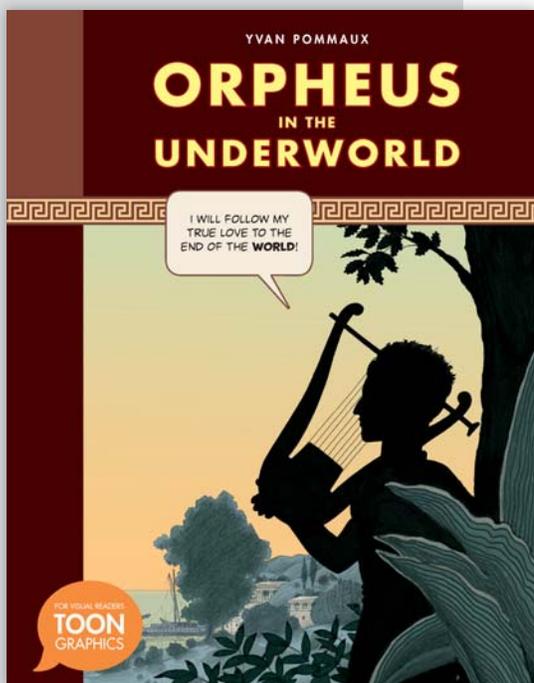




# Orpheus in the Underworld

CCSS-aligned Lesson Plan & Teacher's Guide

## TOON GRAPHICS FOR VISUAL READERS



**Orpheus in the Underworld**  
by Yvan Pommaux  
A TOON Graphic  
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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.

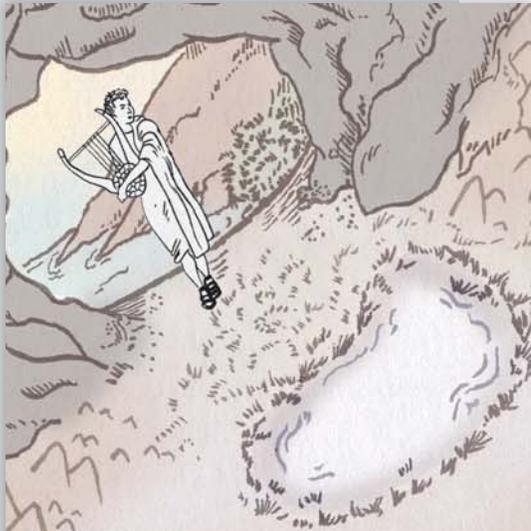
Facial expressions and body language reveal subtle aspects of characters' personalities beyond what can be expressed by words.

### 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:

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.

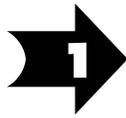
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.1  
Students write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

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 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.

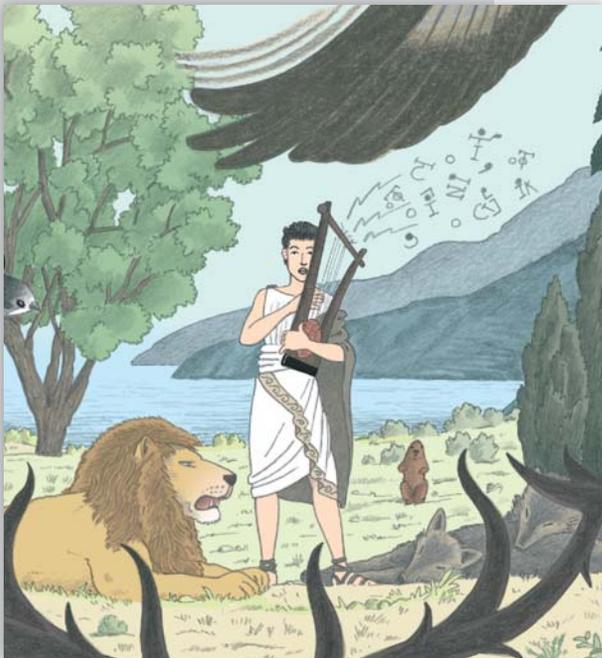
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5  
Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

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.

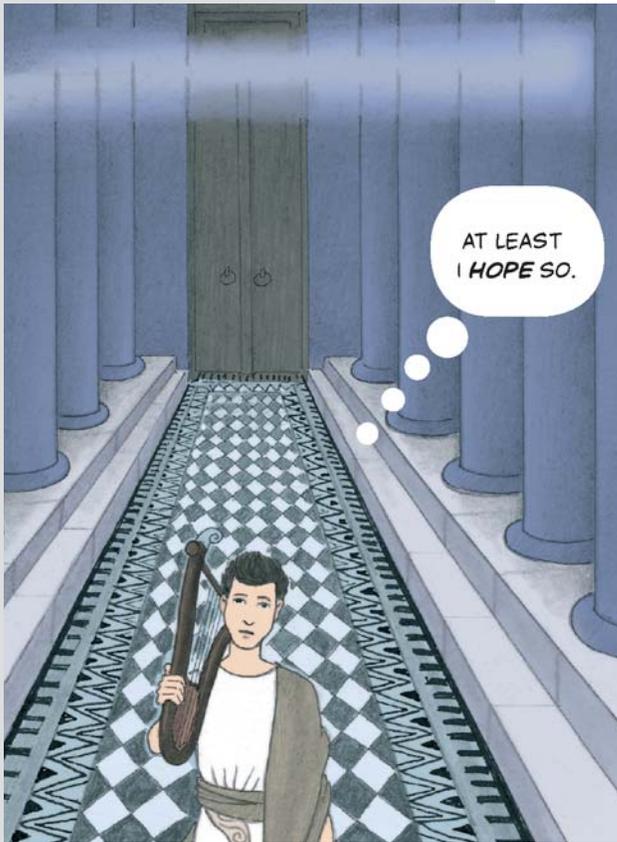
◆ What do the green snakes on p. 45 remind you of?

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.

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.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.

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.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.

