

Dionysus and The Pirates

A myth from Ancient Greece

Recommended Key Stage: KS2

Synopsis

Dionysus was the God of parties, but sometimes he would get bored. One day, he transformed himself into a Prince and was immediately kidnapped by greedy pirates. The pirates tied him to the mast of the ship, but each time they tried, Dionysus would turn the ropes and chains to animals. Dionysus, furious with the pirates, transformed into fearsome creatures again and again, scaring them all away.

Part 1: Share the Story

Share the video **Stories from the Whispering Wood: Dionysus and The Pirates** or tell the story yourself.

Top storytelling tips:

- Learn the story beforehand so that you can be expressive and maintain eye contact with the students.
- Use actions and sound effects and encourage the students to join in.
- Find one or two moments in the story to stop and ask the students to predict what is going to happen next, or how they would feel if they were the characters.

Part 2: Discuss the story

Use the questions below to begin a discussion about the story

Questions

- What did you think of the story?
- What would it be like to be a God? What kind of God would you be?
- How would you describe Dionysus? What adjectives could you use? What adjectives could you use to describe the pirates?
- What would you do if you were captured by pirates?
- What do you think Dionysus could have done differently?
- What lessons can we learn from this story?
- Lots of stories have goodies and baddies in them. Is it clear who is who in this story? Do characters have to be one or the other?
- How were the characters feeling throughout the story? How did their emotions change at different moments?

Part 3: Play the Story

Activities	
Story Walk - Students stand in their own space around the room. - Tell the story slowly using Resource A - As you tell it, the students use the space to mime it while staying in their space. Dionysus being captured, turning into different animals, the pirates running scared. - Try doing this with no sounds, just expressions.	
Dionysus Attack! Students stand in their own space around the room. The battle between Dionysus and the Pirates is about to begin! When you give the following commands, the students should do the following actions or calls: “Tie up the prisoner!” – quickly find a partner and wrap them in imaginary ropes “Watch out, snakes!” – the ropes have turned to snakes! Half the room hop up and down, the other half slither on the floor like snakes “Hungry hyenas!” – prowl on all fours, laugh like hyenas “Prisoner has escaped!” – find a place to hide or hit the deck! “Raging bull!” – charge to the middle as Dionysus “Fearsome lion!” – stand on all fours and let out a fearsome roar “Prowling panther!” – prowl around the room on all fours “Jump overboard!” become the scared pirates: walk the plank, one foot in front of the other and jump into the sea “Fly back home” – turn into Dionysus as a bird, spread your wings and fly away home	Conscience Alley - Imagine you are the pirates who have unwittingly captured Dionysus in the beginning of the story. You have an important decision to make – should you stick to your plan and keep him tied up or should you let him go? - Discuss both sides of the argument in pairs and share back some ideas. Now everyone should have an idea. - Create a pathway, with the children standing in two lines parallel with each other. - Nominate a child to act as one of the pirates (or an adult to begin with). The pirate will walk through the pathway, with children on either side. One side of the path will try to convince them to keep Dionysus tied up, while the other side will try to convince them to let him go. Encourage the children to give reasons for their opinion. - By the end of the path, the pirate will take in all the arguments and come to a decision. This decision can be different from the outcome of the story - that could make for an interesting discussion!

Part 4: Story Stimulus

Activities	
Creative Challenge: Draw the story as a comic strip instead. - Students take a piece of paper and make 9 panels. - Students try to tell the story of Dionysus and the Pirates from beginning to end in just those 9 panels. - Plan what will happen in each panel before you start to draw it, so you don't use too many or too few. - Use words and pictures in each. Create sound effects, and speech/ thought bubbles to show what the characters are saying and thinking. - When drawing, make sure you show how characters feel throughout. Show Dionysus angry and fearsome when he is tied up, and the pirates confused as he becomes untied.	Emotions Graph Look at an emotion wheel (various versions are available online) and ask children to explore whether they can each create an emotion graph showing how one character's emotions change during the story. They need an emotion graph template, each showing: - Dionysus walking along the beach in fine clothes, spotted by the pirates - Dionysus being captured by the pirates - Dionysus turning the ropes to snakes - One pirate tells the others to be careful, but they don't listen - Dionysus escapes and turns into a wild animal - The pirates jump overboard, and Dionysus turns them into dolphins Ask the students to label the y axis with emotions: happiest at top to despair at the bottom. The x axis line represents time. Mark on dots to show how their character feels at each moment in the story. Can they join the dots to show their emotional journey through the story? Challenge students to compare their graphs with someone who has used a different character. How do their emotions differ? Share graphs and discuss any differences between the students' interpretations.
What ifs? Innovate the story in pairs or groups, making one change. How does this alter the events of the story? Does it change how we perceive the characters? Use the following as starting points for your innovation: - What if the pirates had actually been good pirates? - What if Dionysus had been captured by children? - What if Dionysus had different powers? - What if he had turned into different animals? - What if Dionysus had taken the pirate ship at the end? Present your new story – this could be as a written story, a comic strip, an oral story, or a performance with actors and narrators.	Create a new Greek Myth Find out about some of the other Greek Gods and Goddesses. Write or perform a story imagining that one of them has been captured this time. What will be different? E.g. What if Zeus was captured? How would he use his powers? Would he be kind or fearsome? Follow this structure to help you: 1. Your God/Goddess visits the mortal world for some reason 2. They are captured 3. They use their powers/abilities to get them out 4. Their captors are taught a lesson 5. Optional: they return home

Part 5: Taking it Further

Similar Stories

Other Greek myths

King Midas (Dionysus also appears in this story)

Zeus and the Poplar

Theseus and The Minotaur

Icarus and Daedulus

Other stories about shapeshifting

The Birth of Taliesin (Britain)

The Coming of the Unicorn (Britain)

Wider Curriculum Links

KS2 History

- Ancient Greece – a study of Greek life and achievements and their influence on the western world

Resource A

Story Walk for Dionysus and The Pirates

- One day, Dionysus was feeling bored and so he came down from Mount Olympus.
- He disguised himself as a royal prince – put on your royal cloak and fine clothes, and stand like a prince
- A group of rowdy pirates spotted him from the beach – ooh a wealthy prince! Rub your hands together and do a mischievous, pirate laugh! Hee hee!
- The pirates grabbed the prince and tied him up in ropes aboard their ship – find a partner, tie them up in imaginary ropes
- Dionysus was very cross – pull an angry face! – and he turned the ropes into slithering snakes! Make a snake with your arms and have it slither along the floor around you
- The pirates were very confused! Where have all these snakes come from?
- They tied Dionysus up again, tighter this time! – find your partner, tie them tighter with imaginary chains
- Dionysus used his magic to grow vines all around the ship, keeping it stuck in place – stand still like a stuck ship!
- Dionysus was feeling even more cross – show your angriest face! – and so he turned the chains into hyenas – drop on all fours and laugh like a hyena, ha ha hee hee!
- The pirates were very confused! Where have these hyenas come from?
- They tied Dionysus up again, tighter this time! – find your partner, tie them tighter with imaginary chains and ropes
- One pirate noticed that something was wrong... Scratch your chin, tap your friend on the shoulder and whisper in their ear... but the other pirates didn't believe him. Shake your head and wag your finger
- Dionysus had had enough! He turned into a giant, black panther! Prowl on all fours and growl like a panther.
- The pirates were terrified! Ah! Show me how scared you are!
- The pirates jumped overboard and were turned into dolphins – leap elegantly like a dolphin
- There was one pirate left, who was shaking, terrified. But Dionysus left him alone and went off home. Phew!