

# GREEK MYTHS IN MODES



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Beatin' Path Publications, LLC

BPP-GMIM

## PREFACE

We offer this collection as a way to enter the mythical, magical world of Greek kings and heroes. Because these ageless stories provide opportunities for invention and collaboration, they also invite dramatization, and this powerful amalgam makes for memorable learning experiences.

The Greek myths in this book have been adapted for use through music, movement, speech play, and modes in an open-ended, elemental style for grades 4-5-6. Inviting preparatory activities give the teacher ideas for developments of dialogue, meter, and mode.

We have implemented medieval modes to bring a tonal flavor appropriate to each myth. Every story has its own ethos, just as the modes have their intrinsic individuality. Although we know very little about the affect the modes in ancient Greece had on its people, or even the specific scale tones, we do know the structure of the medieval modes which were an adaptation of the Greek modes. We are drawn to them for their unique qualities and find it easy to assign them to human characteristics which we have done in this collection. Modes are rarely taught in upper elementary music classes, and so this project provides a vibrant, wholly accessible entrance into Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Pentatonic scales.

In our electronic age, the need for human interaction in classroom situations is volcanic. These dramas, which promote inter-personal communication and are “catch-nets” for creativity of both students and teachers, fulfill that need. The dramas are modeled in the spirit Carl Orff intended where elemental music is ever changing and open to student input and creativity.

So let us then enter the magical garden of Greek mythology with mind and heart open. Let us consort with the Gods and Kings, Monsters and Heroes, dance with the Nymphs and Dryads, and join Orpheus and Apollo in their divine songs, living with them through the Arts.



*Everybody knows that the story is about to begin when this verse is heard.*

ΚΟΚΚΙΝΗ ΚΛΩΣΤΗ ΣΤΡΙΜΕΝΗ  
ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΕΜΗ ΤΥΛΙΓΜΕΝΗ  
ΔΩΣ ΤΗΣ ΚΛΩΤΣΟ ΝΑ ΓΥΡΙΣΗ  
ΠΑΡΑΜΥΘΙ Ν' ΑΡΧΙΝΙΣΗ

*Red thread twisted, tied to the spinning wheel,  
Give it a kick to go round, that the tale may begin...*

*~D.G. J.T.S.*

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# HOW HEAVEN AND EARTH CAME INTO BEING

Mode: Aeolian



Focus: Movement exploration.

Possible Overture ideas:



BM



BX



AM

**NARRATION: ONCE UPON A TIME BEFORE THE WORLD WAS BORN, THERE WAS A GIGANTIC EGG IN A HUGE, EMPTY SPACE.**

**Suggestions:** The egg could be formed by a tight ball of bodies. For other sound accompaniment, experiment with a low kettle drum tremolo or a time veil of voices singing straight tones on a variety of pitches. You may want to begin with the egg dancers lying flat on the floor, gradually rising to create the shape. You may prefer silence prior to the narration or sounds. The instruments might begin when the egg is cracked open.

**NARRATION: ONE DAY THE EGG CRACKED OPEN...**

The egg of bodies might rock in unison And, gathering momentum, split into two groups, Earth and Heaven (in contrasting costume). Discover instrumental sounds for the cracking, etc., to accompany this action (perhaps a cymbal when the spirit flies out). For the flying spirit, explore movement that highlights the birth, and create a floor pattern to allow a frame of space around this key figure.

**NARRATION: AND OUT CAME A FLYING SPIRIT THAT PUSHED THE UPPER PART OF THE EGG SHELL UPWARDS, AND HEAVEN CAME INTO BEING.**

# JASON AND THE MAGIC FLEECE

Mode: Lydian



## Focus:

- Vocal improvisation over rhythmic drone.
- Awareness of dynamics, balance, polyphonic texture.

## Suggestions:

### Dynamic preparation:

- Move palms upward to indicate a crescendo in vocal sound; downward, a diminished sound.
- Conduct the group on any pitch, using "ah," varying the dynamics.
- Students echo the teacher improvising in Lydian using only the first five tones of the mode F, G, A, B, C (Lydian pentachord). The teacher will continue to indicate loud and soft.
- Savor the 4th tone, characteristic of Lydian.

## Background music for introduction of myth:

- Invite students to play background music under all narration inventing or selecting from the following drones.
- Various instruments can be selected for timbre variety.

Drones



**NARRATION/SYNOPSIS:** (Background music begins.) **ONCE THERE WAS A STEPMOTHER WHO WAS UNKIND TO HER TWO CHILDREN, FRIXOS (FREEK soh) AND ELLI (EL lee). JUPITER, THE KING OF THE GODS, HEARD OF THEIR UNHAPPINESS AND WANTED TO HELP THEM. HE SENT A BEAUTIFUL FLYING RAM WITH A GOLDEN FLEECE TO TAKE THE CHILDREN AWAY FROM THE STEPMOTHER TO A KINGDOM WHERE THEY WOULD BE TREATED KINDLY. FRIXOS ARRIVED SAFELY, BUT UNFORTUNATELY, ELLI, FELL OFF THE RAM IN FLIGHT, AND DROWNED IN THE ISTHMUS OF ELLISPONDOS (el lis PON dos), WHICH SEPARATES EUROPE FROM ASIA.**



## THE FATE OF ICARUS

Mode: C Pentatonic



### Focus:

- Development of melodic criteria.
- Ostinato vocabulary.
- Question and Answer (binary AB form).

**SYNOPSIS: DAEDALUS (DEAD da los) WAS TRYING TO ESCAPE FROM THE LABYRINTH IN CRETE WHERE HE AND HIS SON ICARUS (IK ah ros) WERE BEING HELD CAPTIVE BY THE KING, MINOS (MEEN os).**

**THE MINOTAUR (MEEN oh taur), WHO HAD THE HEAD OF A BULL AND THE BODY OF A MAN, HAD LIVED YEARS BEFORE IN THIS LABYRINTH. HE HAD LEFT REMNANTS OF WHAT HE HAD EATEN: FEATHERS FROM THE BIRDS AND WAX FROM THE HONEYCOMBS.**

**DAEDALUS, BEING A CREATIVE CRAFTSMAN, DEVISED A WAY TO ESCAPE, BY USING THESE FEATHERS AND WAX. HE CREATED WINGS FOR BOTH HIMSELF AND HIS SON, USING THE WAX TO COAT THE FEATHERS.**

**ATTACHING THE WINGS TO THEIR ARMS, DAEDALUS AND HIS SON FLEW TO FREEDOM. AS THEY WERE FLYING, DAEDALUS WAS CAREFUL NOT TO GO TOO NEAR THE SUN, BECAUSE HE KNEW THAT WARM RAYS WOULD MELT THE WAX.**

**ICARUS, WHO WAS YOUNG AND ADVENTURESOME, THOUGHT HIMSELF A GOD, AND FLEW HIGHER AND HIGHER TO LEARN THE SECRETS OF THE HEAVENS. BY DOING SO THE WAX MELTED, AND ICARUS FELL INTO THE SEA AND DROWNED.**

# PERSEUS AND MEDUSA

Mode: Dorian



## Focus:

- Vocal improvisation.
- Recitative based on the Dorian mode.

## Suggestions:

### Vocal Applications:

- Sing the new minor scale with numbers; be aware scale degree 6 is a raised tone.
- Echo phrases sung in Dorian, being aware of the raised tone.
- Ask students to answer questions in Dorian as recitative without regard to meter or form.
- Play a Question and Answer game. Sing the question phrase starting on D and ending on A; students sing an answer ending on D.
- Repeat the above task, adding vocal improvisations in Dorian above ostinati.



### Instrumental Applications:

- Using only D, A, and B tone bars on your instruments, play Question and Answer with your neighbor. (Teacher will keep the meter going beneath this task by playing an ostinato on a BX.)
- Continue the game, adding F (completing the tonic triad, D, F, A) and the raised tone B.
- Add remaining passing tones gradually, E, G, C, completing the scale, while always being aware of the triad D, F, A, and the raised tone B which defines Dorian.
- Having the Dorian mode firmly in your head, improvise some of the story text in Dorian recitative.

## DIMITRA AND PERSEPHONE

Mode: Phrygian



### Focus:

- Creating a dialogue from a story and in Phrygian mode.
- Adding body percussion accompaniments to speech pieces.

**Suggestions for creating dialogues:** An excerpt of the teacher's script for evoking dialogue from the story of Dimitra (dih MEE tra) and Persephone (per SEF oh nee) follows.

Teacher: I am going to read you the myth of Dimitra and Persephone (in box below). Your task will be to remember it, and later put the story into a dialogue form instead of a narration. How might you put this particular excerpt into a dialogue? I will write down your ideas. For example, *Persephone was the most beloved daughter of Dimitra, the goddess of agriculture.* Who can recreate this as Persephone speaking?

Student: I am Persephone, and this is my mother, Dimitra. She is the goddess of agriculture who makes all things grow on the Earth.

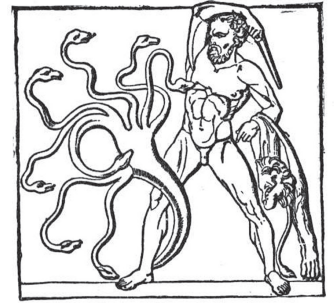
Teacher: Well done. What might you do with this next excerpt? *One day as Persephone was gathering flowers in the field, she saw a narcissus. The moment she reached down to pick it, the Earth split beneath her feet.*

Student: Mother, I am going to gather some flowers in the fields. (to herself) Here are so many beautiful ones...look at this interesting white one. I will bring it back to Mother. It is so rare it will surely make her happy. What's happening...the Earth is trembling...I can't keep my balance...Mother! I'm falling...

**SYNOPSIS** (for student narration development): **PERSEPHONE WAS THE MOST BELOVED DAUGHTER OF DIMITRA, THE GODDESS OF AGRICULTURE. ONE DAY AS PERSEPHONE WAS GATHERING FLOWERS IN THE FIELDS, SHE SAW A NARCISSUS. THE MOMENT SHE REACHED DOWN TO PICK IT, THE EARTH SPLIT BENEATH HER FEET, AND PERSEPHONE FELL INTO THE DARK CREVASSE BELOW. SHE SLID DEEPER INTO THE DARKNESS AND FINALLY FOUND HERSELF IN FRONT OF THE GOD OF THE UNDERWORLD, PLUTO. PERSEPHONE DID NOT KNOW PLUTO CAUSED THE EARTH TO PART, IN ORDER TO CAPTURE HER FOR HIS WIFE.**



## HERCULES AND THE HYDRA: THE SECOND ADVENTURE OF HERCULES



Mode: Mixolydian



Focus: Mixolydian mode and mixed meter.

### Suggestions:

- Invent a dramatic tremolo to play under the beginning narration (bass xylophone or timpani, etc.).
- Employ different vocal timbres by using solo/group narration and a variety of dynamics and expression.
- Cast the drama with the three main characters, Hercules, Iolaos (eye o LAH oss), and Hydra (HY dra), who will have special speeches or songs to perform with supporting accompaniments.

**NARRATION/DIALOGUE/SYNOPSIS:** (over tremolo)

**GROUP:** HERCULES WAS ORDERED BY THE KING OF MYCEANE (my SEEN), TO KILL HYDRA.

**SOLO 1:** (mysteriously) THIS MYTHICAL MONSTER IS SAID TO HAVE HAD MANY HEADS.

**SOLO 2:** THERE ARE MANY STORIES ABOUT THE APPEARANCE OF THIS CREATURE...

**GROUP:** ...AND ONE CLAIMS THAT SHE HAD NINE HEADS, EIGHT OF THEM BEING MORTAL, THE NINTH - IMMORTAL...

**SOLO 3:** (stage whisper) ...AND NO ONE KNEW WHICH WAS WHICH...

### Preparation for the Mixolydian mode:

- Listen to this new mode the teacher plays or sings, and discover the tone which sounds different (scale degree 7 is lowered).
- Acknowledge the familiar major sound of the scale.
- Identify the mode as Mixolydian and echo the teacher, and later student leaders, as they sing short phrases in this mode. Include the characteristic lowered 7th.
- Using excerpts from the story, create a recitative in Mixolydian in one or two groups.

## PANDORA'S BOX



**Mode:** Silence (except for the narration)

**Focus:**

Pantomime (A play in which the actors use no words, expressing something with the body and face only.)

**Suggestions:**

**Teacher script preparation for pantomime:**

- You're trying to move a large boulder; press against it with your weight.
- The ceiling is closing in on you; press it upward.
- The floor is moving upward; press it downward.
- Grasp the handle of an invisible, heavy frying pan; place it on an invisible stove.
- Your arms are attached to helium balloons; let them float you upward.
- Turn an invisible door knob; walk into a kitchen where you open a loaf of invisible bread and place the slices in a toaster.
- Open a pretend wrapped gift box; show surprise with your face and whole body.
- Use your face as a make-believe mask and show surprise, fear, anger, happiness, sadness, and wonder.
- Try the same emotions with other parts of the body (shoulders, hands, legs and feet, etc.).
- Use this pantomime concept to tell the myth of "Pandora's Box."

**NARRATION/SYNOPSIS: PROMETHEUS STOLE THE CELESTIAL FIRE FROM URANUS AND BROUGHT IT TO THE PEOPLE ON EARTH.**

**Suggestions:**

- Develop a pantomime which shows the story action of Prometheus and Uranus.
- In partners, practice shadowing each other's movements and include this technique in your pantomime.

**NARRATION: JUPITER WAS ANGERED BY THIS ACT OF THEFT AND DECIDED TO PUNISH PROMETHEUS BY CHAINING HIM TO MOUNT CAUCASUS (COH ca sus).**

**Suggestions:**

- Here, Jupiter might advance aggressively toward Prometheus and move parallel with him as they interact forward and back.
- Show the size and weight of the chain by the shape of Jupiter's hand and resistance the chain gives as Prometheus is restrained.

## INVENTING A MYTH FOR AN AMPHORA

An **AMPHORA** (am PHO rah) was a large, Greek vase that held wine. Scenes of complete tales, myths, or actual happenings were painted on the vases.

Study the scenes on these amphoras and create dialogues which tell a story of what you think might be happening.

- Add modal music to your story.
- Use chants.
- Bring the story to life through movement.
- Make up a myth and draw an amphora for the story.



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## MORE GREEK MYTHS AND PROVERBS TO EXPLORE

### TELCHINES

Among the spirits of the fire were the Telchines (tell HEEN ness), volcanic spirits like the ones met in many myths from Cyprus and Crete. The invention of the three most precious metals, gold, silver, and brass, were attributed to these spirits.

Telchines were magicians who made potions out of different roots of herbs, through which they would invoke rain, hail, snow, or thunder. The Telchines had the ability to change themselves at will to fire, thunder, or spirits. Their first home was the island of Rhodes; but the male children of the Sun chased them away. The Telchines went to Crete where they took the form of armed soldiers of Jupiter.

### KADMUS AND THE DRAGON The Founding of the City of Thebes

Europa, the sister of Kadmus (KAD mohs), was kidnapped by Jupiter. Kadmus arrived in Delphi (DEL fie) in search of his sister and consulted the oracle of Apollo to help find her.

The oracle advised Kadmus to give up the search for his sister and continue on his way until he saw a heifer which he was to follow. The oracle said wherever the animal stopped, there Kadmus was to create a new city. The heifer led the way through forests and valleys and finally came to a stop in an open field which Kadmus had never seen before. It let out a cry and lay down to rest on the grass. Kadmus realized this was the chosen place to build the city he named Thebes.

Kadmus asked his friends who followed him faithfully during his long search to find water and prepare for a sacrifice to thank the gods. Not far from where they stopped, the friends saw water flowing from a cavern which was surrounded by thick bushes and small trees. When they rushed into the cavern to fill up their jugs, a fierce dragon appeared and devoured the men one by one. Some said the dragon was the son of the god Aries.

Realizing his men were taking a long time to come back, Kadmus went to find them. As he entered the cavern, Kadmus was also confronted by the dragon. After a fierce battle, Kadmus killed him, and at the advice of goddess Athena, he buried the dragon's teeth deep in the Earth. The ground began trembling immediately. The teeth emerged from the Earth in the form of armed soldiers. A fierce battle ensued among the soldiers, and all but five were killed. Some said these five soldiers were the first to inhabit the city of Thebes.

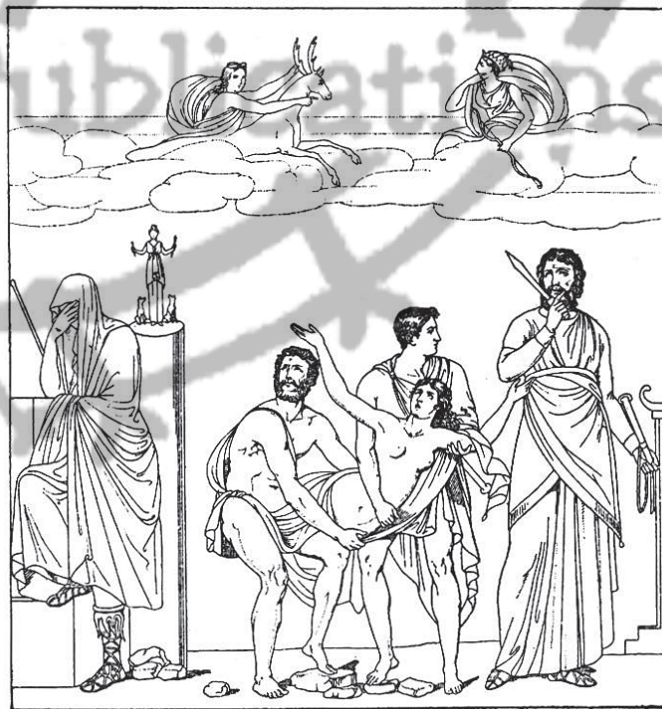
## THE SACRIFICE OF IPHIGENIA

Beautiful Helen was abducted by Paris, the son of the king of Troy. Her husband Menelaos (men a LAH os) asked for help from his brother Agamemnon (ag a MEM non) and neighboring kingdoms to rise up against Troy and help him reclaim his wife.

The armies set sail for Troy, but found their ships “in irons” by the absolute lack of wind. The men looked upon this as a bad omen and consulted the oracle from Delphi. The oracle said that Iphigenia (if ee jeen AIA), daughter of Agamemnon, would have to be sacrificed on the altar of the goddess Artemis (ART eh mees). In return, Artemis would provide the wind needed for their journey to Troy.

Iphigenia was asked to come to the soldiers’ encampment the following day, but was not told she was to be sacrificed. When she arrived, her father gave her to the priests who started preparations for the sacrifice with an elaborate processional and mysterious ritual.

Artemis felt pity for the innocent girl. At the last minute before the sacrifice, the goddess Artemis secretly substituted a ram in Iphigenia’s place. Only the priests and the gods knew of the change, and Iphigenia spent the rest of her life worshipping Artemis in her temple.





## ABOUT THE MODES

We owe the present tonal structure of the modes as we know them today to Ptolemy who reduced the number of keys from 15 to the present seven. Centuries later Plato and Aristotle wrote of the modes. Aristotle wrote in one instance: "The musical modes differ essentially from one another, and those who hear them are differently affected by each. Some of them make men sad and grave. Others enfeeble the mind, and others produce a moderate and settled temper which appears to be the peculiar effect of the Dorian mode. The Phrygian inspires enthusiasm."

No one knows with certainty what the principles of difference were among the modes which caused such strikingly different effects to be attributed to them. No writer contemporary with Aristotle and Plato gives a clear technical description of the modes, and not enough of the music is preserved to enable historians to verify the statements of the theorists. The modes as we know them today are derived from the writings of medieval theorists who adopted the names of the Greek modes. Medieval modes consist of a certain octave scale pattern of tones and semi-tones with a definite tonal center.

The image displays seven musical scales, each on a single treble clef staff. The scales are arranged in four rows. The first row contains Ionian and Dorian. The second row contains Phrygian and Lydian. The third row contains Mixolydian and Aeolian. The fourth row contains only Locrian. Each scale is represented by a sequence of eight notes with stems, and the intervals between notes are indicated by brackets above the notes. A large, faint watermark reading "Beatin' Path Publications" is overlaid on the background of the musical notation.

Keeping the whole and half step arrangement intact, all modes can be transposed.



***This CD ROM contains information that can only be read on a computer.***

***This CD ROM does not work in an audio CD player.***

***This CD ROM contains m4a audio files that can be played on a computer or burned on a separate disc and played on an audio CD player.***

Folders for each Myth contain the following:

- Audio Files - High quality .m4a file of each full score
- Full Scores - A full score laid out in landscape orientation to facilitate projecting on a screen or whiteboard.
- Images - Image files that accompany each story.
- PDF Visuals - pdf files of each example in the myth.
- Visuals - Full color visuals of the musical examples in .tiff format ready for your interactive whiteboard.

More Folders

Modes - Each mode in pdf format for printing or projecting on an interactive whiteboard. Full Color visuals of each mode for projecting on an interactive whiteboard.

Other Images - Images in tif format that supplement the stories.

Script - copy-ready script for actors or readers in pdf format.



ISBN: 978-0-9882814-0-0



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