

Zeus and the Poplar

A Myth from Ancient Greece

Recommended Key Stage: KS2

Synopsis

Zeus throws a spectacular party for his wife Hera – everyone is invited, including the trees. After the party, Zeus cannot find his silver spoons and swears that the trees must have stolen them! He sends Hermes down to the forest to find the thief. Hermes speaks to every tree in the forest, but cannot find the culprit, until he speaks to the Poplar tree. Poplar has been hiding the spoons behind his back and tells Hermes that he only wanted to be beautiful. Zeus punishes the tree by making him raise his branches for eternity, but he also adds some silver to his leaves.

Part 1: Share the Story

Watch the video **Stories from the Whispering Wood: Zeus and the Poplar**

Show a world map and point out Greece. Discuss what the children know already about Ancient Greece/ Greek mythology.

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 was your favourite part?
- Have you ever been to a party before? What was the best part?
- Why do you think Zeus was suspicious of the trees?
- How do you think Hermes felt during the story?
- How might you persuade a tree to talk to you?
- What do you think of Zeus' punishment? Why do you think he gave him the gift as well?
- What can this story tell us about right and wrong? Do you think Poplar should have stolen the spoons?

Part 3: Play the Story

Activities	
Summarise the story Retell the story of Zeus and the Poplar as a storyboard or comic strip. Can you retell the whole story in only 9 boxes? Plan what you will put in each box before you draw or write so that you don't run out of space! Think about how you will summarise the story, keeping only the most important details. Use words and pictures to tell your story and think carefully about the emotions of each character. How would Hermes be feeling when he speaks to the trees? How would Poplar feel at the end? Retell the story to somebody else using only your storyboard or challenge them to tell the story.	Tell the story from another perspective Tell the story from the point of view of the Poplar tree. This could be written as diary entries or internal monologues. You could start from these points: 1. When you are invited to the party 2. When you see the silver spoons and decide to take them 3. When you see Hermes asking all the trees in the forest about the spoons 4. When Hermes asks if you've stolen them and you tell the truth 5. When Zeus comes down to punish you/ give you a gift Does this change the way we tell the story? Does it make you see any of the characters differently?

Part 4: Story Stimulus

Activities	
Creative Challenge: Create a party fit for the Gods Think about: • Activities & games • Music • Food & drink • Invitations • Where would the party be held? • Who would be invited? Draw and label your party on a big piece of paper or create your party space in your classroom environment. You could use any fabric or blankets and draw out any props you need. Act out the story in your party space.	New endings In groups, pairs, or independently students can create a new ending or new version of the story. Work out where in the story you will make the change. Some ideas for changes: What if Hermes hadn't found the spoons? What if all of the trees had stolen a spoon? What if Hera hadn't invited the trees to her party? What if the trees had ganged up on Hermes when he came to the forest? What if the trees had stolen something different? What if it wasn't Poplar who was the thief?
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 is having a party this time. What will go wrong here? E.g. Apollo is the God of the Sun – perhaps mountain stands up tall to look at the sun and ends up blocking the sunlight entirely, so Apollo carves into its sides so you can always see the sky and the light around it. Follow this structure to help you: 1. There is a party held by one of the Greek Gods/ Goddesses 2. At the end of the party, something is wrong 3. The God/Goddess sends someone to go and solve the problem 4. They have some trouble finding out who is responsible 5. They find out the culprit and they are punished 6. Optional: They are also given a gift	

Part 5: Taking it Further

Similar Stories

King Midas (Ancient Greece)

Dionysus and the Pirates (Ancient Greece)

Thor and Utgard Loki (Norse)

How Thor Lost His Hammer (Norse)

Wider Curriculum Links

KS2 PSHE

- to recognise reasons for rules and laws; consequences of not adhering to rules and laws
- the importance of having compassion towards others; shared responsibilities we all have for caring for other people and living things; how to show care and concern for others

KS2 History

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