce traditional western paintings, in which the clothing hierarchy is frequently applied to male/female subjects.



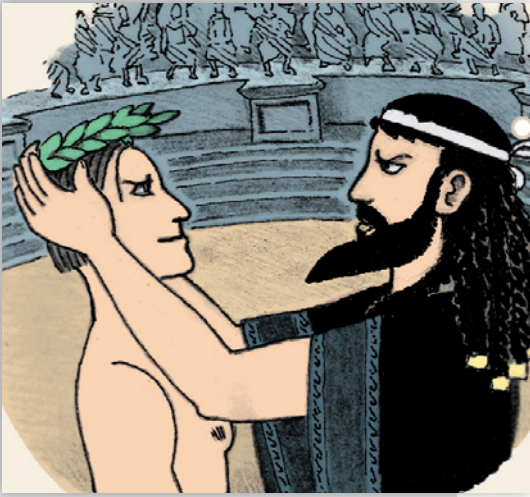
◆ In what ways does Theseus resemble King Aegeus? Are there certain things that they both do? For example, compare the panel in which King Aegeus lifts the rock (page 11, panel #01) and the panel in which Theseus lifts the rock (page 20, panel #01). What are the similarities and differences? Or, compare the panel in which King Aegeus sits in his palace (page 12, panel #02) and the panel in which Theseus sits in the same palace (page 47, panel #02).

In the case of the palace scene, the sky on page 12 is bright, but it is dark on page 47. This may reflect the thoughts and moods of the characters; King Aegeus is angry about his fate whereas Theseus feels saddened and guilty. Ask students to analyze how Theseus's experiences in this story shaped his psychology and made him different from Aegeus in both attitude and personality.

◆ Compare pages 29 (Theseus jumping off the cliff) and 46 (King Aegeus falling from the cliff) what are the similarities and differences? What do you think Theseus is feeling when he jumps off the cliff? How about King Aegeus felt?

Although the cliffs look similar, the composition is reversed. Theseus jumps left to right, indicating a forward movement, in line with the direction of the narrative. Aegeus, however, topples backwards and down, an indication of his defeat. These compositions reflect the different moods of the characters: Theseus is eager/willing to prove himself by jumping off the cliff; King Aegeus feels desperate, devastated, and full of grief.





- ◆ Compare the facial expressions of Minos, Aegeus, and Androgeos on pages 17 and 18. How does Minos feel about his son, Androgeos? How does Aegeus feel about Androgeos? What are the differences?

Note that Minos and Androgeos are looking out in the same direction (page 17) whereas Aegeus and Androgeos are facing each other (pages 17 and 18). Perhaps this indicates that Minos and Androgeos have a similar viewpoint and position, but Aegeus and Androgeos do not. In both instances, Aegeus and Androgeos are actually thinking and feeling radically different things, including on page 18, where Aegeus is plotting Androgeos's death, and the young man is none the wiser!

- ◆ What do you make of the transparent curtain that hangs in King Aegeus' palace (pages 24-25) and in the scene of Theseus saying goodbye to his mother (page 20)? What might this curtain represent?

The transparent curtain appears in scenes that link Theseus to parents (especially to his father Aegeus). In some ways, it may be an allusion to a white sail (a symbol of safety that also foreshadows the accidental death of Aegeus [for which Theseus is indirectly responsible]). In other ways, it may simply represent the "safe space" of family, which is set off from the rest of the world by a kind of protective, private membrane. Be sure to note that the transparent curtain is gone on page 47 (after Aegeus' death). This supports both explanations—because Theseus is cut off from his family, and also feels exposed to the violence of the world.



- ◆ Compare the texture of the curtain with the other materials used in buildings in the book, what are the similarities and differences between those materials? Compare the palaces of Minos and Aegeus, as well as the Minotaur's labyrinth. Describe the appearance of the buildings, and analyze the ways that this corresponds with the personalities of the characters.

The palaces of Minos and Aegeus are quite similar in composition and color (pages 24 and 28), although the way in which the two leaders occupy them are quite different. Aegeus appears almost exclusively in his elaborate throne room, an indication, perhaps, of his obsession with power and inheritance. Minos, by contrast, often appears at the edge of the ocean, gazing towards Athens. This, in turn, may indicate his competitive spirit, and his quest to dominate the surrounding kingdoms. The Minotaur's labyrinth resembles a city, but is completely devoid of embellishment. It is also the only palace/city that is not located on water. The Minotaur's domain is completely cut off, unfinished, abandoned.

Composition



- ◆ Drawing on your sense of traditional Greek and Roman painting (see the front endpapers and the jars on page 26 for inspiration), do you see any similarities between the style of art throughout the book (especially pages 16-18) and actual Greek and Roman illustration? What is unique about this special style of art? How does it make you feel as a viewer? Do you like it? Why or why not?

Traditional Greek and Roman painting features characters facing to the side and many flat backgrounds. Greek and Roman art did not have a developed perspective technique. That being said, it also used sequential illustration to tell stories in many media (walls, jars, etc.), making it deeply connected to the history of comics. Students may be interested to learn about the historical development of narrative art / sequential narrative. In many ways, this book is actually designed to resemble the ancient style sequential narrative expression—horizontal panels, tiered story-telling (from top to bottom), characters in profile—yet it also has adopted more advanced techniques such as perspective, camera angles, and more realistic modern landscape renderings.

- ◆ How many enemies does Theseus fight in the story? Take a look at pages 22-23, where the illustrator utilizes different sizes of panels for Theseus' different battles. Why did the artist choose to do this?

The size of panels may be related to the power or strength of the enemy. The more difficult the enemy is to beat, the larger the panel. Ask students to compare with pages 39-43, where huge spreads are devoted to Theseus's battle with the Minotaur.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-5.9
Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics and patterns of events in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures. (See Picasso question below)



- ◆ Look at the fight scene between Theseus and the Minotaur (pages 38-43). How does it make you feel? What techniques does the artist use to build tension? How is this scene similar to (or different from) suspenseful scenes in films or novels?

On page 38, we see Theseus walking through a narrow doorway to find the Minotaur (who appears in close-up on the facing page). This, along with the growing prevalence of the colors pink and red, slowly builds the tension and stress, guiding the audience to expect a strong enemy and a dramatic confrontation.

- ◆ Pages 42-43 display the long battle between Theseus and the Minotaur in a single image. What do you make of this image? What do you see? Does the composition remind you of anything?



Pablo Picasso's Guernica (1937)

Some students may be interested to compare this composition to Pablo Picasso's Guernica. Guernica was painted in April of 1937 in response to the bombing of Guernica, Spain (a Basque Country village) by German and Italian warplanes during the Spanish Civil War. The painting shows the violence and suffering of war and is considered to be a strong anti-war symbol. Certain visual similarities (not least of which is the white bull and the black/white/yellow/blue color palette) connect Guernica to the scene in Theseus. Ask students to think about what the two paintings are trying to communicate, and why the artist of Theseus may have looked to Picasso for inspiration.



- ◆ What do you make of Theseus’s “victory” over the Minotaur. Note his body language as he walks away from the scene of the battle on page 43. How do you think he defeated the Minotaur? Is it a “victory” in the traditional sense? Why or why not?

Throughout the storyline, the artist emphasizes a lot of similarities between Theseus and Minotaur. It’s hard to tell whether Theseus really “defeated” the Minotaur or not. In some ways, he may have helped put the Minotaur out of his lonely misery. Regardless, Theseus certainly does not feel deserving of praise (page 47). By the end, although he has saved the lives of many young Athenians, his actions have cost him several close relationships, and his death count has become quite high. Is Theseus really less of a murderer than the Minotaur? How clear are the lines of good and evil in this story?



Further Research

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-5.6

Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, and describe how a speaker’s point of view influences the description.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4-5.9

Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.1

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.7

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



- ◆ Ask students to look at the map in the back of the book (page 54) that shows Theseus’s path to Crete. How does it compare to a modern day map of that area of the world? What has changed? How would Theseus’s journey be different if he travelled from Troezen to Knossos today?

- ◆ Ask students to write two separate accounts of everything that happened between Ariadne and Theseus, one from each point of view (in the form of journal entries). How are the accounts different? Why are they different? Then, select two students to play the parts of Ariadne and Theseus. Have them act out a conversation in which they explain their respective points of view to each other.

- ◆ Have students split into groups and write/present an account of Theseus’s journey to Crete and his homecoming, as if they were news reporters updating the citizens of Athens. They should focus on chronology, and be sure to address instances of cause and effect (e.g. how Theseus’s forgetfulness leads to Aegeus’s death). Be sure to use appropriate tone when reporting each event; is it anxious, excited, tragic, or triumphant?



◆ Have students choose an aspect of Ancient Greece from Theseus and the Minotaur that interests them. Is it the characters' clothing? Greek weddings or burials? Classical architecture? Ancient ships? Have students use web and book sources to research their topic of interest and write a report to be presented in class.

◆ Readers' Theater: Have students read various scenes aloud in class. Pay attention to their inflection. If possible, have each student play multiple roles and be sure that they adjust their performance accordingly. Ask them to try to incorporate visual information from the images into their performance. Remember to refer to the pronunciation keys at the bottom of each page.

◆ Ask students to write an alternate ending to Theseus and the Minotaur. A good place to begin may be when Ariadne gives Theseus the magical string. What would happen if Theseus did not have the string? Would he still defeat the Minotaur? Students are encouraged to follow the comics format, including paneled illustrations, speech balloons, sound effects, etc. Remind students to think about the ways they can use graphic cues to direct their reader.



◆ Ask students to imagine that they, like Daedalus, were given the task of designing a building from which no one can escape. How would they have done this in ancient times, and how would they do it today? What sort of materials would be available in each era? Have students write an essay describing their thoughts and strategies. Students may want to draw their own pictures, diagrams, and blueprints as well.

*Activities by Genevieve Bormes,
Educational Outreach Consultant.*

◆ Give each student a blank family tree and a blank timeline. Give each student in class a number, either 1 or 2. As they read in small groups, the 1s will fill out the family tree for this story together. Similarly, as they read in small groups, the 2s will fill out the timeline. Display student story-based family trees and timelines somewhere where all students can see them. Ask each group to explain their graphic organizer and their decisions. After all of the groups have shared their ideas, have the students work together on an "ultimate" class family tree and timeline.

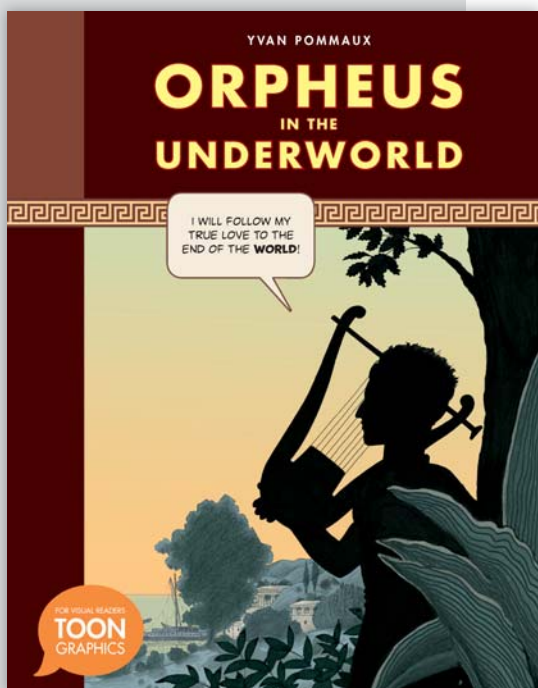
*Activity by Dr. Katie Monnin,
Associate Professor of Literacy at the University of North Florida.*



Orpheus in the Underworld

CCSS-aligned Lesson Plan & Teacher's Guide

TOON GRAPHICS FOR VISUAL READERS



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by Yvan Pommaux
A TOON Graphic
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THE TOON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH TEAM:

Richard Kutner, a translator of both prose and graphic literature with a thirty-three year background in education. He holds degrees from both New York University and Yale, and was the 2014 recipient of a Hemingway Grant for his work with TOON.

Genevieve Bormes, holds a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and is an illustrator based in New York City.

TOON Graphics are comics and visual narratives that bring the text to life in a way that captures young readers' imaginations and makes them want to read on—and read more.

The very economy of comic books necessitates the use of a reader's imaginative powers. In comics, the images often imply rather than tell outright. Readers must learn to make connections between events to complete the narrative, helping them build their ability to visualize and to make "mental maps." A comic book also gives readers a great deal of visual context that can be used to investigate the thinking behind the characters' choices.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE ARTIST'S CHOICES

Look carefully at the artwork: it offers a subtext that at first is sensed only on a subliminal level by the reader and encourages rereading. It creates a sense

of continuity for the action, and it can tell you about the art, architecture, and clothing of a specific time period. It may present the atmosphere, landscape, and flora and fauna of another time or of another part of the world.

Facial expressions and body language reveal subtle aspects of characters' personalities beyond what can be expressed by words.

READ AND REREAD!

Readers can compare comic book artists' styles and evaluate how different authors get their point across in different ways. In investigating the author's choices, a young reader begins to gain a sense of how all literary and art forms can be used to convey the author's central ideas.

The world of TOON Books, TOON Graphics, and of comic book art is rich and varied. Making meaning out of reading with the aid of visuals may be the best way to become a lifelong reader, one who knows how to read for pleasure and for information—a reader who *LOVES* to read.





LAND OF LOST SOULS

LITERACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In addition to providing students with the tools to master verbal literacy, each TOON Graphic offers a unique focus on visual learning. The 21st Century has seen a shift where literacy has been redefined to include visual literacy. Our unique lesson plans and teacher's guides help instructors and students alike develop the vocabulary and framework necessary to discuss visual expressions, structure, and meaning in the classroom.

For schools that follow the ELA Common Core, TOON Graphics lesson plans offer examples of how to best utilize our books to satisfy a full range of state standards. The Common Core's learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade and were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live. Though this book can be used in any grade, we focused this lesson plan on state standards for grades 4 and 5. Questions included in this guide fulfill the following standards:

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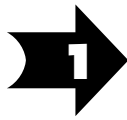
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CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.7
Students conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



- Black = potential questions for course plans
- Gray = feedback for teachers.



Verbal Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).



Characters

- ◆ Orpheus is a handsome poet and musician. Why does he pay no attention to the women of Thrace's expressions of love? (p. 11)

Orpheus is an idealist whose thoughts are on a high moral plane. He is waiting to meet a woman of ideal physical and spiritual beauty. He is absorbed in his quest for absolute truth and ideal love and pays no attention to anything less. Remember that his mother was a Muse.

- ◆ Orpheus is attracted by Eurydice's eyes (p. 19), which seem different from the other women's. What does he see in her eyes? Can a person's eyes communicate what a person is really like inside?

People have said that the eyes are the mirrors of the soul. Certainly they are expressive. We can often tell how people are feeling from the look in their eyes—fear, happiness, anger, love. Perhaps we can also get a glimpse of their intelligence and innermost feelings and that is what Orpheus senses. Hypnotists ask their subjects to look into their eyes. A rock-and-roll song says, "Just one look, that's all it took."



- ◆ Can you tell what kind of person Eurydice is from what she says? Please give specific examples. (pages 19-20, 24-25)

On pages 20-21, Eurydice says, “Your voice is music enough to my ears.” When she hears about the myth of Persephone, she says, “HOW SAD! Poor Persephone.” She shows the depth of her love for Orpheus and a kind heart in her concern for Persephone. The author doesn’t need to tell us these things. They are conveyed in the speech bubbles by Eurydice’s own words. On pages 24-25, Eurydice shows her loyalty to Orpheus and her strength of character in firmly resisting Aristaeus’s advances. Notice the size of the letters in the speech bubbles.

- ◆ Why isn’t Orpheus afraid of the darkness of the underworld, of the short-tempered Charon, the fierce Cerberus, the torments of the land of the dead, or the cold-hearted Hades?

Orpheus is driven by his quest to retrieve his beloved Eurydice at all costs. His love overcomes any fear he may have and has his adrenaline going. And he is confident that his singing will help him to overcome all obstacles. Is it really his singing or something inside him?

- ◆ Why does Hades set a condition for returning Eurydice to Orpheus? Why doesn’t he just let her go? (page 43)

The Greek gods and goddesses often impose conditions on mortals to test them. Theseus must find his way through the labyrinth and confront the Minotaur (see Toon Graphics *Theseus and the Minotaur*). Even before this, Theseus must defeat many enemies. This is true in other cultures as well. In the Old Testament, God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac to test his faith and obedience. Job is severely tested as well. In Mozart’s opera *The Magic Flute*, the hero and heroine are tested by fire and water. Tamino, the hero, like Orpheus, is able to charm wild animals with his musical instrument, a flute.

- ◆ Why does Orpheus lose Eurydice at the last minute? Could he have acted otherwise? What is the main idea of this event?

There is no simple answer to these questions. Orpheus is plagued by doubt in his departure from the underworld (pp. 45-47). Is Eurydice really there? He can’t hear her. Does he lack faith? Is his curiosity too much for him? Is he overly impatient? What in his character brings about this loss?

- ◆ Why do the women of Thrace tear Orpheus apart? Could the gods have prevented this?

The women are still jealous of Orpheus’s love for Eurydice. They’re also tired of his unrelenting sadness that’s dragging down their mood. Orpheus remains loyal to the memory of Eurydice (a positive quality), but this loyalty brings about his downfall (a negative event). It is hard to know what the gods’ role is in all this. They don’t seem to be involved, or could they have been planning this all along? They did, in the end, send the Muses down to bury him at the base of Mount Olympus, where the song of the nightingale was more beautiful than anywhere else.

- ◆ Do you think that Orpheus is reunited with his beloved Eurydice in the end, as the author says? Why or why not? (p. 49)

- ◆ Ask students: Were Orpheus’s constant sorrow and undying devotion to Eurydice right or wrong? What was good or bad about them? Why do students think so? Ask them to write a composition telling if they would do whatever they could to save someone they loved. They should support their point of view with detailed examples.





Visual Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5
Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7
Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5
Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, stanzas, etc. fits together to provide the overall structure of a story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)



Light and Dark

◆ There is an interplay between light and dark in this book. There are two light worlds (Mount Olympus and Thrace) and the dark world of the underworld. What does this mean? On which pages is the artwork the very darkest? Why do you think this is so?

The artwork is darkest on pages 44-47, where the background is solid black. This may reflect Orpheus's doubt: "...seeds of doubt were growing in Orpheus's mind..." (p. 44) All the rest of the text on this page consists of questions that Orpheus is asking himself. When the full light of day returns on p. 48, ironically Orpheus is in a state of despair. His state of mind is removed from the light surrounding him. It's interesting that the Fates do their work in a dark cave (pages 22-23). What does this tell you about the Greeks' view of fate? Was it positive or negative?



◆ How many shades of gray do you see on pages 36-42?

Life is not just all dark or all light. There are many shades of gray. The same is true for people's personalities. Often in literature, evil characters are not all evil, and good characters are not entirely good. Think of Hades in this book.

Foreshadowing

◆ Foreshadowing is giving a hint about something that is going to happen later in a book or story. How do the shadows of the leaves on p. 24 foreshadow later events in this book? What else could they represent?

The dark shadows may foreshadow Orpheus's descent into the underworld. This descent may really be a physical symbolic representation of his psychological descent into despair or into the depths of his own character. The dark shadows may also represent Aristaeus's evil intentions.



Color and Composition

◆ Look at the harmony of colors and forms on pages 14-15. How does this make you feel? What does it have to do with Orpheus? How does the artist create a feeling of depth?

All the forms are rounded on these pages, creating a soft, calm, lyrical feeling. The colors are mixed harmoniously. This probably relates to the music that Orpheus is playing and to his talent. The artist creates a feeling of depth by placing large animals, rocks, and plants in the foreground and extending the field of view to the sea and sky in the background. We get the feeling that Orpheus's music is filling all of nature.

◆ Contrast the stark vertical trees on page 30-31 with the fluid trees that bend to brush against Orpheus on pages 16-17. Why do you think the artist made this contrast?

The author probably made this contrast to scare us and make us think that the underworld might not respond to the magic of Orpheus's music.

◆ What do the green snakes on p. 45 remind you of?

They recall the green snake that bit Eurydice on p. 25. The snakes on Cerberus's head are also green. Ever since the story of Adam and Eve (and before), snakes have not been associated with good things. We call a treacherous person or a concealed danger a "snake in the grass."

◆ On pages 46-47, how does the artist create a feeling of distance between Orpheus and Eurydice? Between Orpheus and Charon?

Orpheus is large in the foreground at the top of the page, and Eurydice is small, fading into the background. The artist creates a big, empty space between Orpheus and Charon, reflecting the idea that they are separated forever now, that Orpheus must "leave this place and never return!"





◆ Look at the composition of pages 32-33. Why is Orpheus so large in the foreground?

Perhaps the artist wants us to try to feel what Orpheus is thinking and feeling, to penetrate and identify with his thoughts and emotions. The view of the River Styx is a dramatic moment for him—it’s the body of water separating him from the heart of the underworld. The composition reflects this drama. Although the river itself, and the barrier it symbolizes, takes up most of the page, the inner feelings of Orpheus dominate the scenery and all it represents.

◆ Look at the artwork on p. 40. What does the artist do to make Orpheus feel fear or doubt?

The height and monumentality of the door and the darkness and mist of the hallway with the columns must make Orpheus feel small and probably causes a feeling of anxiety and self-doubt. This page sets the tone for his encounter with Hades and Persephone.

◆ The only times we see the color red in this book are on the clothing of Hades and Persephone, on the pages with Cerberus (mouth, tongue, claws, eyes), and in the snake’s eyes on p. 25. Why do you think this is so? What do you associate the color red with?

In Western culture, red is often associated with blood, violence, death, and evil. In other cultures, such as that of China, red is said to bring good luck. The red on the clothing of Hades and Persephone clashes dramatically with the rest of the color palette in the underworld. It no doubt symbolizes death and violence, especially in its visual reference to Cerberus and the snakes. The “hot” color red is all the more shocking in this cold domain of Hades.

◆ The speech bubbles in this book are rectangles with rounded corners. In the Philemon books they are completely round ovals. Why do you think this may be?

This book is a more straightforward, formal telling of a story of a classical myth. Its rectangular speech bubbles bring out this formality. They also echo Ancient Greek ideals of symmetry and perfection, as in Greek architecture. In the Philemon books, the author makes bolder use of his wild imagination. A looser, less symmetrical speech bubble reflects this difference. If you look closely, you’ll see the same difference in the fonts.



3

Music

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4-5.9
Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.7
Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

◆ Ask students what kind of music they like and how it makes them feel. Have them bring in a sample and see how the other children react. Do they feel the same way? Why or why not? What is their favorite song? What do they like about it?

◆ Play samples of different kinds of music: Gregorian chant, classical instrumental, opera, Big Band, African, doo-wop, folk, 60s rock, Motown, rap, hip-hop, techno. Ask students if different music elicits different feelings. What are they? Why do they think this happens? Why do they think music has changed over the centuries? What exactly are the changes?

You can do the same activity with traditional or popular music from different cultures: China, Japan, India, Middle East, Europe, Latin America, the U.S. What differences do they hear and how do they make them feel?

◆ There are other stories that speak of the power of music over people and animals. Read the “Pied Piper of Hamelin” to the students or have them read it themselves. Have students compare and contrast how Orpheus uses music with animals and people to the way the Pied Piper does. Are there any similarities?

◆ No one knows exactly what Ancient Greek music sounded like. However, we do know that the Greeks used a series of modes, or scales, named from the top note to the bottom. Each mode was supposed to have its own emotional or psychological characteristics. They were:

- Dorian (e-d-c-b-a-g-f-e)
- Phrygian (d-c-b-a-g-f-e-d)
- Lydian (c-b-a-g-f-e-d-c)
- Mixolydian (b-a-g-f-e-d-c-b)
- Hypodorian (a-g-f-e-d-c-b-a)
- Hypophrygian (g-f-e-d-c-b-a-g)
- Hypolydian (f-e-d-c-b-a-g-f)

Have students break into seven groups to try to compose a melody or even a song in each of the modes. Do they sense any differing feeling in the different modes? Your music teacher can help you with this. Maybe they can even choreograph a dance to their music.





◆ Discuss with students: Why are there so many love songs? How and why does music express the joy or sadness of love so successfully?

◆ Tell the students to ask a parent to sing them a song. Have them ask why he or she chose this particular song. They should come back to school the next day and sing what they can remember to the class. (They could also record it on an iPhone, but many schools do not allow children to bring phones to school.) Then have them explain why their parent chose the song. Compare parents' reasons and your classmates' reactions. What conclusions can students draw?

◆ Ask children to compare the different reactions of the characters (the women of Thrace, Eurydice, Charon, Cerberus, Hades, Persephone) and animals in the book to Orpheus's songs. How can music change our lives? This can be used for discussion or for a writing assignment.

◆ Orpheus plays a musical instrument called a lyre. Have children research the myth of the invention of the lyre by the Greek god Hermes. They will find several versions of this funny story. What is similar and what is different about them? What might account for the differences? How did Apollo end up with the lyre and become the god of music? Do they remember from this book how Orpheus got the lyre? Ask them to report their findings to their classmates. Zeus had an eagle place Orpheus's lyre in the sky as the constellation Lyra. Where is this constellation located?

◆ Pythagoras [pih-THAG-or-us], an Ancient Greek philosopher and mathematician, thought that mathematics was the basis of everything and that it explained how the physical world worked. He discovered that the intervals (spaces) between notes played on a string were based on mathematical ratios or fractions. He also thought that the planets and stars moved according to mathematical principles that corresponded to musical notes and intervals, creating a harmonious "music of the spheres" that humans could not hear. Ask children to research these ideas and see if they can understand them. Then have them explain or even demonstrate them to their classmates in small groups. By the way, Pythagoras played the lyre.

◆ The story of Orpheus has been made into two operas, *Orfeo*, by Monteverdi (1607) and *Orfeo ed Euridice*, by Gluck (1762). It was also made into an operetta (*Orpheus in the Underworld*) by Jacques Offenbach, in 1858. Play some music from these works for the class. What differences do they hear? Do they think that the music portrays the underlying themes of the story? What are those themes? The Orpheus story has also been made into films, books, and dance pieces.



4

Ancient Greek World

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.9
Compare and contrast stories in the same genre (e.g., mysteries and adventure stories) on their approaches to similar themes and topics.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4-5.9
Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.1
Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

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Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

Ancient Greek World



◆ The gods and goddesses on Mount Olympus are always meddling in the lives of humans. Why do you think this is so? Support your point of view with examples from other Greek myths you have read.

The gods and goddesses live lives of pleasure without much to do. It amuses them to manipulate humans' lives or just to watch what happens to them. It's good entertainment. Sometimes they come down to earth and, often disguised in another form, even fall in love with humans. (See Toon Graphics *Theseus and the Minotaur*, when Poseidon falls in love with Aethra.) Is this how the Greeks thought about their gods and goddesses, or is it a way to try to explain the strange and sometimes difficult-to-understand things that people do?

◆ What does "fate" mean? Do the three Fates (pages 22-23) really cause the death of Eurydice or is something else at play? What could it be? Are the Fates testing Orpheus? Why?

Is our fate determined by outside forces (like the gods) or by things in our character? What in Orpheus's character could have brought about his fate? Was he too pleased with himself? How does the fate of Eurydice compare with that of Orpheus? Do you think that Eurydice has any say in her fate? What about Orpheus? If you see a difference, what does it tell you about the ancient Greeks' views about the roles of men and women in society?



5

Activities

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.2

Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

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Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7

Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).



◆ Ask students to write a different ending for this story in which Orpheus does not look back at Eurydice. Do they feel that their version is as satisfying? Why or why not?

◆ Tell the children to look carefully at the author's drawings of the underworld. Then have them draw or make a diorama of their own version of the underworld. What colors, objects, and other elements will they choose? Why?

◆ Readers' Theater: Have students read various scenes aloud in class. Pay attention to their inflection. If possible, have each student play multiple roles and be sure that they adjust their performance accordingly. Ask them to try to incorporate visual information from the images into their performance. Remember to refer to the pronunciation keys at the bottom of each page.

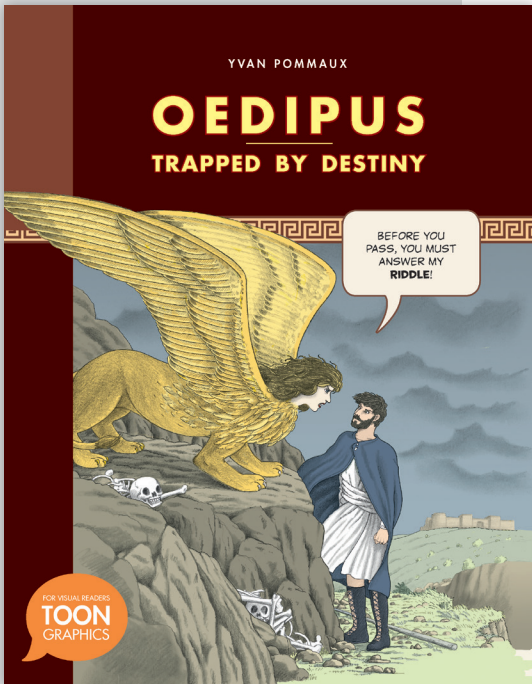




Yvan Pommaux's **Oedipus Trapped By Destiny**

CCSS-aligned Lesson Plan & Teacher's Guide

TOON GRAPHICS FOR VISUAL READERS



Oedipus Trapped By Destiny

by Yvan Pommaux

A TOON Graphic

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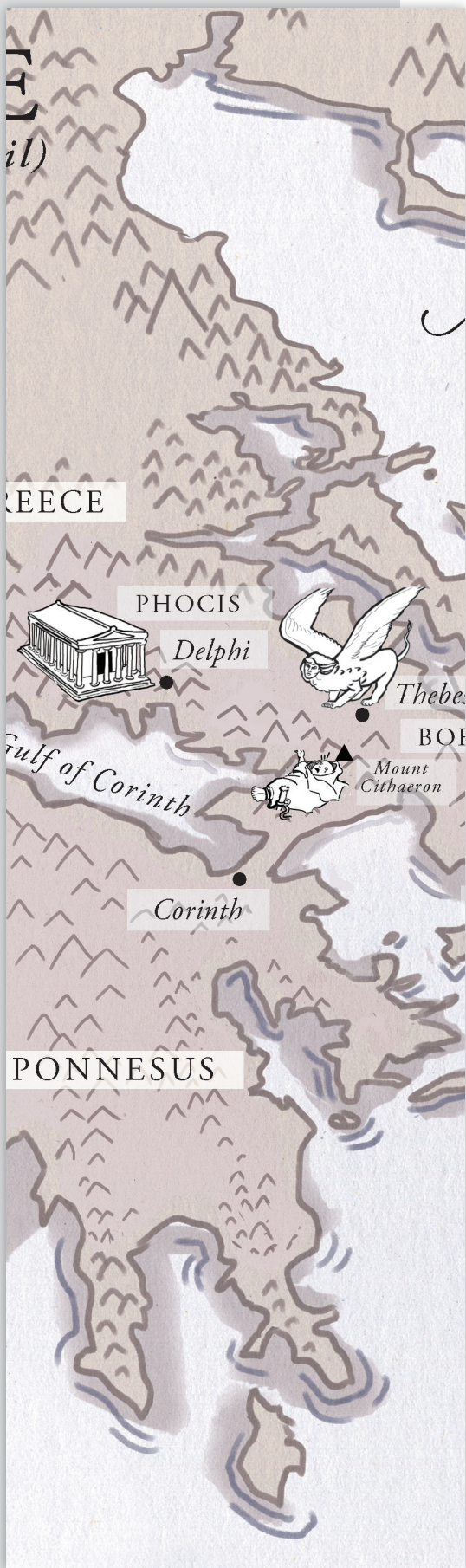
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TEACHER'S GUIDE PREPARED BY
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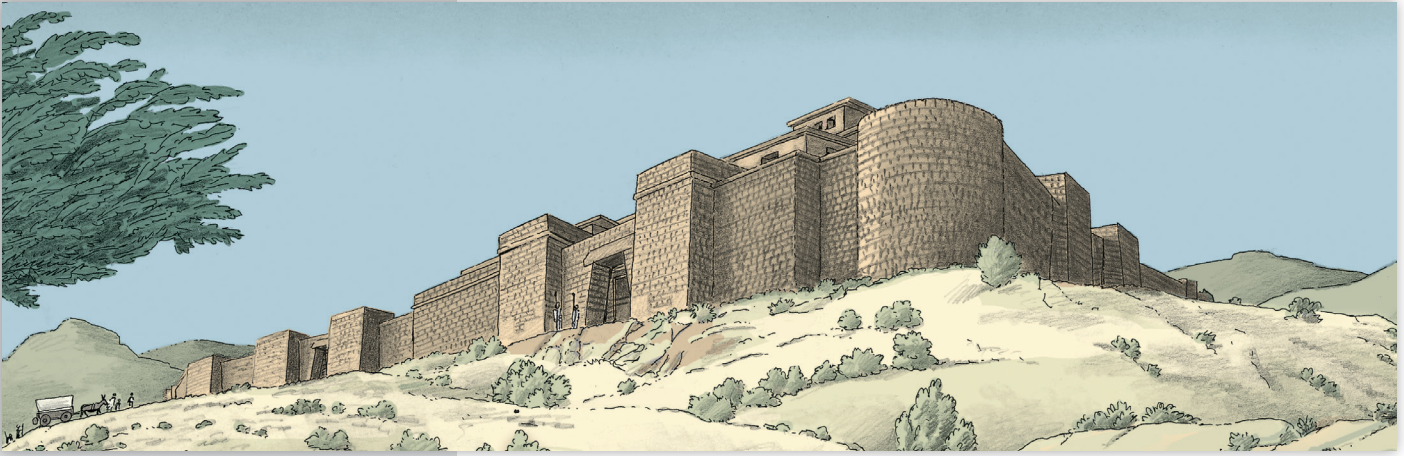
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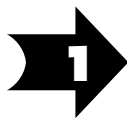
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.1
Students write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.2
Students write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.7
Students conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



- Black = potential questions for course plans
- Gray = feedback for teachers.



Verbal Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*

Theme and Characters

◆ Hubris

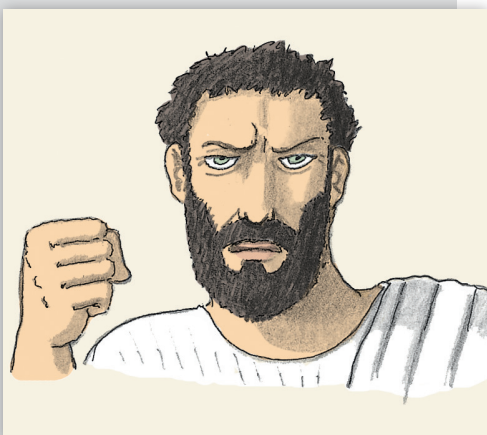
In modern usage, the word “hubris” (from the Greek ὕβρις) means extreme pride or self-confidence. The Ancient Greeks looked at hubris differently. They believed in balance and justice, and for them, hubris meant violent and excessive behavior that exhibited arrogance before the gods. When someone’s actions offended the gods, he or she had to be punished. The Greeks had a goddess named Nemesis, who, among other things, was the spirit of divine retribution against those who committed hubris.

Hubris is usually thought of as a characteristic of an individual rather than of a group, but, as in this book, it can have consequences for a group that the individual is part of.

Laius commits hubris in trying to avoid the Pythia’s prophecy, and Jocasta possibly commits it as well in saying that she doesn’t believe that the prophecy had come true.

Oedipus commits hubris in three ways:

1. by killing Laius
2. in believing so firmly that by fleeing Corinth he has outwitted the gods and escaped the terrible prophecy about himself





CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4

Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, concepts from the ancient world.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4

Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, concepts from the ancient world.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.6

Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6

Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.



3. by refusing to believe Tiresias and treating him arrogantly.

It is probably because of Oedipus that the plague comes to Thebes. On page 30, the Pythia says, “Find the man who slew King Laius and punish him. Only then will the gods have mercy and the plague relent.” When he learns the truth, Oedipus punishes himself by gouging his eyes out. This event appears to end the plague in Thebes, returning peace and harmony to the city. Laius and Jocasta both die in this book.

◆ Blindness

The idea of blindness runs through this book. Page 15 begins: “Blinded by unbearable pain and anguish, Oedipus fled.” The soothsayer Tiresias is blind, and on page 31 he says to Oedipus, “Everything you want to know is right before you. For refusing to see, you will be deprived of your sight.” On page 39, Oedipus blinds himself.

What do you think Tiresias means? Did Oedipus refuse to see the truth or was he unable to see it? Why? Have you ever refused to admit the truth to yourself? Tell or write about it. What do you think is meant by “emotional blindness”?

◆ Tragedy Across Generations

There is an old saying that the sins of the father will be visited on the children. This means that if your parent or grandparent did something bad, you may suffer for it or even repeat it. Can you give an example of this? Do you think it's fair? Many people think that Oedipus suffered because of something very bad that his father did to his own protector. This would take away Oedipus's responsibility for his actions. What do you think? Things turned out badly for three of Oedipus's four children. Was this somehow because of their father? What characteristics might they have inherited from him?

◆ Abandonment, Adoption, and the Search For Home

How does Oedipus's abandonment as a baby set the tone for his life? Discuss his adoption by the King and Queen of Corinth. How does his suspicion that he is not their biological son change him? What drives him to leave his home, and what does he hope to discover? When he marries Jocasta and becomes king of Boeotia, one can imagine that Oedipus believes he has finally found his true home. Then, for the second time in his life, sudden knowledge completely changes his relationship to his home and his family. What do you think he hopes to gain by leaving Thebes? Talk about Oedipus's last days. Who takes on the responsibility of caring for him? Do you believe he finally finds a peaceful home in Athens? (For more questions and activities about the role of abandonment in this story, please see the “Further Research” section.)

◆ Oedipus

Make a list of adjectives that describe Oedipus's personality. Think about characters in other books you have read who have these qualities. What influence did these aspects of their personalities have on their actions and destinies?

Oedipus is intelligent (he solves the Riddle of the Sphinx), impulsive (killing Laius), curious (he wants to know the truth from Tiresias), concerned about others (he wants to save the people of Thebes from the plague), responsible (he realizes what he has done and gouges out his eyes), reasonable (as ruler of Boeotia), and courageous (he fights against all of Laius's escorts at once; he faces the Sphinx). He is also egotistical (“Don't you know who I am?”) and quick to anger (he overturns Laius's cart and later threatens Tiresias).



◆ How does Oedipus's personality change from the beginning of the book to the end?

At the beginning of the book, Oedipus is proud, impulsive, and arrogant. As he gets older, he becomes more mature and reasonable and brings peace and prosperity to Boeotia for twenty years. At first he blames what happens on the gods, but Tiresias tells Oedipus that he is responsible for his own fate because he let loose his anger on an old man and took his life. Realizing his responsibility for Laius and Jocasta's deaths, Oedipus gouges out his own eyes, hoping to be able to perceive the true essence of things.

◆ Not much is said about Jocasta in this story. How do you think she felt about having her baby son put out on a mountainside to die? What happens to her in the end?

Women were not citizens in Ancient Greece and had little freedom. On the other hand, Greek goddesses, like Hera, Athena, and Artemis, had a great deal of power. It was Hera who blinded Tiresias (in one version of the myth) and later transformed him into a woman. Why do you think that women were granted less freedom and rights than men in Ancient Greece, although their goddesses were so powerful? Do some research and see what you can find out.

◆ Tiresias lived his life as a man, a woman, and a man again. He was considered to be especially wise because he had experienced life as both man and woman. What knowledge do you think he gained from being each gender?

◆ How is the role of Laius's servant central to this book?

Following Laius's orders, the servant, who is unnamed, tied baby Oedipus to the stake and left him on the mountainside. By the end of the book, he has hidden the truth of this event and of Oedipus's killing Laius for many years (although he didn't know it was Oedipus who killed Laius at the time). His revelations bring about the tragic ending of the myth, leading to Oedipus's blinding himself and Jocasta's suicide. Jocasta does not hear what the servant says but is intelligent and puts two and two together.



Visual Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5
Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7
Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5
Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, stanzas, etc., fits together to provide the overall structure of a story.

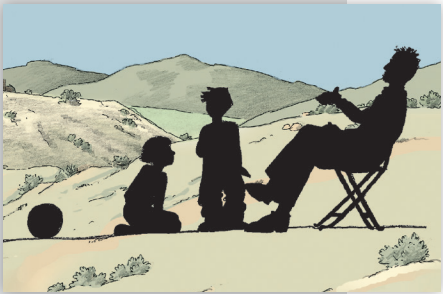
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary.)

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*

Color and Composition



Page 9



Page 9

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1

Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2

Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3

Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).



Pages 16-17

- ◆ Most of the book is done in soft, calm tones of beige, yellow, blue, brown, and gray. However, there are some sudden and violent changes. Look at the contrast between pages 9 and 10. How does the color change express what is happening, and how does it make you feel?

Things are peaceful and positive on page 9, but on page 10 the Pythia's wild prophecy is reflected in the swirling puffs of blue-gray smoke and the black rocks. There is also a sharp contrast between the white of her robe, the black of Laius's robe, and the rest of the picture. This dramatic color change enhances the disruption of the peaceful mood on the previous page. It takes us off guard and helps us to understand the horror that Laius is feeling. Look also at the Pythia's body language and at her eyes and open mouth. They add to the bizarre, frightening, other-worldly atmosphere. The drama is amplified by the composition of the picture on top of page 14.

- ◆ What effect does the silhouette of the author and his grandchildren have on page 9?

The presence of these figures brings them and us into the world of the story. We almost feel as though we're actually there.

- ◆ The layout of pages 16 and 17 is complicated and adds to the drama of the situation. How? What effect does the use of color have?

This two-page spread begins with Laius at the top left and ends with Oedipus at the bottom right. The sequence of fast-paced short panels enhances the violence of the scene, while the culminating large panel with the red word "CRASH," Laius's blood, the overturned horse, and the tilted, crossing axes of the cart all intensify the drama of the final moment. The muted color palette adds an element of unreality and makes the blood on both pages stand out. Note also the exciting composition of the top central panel and how Oedipus's sword stands out from the rest of the quiet grays and browns.

By placing Laius at the top left and Oedipus at the bottom right, the artist frames the action and uses a subtle diagonal axis to intensify the excitement and add a layer of meaning. He gives the scene a sense of movement and direction but also underscores the biological and psychological links between the two characters. It begins with an angry Laius (who had baby Oedipus abandoned on a mountainside) and ends with Oedipus's sudden realization of what he has done—without knowing that he has actually killed his father. Are they both responsible for their acts or victims of destiny controlled by the gods? In a sense, placing the two characters in this way, with the violent action between them, maps out the fundamental issues of the Oedipus myth.

- ◆ As in *Orpheus in the Underworld* (TOON Graphics, 2015), bright red is used in very few places and in small amounts in this book (pages 16 -17, 33, 36, and 39, and on the lips of the Sphinx and the Pythia). Why do you think this might be, and what do you think it means?

The red stands out in stark contrast to the muted, harmonious color palette of most of the book, making its relationship with blood and violence all the more startling. (Look especially at page 39.) It provides a connection between blood that is actually shed and the violent prophecy of the Pythia. The Sphinx is a fierce and brutal creature, and her red lips are clearly related to the violence of the Oedipus myth.



Pages 18-19

◆ Pages 18-19 seem peaceful at first glance, especially on the left, but take a second look. What makes you sense that something is not right?

The huge, dark trees, with their crossed and curving trunks and branches seen in shadow, dominate this spread and give a menacing and sinister feeling to it. They prepare us and draw us into the drama that begins on the following page, leading up to the confrontation between Oedipus and the Sphinx. The landscape changes from calm, with beautiful, soft colors, to rocky, “busy,” and less flat—another indication of change to a less peaceful situation. Notice how the huge, unrelieved gray area of rock on page 22 makes the encounter feel more sinister.

◆ Follow the color change from page 18 to page 25. Why do you think the author did this?

The sky becomes progressively darker and is gray by page 21. The mountains on page 21 lead us physically and psychologically to the Sphinx. Pages 22 to 25 are mostly dark gray, heightening the emotion and meaning of Oedipus’s encounter with the Sphinx. Will he be able to solve her riddle? The bright, unnatural yellow of the Sphinx stands out against the dark background, and the huge spread of her wings adds to the excitement. The whiteness of the skulls and bones of her victims relate to the white of Oedipus’s tunic and perhaps suggest that he may end up like them. The dark color of the rocks underscore the Sphinx’s evil intentions. Sometimes in life, when things are going well, a Sphinx comes along and throws things into chaos.

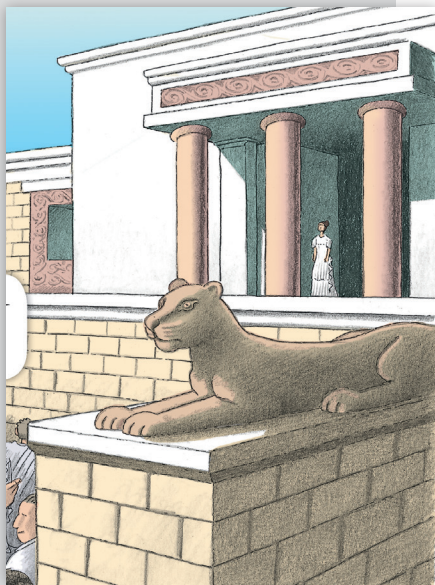
◆ The author went to a great deal of trouble to research Greek art, architecture, use of color, and principles of design. Discuss what some of these are and what they can tell us about Greek culture.

The Greeks liked symmetry and geometry. Look at the temple at the bottom of page 9 or the city walls on pages 8-9. Look carefully at the houses on pages 40 and 41.

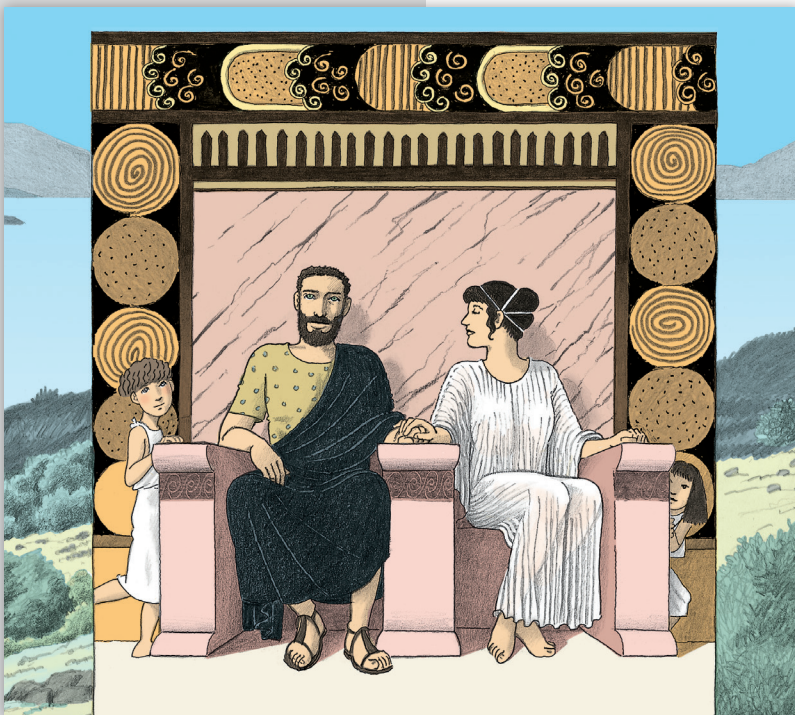
Interiors are uncluttered and orderly (page 32, 34) with repeated geometric designs drawn in fine lines (pages 12 and 37). Colors are muted and peaceful. Geometric designs appear on rugs and vases (page 32), and curtains separate rooms. Temples have columns, and the white clothing that Greeks wore almost seem to echo them.

◆ When Oedipus becomes king of Boeotia, it enjoys a period of twenty years of peace and prosperity. How does the illustration on page 27 reflect this time of order?

Much use is made of symmetry on this page, a peaceful and balanced form of design. Oedipus and Jocasta and two of their children are placed symmetrically in a carefully ordered rectangle, with symmetrically placed designs around them. The rectangle is placed in the center of the landscape, and the harmonious colors reflect a time of peace and tranquility. The shepherd and sheep add to the feeling of serenity.



Page 26



Page 27

◆ How do the colors and composition of



Page 36

the next two pages indicate a change?

The wild composition with rats in the foreground and the color change clearly show that the time of peace and order is over. The dark colors of the rats and the columns, the dead woman, the lone sandal all make us think of death and disease, and our view of Thebes is dominated by them. Compare the colors here with those used for the Pythia's pronouncements and for Oedipus's encounter with the Sphinx. The green of the plants on page 29 is an ironic twist, perhaps representing that life goes on.

◆ On page 35, how does the untied rope on the stake and Phorbas carrying away baby Oedipus make you feel? Why do you think the author-artist composed this page this way?

◆ Look at how the composition of page 36 provides a fast-paced, flowing recollection of the encounter of Oedipus and Laius's servants and the overturning of the cart. Notice how the yellow of the Sphinx stands out, as well as the traces of red blood and the Sphinx's red lips. The events are carefully interwoven but appear almost as if viewed through a cloud or curtain, since they are being represented in Oedipus's memory (see also the top of page 33).



Pages 40-41

◆ How do the colors on pages 40 -41 relate to Oedipus's blindness?

The darkness of the colors and of the twilight reflect Oedipus's inability to see. The remaining light may indicate that now he will begin to see the true essence of things, as he hoped. Relate this idea to the colors on the next page. The bright yellow in the foreground may indicate that Oedipus will get his wish. However, the foreboding sky may indicate otherwise.

◆ What can the composition of pages 40 and 41 tell us?

The huge columns in the foreground, through which we view this scene, may indicate great, impersonal forces at work--perhaps the will of the gods--that brought about the tragedy of this tale. Humans cannot control these forces, in spite of their efforts to create order, represented by the geometry of the buildings in the picture.

◆ What feelings does the last image of the book (page 42) create in you? Why? Think about why the author-artist chose this to be the last image we have of Oedipus.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1

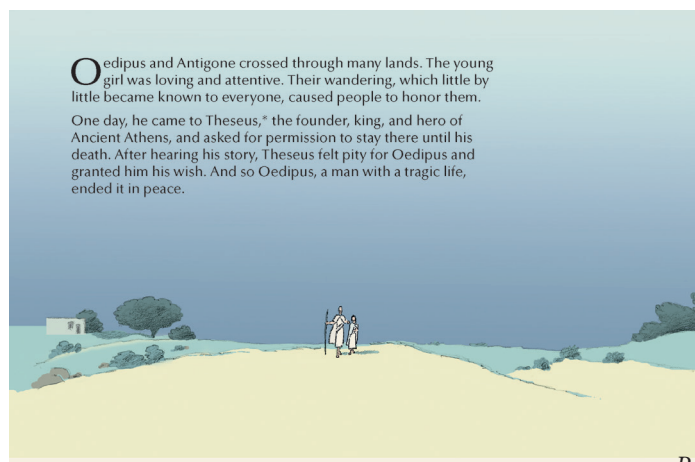
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2

Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3

Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).



Page 42

We get a feeling for Oedipus and Antigone’s vulnerability. They are very small beings in a world beyond their control. The landscape is peaceful and uncluttered, reflecting Oedipus’s hope that he may be able to perceive the true nature of things. The foreboding sky may indicate otherwise, might be a representation of Oedipus’s tragic life, or might be a foreshadowing of his death, mentioned in the last sentence.

◆ On page 38, how does the artist make Tiresias look as though he has “appeared from nowhere”?

Tiresias appears in a kind of black cloud and is sharply outlined in thick black lines. It almost looks as if a cutout has been laid on the page. Notice how the “cloud” makes the lines in the floor stand out, in contrast to how they look under Oedipus. This may be related to the conflict between darkness and light in this book or to the contrast between blindness and sight. It may also foreshadow Oedipus’s blinding of himself and suggest that he will be able to see the true essence of things, as he hopes, when he can no longer physically see.



Further Research

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-5.6

Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, and describe how a speaker’s point of view influences the description.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4-5.9

Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.1

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.7

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

Abandonment in Oedipus and Hansel and Gretel

◆ Like Oedipus, *Hansel and Gretel* (TOON Books, 2014) are also abandoned by their parents. Compare and contrast the parents’ motivations. Was abandonment the only solution in both cases?

In order to avoid the Pythia’s dire prophecy, baby Oedipus’s father orders that he be placed on a mountainside, where he will surely die. The abandonment of Hansel and Gretel is their mother’s idea. With two less mouths to feed, the parents will have a much greater chance of surviving the famine. Both Laius and Hansel and Gretel’s parents were concerned more with their own survival than with the welfare of their children. Laius and Jocasta could have chosen not to believe the prophecy. In fact, later in the book, Jocasta says that it hasn’t come true. Maybe they could have run away to try to avoid it. Hansel and Gretel’s parents could possibly have found more creative ways of finding food or could have been more generous with the little they had. Perhaps they could have moved somewhere else or given their children temporarily to other relatives.

◆ Why does Hansel and Gretel’s mother say they should “lose” the children, not “kill” them? How does this relate to Laius’s having Oedipus put on the mountainside?

In using this approach, Hansel and Gretel’s mother probably wants to avoid

feelings of guilt. She says, “They will be fine.” No doubt she knows that the children won’t be able to survive in the forest, but she personally won’t be guilty of their deaths. The same is true for Laius. In having his servant place baby Oedipus on the mountainside, he is leaving what happens to him up to fate. In both cases, the parents are avoiding taking responsibility for what happens to their children. In saying the children “will be fine,” Hansel and Gretel’s mother may be trying to convince herself of this more than her husband, in order to justify her decision and her greed.

◆ Both Hansel and Gretel’s mother and Jocasta are dead at the end of the two books. Could this be a form of punishment for their acts? Do they both deserve such punishment?

Hansel and Gretel’s mother acts out of self-interest and clearly plots the abandonment of her children. Perhaps she deserves some kind of punishment. Since she is dead when the children return at the end of the story, she cannot enjoy the riches they bring home. This is a fitting punishment for her greed. Jocasta unknowingly marries her son. For this reason, she may be less guilty. However, she commits hubris (see earlier) in not believing that the Pythia’s prophecy had come true and, according to Greek beliefs, had to be punished.

◆ Ask students if they have ever avoided taking responsibility for something that might put them in a difficult or unpopular position or get them into trouble. Can they name people who DID accept responsibility even if it put them in a challenging or dangerous situation?

You could talk about Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Jackie Robinson, Mother Teresa, Socrates, Nathan Hale. Sometimes, because of peer pressure, children will not stick up for a classmate, even when they know they should. At other times they may not take responsibility for themselves and engage in inappropriate behavior to seem “cool.” Ask them for other examples.

◆ The Ancient Greeks loved mathematics and logic. They were part of their art, architecture, politics, and everyday life and helped them to solve problems. How does Hansel and Gretel’s mother use logic and mathematics to convince her husband to abandon their children? Is she being purely mathematical and logical, or does she have an ulterior motive?

The mother says that with only two mouths to feed rather than four, her husband will have enough food so that he can be strong and continue to work and earn money: “If you do not eat ... then you will not be able to swing an axe. And if you cannot cut down a tree or haul the wood into the town, then we all starve and die. Two dead are better than four dead. That is mathematics, and it is logic.” The father replies, “I care for neither your mathematics nor your logic.” Notice how the mother twists logic and mathematics to her own purposes. It is important for children to know that adults, such as politicians, sometimes do this.

◆ Do Hansel and Gretel react to their abandonment in the same way? How do their ways of reacting and coping compare to Oedipus’s?

Hansel overhears his parents the first time they plot to abandon him and his sister in the woods. When the father leaves them there and goes off, he tells Gretel that their father won’t be coming back. She replies, “He is our father ... You must not say such things about him.” When he takes them into the forest a second time, Gretel finally understands the truth. It is interesting how matter-of-factly the children accept their abandonment. In the end, though,

both children use their wits to deceive the old woman in the gingerbread house, showing that they're not simply going to be victims who don't fight back.

Oedipus has a stronger, bolder, far more emotional reaction. When he hears rumors that he might not be the son of Polybus and Merope, he immediately runs to them to find out the truth. Still doubting, he consults the Pythia. After hearing her prophecy, he is blinded by pain and anguish and flees Corinth so he can be far from his "parents." These emotions turn to anger, and he kills Laius where the three roads meet.

◆ Impersonal outside forces often influence the behavior of characters in myths and stories. What forces beyond their control influence the behavior of Oedipus, Hansel and Gretel, and their parents?

The Pythia's predictions to Laius and Oedipus cause them both to behave as they do. In this sense, they may not be fully responsible for their actions. The war and its resulting famine bring about Hansel and Gretel's parents' hunger. Starvation may make them so desperate that they can't think straight about how to solve their problem or take their children's needs into account. Or it may bring out a darker side of their personalities that was there all along.

◆ Hansel and Gretel outwit their mother and the old woman in the gingerbread house. Oedipus tries to outwit the gods and escape the prophecy about him. Contrast what happens in the two books. What do you think the difference means?

At the end of the story of Hansel and Gretel, they return home with fine clothes, coins, and jewels. They are rewarded for their cleverness and for deceiving the old woman. It would appear that outwitting fate is good in this instance. Oedipus is punished partly for trying to outwit the gods and avoid the prophecy. In Ancient Greek thinking, such punishment for hubris was a necessity and a warning to people to be careful not to exhibit arrogance before the gods.

Activities

◆ Revisit the theme of hubris. Ask student if they see relevance to their everyday lives in their relationships with other children and adults. When they do something they know is wrong, are they committing hubris by putting themselves above the norms of acceptable behavior?

◆ What is arrogance, and what are its consequences on the arrogant person and those around him? Should arrogance be punished? How? Do people who are arrogant receive their punishment in the natural course of their dealings with others?

◆ Blindness is important in this book, both physically and metaphorically. Ask children if they know anyone who is blind and how this person navigates the everyday world and perceives reality.

◆ People often say that blind people make heightened use of their other senses. Have children sit in their seats and close their eyes for five minutes. Do they feel that they are experiencing anything different through their senses of hearing, touch, smell, or even taste? Allow them to express what happened.

◆ Related to blindness is the idea of truth, which runs all through this book. If you hide the truth from someone, you're leaving that person blind

to an aspect of reality. Laius is horrified by the truth spoken by the Pythia. Polybus and Merope never tell Oedipus the truth about how he was found and deny the rumor that he's not their son. Jocasta doesn't believe the truth of the Pythia's oracle (p. 32). When she understands that it has come true, she kills herself. Laius's servant hides the truth about Oedipus for years, and Tiresias doesn't want him to know it. Oedipus is devastated by it and blinds himself, hoping to be able to perceive the true essence of things better.

Discuss with students each of these characters' reasons for concealing, not accepting, or not believing the truth. Ask them if it is ever all right not to tell the truth. Under what circumstances?

People may hide the truth if they think it is too painful for someone else to hear, in order to protect themselves or someone else from danger, because they think they'll get into trouble, because it will make them look foolish or bad, because they think revealing it isn't necessary or won't be helpful in the end, because they think it's too complicated for others to understand, etc. See if you can elicit reasons such as these from your students.

Now ask them if they have ever not told the truth to someone else and how it made them feel. Have them write a paragraph about this withholding of the truth, the reasons behind it, its consequences, and how they felt about it. Have children share what they wrote orally, or post their compositions on the bulletin board.

Students are sometimes tempted to cheat. Cheating may be viewed as a form of lying: untruthfully representing someone else's thinking or work as your own. Discuss with your students if cheating is ever appropriate. What should be its consequences?

◆ The myth of Oedipus could have turned out differently at many points in the story. Sometimes one event or decision can change everything. What would have happened if :

Laius's slave didn't follow his orders and took in Oedipus as his own child or gave him to someone else?

Phorbas took in Oedipus as his child instead of giving him to Polybus and Merope?

Polybus and Merope told Oedipus the truth?

Laius and his escorts didn't pass by the place where three roads meet just when Oedipus was there?

Oedipus didn't lose his temper and kill Laius?

Oedipus couldn't answer the Riddle of the Sphinx?

The plague killed all the inhabitants of Thebes?

The slave didn't tell Oedipus the truth?

Tiresias didn't speak to Oedipus the way he did on page 38?

Oedipus didn't gouge his eyes out?

Have students choose one of these questions and ask them to write their own ending (or entire new version) for the myth of Oedipus. They could also work in groups and do this task in the form of a play that they act out.

◆ As we can see from the artwork in this book, the Ancient Greeks were



very curious about geometry. Have students research Greek mathematicians like Pythagoras, Thales, Euclid, Archimedes, Apollonius, Aristarchus, and Hippocrates. Ask them to report their findings using visuals to help their classmates understand. This will be especially relevant when you are teaching geometry to your class.

◆ On the Oedipus character card on page 44, it says, “The question of whether Oedipus is a victim of fate or a victim of his own actions has been debated for thousands of years.” The Ancient Greeks were curious about this because the gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus were always meddling in the lives of the heroes and heroines of their myths.

Have children divide into groups of two to four to debate this question. Then have them write their point of view about it using specific examples from the text. Remind them that the oracle at Delphi predicted Oedipus’s fate, and she always told the truth. Relate what happens to Oedipus to the story of Orpheus (*Orpheus in the Underworld*, TOON Graphics, 2015). Was Orpheus’s destiny entirely controlled by the Fates, or did something in his character bring about his tragedy?

Related question: Oedipus is described on page 13 as a “proud and impulsive prince.” Does that give any hint about what may have caused his downfall?

◆ Further investigation:
Philosophy (φιλοσοφία in Greek) means “love of wisdom” or “friend of wisdom.” The word was probably coined by Pythagoras. Philosophy is the study of the nature of knowledge. One of its branches is called determinism, in which all things that happen are planned by a higher being, or preordained. This is opposed to the idea that human beings have free will and can choose how they will act. Discuss these ideas with children and ask them what they think. How do they feel about these ideas in their own lives? Then ask them if they think that characters’ actions in Greek myths like those of Oedipus and Orpheus (TOON Graphics, 2015) are preordained or the result of the protagonists’ free will.

Related question:

Do you think that Phorbas, the shepherd, brings baby Oedipus to King Polybus and Queen Merope out of his own free will, or is he acting solely as the agent of the Pythia to carry out her prophecy?

◆ In Greek myths and those of many other ancient cultures, there are lots of part-human part-animal creatures, like the Sphinx. There is a very long list of them at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_hybrid_creatures_in_mythology. Have children learn about some of these. Then ask them to work alone or in groups to create their own part-human part-animal creature. They should draw it and tell its characteristics. What can it do? They can even write a myth in which it plays an important role based on these characteristics. Before this, you should discuss the nature of a myth with them.

◆ Readers’ Theater: Have students read various scenes aloud in class. Pay attention to their inflection. If possible, have each student play multiple roles and be sure that they adjust their performance accordingly. Ask them to try to incorporate visual information from the images into their performance. Remember to refer to the pronunciation keys at the bottom of each page.