

ENCYCLOPEDIA MYTHOLOGICA

GODS & HEROES

**MATTHEW REINHART
& ROBERT SABUDA**

These centuries-old myths and legends take the intrepid reader to the lush banks of the Nile in ancient Egypt; high above the clouds of Greece to Zeus's kingdom on Mount Olympus; up to Norse god Odin's frozen north; to the Far East, where the Jade Emperor sits high in the heavens; into the wilds of Oceania, where jealous Pele's volcanic rage simmers just below the earth's crust; and to many more lands and times, all rich with legend.

Every page of this incredible book is alive with intricate and colorful pop-ups that unfold, fan, and rotate to bring the gods, goddesses, and magical creatures of the world's myths to life.

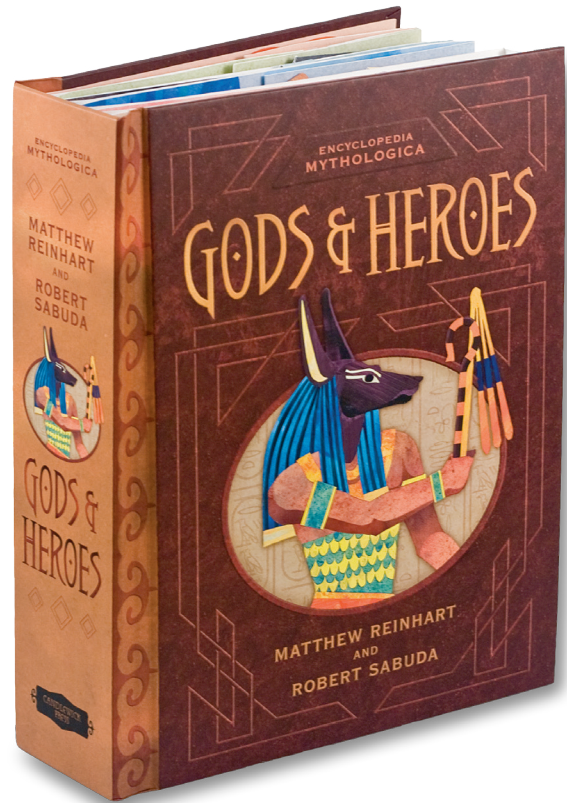
Let this amazing book serve as an inspiration for students to dig deeper into the world of mythology. These classroom activities show you how!

Unknown Origins

Authors Matthew Reinhart and Robert Sabuda note that myths were often created to explain the mysteries of nature—to answer such questions as What makes the sun rise each morning? Why do volcanoes erupt? and Why do animals hibernate in the winter? As a class, have students brainstorm a list of similar natural occurrences. Then invite them to use mythology as their inspiration to create stories that explain the origins of these phenomena. Their tales might include mythological characters from the book or beings of their own creation.

The Seven Wonders

On spread 1 of *Gods and Heroes*, we learn that of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, only the Great Pyramid of Khufu, in Giza, has survived. Divide the class into six groups and assign each group one of the other Ancient Wonders. Have students research the answer to such questions as What were they? Who built them? What was their significance to ancient peoples? and What was their fate? You might wish to invite students to write a fictionalized narrative that explains the disappearance or downfall of their Ancient Wonder, perhaps at the hands of an angry or jealous god. Have each group draw or build a simple model of their Wonder for placement in a classroom museum.



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Signs of the Times

Many gods and goddesses appear in records of ancient Egypt, captured in symbolic pictures called hieroglyphics. Have students refer to books or the Internet to help them create simple stories using picture symbols taken directly from, or inspired by, hieroglyphics.

You might also ask students to explore the ways other cultures recorded or passed down their tales. How did the Vikings of ancient Scandinavia, for example, keep their legends alive without hieroglyphics?



BONUS: On the fourth spread of *Gods and Heroes*, written in runes, there is a secret link to a do-it-yourself pop-up. See if your class can figure it out!



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When in Rome

As mentioned on spread 2 of the book, Roman mythology was heavily influenced by Greek mythology: both cultures, for example, had a god of War (for the Greeks it was Ares; for the Romans it was Mars). Create a three-column chart for students to fill in with information about several gods and goddesses. Designate one column for character descriptions (such as “goddess of love”), and one column each for the gods’ or goddesses’ Greek and Roman names. To extend this further, you might have students choose (or be assigned) a single god or goddess and create a “character trading card” for that deity, listing all known names, associations, achievements, mischief, and so on.

Stars on Parade

Many constellations are named for gods and goddesses, and even for demi-gods and the occasional mortals who possessed godlike abilities. Assign each student a constellation to research. As students gather data, they will note that many classical figures reappear often in the stories surrounding these celestial bodies. This assignment is a terrific way for students to practice their summarizing and paraphrasing skills in addition to their research skills.

It’s All Greek to Me

Much modern English is rooted in ancient Greek and Latin. For example, students will recognize that the ship *Titanic* derives its name from the Titans, and that the Chaos from which the world was first formed gives us the more common word *chaos*, as well as the word *chaotic*. The term *Argonaut*, mentioned on spread 3, can be parsed into *Argo* (the ship’s name, for its creator, Argus) and *naut* (from the Greek word *nautes*, meaning sailor, from which we get the word *nautical*). This etymology makes sense when related to a similar word, *astronaut*: since *astron* is the Greek word for star, an astronaut is literally a “star sailor.” Have students use additional resources to research other ways in which the names of Latin and Greek gods and goddesses, as well as common Greek and Latin words, continue to be used in our language.

Troublesome Tots

Much of the fun in reading myths comes from realizing that these powerful immortals embody human faults and frailties. Jealousy, stubbornness, foolishness, vanity, and pride are just a few traits that reach almost hyperbolic proportions in mythology. Invite students to imagine these powerful beings as children and ponder such questions as: What’s the cause of their out-of-control emotions? What sort of predicaments do they get themselves into through their rash behaviors? Have students choose one mythological figure, research that character’s traits, and create an original narrative of a childhood adventure.

Totem Tales

Spread 6 of *Gods and Heroes* features an example of the way divine beings were and are pictured on totem poles by native peoples in the Pacific Northwest. Ask students to research the beings portrayed on totem poles by Tlingit and other indigenous people. Then invite them to create their own totem pole, illustrating the relationships among various figures. If students work individually, paper towel rolls would work well as totem poles, as they allow for easy cutting and attaching of pieces. If you’re a bit more ambitious, you may wish to group students into threes and fours and have them decorate the large paperboard cylinders that can be easily obtained from carpet stores.

Trickster Traditions

Coyote is the trickster of tribal lore in many Native American tales. But other cultures also serve up their own versions of the trickster. Have students research this literary tradition, not only in myths but in modern culture as well. Who are some of the tricksters that appear in our contemporary world? What is their purpose? Why is it so hard to dislike them, no matter how much trouble they cause?



A Pantheon of Pop-Ups

A great extension of this book would be for students to create their own pop-ups. This is not as easy as it sounds—unless, of course, you have resources such as those on Matthew Reinhart’s or Robert Sabuda’s own websites, which feature printable templates for more than two dozen pop-ups. In addition, templates and instructions for pop-ups of Pegasus and the *Argo* are posted at www.candlewick.com. Once students get the hang of the physics behind the pop-up, they are likely to invent their own variations. These can serve as great presentation formats for many of the research and writing projects described above.

This guide was written by Keith Schoch, a sixth-grade reading and language arts teacher and creator of three blogs: Teaching That Sticks, Teach with Picture Books, and How to Teach a Novel.



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