

Puppets Tell the Tale

This exercise reinforces information from pages 162-175 of "The Golden Fleece" in d'Aulaires' *Book of Greek Myths*.

Create a cooperative class puppet show to tell the story of "Jason and the Argonauts."

1. Divide up the class into groups so that the number of characters in each act equals the number of students in the group. Exception: Some students will need to make two puppets since many of the parts are small. Suggestions for two-puppet assignments are listed at the beginning of each act.
2. Students can create the puppets by drawing their character on a piece of tag board 6 inches by 3 inches. Using tape, attach these puppets to one end of a ruler so that the characters can pop up from behind a tabletop while the children sit on the floor.
3. Each group should determine the props needed for its act, e.g. the golden fleece, a tree, tail feathers, a cloud, clashing rocks. Students who finish their puppets quickly may then create props.
4. Students will need to prepare dialogue based on the synopsis of each act. This component of the puppet project will require much effort on the part of the students since there is no "narrator" to provide background or to describe the action. Every detail must be conveyed through the dialogue. Students will probably want to write out a script.
5. Each group should plan to rehearse its act a number of times so that the props are introduced at the right moment and the action flows smoothly.
6. Finally, present the four acts in order and you will have the story of Jason.
7. Distribute copies of the evaluation form so that the students can evaluate their ability to function in a group.

ACT I: Events Leading Up to the Quest

<i>Characters:</i>	Pelias	Jason's Father	Chiron
	Jason	Hera	

In Iolcus, Pelias successfully takes the throne from Jason's father who then whisks Jason away to live with Chiron so that he will be safe. Chiron mentors Jason, and when he is grown, Jason heads to Iolcus to confront his uncle. On the way he meets an old woman at a swollen stream and helps her cross. During the crossing, Jason loses a sandal. The old woman reveals herself as Hera and promises to help Jason in the future. Jason arrives in Iolcus, and Pelias fears Jason when he realizes that Jason is the young man who is fulfilling the words of the Oracle. Jason agrees to bring back the fleece from Colchis although Pelias is secretly hoping that Jason will die during the attempt.

Puppets Tell the Tale (continued)

ACT II: Jason Sets Sail

<i>Characters:</i>	Athena/Poseidon	Heracles	Jason
	Orpheus	Hylas/ Wise King	Harpies/Dove
	Zetes/Calais		

Jason begins work on the Argo, and Athena adds a piece of sacred oak. Jason gathers his crew: Heracles, Hylas, Calais, Zetes, and Orpheus. Poseidon gives them favorable winds, and Orpheus plays his lyre while Heracles and Jason have a rowing contest. Heracles needs a new oar, and when his friend Hylas disappears on the island where they stop, Heracles is so distraught that the Argonauts sail away without him. Jason goes to a Wise King to ask for instructions to Colchis, but he is being attacked by Harpies. Zetes and Calais chase the Harpies away, and the Wise King tells Jason how to get to Colchis and warns him about the clashing rocks. They set sail, and when they arrive at the clashing rocks, Jason releases a dove who safely gets through. The Argonauts row mightily, and they, too, pass safely through.

ACT III: Jason in Colchis

<i>Characters:</i>	Jason	King Aeetes	Medea
	Bull/Dragon	Medea's Brother/ Warriors	

Jason arrives at Colchis and meets King Aeetes who tells him that he must perform a task before he can have the fleece. Medea helps Jason by concocting a magic salve that will protect him from the bull's fiery breath, and in gratitude, Jason promises to marry her. The next day, Jason successfully sows the dragon's teeth and tricks the warriors who spring up. King Aeetes goes back on his promise, but Medea advises Jason to take the fleece and flee. Medea charms the dragon, Jason takes the fleece, and they escape. King Aeetes follows the Argonauts, but Medea plays a trick on her brother which results in his death. King Aeetes stops his pursuit to give him a funeral.

ACT IV: Jason's Return

<i>Characters:</i>	Circe/Princess of Corinth	Jason	Medea
	Sirens/Nereids	Scylla/Charybdis	Pelias

The oak tells the Argonauts that they must go to Circe. She performs a sacrifice, and Zeus is no longer angry with Jason and Medea. The Argonauts head for home, but they are tempted by the Sirens and attacked by Scylla and Charybdis. The Nereids save the ship. Jason and the Argonauts return, and a fisherman tells Jason that Pelias is planning to kill him. Medea plays a trick on Pelias which results in his death. As a result of Medea's wicked deed, Jason loses the throne of Iolcus. Jason falls out of love with Medea and makes plans to marry the Princess of Corinth. Medea causes the death of the princess and then disappears in her dragon carriage. Jason, no longer favored by Hera, dies when a part of the Argo falls on him. The Golden Fleece is hung in Apollo's temple in Delphi.

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EVALUATION

Student's Name: _____

Puppet(s) I made: _____

1. Did your group work together harmoniously? YES NO

If NO, how could group interaction be improved in the future?

2. What was your contribution to the group? (Did you help write the dialogue? Did you make any props or scenery? Did you help organize the presentation?)

3. What part of this project did you like the most? Why?

4. What part of this project did you like the least? Why?

5. Would you like to do a project like this again? Why or why not?

The Real Golden Fleece

Science Behind the Myth

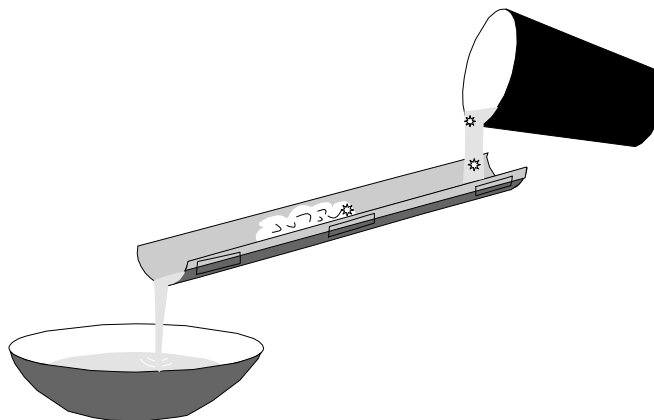
Like many seemingly impossible details present in mythology, the golden fleece sought by Jason has an explanation based in science. People living in the easternmost area of the Black Sea did at one time collect gold particles by pegging the pelts of sheep to the bottoms of streams running from the gold-rich Caucasus Mountains. They produced by this method true “golden fleece.” Here is a classroom experiment you may try for yourself.

MATERIALS

paper towel tube ● waxed paper ● fine-grained glitter ● cotton ball
scissors ● stapler ● tape ● water ● cup ● bowl

PROCEDURE

- STEP 1: Cut the paper towel tube in half lengthwise and cover the inside with the waxed paper to keep it from absorbing the liquid.
- STEP 2: Stretch out the cotton ball into an approximate rectangle and staple it firmly halfway down the covered tube.
- STEP 3: Pour a small amount of the glitter into the cup and add water. Stir until all the glitter particles are in suspension.
- STEP 4: Slowly pour the glitter water into the tube, allowing it to wash over the cotton and gather in a bowl. Repeat once or twice more.



Hopefully, your result will be some “golden fleece” of your own.

Sad But Strong

Women featured in this year's subtests might have led miserable lives, but they also showed incredible strength of character. They were not paralyzed by fear and loneliness; rather they formed plans of action and carried them out.

After each quote, identify the way in which each woman shows "strength of character" in her planned action.

1. In the *Iliad*, Thetis states:

"... though I go to him I can do nothing to help him. Yet I shall go, to look on my dear son, and to listen to the sorrow that has come to him as he stays back from the fighting." XVIII: 62-64

2. Once Thetis has found Achilles, she tells him what she plans to do:

"For I am coming to you at dawn and as the sun rises bringing splendid armor to you from the lord Hephaistos." XVIII: 136-137

3. In Book I of the *Odyssey* Penelope only weeps at the memory of Odysseus, but as time passes she is pressured to choose a new husband. Penelope describes the plan she has formulated:

*"Young men – my suitors, now my lord is dead,
let me finish my weaving before I marry . . .
So every day I wove on the great loom,
but every night by torchlight I unwove it;
and so for three years I deceived the Akhaians." XIX: 169-175*

Sad But Strong (continued)

4. Once the suitors discover her trick, Penelope plans a contest that only Odysseus can win:

*“Now I’ll impose this trial on the suitors.
The one who easily handles and strings the bow
and shoots through all twelve axes I shall marry.”* XIX: 574-580



5. In the *Aeneid*, Book I, Virgil tells the story of the flight of the Phoenicians from an evil tyrant of Tyre and Dido’s founding of Carthage. When Aeneas and his fleet are driven by a storm to Dido’s new city, she states:

*“Come, then, soldiers, be our guests. My life
Was one of hardship and forced wandering
Like your own, till in this land at length
Fortune would have me rest. Through pain I’ve learned
To comfort suffering men.”* I: 857-862

Sad But Strong (continued)

6. In Book IV, after Dido has unknowingly been manipulated by Cupid's spell, she laments

*"... I recognize
The signs of the old flame, of old desire.
But O chaste life, before I break your laws,
I pray that Earth may open, gape for me ..."* IV: 31-34

7. Medea, who had also been forced into love by Cupid, speaks in Book VII of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* about Jason:

*"... And if he lives or dies? Gods' will
Takes care of that. And yet I hope he lives!
Let me hope, pray for him, and yet not love!"*

8. After meeting with Jason in the temple of Hecate, Medea tells him:

*"I see what I am doing. I know the truth,
For it is love that brings me to your side.
Even my arts are here to save your life;
Only be sure your promises are kept."*

TEACHER'S KEY
Sad But Strong

1. Even though Thetis is sorrowing because she knows that Achilles will die, she goes to him to offer him comfort rather than dwelling on her own sorrow.
2. Instead of trying to keep Achilles from joining the battle, Thetis supports him by supplying him with new armor to replace that which he loaned to Patroklos.
3. Although Penelope has waited nearly twenty years for the return of Odysseus, she keeps the hope of his return alive. She buys herself time by conceiving a clever plan instead of allowing herself to believe that all is lost.
4. Penelope refuses to entertain the idea that Odysseus has abandoned her and remains true to his memory as long as she possibly can. The strength of her love endures.
5. Dido, having experienced flight from her own country, offers refuge to Aeneas and his men who are in similar plight, thus showing empathy.
6. When Dido suspects that she is falling in love with Aeneas, she berates herself for falling short on an earlier pledge she made to her departed husband. She is not happy with breaking a promise.
7. Medea recognizes that the gods control the final outcome of all events. Still she recognizes her own desire to see that Jason is safe.
8. Admitting her own weakness, love, Medea asks only that Jason honor his half of the bargain they are making.