



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1984 Volume II: Greek Civilization

Twentieth-Century Oracles

Guide for Curriculum Unit 84.02.02
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A fascinating area of study is the ancient Greek custom of consulting oracles for advice. The most prolific and time-honored of these was the oracle at the temple of Apollo in Delphi. For over one thousand years Greeks and foreign pilgrims consulted the Delphic Oracle for advice on a myriad of matters that concerned their existence. This unit highlights the history of the Delphic Oracle and pays particular attention to a description of the process involved in making consultation to the oracle. Included is a description of the Pythia, Apollo's bride, who was the human mouthpiece of Apollo for all those who yearned for oracular guidance. The unit attempts to draw parallels for modern students between the ancient Greek tradition of oracular consultation and five groupings of modern day oracles which can and do influence their decision making process. Students learn how the family, church and school, the peer group, the media, and various professional oracles can advise them in a not so different way as the Delphic Oracle advised the ancient consultants. Included in the unit are extensive suggestions for student writing as well as a bibliography of pertinent sources necessary to understand and appreciate this ancient Greek tradition.

(Recommended for English classes, grades 8 through 12)

Key Words

Delphi Oracles History Ancient Greek Contemporary

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