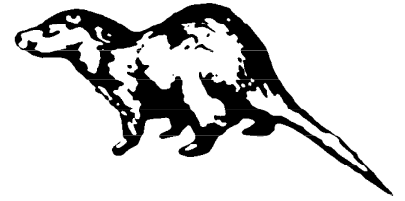# NUFFIELD PRIMARY HISTORY

ANCIENT GREECE: GREEK MYTHS

TEACHERS' NOTES

The pupils attend a small village school which has a four-year rolling programme for foundation subjects and a two-year rolling programme for science. Numeracy and literacy are taught according to the Numeracy and Literacy Strategy frameworks.

The topic for the term was the Ancient Greeks. The topic was introduced via a time-line and discussion about BC and AD. Research skills were introduced by reading an extract from Usborne History's *Ancient Greeks* on the origins of the Ancient Greeks, posing questions to be answered, and then revisiting the text extract and highlighting the relevant information as a whole class before answering the questions as a group.

Further research practice was given when the children were asked to research either the Trojan War (Year 3) or the Persian Wars (Year 4). Again, they were given a starting text for research and questions to answer; they highlighted the texts to ease information identification. The children were encouraged to use other books and a database (already set up from the Internet) to further their research. As an added task, the children were asked to use their information to write either a letter home from a general in the Persian War, or a letter from Odysseus to Agamemnon detailing the plan for the Trojan horse.

Next we turned to Greek myths and the different versions which have come down to us.

Year group/class

Mixed Year 3/4 class of 20 children. Mixed ability with one statemented child.

Teaching time

Four lessons of 1 to 1.5 hours each, blocked over two weeks.

Learning objectives

History – for the children to:
• use stories as a starting point for historical research
• understand that the past is represented and interpreted in different ways
• select and record information relevant to the focus of enquiry.

English – for the children to:
• identify key points in a text
• use an index
• experiment with recounting the same story using the main points of the story (one group)
• present their work using bullet points or similar easy-to-read layout.

ICT – for the children to:
• be able to combine text and graphics
• use the *Publisher* program to present their work
• be able select fonts suitable to their presentation
• use a prepared folder to access information if the Internet is not available.

Key questions

Each group had a different question.

Year 4 (one group):
• What evidence is there to prove that the story of Theseus and the Minotaur might be true?

Year 3 (three groups)
• What sort of ship was Jason's *Argo*? Find out about Ancient Greek ships.
• What gift might these gods have given Pandora? (Five named gods were given here.)
• The third year 3 group was not given a question, but rather an area to research under the title: 'Retell the story of Persephone and then find out about the Underworld'.

Resources

A range of topic books on the Ancient Greeks from the Schools Library Service and from our own Reference Library

Information downloaded from the Internet, some of it stored in a prepared folder

Photocopied pictures of artefacts, the gods, the Persephone myth and an Ancient Greek ship, taken from topic books and the Internet

Computer programs: *Publisher* and *Storybookweaver*

The teaching

The four lessons followed the sequence below.

1. Listening to the four stories: Jason and the Argonauts; Theseus and the Minotaur; Pandora's box; Persephone in the Underworld. The children were not told which one they would be working on. Reading a version of their story in their groups. Discussion.

2. The children were given their question or task and then began their research, making notes as they went along. The group working on the Persephone story began sequencing a version of the story.

3. Research continued and any problems were discussed. Each group member wrote out their findings in their workbooks for a permanent record of their work, and made the first plan for their finished presentation.

The Persephone group wrote their story on the PC, and also recorded their work and findings on the Underworld in their workbooks.

4. Planning the presentation of their work, putting it together using ICT, and presenting it to their classmates.

Lesson 1

Episode 1
Focus: Introduction; listening to the four stories.

I began by introducing the stories to the whole class. Some children already knew one or more of the myths and they all understood the term 'myth'. They listened to the stories knowing they would have to focus on one of the myths.

We then discussed the myths and their characters. One of the children introduced the idea that the version he had heard was different from the one I had read, and so we discussed this. I told the children that one group would be researching this point further.

Episode 2
Focus: First step of the research, introducing the questions.

I put the key questions and the Persephone research area on the board with the appropriate group name beside it. Each child was then given a photocopied text of their myth and asked to read it with their group members. They were asked to underline the key points of the story and discuss their decisions.

Episode 3
Focus: Reporting back on progress; presentation and discussion.

Each group in turn presented the main points of their myth to their classmates and explained why these points were chosen. Each group was then asked to allocate a research task to each member of their group. They were asked to use their notebooks for recording their research and the resources they used.

Lesson 2

Episode 1
Focus: Review of how the work is being approached – how and what do we research?

Each group was asked to re-read their story and to discuss their key question in relation to it. I worked with each group in turn, ensuring that they were clear about their task and helping with the organisation of the research.

The Year 4 group were given six versions of the myth about **Theseus and the Minotaur**. Each child made a note of the points contained in their version which were also included in the photocopied 'original'. We discussed these findings, and each child made a note of the agreed main points of the myth in their notebooks. I then introduced pictures of artefacts found on Crete and the site of

Knossos, and asked the group to discuss how these fitted into their research of the main points of the story.

The Year 3 'Persephone' group worked with a Support Assistant whom I had briefed before the session. The children worked on sequencing photocopied pictures from the story and adding text to ensure that the main points of the story were covered.

The Year 3 'Jason and the Argonauts' group were asked to research the Greek ship *Argo* and given some books as a starting point. I gave them a picture of an ancient Greek ship discovered on a vase, and we discussed if this could have been the *Argo*. We agreed it was difficult to know for certain, and why this was so. The group, with a little help, then organised themselves into 'research pairs' and each pair began to find out about a particular section of the ship.

The Year 3 'Pandora's box' group were to research the Greek gods. They had already sorted out some books and were amazed to find out how may gods there were. We then went back to the story and realised that only five were mentioned in our version of the myth. Each group member chose 'their' god and was happy to get on with their research. They took it in turns to access the prepared folder on the PC.

Each group – with the exception of the Persephone group – had a slot on the PC for research using the Internet.

Episode 2
Focus: Review of findings so far; reporting back on problems and progress.

At the end of this session we all reported back on problems and progress. Each group was positive in its attitude towards the other class members, and was willing to share approaches and solutions to problems.

Lesson 3

Episode 1

Focus: Putting it all together; first draft of presentations.

The Year 3 Persephone group worked in pairs to put together the story of Persephone using *Storybookweaver*, combining text and pictures from their sequencing activity for a Year 1/2 audience. As group members waited their turn on the computer, they began sequencing the events on the entry to the Underworld and researched certain main points, again working with the Classroom Support Assistant.

The rest of the class, after an initial discussion, wrote out their findings. I worked with each group in turn, offering suggestions and discussing layout.

Episode 2

Focus: Whole class involvement in using the PC for presentation purposes.

At this point a rota was introduced to the class for their slot on the PC to put together their work for their final presentation. I allocated time both within the session and at other times in the day, as there is only one computer available for their use.

Episode 3

Focus: Groups working co-operatively on preparing their presentations.

The groups decided who was doing what on the computer so that their time on it was used effectively. I discussed their plans with each group.

Episode 4

Focus: Getting ready to report back to the whole class – final stage.

This is the point where we reported back on our progress. Some groups needed extra time to finish and this was slotted in during the week, for instance in Quiet Reading or at the end of the morning. I also reviewed the features of *Publisher* so they were all familiar with its use.

Lesson 4

Episode 1

Focus: Assembling all the research and organising it for presentation.

Each group was given time to sort out their information and discuss how to present it on an A3 sheet. Some groups needed a little guidance here as there was some argument about how best to proceed.

Episode 2

Focus: Groups present and explain their findings to the class.

I held up the finished presentation from each group, and the child responsible for each section's research presented his/her work to the class. They were all willing to accept questions about their research and were confident in their responses.

Each group discussed the resources they had used and which ones had been the most helpful.

Learning outcomes

The children were able to use the myths as a starting point for their research. They soon realised that many of the same points were repeated in every version, and that these were the ones to focus on. A good discussion on the different elements of the stories ensued, as well as on those which were missing from some stories.

The children used all the books available in the classroom and then went to the Reference Library to look for more before using the folder on the PC. The use of the computer for their research and presenting their findings was very successful, and they found that the *Publisher* and *Storyweaver* programs were not as complicated as they had first thought.

The children were well-motivated and allocated jobs within their groups so as to make sure that they covered their question or topic thoroughly. They looked forward to presenting their findings to their classmates.

Reflection

I was extremely pleased with the outcomes of some very hard work. The children were apprehensive at first, but soon were thoroughly engrossed in their research. In fact it was difficult to stop them. It was interesting that at first they all wanted to use the PC for research, but soon decided that the books were easier to use and more informative. Their skills in using the books and identifying key points were good.

The use of the PC for presenting their work was very popular. The group retelling the Persephone story found some great pictures to accompany their text and were thrilled with the results. The other groups all chose different fonts and layouts for their work and much debate was had before a decision was taken on a way forward.

I felt this was an excellent way to find out about different aspects of Ancient Greek life. The children were not only eager to share their findings but also to listen to what their classmates had found out.

The use of stories as a starting point worked well and stimulated everyone to find out as much as they could about their given topic.