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Heracles: Super Hero

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I am presently teaching Drama in the New Haven public school system. I do not have a regular classroom, but rather come into a classroom for a certain amount of time for a certain number of sessions. Sometimes a teacher will ask for Drama to be tied into a subject she is working on, such as map skills, language arts, social studies, storytelling or metaphors. More often than not, it is left up to me to decide what to do and in what way to tie into the curriculum. Since I am working with children from kindergarten through high school, I'm interested in developing a unit that can be adapted to different ages and abilities.

This unit uses Heracles—The Super Hero as an overall theme, concentrating on his Twelve Labors. These stories or myths reveal a great deal about the world of Ancient Greece, its geography, values, religion, and customs. They are also adventure stories and are a good hook to connect students to a different time and place as well as being dramatic. Drama in the classroom is used to bring some children out and to channel others' energy into useful forms. I hope to develop children's ability to express themselves verbally and physically, to connect their thoughts and actions to others and to see larger connections to the culture and world around them. Discussing yourself, your thoughts and fears is difficult and too revealing for most of us, including children. Heracles and his life can be the cover for these thoughts and feelings.

I have chosen Heracles as a subject for this unit for a number of reasons. He was the most popular Greek hero, a hero who became a god. His fame as a hero and his worship as a god spread across the ancient world and outlasted most of the other Greek gods. Although the stories vary somewhat and the emphasis changes over hundreds of years, he has been remarkably enduring in popularity from ancient times to today. The contradictions in his nature as seen in the stories about him not only leave him open to personal interpretations through the years, but encourage us to perceive the contradictions in ourselves, societies, men and women, beliefs, needs, governments, laws etc. Men in ancient times and men today still struggle with chaos, attempting to order themselves and their world, to find meaning or knowledge. It is apparent that we haven't succeeded. Perhaps we never shall, but our continuing struggle to know and order our world, to right wrongs and champion the people are bonds that link us to both past and future.

While the contradictions in the stories may account for their longevity, an action-packed story has always been a popular favorite. Action is easy to remember and remembering can lead to thought and analysis. I'm not sure it always works the other way around. Before discussing some of these contradictions, the teacher and students should know something about the Gods, demigods and characters encountered in The Labors of Heracles. At the end of this unit you will find a glossary and a guide to pronunciation.

Heracles: Man and God—Super Hero

Heracles was the son of Zeus and Alcmena, who was married to Amphitryon. Zeus announced just before the birth that a son of his was about to be born who was fated to be lord of his people. Hera retarded the delivery of Heracles in Thebes, and brought about the premature birth of Eurytheus in Tiryns, thus forcing Heracles to be subject to Eurytheus during his life and aborting his destiny as lord of his people during his earthly life. His assumption to Olympus as an immortal god on his death and his heavenly marriage to Zeus and Hera's daughter Hebe, fulfilled his fated destiny as "lord of his people".

Greek heroes and comic book Super Heros like the X-Men and Superman share certain characteristics. They have a characteristic gift (strength in the case of Heracles) that sets them apart from the average man. They also have human qualities and frailties which cause them to misuse or not totally understand their gifts. These heros or super heroes are out of balance. They are also unique, one-of-a-kind, always different from their fellow mortals, although like them, subject to the Gods. They are often hot-tempered, vengeful, arrogant, generous, depressed and subject to madness. In short their natures are exaggerated and unresolved. Their superior gifts make it impossible for human beings to control or discipline them and they must master self-control over their powers with their human limitations. In Heracles's case, he has a jealous goddess Hera to deal with. She is not disciplinary but malevolent.

Heroes and super heroes usually have a physical or sensual strength. Their reasoning and thinking capacities are usually on a mortal level. Few of them are stupid. They are often clever and wiley, but foresight and reason are not usually present. For example; Heracles agrees to hold the heavens for Atlas, if Atlas will get the golden apples of the Hesperides for him. When Atlas returns with the apples, he suggests that he would be glad to deliver them and leave Heracles holding the heavens. Heracles cleverly agrees, but asks Atlas to hold the heavens for a few moments while he gets a pad for his shoulders. Atlas takes back the heavens and off goes Heracles (Giants aren't very smart). On the other hand, his lack of reasoned behavior is shown in his treatment of Iphitus. Heracles was angry with King Eurytus because he wouldn't let him marry his daughter Iole, although he had won her in a match. Eurytus claimed, with some justification, that Heracles had killed his first wife and sons and that one couldn't be sure that he might not do the same thing again. Some of Eurytus' cattle disappeared and Eurytus suspected Heracles. Eurytus's son Iphitus refused to believe that Heracles would do this and went to Heracles to ask for help in finding the cattle. Heracles wined and dined Iphitus in his home. After dinner, without warning he threw him from the roof of his house, killing him. Iphitus admired and trusted Heracles and as a guest was entitled to complete protection from his host. He was punished for his behavior. He developed a terrible skin disease that physically incapacitated him. He went to the oracle. He was told that he must allow himself to be sold into slavery if he wanted to be free of his disease. He served Omphale, a queen of Lydia for three years and was cured.

Brawn and Brain

Brawn and brain: their distribution and merits pose questions and subjects for discussion. Is strength (might makes right) what we want or trust? Is physical superiority something that does and/or should attract us? Does mental superiority guarantee strong or good leadership? Do we entirely trust people who are stronger than those around him? What constraints can or should we impose on our leaders, our friends, ourselves?

Good and Evil

Good and evil, or rather good versus evil, are constants in mythology, folklore and life. How do we distinguish one from the other? Are we predisposed to one or the other? How do we know what is good? What is evil?

Should we do or suffer things for the common good at the expense of our own happiness? Are there forces beyond our control which dictate what is to come? These are questions which can and should be explored in discussion and drama.

The Gods of the ancient Greeks were not dictators of morality. Their behavior was a heightened version of man's behavior. They were not necessarily better, but they were much more powerful, and immortal. The Gods did punish, but often capriciously and offerings were made to them as bribes to win their favor. The Gods could side with or against you depending on whim, love, jealousy etc. As time went on the Greeks conquered or colonized other surrounding areas. The ancient myths remained dominant, but other cultures and changes in life patterns produced many variations and shifts of emphasis. Some characters were added in, some were left out. The contradictions in the myths of Heracles and others continued and perhaps encouraged the spread of the Heracleian cult. Stories and myths about the Gods and heroes were believed in literally as actual fact by most ancient Greeks. The Greek Gods were incorporated by the Romans with their own, but with the expansion of Christianity the myths and stories became just that, no longer a religious belief.

Good and evil are the cornerstone of Heracles's character. Heracles comes back from his adventures to his wife Megara and three children. They are overjoyed to see him. He goes insane and kills at least two of his sons, two of his nephews and possibly his wife and youngest son. He regains his sanity and remembers nothing. When he sees and hears what he has done, he is overcome with remorse and wants to kill himself. His friend Theseus takes him to his home and convinces him to live. The great must not only suffer for others and for capricious gods and natural forces, but must live and suffer through their own faults and crimes. Knowledge is won through suffering.

Was Heracles responsible for his actions? Was he insane, a victim of Hera, or conscious of his actions when he killed his family or threw Iphitus from his roof? Hera pursues Heracles and brings on his madness. To what extent is he liable? What are our current laws on pleading insanity?

The Labors are his fate: Hera's trick at his birth makes him subject to his cousin Eurytheus. But the murder of his children and his subsequent trip to the oracle at Delphi confirms that for his crime he must serve Eurytheus for ten years. Heracles kills many during his labors and adventures. Some are monsters or tyrants. He kills some through misunderstanding (Hippolyte, the Amazon Queen), and some in rage (Lichas and Iphitus). Most importantly, Heracles is working to restore order, to further the common good. He destroys monsters that threaten the crops and herds, rescues the populace from cruel rulers and pirates, establishes his friends or just leaders to rule, overcomes tremendous physical odds and conquers unknown territory, all to organize and consolidate the world into order and deliver it from chaos.

If we consider death as evil, then certainly his triumph over death is enough to establish Heracles as a super hero. Not only was he immortalized in his death, but he twice rescued mortals from death. Admetus's wife Alcestis agrees to die in his place. Heracles wrestles with death at her tomb and brings her back. His twelfth labor was to bring to Eurytheus the dog Cerberus who guards Hades. He not only accomplishes this, but rescues his friend Theseus who has been entrapped in Hades in the chairs of forgetfulness.

His labors for order and the good of man are always in contrast with his egotism, jealousy, vengefulness and madness. How do we measure this behavior? Are we always interested in hearing or reading about unusually good people? Do we find danger and/or evil exciting? Why? Do we justify questionable behavior or change facts to prove our point?

Many of the later plays or retelling of the Heracles myths play down his contradictory and human behavior

when it became more important to deify him and attribute moral superiority to the Gods.

Public and Private Life

Heracles's private life was in sharp contrast to his public life. He had two mortal wives, Megara and Deianeira, and many lovers. He fathered fifty children by the fifty daughters of Thespius when he was seventeen or eighteen. There were many more to come. His children populated and settled the lands he conquered or traveled to. It doesn't appear that he knew any of them very well. None seem to have journeyed with him. His eldest son by Deianeira, Hyllus, prepares his father's funeral pyre but is unable to set it on fire. He agrees to marry his father's newest love Iole, a deathbed request. Heracles's sons and daughters seem to follow their father's orders (a super hero is hard to deny). Although from time to time he befriends a young follower (Iolaus, Lichas, Hylas, Telamon and Iphitus), two were killed by Heracles, one almost killed and two perish from his neglect. Heracles was given Megara as a reward from Creon, king of Thebes after he slew the Cithaenan Lion that was ravaging Creon's and Amphitrion's herds. Although he was young (seventeen) at the time, he seems to have had little to do with her. He went off on his journeys, fathered three children and either killed her in a fit of madness or married her off to his nephew Iolaus. He married Deianeria at the request of her brother Meleager, whom he met in Hades on his twelfth labor. It seems to have been for duty and also because he won her in a wrestling match against a river god, Achelous, a creature who could change shape at will. He fathered children by her, but quickly left on further exploits, fathering many other children by various princesses and creatures. His lusts for food, wine and sex were a legendary part of his character.

Are there problems inherent in being a major public person? Do rock stars and heroes have problems with their private lives? What are the advantages and disadvantages in being a hero, a star or leader?

Heracles subdued by force and strength of character the known and unknown world and by example showed man his potential for forming order out of chaos through trial, suffering and strength. The mythological strivings of man to be a god, to be immortal and to overcome death is realized in this super hero. In ancient times and today he represents our contradictions and our striving for control over ourselves and our world, despite our failures and shortcomings and our ultimate desire for immortality and meaning.

I hope that some of the issues raised so far will interest you enough to discuss them with your students. Discussion and analysis are a part of drama in the classroom. Discussion and analysis should proceed and follow dramatization or interpretation i.e. story writing, drawing etc. The Labors of Heracles can be found in a number of books which you and the students can read. I have suggested some questions and contradictions that have occurred to me; there are of course many more that teachers and students will think of. The material that follows includes a brief synopsis of The Twelve Labors of Heracles, a glossary and five lesson plans using drama and visual arts.

Although I am a drama teacher, this unit is meant to be of general use. When I am teaching in a classroom with a cross section of children, my aim is obviously not to teach them how to be actors, directors or playwrights. The broader aim of drama is communication—to express thoughts, feelings and convictions verbally, physically and visually. Drama is the art form you can't do alone. A case might be made for monologues, but even then you need an audience, someone to listen. Drama forces you to think about human behavior, to think about how you are like or different from others and to work with others to express and communicate stories and ideas.

Heracles is a hero on a grand scale. His character and the stories about him mirror our own world on that grand scale. The Hydra is not just a multi-headed monster of mythology, but a symbol of the monsters and

frustrations we must each overcome in our own lives. When we discuss Heracles's contradictory behavior, we are talking about our own behavior or others we know. When we write or act out his stories, we are writing or acting out our own version of the story and our own vision of the world, how it is and should be. In a world with many heroes we know nothing of and others defined by money, surrounded by evils we fear we can't control, it is important to study our mythic roots and get to know a hero greater and bigger than the super heroes of our current comics. A hero who has stood the test of time. "Ladies and Gentlemen! May I present, Hercules! Oh, excuse me! The original . . . Heracles!"

GLOSSARY

ACHELOUS (ak e lo'us) God of the river of the same name. He could change shapes. Wrestled with Heracles as a bull.

ACHILLES (a kil' ez) The son of Peleus and the Nereid Thetis. Greek hero of the Trojan War.

ADMETA (ad me' ta) Daughter of Eurystheus. Heracles brought the Amazon Queen's girdle back for her in one of his labors.

ADMETUS (ad me' tus) King of Thessaly. Heracles rescued his wife from the underground.

ALCESTIS (al ces' tis) Wife of Admetus, who was willing to die in his place. Saved by Heracles.

ALCMENA (alc me' na) The wife of Amphitryon, mother of Heracles by Zeus.

AMAZONS (am' a zonz) A warlike race of women living on the coast of the Black Sea.

AMPHITRYON (am fit' ri on) Husband of Alcmena and stepfather to Heracles.

ANTAEUS (an te' us) Gigantic wrestler, son of earth and sea. His strength was derived from the earth. He wrestled with Heracles.

APOLLO (a pol' o) Olympian god of archery, prophecy, music and healing. He was the son of Zeus and Latona and the brother of Artemis.

ARCADIA (ar ka' di a) A district in the Peloponnesus where many of Heracles' labors took place.

ARES (a' res) Olympian god of war.

ARGONAUTS (ar' go nawts) Jason's crew in search of the Golden Fleece.

ARTEMIS (ar' te mis) Olympian goddess of childbirth and wild animals. Daughter of Zeus and Latona and the sister of Apollo.

ATHENS (ath' enz) The capital of Attica.

ATHENA (ath' en a) Olympian goddess of the arts and war. She was born from the head of Zeus. The patron goddess of Athens. She was helpful to Heracles.

ATLAS (at' las) A Titan who was condemned by the gods to hold the heavens on his shoulders. His kingdom was in northern Africa (Atlas Mountains).

AUGEAS (aw' je as) A King of Elis and owner of the Augean stable that Heracles cleaned out.

CACUS (ka' kus) A giant living near Rome who stole some of Geryon's cattle from Heracles and was killed by him.

CERBERUS (ser' ber us) Watch dog at the entrance of Hades. He had at least 3 heads, a mane of snakes and a snake for a tail.

CHAOS (ka' os) Original confusion in which earth, sea and air were mixed up. The beginning of the world.

CHARON (ka' ron) The ferryman of Hades. He ferried the souls of the dead across the river Styx.

CHEIRON (ki' ron) A centaur (half man, half horse) friendly to Heracles who was accidentally killed by Heracles' arrow.

CITHAERON (si the' ron) A mountain near Thebes. Home of the Cithaeron lion whom Heracles killed at the beginning of his career. Heracles either wore the skin of this or the skin of the Nemean lion.

CORINTH (kor' inth) City and Isthmus of Corinth.

CREON (kre' on) King of Thebes and father of Megara first wife of Heracles.

DEIANEIRA (de' ya ni' ra) The daughter of Oeneus and Althea, sister of Meleager and second wife of Heracles inadvertently responsible for his death.

DELPHI (del'fi) A town famous for its temple to Apollo and its oracle.

DEMETER (de me' ter) Olympian goddess of harvest and seasons.

DIOMEDES (di' o me'dez) A king of the Bistones in Thrace. He owned four horses who ate human flesh. Heracles took them.

DIONYSUS (di' o ni' sus) The Olympian god of wine and vegetation. A son of Zeus and mortal Semele.

ECHIDNA (e kid' na) A monster, half woman and half snake. The mother of various monsters including the Nemean Lion, Cerberus and the Hydra.

ERYTHEIA (er i the' ya) The island home of Geryon in the far west in the river Oceanus.

EURYSTHEUS (u ris' the us) A king of Mycenaea and Tiryns. Heracles was subject to him for 12 years. He devised the twelve Labors of Heracles.

EURYTION (urit' i on) A centaur killed by Heracles. This is also the name of the herdsman of Geryon whom Heracles also killed.

GE (je') The earth, and the goddess of the earth.

GANYMEDE (gan' i med) A son of Trojan king Laomedon. Zeus took him to be his cupbearer and gave his

father two fine horses.

GERYON (je'ri on) A monster son of Medusa, the king of Erytheia. He had three heads, or the bodies of three men from the waist down. His dog Orthus had two heads. He had a famous and large herd of cattle.

EURYTUS (u ri'tus) King of Oechalia father of Iole and Iphitus.

HADES (ha' dez) The Greek god of the underground, and also the name of his place. He was a brother of Zeus.

HEPHAESTUS (he fes' tus) Olympian god of fire and metal working. The son of Zeus and Hera. He is said to have made Heracles' armor.

HERA (he' ra) The olympian goddess of marriage and childbirth. She was married to Zeus and was the queen of the gods and Olymus. She was also the sister of Zeus and jealous of his many affairs. She persecutes Heracles throughout his life.

HERACLES (her' a klez) The son of Zeus and Alcmena. He was one of a set of twins. His twin Iphicles was fathered by Amphitryon, who raises them both. When he was a baby sleeping in his crib with his brother, Hera sent two deadly snakes to kill him. He strangled both of them. His family then became aware of his superhuman strength. He was eight feet tall and excelled in archery and wrestling. He used his strength and skills for good, putting down tyrants, killing monsters and restoring order. He was honest, brave and loving. He was also quick-tempered, lustful and cruel. His behavior was excessive in every way. His labors were in atonement for the killing of his wife and children. He had many adventures following his twelve labors for Eurytheus. His children settled all over the ancient world, which he traveled extensively. He aided the gods in their war with the giants and was said to be the founder of the Olympic games. On his way home to Trachis with his new wife Deianeira, he came to a river. The centaur Nessus ferried travelers across. Heracles waded across himself but hired Nessus to carry Deianeira across. Nessus tried to abduct (rape) her, and hearing her cries for help, Heracles shot Nessus with his deadly arrows. As he was dying, Nessus told Deianeira to dip some cloth in his blood and keep it as a love potion to apply to Heracles' robe when she felt she was losing his love. She kept the potion, and some years later when Heracles was returning from one of his adventures, she had cause to use it. Heracles had won his war against the king of Oechalia, Eurytus. He had taken the king's young daughter as his concubine (he had won her in a contest to be his wife before marrying Deianeira, but her father had refused to give her to Heracles claiming that Heracles had murdered his other wife). Heracles sent his messenger Lichas to his wife to ask for fresh clothes so that he could make proper sacrifices to Zeus for his victory. Deianeira heard about his new love, Iole, and wishing to keep her husband's love, she rubbed some of the potion on his new robes. When Heracles lit the fires, the heat activated the potion and his clothes clung and burned into his skin searing and melting his flesh. He returned in agony to Trachis and Deianeira, learning of the consequences of her intended love potion, killed herself. Heracles had his son Hyllus build a funeral pyre. Hyllus could not bring himself to light the pyre, nor could any of the others watching. Finally a passing herdsman, Philoctetes, volunteered. Heracles gave him his famous bow and arrows in gratitude. The flames engulfed Heracles' mortal remains. A cloud enveloped the pyre and then carried his remains to Olympus, to the Gods. Heracles achieved immortality. Hera reconciled with him and gave him her daughter Hebe to be his wife. Heracles was worshiped as a god and became a powerful cult figure to the ancient Greeks and other nations of the ancient world.

HERMES (hur'mez) The messenger of the gods and guide for travelers.

HESIONE (he si' o ne) The daughter of Laomedon. When Poseidon sent a sea monster to Troy, she was to be

sacrificed to it. Heracles saved her. She later married Telemon, a friend of Heracles, and ransomed her younger brother Podarces, who became Priam of the Trojan War.

HESPERIDES (hes per' i dez) Nymphs that guarded the golden apples sacred to Hera. There were 3-7 of them, possibly daughters of Atlas or of Night. A dragon, Ladon, also guarded these apples. Heracles got some of the apples either via Atlas or by killing the dragon and getting them himself.

HIPPOLYTE (hi pol' i te) The Queen of the Amazons. She is sometimes confused with Antiope (another Amazon whom Theseus is said to have married). Heracles sought her girdle for Eurystheus and got it from her, but Hera stirred her followers up and he killed her.

HYDRA (hi' dra) A monster, son of Echidna, whom Heracles slew. He had many heads. If you lopped off one, two grew in its place. One of the heads was immortal and its blood was deadly. Heracles used the blood of the Hydra to dip his arrows in.

IOLAUS (i o la' us) The son of Iphicles, the twin of Heracles. He was a charioteer for Heracles and helped him to slay the Hydra.

IOLE (i o le) The daughter of Eurytus, King of Oechalia (see Heracles).

IPHICLES (if' i klez) The son of Amphitryon and Alcmena, twin of Heracles.

IPHITUS (if' i tus) The son of Eurytus, brother of Iole. He sided with Heracles against his father, but was killed by Heracles in a fit of rage.

LADON (la' don) A hundred headed snake or dragon that guarded the golden apples with the Hesperides.

LAOMEDON (la om' e don) The King of Troy who hired Heracles to pay his debt.

MEGARA (meg' a ra) The first wife of Heracles, daughter of Creon. Heracles killed her in a fit of madness brought on by Hera.

MELEAGER (mel' e a' jer) A Greek hero, brother of Deianeira.

MINOS (mi' nos) The King of Crete when Heracles captured the bull. There are lots of stories about Minos. They may be the same king or one of many.

NEMEAN LION (ne me' an) Heracles slew this beast for his first labor. The lion was an offspring of Echidna and had an impenetrable skin. Heracles wore the skin of the creature, and it became his trademark.

NEREUS (ne' rus) An ancient sea god, who could change his shape. Heracles met up with him while seeking the golden apples.

NESSUS (nes'us) A centaur whom Heracles met on several adventures. Heracles killed him, but the centaur's blood ultimately destroyed Heracles (see Heracles).

OETA (e' ta) The mountain on which Heracles had his pyre built.

OLYMPUS (o lim' pus) A mountain, the top of which was believed to be the home of the gods.

ORTHRUS (orth' rus) A two-headed dog that guarded the cattle of Geryon.

PERSEPHONE (per sef' o ne) The goddess of the underworld and wife of Hades. She was the daughter of Zeus and Demeter.

POSEIDON (po si' don) The god of the sea, of earthquakes and horses. He was a brother of Zeus. He also had many children by many different women, Heracles killed a few.

PROMETHEUS (pr o me' thus) A Titan. He was perhaps the creator of man whom he molded out of clay. He gave the gift of fire to man and was punished by Zeus. He was tied to a cliff and an eagle picked at his liver. Since he was immortal, he was there for a long time. Heracles rescued him by shooting the eagle and undoing his chains.

STYMPHALIAN BIRDS (stim fa' li an) Man-eating birds with metal feathers and claws.

TELEMON (tel' a mon) Warrior, friend and companion of Heracles.

THESEUS (the' sus) A super hero and friend of Heracles. Theseus took Heracles home with him to Athens after Heracles killed his family. Heracles released Theseus from Hades.

ZEUS (zus) The ruler of the Olympian gods. He was husband to his sister Hera, and father of many children by goddesses, demi-gods and mortals. He was God of the skies, master of all, and his trademark and weapon was the thunderbolt.

THE TWELVE LABORS OF HERACLES FOR EURYTHUS

1st LABOR To bring back the skin of the Nemean Lion, who couldn't be wounded. Heracles' arrow bounced off the lion. He strangles it and skins it with its claw. He wears the skin as his trademark.

2nd LABOR To kill the Hydra of Lerna. The Hydra has 9 or more heads, one immortal, and the body of a snake. If a head is cut off it grows two more. Heracles clubs the head and sears them with a burning tree provided by Iolaus. He cuts off the immortal head and buries it. He clubs the giant crab (sent by Hera) that is biting his foot. Heracles dips his arrows in the Hydra's blood. Eurytheus refuses to accept this labor because he had help.

3rd LABOR To bring back alive the Cerynithian deer sacred to Artemis and Apollo. The deer never rests. Heracles chases it for a year, finally netting it in the Ladon River.

4th LABOR To bring back alive The Erymanthian Boar. Heracles fights with centaurs accidentally killing a friendly centaur Chiron. Heracles shouts the boar out of a thicket and chases him into deep snow where he eventually tires. He carries him back on his back.

5th LABOR To clean out the manure from Augeus's barnyard in one day. The barnyard has been used by hundreds of cattle for many years uncleaned. Augeus promises Heracles one tenth of his herd if he can do it. Heracles diverts two rivers into the barnyard, cleans it out and replaces the rivers. Augeus refuses to pay. Eurytheus refuses to accept the labor, saying it was done for profit.

6th LABOR To drive away the Stymphalions Birds from Lake Stymphalis. The birds are man eating, have metal feathers and are polluting the lake. Heracles climbs a mountain and shakes a brass noise-maker given him by Athena. The birds fly away terrified. Heracles shoots many with his bow.

7th LABOR To bring back the Cretan Bull. King Minos had been given a spectacular white bull from Poseidon which was to be sacrificed to Zeus. Minos didn't sacrifice it. Poseidon made the bull go wild, ravaging the land and killing people. Heracles refuses Minos's help, wrestles the bull and contains it with a net.

8th LABOR To bring back the man eating mares of Diomedes of Thrace. The horses are fed strangers. Heracles feeds Diomedes to the horses, but not before losing his friend Abderus who is torn apart by the horses. The mares are satiated. He returns with them.

9th LABOR To bring back the belt of the Amazon Queen Hippolyte for Admeta, daughter of Eurytheus. After many adventures, Heracles arrives with men at Themiscyra on the Black Sea. Hippolyte comes on board ship and agrees to give him her belt. Hera tells the Amazons on shore that Heracles has killed their Queen and stolen her belt. They attack Heracles and his men. Heracles wins, Hippolyte is killed.

10th LABOR To bring back the cattle of Geryon. The monster Geryon has either three heads or has three human bodies from the waist down. He lives on an island near the edge of the world. His herds are tended by Eurytion and a two headed dog Orthrus. Heracles journeys across Africa, sets up the Pillars of Hercules and rides across the ocean in a golden cup loaned to him by the sun god Helios. After many adventures, he arrives in Erythia. He kills the dog and herdsman when they attack him as he is herding the cattle. Geryon comes after him and is shot. He sails back in the cup and returns it to Helios. He returns via Spain and Italy having many adventures with monsters and thieves while trying to keep his cattle together.

11th LABOR To bring back the Golden Apples of the Hesperides. The apples were a wedding present from Gaia to Zeus and Hera. The apples are on Mt. Atlas guarded by the Hesperides and an immortal serpent Ladon with 100 heads and as many voices. Heracles gets directions on where to go from a sea god, Nereus, who can change his shape at will. Heracles wrestles with him as he changes shape. After many adventures, he rescues Prometheus from Mt. Caucasus, who advises him to go to Atlas and get him to get the apples for him. Heracles holds the heavens for Atlas who gets the apples for him. Heracles brings the apples to Eurytheus and then returns them to the Hesperides. He may have killed Ladon at the same time.

12th LABOR To bring the dog Cerberus from Hades. Heracles goes to Eleusis to be initiated in the mysteries and to be purified. He enters Hades. All the spirits run away from him except Meleager and the Gorgon Medusa. He draws his sword, but Hermes who is guiding him tell him they are just spirits. He sees his old friend Theseus who is being held fast in the chains of forgetfulness. He pulls him loose. He sacrifices one of the cattle of Hades for the souls of the dead and wrestles with their keeper until Persephone asks him to stop. He asks Hades for Cerberus. Hades says yes, but only if he can subdue Cerberus without weapons. Heracles holds Cerberus at arms length by his head and neck and subdues him, although he is bitten by Cerberus's serpent tail. He brings Cerberus to Eurytheus and returns him to Hades.

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Translated by Michael Simpson from the Library of Apollodorus, and excellent ancient source for stories and myths. Complete life of Heracles.

Bulfinch, Thomas. *Bulfinch's Mythology* . New York: Avenel Books, 1978.

Originally published in the 19th century, this anthology covers stories of Gods and Heroes, King Arthur, The Mabinogion, Hero Myths of the British Race and Charlemagne. Pictures and maps from the New York Public Library.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* . Bollingen Series XVII: Pantheon Books, 1949.

Famous book on myths, religious and folktales from many times and societies. Through them finding a symbolic language and universal meanings,

D'Aulaire's, Ingri and Edgar. *Book of Greek Myths* . Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1962.

Simple and accurate retelling with wonderful illustrations. Good for elementary and middle schools.

Euripides. *Alcestis* . *Euripides I* . Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1955. Trans. Richard Lattimore.

Heracles rescues Alcestis from death. Good play for middle and high school students. Euripides may be more accessible to modern students. See unit in this book on *Alcestis* .

Euripides. *Heracles* . *Euripides II* . Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1952. Trans. by William Arrowsmith.

Heracles' killing of his wife and children during a fit of insanity brought on by Hera. Heracles is viewed sympathetically. Male chorus.

Galinsky, G. Karl. *The Herakles Theme* . Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972.

A study of the tradition of Heracles in western literature from Homer to present time.

Gibson, Michael. *Gods, Men and Monsters from the Greek Myths* . New York: Schocken Books, 1982.

Beautifully illustrated and written, this is on a middle or high school reading level. Good for teachers too.

Green, Peter. *Ancient Greece, and illustrated History* . London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1973.

A good general source book for ancient Greek History. Numerous and excellent photographs.

Hesiod. *The Works and Days, Theogony, The Shield of Herakles* . Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1959. Trans. by Richard Lattimore.

Hesiod was probably a contemporary of Homer also writing in verse. *The Works and Days* contains stories, proverbs and folksy advice from ancient times. *The Theogony* is the genealogy of the Gods. *The Shield of Herakles* is a wonderful description of Heracles' and his shield. Selected passages could be read aloud.

Kerenyi, C. *The Heroes of the Greeks* . New York: Grove Press, 1956. Trans. by H.J. Rose.

A very readable book recounting the myths and stories. An extensive section on Heracles. Excellent plates of vase paintings depicting his exploits.

Lee, Stan. *Origins of Marvel Comics* . New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974.

The origins of the Hulk, The Thing, Spiderman, Thor, Dr. Strange and other modern superheroes in comicbook form. Narrative on the superheroes by their creator Mr. Lee.

Pinsent, John. *Greek Mythology* . New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1969, 1982.

Part of a series, *Library of the World's Myths and Legends* . Wonderful and extensive colored photographs of Greek art and architecture, including many vase depictions of Heracles.

Raglan, Fitzroy. *The Hero* . Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1956.

Discusses myths of various heroes and their relationship to ritual and ritual drama.

Schoo, Jan H. *Hercules' Labors* . Chicago: Argonaut Inc., 1969. Description of the twelve Labors and speculation on the symbolism therein.

Sophocles. *The Women of Trachis. Sophocles II* . Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957. Trans. by Michael Janson.

Classic Greek tragedy. The death of Heracles. Deianeira has a major role. Female chorus.

Tripp, Edward. *The Meridan Handbook of Classical Mythology* . New York: New American Library, 1970.

An A-Z collection of stories and characters from classical mythology. Excellent bibliography. A very helpful source book.

Van der Heyden, A.A.M. and Scullard, H.H. *Atlas of the Classical World* . London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1959.

Good photographs and good maps.

STUDENT'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

Asimov, Isaac. *Words From the Myths* . Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1961.

Exploring the Greek Myths to discover roots of hundreds of words in daily usage.

Colum, Padraic. *The Golden Fleece and Heroes Who Lived Before Achilles* . New York: MacMillan Co., 1921.

Literate telling of the story of Jason.

D'Aulair, Ingri and Edgar. *Book of Great Myths* . Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1962.

Beautifully written and illustrated.

Gates, Doris. *A Fair Wind for Troy . The Golden God: Apollo . Lord of the Sky: Zeus . Mightiest of Mortals: Heracles . Two Queens of Heavens: Aphrodite and Demeter . The Warrior Goddess: Athena* . New York: Viking Press, 1976.

A good series. Moderate reading level and good illustrations.

Gibson, Michael. *Gods, Men and Monsters from the Greek Myths* . New York: Schocken Books, 1982.

Good general source. Excellent chapter on Heracles. Wonderful illustrations. Middle school reading level.

Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology* . Boston: Little Brown, 1942.

Heracles and other Greek myths.

Johnston, Norma. *Pride of Lions*. New York: Atheneum, 1979. Story of the House of Atreus. Middle or high school level.

Macpherson, Jay. *Four Ages of Man* . Toronto: MacMillian Co. of Canada Ltd., 1962.

Myths of the Gods and heroes. Helpful and further sources. Good maps and charts.

Quennell, Marjorie and C.H.B. *Everyday Things in Ancient Greece* . London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1962.

Life in ancient Greece on elementary school reading level.

Renault, Mary. *The Lion in the Gateway* . New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

Novel on middle school level about the Persian Wars.

Robinson, Charles A. *The First Book of Ancient Greece* . J. Franklin Watts, Inc., 1960.

Easy reading.

Serrailler, Ian. *Heracles The Strong* . New York: Henry Z. Wack Inc., 1970.

Snedeker, Caroline Dale. *Theras and His Town* . Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1961.

Novel about Athenian boy forced to live in Sparta.

Steward, Philippa. *Growing Up in Ancient Greece* . London: B.T. Batsford, Ltd., 1962.

History on elementary and middle school levels.

Weisgard, Leonard. *The Athenians* . New York: Coward—McCann, 1963.

History with good illustrations and photographs on elementary and middle levels.

Vautier, Ghislain. *The Shining Stars* . London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978.

Greek legends of the Zodiac. Pictures of constellations and where to find them in the sky. Elementary school level.

LESSON PLANS

Teachers should have a map of the Ancient World, i.e. Mediterranean countries, and books about Ancient Greece, the Gods and Heroes.

LESSON 1

1. Discuss the Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Greece.
2. Discuss B.C. and A.D. Make a time line on the board.
3. Talk about Heracles. What was he supposed to look like? What is a hero? Who is a modern hero? Do we make up heroes? Who are some Olympic Games or Comic book heroes and heroines? What do they do?
4. Have students invent a hero or super hero. Write a description and/or draw a picture. Describe that super hero to the class.

LESSON II

1. Recap who is who among the Gods.
2. Tell the story of Heracles' birth and his strangling of the snakes.
3. Give the students roles to play. Depending on cast numbers, you can adapt and add or subtract characters.
CHARACTERS: Alcmene, Amphitryon, Heracles, Iphicles, Hera, snakes. Other possible characters: Nurse, Zeus, servants, relatives, townspeople.
4. Clear a space and group chairs or desks for crib. Decide where the parents bedroom is, where Hera and the snakes come from etc. How do snake's move? How is Heracles going to kill them? Discuss and work out fight.
5. Teacher acts as narrator. Students can pantomime the action.
6. Discuss how it went. Give more dialogue or sounds to the actors as you keep doing it. Narrator can become a student. Get suggestions from the class.

Teachers sometimes think that students will get bored acting out the same thing many times. In my experience this is not the case. Each time you do the scene there are changes because it is improvised. Keep it improvised. You can change roles if you like. You can go through all the Labors this way, making them simple or complicated. Keep it simple! Find the core of the story.

Act it out. Add in details as you repeat the improvisation.

LESSON III—The Hydra

1. Discuss monsters. Describe the Hydra.
2. Discuss animals that can regenerate parts of themselves.
3. *Machine Game* (Monster Game). See note.
4. Tell story of Heracles and the Hydra.
5. Cast the parts. Cast: The Hydra (several people), The Crab, Hera, Heracles, Iolaus (nephew), Eurystheus, Villagers, family members etc.
6. Decide how to depict Hydra. Act out, as in previous lesson, teacher narrating.
7. Discuss and repeat. Have students design a monster and ways to overcome it. Draw and/or write a description.

Note: *Machine Game* . One student comes up and holds a pose as a part of a large machine. Other students follow, connecting in some way and becoming another part of that machine. When the machine is together, the teacher pushes the button and the machine starts to move. In this version we are making a monster instead of a machine.

LESSON IV—Heracles' Shield

1. Discuss what warriors wore in Ancient Greece and what it looked like. What materials it could have been made of.
2. How big should a shield be for a man eight feet tall?
3. Read from Hesiod's *The Shield of Heracles* lines 139-320 aloud to the class.
4. Assign parts of the shield to be drawn (you don't have to use all of the scenes described by Hesiod, you could also make some up). Give everyone a pie shaped piece of paper, save one circle piece for the center. Work out dimensions. Pictures can be done on graph paper and enlarged or drawn free form.
5. Color and mount on cardboard shield.

LESSON V— *Heracles* , by Euripides and *The Women of Trachis* , by Sophocles

1. High School students read both plays.
2. Discuss issues raised in the body of this unit, i.e. good and evil, brawn and brain, fame, insanity etc.
3. What are the differences in the two authors?
4. Read part or all of the plays aloud. Try choral reading with the chorus'.
5. Have students select contrasting speeches from both plays to be read aloud as an argument or dialogue?
6. Do dialogue as a radio play or debate. Who is right? Who is wrong? How would we judge these characters? What questions are posed? What do we think and how do we feel?

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