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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1998 Volume II: Cultures and Their Myths

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## **Hercules the Hero: Understanding the Myth**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 98.02.06  
by Christine Y. House

This unit is intended to be used with upper elementary school students at inner city schools. American children are avid watchers of television and movies. They get a great deal of information and misinformation from these sources. It is incumbent upon parents and educators to see that the information received is factual and truthful and that the messages conveyed are accurate. This unit is designed to look at the myth of Hercules as told throughout the ages in literature and art. In particular, we will compare the animated Disney version of the tale with a variety of versions from traditional sources. Without prior knowledge of the myth of Hercules, this movie never makes any real sense. It is simply another cartoon filled with gratuitous violence without any sense of who the villains are or what has brought on such monumental challenges. The culmination of this unit will be a visual display of the children's interpretation of the stories as well as discussion of the characteristics which constitute heroism.

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