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Research Article

Teacher Trainees Telling Tales

Steven Hunt, Anya Morrice, Daisy Knox, Iaomie Malik, Jordan Hawkesworth, Eleanor Barker, Clare Mahon, Jaspal Ubhi, Giorgio Molteni, Rachel Hambly, Aleksandra Ruczynska, Lawrence McNally and Benjamin Connor

The following article is made up of several assignments set for the Cambridge PGCE secondary teacher training course on the subject of the telling of a mythological story to a key stage 3 class of students aged around 11–14 years. The setting of the assignment arose out of discussion with mentors from the PGCE partnership for Classics teacher trainees in response to the following three requirements:

1) To include a lesson in their first school placement which fitted well within any of the timetabled lessons from the wide range of schools which participate;
2) To provide an opportunity to encourage trainee teachers at an early stage in their school placement to practise and reflect upon their own oracy as a medium for teaching and learning; and
3) To provide an opportunity to think about research methodology on a small scale ahead of the major research assignment of the second school placement.

Trainees were encouraged to tell a mythological story to the class, lasting about ten minutes. They could use props and other visual aids if they wished, but the emphasis was for them to practise speaking before the class, using prompt cards if necessary, and employing all the techniques of a professional oral 'poet' – such as gesture, eye contact, tone of voice and so on. There is obviously considerable general interest among younger students about mythology. Locally, interest is captured by the Cambridge School Classics project which puts on an annual Ovid Mythology competition and the website *War with Troy* is used by several of the schools where trainees are placed. Its use as a stimulus for learning has been well-documented by its author and past PGCE subject lecturer Bob Lister (2005, 2007) and by Walker (2018), a former teacher trainee from the faculty. Some of the Latin textbooks such as *Minimus* (Bell, 1999) and *Suburani* (Hands-Up Education, 2020) contain myth episodes and are familiar to the teacher trainees. The GCSE and A Level qualifications often contain mythological subject matter. Khan-Evans (2018) has shown how older students of Classics have retained deep-rooted affection for mythological stories in their earlier schooldays. Research into the power of mythological storytelling as a stimulus for learning, creative arts and even therapy is current, as the Our Mythical Childhood project (2020) has demonstrated. A book of the project's work is eagerly anticipated next year. The recent Troy exhibition at the British Museum has also awoken considerable interest.

The following accounts are by the teacher trainees themselves. They reveal some of their tentative efforts to engage with storytelling with classes of students with whom they were not especially familiar. They show, I think, considerable bravery in exposing their own shortcomings, overcoming the challenges and situating their own developing understanding of what it is to teach, to listen and to learn almost alongside their classroom students. Some use props and slideshows, prompt cards and bits and pieces to give themselves almost something physical to grasp and to hold on to – a secure place in an otherwise uncontrolled one. Others are more comfortable just telling the tale (transcripts are those made after the event). While this article is very long and perhaps might seem indulgent, I think that there's much to learn here about how trainee teachers set about their task and explore and reflect upon their experiences, and the recorded examples of lessons afford, I think, an interesting glimpse into teacher and student talk in the Classics classroom. Some trainees self-define as teacher, others as storyteller; some set work based on the telling of the myth, others are happy to use the story as a basis for discussion or creative activity. Several express surprise and satisfaction at the attentiveness of students in listening to lengthy stories, at their ability to recall details from them, and to be able to reactivate prior knowledge. Transcripts suggest student engagement levels are high. It is worthwhile considering how much more the students might want to ask questions when they have listened to a storytelling compared to when they are answering questions set for them on a worksheet.

The teacher trainees gave permission for their assignments to be included. In the spirit of narrative research, they are presented 'as they are' without editing by myself, except for typographical standardisation.

Steven Hunt, Senior Teaching Associate in Classics Education, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge
sch43@cam.ac.uk

The Wedding of Peleus and Thetis

Anya Morrice

The value of storytelling in education should not be underestimated. Bage lists twenty reasons why stories support educational practice, for example: stories prioritise meaning; students enjoy stories; stories inspire curiosity; stories are important in developing literacy (Bage, 1999, p. 30-32). Storytelling also has considerable importance for teaching oracy, the ability to express oneself fluently in speech.

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Although oracy is an important life skill, as the English Speaking Union's *Speaking Frankly* pamphlet (ESU, n.d.) explains, it is not simply talking, but it is also the ability to imagine, to receive and build upon answers, to analyse and evaluate ideas and problems, and it is important to well-being. However, it currently has no formal place in the curriculum. As Mercer *et al.* (2014) highlight, oracy is actually discouraged by a mentality that equates talking with not learning. The ESU website also cites a study by the Better Communication Research Programme that revealed that students with good communication skills are four times more likely to get five A*-Cs at GCSE (ESU, 2019). Storytelling in secondary education can develop both discussion and literacy skills, as Walker (2014) concludes in her small study of the impact of storytelling in Classics lessons.

I decided to undertake my storytelling in a Year 7 Ancient History lesson because the topic for the class, the Trojan War, provided a suitable opportunity for storytelling within the existing scheme of work. My placement school, an academically non-selective single-sex girls' academy in Hertfordshire, rotates the Year 7s through a carousel of Ancient History, Latin and two other optional subjects. My lesson, just after the carousel rotation, was the students' first Ancient History lesson. The Trojan War course is designed around the Cambridge Schools Classics Project's *War with Troy* (Classical Tales, 2020) an oral narrative based on Homer's *Iliad* and broader narratives about the Trojan War. Reedy and Lister describe the narrative as designed to 'develop literacy skills, particularly speaking and listening' (Reedy & Lister, 2007, p.3). I was teaching a lesson based around Episode 1.

I chose to narrate the wedding of Peleus and Thetis because I thought that this narrative would provide interesting discussion material. During my observations of Year 7 lessons in the previous carousel rotation, I noticed that the teacher and the students often discussed the far-reaching consequences of characters' decisions and how responsible individual characters were in the events that followed. I wanted the students to begin to consider these questions early on in the story, where they could imagine the potential outcomes. I based my storytelling around the content of the *War with Troy* recording, so that the students could access the information they would reflect on in later lessons. I also made additions to focus on the decisions of various characters during the narrative. I aimed to encourage the students to consider consequences and different perspectives.

I decided to follow my storytelling with a hot seating activity to achieve this aim. I drew on feedback from student interviews with Year 7s during a school-based Professional Studies session on *Teaching and Learning*. The interviews suggested that Year 7s felt they learned best when activities were creative e.g. story-writing or hands-on, such as took place in Science practical lessons or drama activities. Before the lesson I distributed characters' names onto the students' desks, ensuring that each group of four contained a variety of perspectives. The students then pretended to be this character during the activity and hot-seated each other about their characters' actions and views. I also put a series of prompt questions on the board to aid the students. During the activity, I assessed the students' learning through observation and obtained student responses to my storytelling. The students also had a matching-up activity to complete while listening to the story. I initially planned for them to do this after the story, but it became apparent in the lesson that some students struggled to recall details. The matching-activity also allowed me to assess that most students were listening and following, at least, a part of the story.

However, the hot seating activity had limitations as a means to assess student learning and gain student feedback on my storytelling. First, there was little to no written evidence and my assessment relied on my own observations. However, the seating arrangement meant that some groups were less accessible, so I did not observe the groups evenly, nor could I observe one group for any length of time, which limited my ability to assess the students' learning. Some of the groups had questions or needed additional support. In addition, this was the students' first experience of a hot seating activity and I should have explained the activity more, since two groups seemed to have not understood – one group played 'Who am I?'. I also discovered that a number of the students struggled to recall characters' names, especially Hera and Peleus. This seemed to be more of an issue with associating names and characters, as the students readily discussed 'the evil one' (Eris), 'the goddess of love' (Aphrodite), 'the stupid one' (Zeus). I tried to help the students by listing the characters on the board, using key words to describe each. Despite the issue, the student descriptions of Eris and Zeus indicate that the students were forming opinions about the characters.

I attempted to acquire feedback on my storytelling through observing the students and asking them questions. However, I often felt that I was interrupting the students' activity by asking questions. I also discovered that the students were hesitant about saying what they thought about the storytelling and often gave vague or monosyllabic answers which required further questions. If I tried to get feedback in this manner again, I would plan my questions to a greater extent to encourage student response. This was also the students' first lesson with me and they were likely more guarded as a result.

Regardless, both the student feedback and the recording revealed interesting aspects of my storytelling. Student feedback generally focused on the props, and the 'emotion', which made it more exciting. My props included a plush heart, a plush owl and a tiara to represent the three main goddesses, a pair of scissors for the fates and a golden apple. The props which sparked the greatest interest were the golden apple and the heart. I revealed the apple, when Peleus discovered the apple in the story. Meanwhile the heart was used as a visual representation of Aphrodite. However, other props were less effective; it did not seem like many students noticed the scissors. The owl was also difficult for students to see at the back, although it and the heart elicited greater student interest and recall of material than the tiara. My use of props was also concentrated towards the end of the story and quite limited. Although not mentioned in the student feedback, I wonder if a greater use of props might have aided the students who found recall harder.

From what I could establish, the students generally enjoyed the storytelling itself. Some of my feedback revealed that the students preferred the story being read aloud because it was more exciting and there was more emotion. As far as I could establish, a considerable number of students were also able to recall the story in detail. However, when I listened to the recording, I felt that my storytelling was often not as effective as it could have been, particularly in the early part of the story. I sometimes muddle words (e.g. 'lightfully' instead of 'lightly') and phrases when speaking causing my syntax to be slightly confusing. I decided to read off a script, which was a mistake because I know from experience that I speak better without a script as I tend to fixate on it. After a slightly stilted start, the pace became more settled, if a little fast at points. My pace and tone were varied the most in the later part of story when I varied pitch and volume to create tension and excitement as Eris entered the story and decided to drop her

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'gift'. I used deliberate pauses, a faster pace and dropped my volume slightly as Eris was first mentioned and during her plans. The fastest part of the storytelling was when the apple fell, and I tried to mimic the speed of it gaining momentum then the sudden silence that followed its arrival.

In addition, I naturally gesticulate when talking, and I found that my hands tended to move quite randomly when I wasn't deliberately using them for parts of the story. My uses of gesture mainly focused around gestures to reflect the actions of characters, e.g. holding out a hand, thinking, or the falling apple. I also tried to 'act' the characters during the final section to give an impression of the different gods and goddesses. The part of the narrative with Eris and the argument was the part described as having lots of 'emotion' by one of the students.

The storytelling did function to achieve my aims to some extent. Most of the groups engaged well during the hot-seating activity and some began not only to really get into character and consider their character's views but also imagining quite significant follow-ups to the story such as Zeus eventually getting so frustrated that he would banish the goddesses or that the apple situation would be resolved or cause an assortment of further problems. Even the group playing 'Who am I?' still discussed the characters in detail. Perhaps discussion and student talk could have been further encouraged through an extended activity or by giving the students their own props to allow them to explore acting out parts of the narrative. One group did not engage in discussion preferring to write answers to the prompts; even they engaged with the story to some degree and they also participated in the brief whole class discussion at the end of the lesson.

While the storytelling did lead to an interesting activity, its effectiveness is debatable. Could the same effect have been achieved without oral storytelling? The answer is probably, but perhaps not as readily or as quickly. In contrast, I observed that a Year 9 class, which I taught for a sequence of lessons, took longer to engage with a written text than a spoken text, particularly if they are weaker readers and reading can be hindered by not understanding words. Oral storytelling has the advantage that it is immediately accessible to these students. In addition, as my students remarked, the excitement of the story makes it more enjoyable and in turn leads to their increased engagement. As Bage argued, the value of stories in teaching history was that it is a medium that students enjoy and engage with (Bage, 1999, p. 29-30). While I feel my own storytelling activity had limited effectiveness, it is something that I feel could be of greater use with practice and developing my skills.

Vulcan

Daisy Knox

Stories have been an intrinsic part of the human condition for as long as there has been language to tell them and, in many different guises, they continue to be an important part of life in the modern world. As Classicists, we are intimately aware that the myths and legends that we study today are truly ancient tales, kept alive across the millennia not through the relatively late arrival of the written word but thanks to the efforts of generations of oral storytellers. It is only right, then, that we should keep this tradition alive in our own classrooms, disseminating those same ancient stories to brand new ears. Telling ancient myths to modern students, however, is not without its issues. The content of these stories, for example, and the language in which they tend to have been imagined is not always appropriate or accessible to the age group with whom we might wish to share the story (Lister, 2005, p.397-8; Reedy & Lister, 2007, p.8). Yet, when done well, lively, engaging storytelling can not only breathe new life into these ancient tales, but also repurpose them as a vehicle for personal reflection, classroom discussion, and group collaboration (Reedy & Lister, 2007; Mercer *et al.,* 2014). It was with these aims in mind that I chose to tell the story of Vulcan to Year 7 Latin set 5.

This class, the lowest ability set in the year group, comprises 11 students, three of whom have documented difficulties with written work and attention span. One child was absent on the day of the story. I have taught this group for several weeks and found them to be enthusiastic but generally noisy, unfocussed and slow to absorb the new Latin grammar points they meet. The previous week, I had taught the class about Pompeii, based on the material in Stage 3 of the *Cambridge Latin Course* and we talked about the town's destruction by Mount Vesuvius. The story of Vulcan, therefore, was chosen not only because it is a varied and exciting tale but since it is relevant to the civilisation topics with which they were already familiar.

My story formed part of a 50-minute lesson whose aim was to familiarise the students with the myth of Vulcan and volcanic eruptions and have them recall this themselves. I began the lesson by asking them if they remembered what had happened to Pompeii (which they did) and explaining that, although Romans knew something of the science behind volcanoes, they were also familiar with some myths about why they erupted. This linked the lesson to its predecessor on the town of Pompeii and set up the context in which I would tell the story. Next came the story itself, which I chose to accompany with a PowerPoint presentation comprising large images and key names. This I imagined functioning as scenery for the story I would tell, as well as a resource for the spelling and recall of proper names for later in the lesson. In a deliberate attempt to build suspense and intrigue, I showed the title slide while I was explaining how the class would work: I would tell the story and then I would give the students some props, asking them to work out which part of the story each prop referred to, which order they came in, and finally whether they could use the props to retell the story.

The props I chose were deliberately silly (Figure 1): a strange baby doll (baby Vulcan), mermaid Barbie (Thetis), a toy dolphin,

Figure 1. A selection of the props provided

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some rocks, plastic bead necklaces, a tiny Playmobil camping chair (Juno's gift), a net and some plastic Duplo fire (volcano).

During the explanation, I tipped the props from their box onto the desk in front of the students and they were instantly interested, trying to guess what on earth the story might be about. The students then asked if we could turn off the lights 'for atmosphere', as Walker's students did during her experience with the *War with Troy* recordings (Walker, 2018, p. 38). I had not planned to do this but it transpired to be a nice touch. With the light dim, the PowerPoint, with myself standing in front of it, became the sole focus of attention.

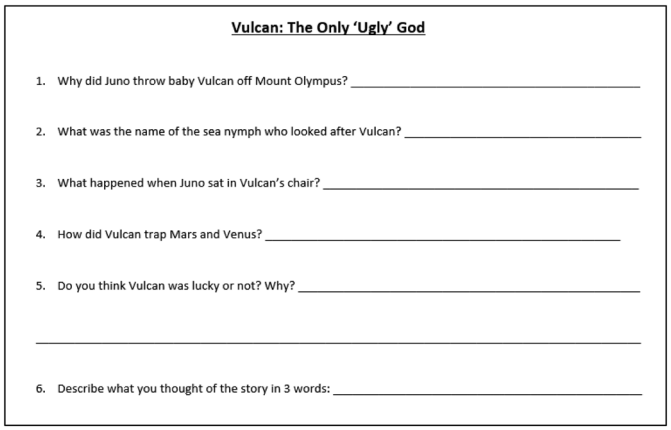
The classroom did not lend itself to much movement but we managed to rearrange the chairs so that all the students, who are normally dotted around the classroom in twos and threes, were sitting together in a shallow arc along the front row. This had the benefit that everyone was immediately in front of 'the action', with no other students in their eye line to distract them from the lesson. As I told the story, I was able to walk up and down the line, looking the students in the eye, which made the whole experience more immediate. It also meant that I could observe how involved they were in the story: they paid perfect attention, their faces rapt, more utterly quiet than I had ever seen this spirited class.

My narrative was a fairly simple version of the story of Vulcan from his birth and rejection by Juno, childhood with Thetis, recall to Olympus, marriage to Venus and her subsequent affair with Mars. It ended with her continued infidelity as the catalyst for Vulcan's anger and the consequent eruption of volcanoes. Mindful of keeping the story accessible and appropriate, I deliberately chose a concise narrative, introducing only the main characters and using familiar language or explaining possibly unfamiliar terms, such as *sea-nymph* or *grotto*, as part of the story. Since my audience had an average age of eleven and a half, I also glossed over the specifics of what Mars and Venus were doing when they were caught in Vulcan's net, describing them merely as 'together'.

During my retelling, I tried to make sure that my speech was paced correctly, not too slow as to be unnatural but not too quick as to jeopardise clarity. I varied the speed and tone of my voice slightly at various points and paused at moments I considered to be particularly dramatic and at natural breaks in the narrative. My speech, however, was not entirely fluent throughout the story. I stumbled particularly on names, catching myself before I called Venus Aphrodite but failing to stop myself calling Mars Ares. This was unfortunate and could have seriously jeopardised the students' understanding of the story. Given their performance in the later activity, however, this proved fortunately unfounded and I may have been saved on this occasion by the labelled PowerPoint slides.

As well as tone of voice and dramatic pauses, I also used a limited selection of gestures and movement to enhance my storytelling: sitting down, for example, during the description of Juno being stuck in Vulcan's chair, and miming her struggle; and bashing my fist against my open palm to add a sound effect to baby Vulcan landing after his fall from the mountain. Since the students started at the latter and watched me attentively during the former, these techniques seem to have proved effective devices, varying the storytelling experience and ensuring the attention of the class.

When the story was over and the lights were turned on, the students continued to sit quietly, not talking or moving as they normally do immediately after an activity has finished. This, beyond anything else, confirmed to me the impact of this episode. I had, however, planned two more formal ways to assess whether the students had understood and remembered the story. First was the prop activity. Having divided the class into two groups, I distributed the props between them, and they set about identifying



Vulcan: The Only 'Ugly' God

1. Why did Juno throw baby Vulcan off Mount Olympus? _____
2. What was the name of the sea nymph who looked after Vulcan? _____
3. What happened when Juno sat in Vulcan's chair? _____
4. How did Vulcan trap Mars and Venus? _____
5. Do you think Vulcan was lucky or not? Why? _____

_____

6. Describe what you thought of the story in 3 words: _____

Figure 2. Sample Fill-in Sheet

what each represented and how they combined to form the sequence of the story. They were extremely enthusiastic about this, asking some questions about details (e.g. 'How many days was Juno stuck?') but overall recalling the story very well. They embraced the opportunity to work together in groups, debating the significance of the props and negotiating who would play which role in their re-enactments. After ten minutes of discussion and planning, during which I was able to ensure that all students were taking part equally, the groups acted out their versions of the story. Both were surprisingly accurate and detailed renderings, making good use of the props with added dialogue, voices and curious touches, such as pencil-case grottos and a human volcano! As well as being great fun, the activity effectively demonstrated that the students had understood and recalled the story.

The final activity of the lesson was a short fill-in sheet (Figure 2). This featured a mixture of questions requiring factual recall, analysis and opinion. Originally, I had planned to set a longer version of this sheet as homework since this would not only have given the students more time to reflect and consider their reactions to the story but also assessed their knowledge recall over a longer interval. As the school homework timetable meant that this was not possible, however, the students completed the shorter version at the end of the lesson itself. This they did in record time, keen to show how much they knew. The factual questions were completed accurately across the board, with only the spelling of Thetis (for which the PowerPoint slide was a useful tool) proving a stumbling block. Question 5, which asked

interesting/not boring	7	old	2
dramatic	5	different	1
funny	4	horrifying	1
good	2	serious	1
sad	2	strange	1
intriguing	1	unbelievable	1
intense	1	confusing	1

Figure 3. Student responses to the storytelling

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them whether or not Vulcan was lucky, produced a wide range of answers, suggesting that each child had thought about the question themselves rather than copied their neighbour. The last question asked the students to describe the story in three words. The 30 words received covered quite a range (Figure 3), with only the single 'confusing' giving cause for concern about the clarity and impact of the story. Although 'interesting' was unsurprisingly the most popular choice, I was particularly pleased with the variety of words chosen, suggesting, again, that the students had made individual choices about their opinions.

Reedy and Lister (2007) praise oral storytelling as a particularly inclusive activity as it allows students to demonstrate their comprehension and analysis without the reliance on the written word (which can prove a significant barrier for some). This almost entirely oral lesson allowed my lower ability set, many of whom have difficulty with writing and reading comprehension, to put aside those struggles for once and fully submerge themselves in the content of the lesson. The responses from the students, both written and oral, indicate its success. They sat captivated during the story itself, enthusiastically embraced the opportunity for discussion and acting, accurately recalled details of the story and provided independent written opinions. The power of storytelling in this case, then, was in creating an inclusive and stimulating environment for the students, transferring the teacher's knowledge and skill and empowering the students to demonstrate their own. It is heartening that the tradition of performative storytelling that was so central to the transmission of culture and collective memory in the ancient world can still prove powerful and relevant in the modern classroom.

Boudicca

Iaomie Malik

For the purpose of this essay, I implemented the telling of Boudicca's revolt with a Year 8 class. I based the script I produced on the information provided in the Roman Britain cultural background section at the end of Stage 14 of the *Cambridge Latin Course*. I hoped to use the story to add to the pupils' knowledge of the amalgamation of Roman and British culture in the first century AD. I thought that the story of Boudicca's revolt would give the pupils a more representative picture of Romano-British relationships and a comparison for the roles of women in the ancient world. Up to this point, the pupils had only seen the interactions of Cogidubnus with Roman culture and how he accepts and assimilates it into his life. In contrast, Boudicca refuses to accept Roman superiority and is independent in a way that Rufilla, the highest status woman they have encountered so far, is not.

From the first time I mentioned the name Boudicca, there was audible excitement and a positive reaction from the room. I used my own enthusiasm to encourage theirs and used my tone of voice to emphasise characters' reactions throughout, particularly to express Boudicca's frustration. I also used gestures to highlight the number of Boudicca's achievements, by counting on my fingers to emphasise that there was a list of Roman cities she had attacked. I had assigned each block of seating an affiliation to a different group or character within the story in order to engage the pupils who did not volunteer for individual roles. To increase their investment in the story, I gestured to each group throughout and asked for their reaction to the events that were unfolding. In retrospect, I would have liked to use the storytelling as an opportunity for the pupils to practise public speaking in the form of reading aloud or as part of a drama exercise. However, I did provide opportunity for some performance in front of their peers. Pupils were asked to volunteer to portray the characters in the story. They would have benefitted from a short script so that they could speak on behalf of their character, but I was prepared to prompt them to encourage appropriate reactions. If the projector had been working, I could have used it to show the pupils visual aids and possibly sound effects. It would be interesting to see how showing the pupils artistic depictions of Boudicca would have impacted their impression of her.

I had intended to use the projector to display a map of Great Britain so that pupils could see Boudicca's movements from city to city in England. Despite the projector not working, I was still able to use a map as a visual aid, by asking the pupils to refer to the map on page 40 in their textbook. This map was useful because it had been produced specifically to aid the cultural background material provided in the *Cambridge Latin Course*, and so had the area where Boudicca's tribe lived in and the cities that they attacked marked clearly on it. The use of the map helped the pupils to think about the area which Boudicca's army covered and prompted questions about how long it would take for an army to march such great distances. I also increased engagement by asking pupils to volunteer to represent characters and groups. They marched on the spot to show their characters were moving location, changed their facial expressions to display their emotions and dramatically depicted their deaths. The pupils' acting helped to create a positive atmosphere and to enhance my storytelling. If I were to tell this story again, I would provide pieces of costume or props so that characters and groups would be more easily identifiable. I think that this would also increase the engagement of inactive pupils and give them a greater sense of involvement. Ultimately, the quality of the pupil responses, which I will analyse later in this essay, demonstrates that to some extent my use of tone of voice, gesture and props was effective.

By basing my story on a topic included in the textbook, I was able to ensure that the content would link to both prior and future learning. Before introducing the story, I asked the pupils questions about *Cambridge Latin Course* characters they had already met (Salvius, Quintus and Cogidubnus) in order to contextualise it. I hope this connection showed the pupils that the story was going to be relevant to what they were studying and that it is worthwhile for them to expand their knowledge about the world in which the stories are set. So that the pupils would also think about the female perspective on Roman Britain, I asked them about the women they had seen so far in the textbook and what their roles were. I used this as a starting point to compare Rufilla and Boudicca as women from different ancient cultures. I then set up the idea that Britons took varying approaches to the arrival of the Romans and that in some cases they actively chose to either be loyal to the Romans or oppose them. The connections to pupils' previous learning to the beginning of the story, created a positive and welcoming atmosphere. These associations also linked to future learning as in the next Stage 15 about the culture in Roman Britain in the first century AD.

The engagement and inclusion of the entire class was crucial in obtaining the learning objectives for the lesson. All pupils needed to be invested in Boudicca's story in order to characterise her in

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some way. On the other hand, I had to ensure that I portrayed Boudicca's story in a sympathetic manner so that they could understand her attitude towards the Romans. To encourage pupil engagement, I asked for volunteers to portray the 'characters' as they appeared in the story. There were multiple volunteers for each role, and I ensured that anyone who was not chosen initially was given a role next. I also gave the pupils groups to support throughout the story, so that they represented different Celtic tribes and the Romans. I think that this sense of belonging added to the experience and made all the pupils feel involved in some way. Those that were not representing individuals in the story were enjoying watching their peers 'perform' and asking questions. I agree with Reedy and Lister (2007) that by telling the story in an inclusive way, I ensured that all pupils were engaged to some extent. I used exit tickets for the plenary which meant all the pupils could contribute an opinion about Boudicca without feeling pressured. One pupil that seemed less engaged, surprised me by writing five carefully considered adjectives to describe Boudicca. I felt that all pupils were included but, during the storytelling, I found it difficult to tell how engaged those still seated were. In their study based at primary schools, Reedy and Lister (2007) found 'unanimous' enjoyment and involvement in the story. I found this kind of unanimous enthusiasm difficult to achieve with the Year 8 class that I was telling this story to. They tend to have a range of engagement levels in lessons and are of a range of abilities. I hope that I was able to eliminate the latter in being a barrier to their inclusion and engagement by making the story accessible to all.

I used the differentiation in my lesson planning to think about how I would assess the effectiveness of my storytelling and pupils' learning. I decided that the minimum output I would be content with was that pupils would at least have an opinion on Boudicca by the end of the lesson. I hope that most pupils would be able to describe Boudicca using one word and that some would use more than one word. During the lesson, I clarified this by asking for an adjective. I chose to use exit tickets so that pupils did not feel they had to commit their comments to their exercise books. The combination of writing their opinion on a piece of paper and the phrasing of my request to write at least one adjective gave the pupils a sense of freedom, which is displayed in the range of adjectives they used. There were more adjectives used than pupils in the class and I think this shows the creativity that the story and depiction of Boudicca encouraged. After analysing the exit tickets, I found that all pupils had written at least one word as I had hoped, and most pupils had written more than one word. There are 29 pupils in the class, three of them gave single word responses and the rest wrote down more than one word. In addition to this, approximately a third of the pupils wrote down five words or more. There were a few terms used that did not comment on her character or which were ambiguous, in that I cannot be sure if the pupils thought that they were admirable qualities or not. I have given these in Figure 4 and colour coded them to show whether I considered them to be positive or otherwise and differentiated within these categories to show the frequency with which they were given by the pupils.

If I were to teach this lesson again, I would aim to use storytelling to improve pupils' creative writing and Latin prose composition. This could be achieved by asking the pupils to produce a piece of writing about the Battle of Watling Street or by asking the pupils to write about a short description of Boudicca in Latin. This would then link the adjectives they provided to describe Boudicca at the end of the lesson and what they have been learning about adjectives. Though the evidence that Skjæveland (2017) uses in support of the benefit of students retelling stories comes from primary schools, I would still be interested to find out to what extent the pupils retelling the story would help them to remember it. It would certainly engage most pupils and show which parts of the story had been portrayed most effectively in my telling of it. This would also give the pupils chance to make their own decisions about how to present the story as Skjæveland (2017) believes is beneficial to their learning.

Term used	Frequency
A woman	1
Angry	1
Annoyed	1
Barbaric	3
Bold	2
Brave	15
Celtic	1
Confident	3
Dead	1
Fearless	7
Feisty	1
Feminist	1
Ferocious	7
Fierce	8
Foolish	2
Ginger	2
Incredible	1
Independent	3
Inspirational	1
Intelligent	1
Loyal	8
No-nonsense	2
Outgoing	2
Over-confident	7
Powerful	4
Rebellious	4
Resilient/ determined	2
Strong	7
Strong-willed / Stubborn	3
Stupid	3
Tall	1
Unorganised	2

Figure 4.

Story Transcript

Teacher: As well as learning Latin, your textbooks give us the chance to learn about the society in which the stories are set. Today's story is set in AD 61, before Salvius arrives in Britain. Can anyone remember the name of the British King that Salvius and Quintus are going to visit?

Student: Cogidubnus.

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Teacher: We have heard about Cogidubnus already and we will see him again in Stage 15. Cogidubnus had a good relationship with the Romans that had moved to Britain. He had accepted that they were more powerful than him and so was allowed to keep his position as king. However, he had to collect taxes on behalf of the Roman governor, who was in charge of most of Britain at this time. But today I am going to tell you the story of someone who refused to let the Romans control them… Boudicca.

Now all I need you to have out is the map on page 40 in your textbook. Boudicca was Queen of the Iceni, a tribe that lived in what we call East Anglia. You can see the name of her tribe, the Iceni, on the map. Boudicca was rich and powerful in her own right. She could own her own property and divorce her husband.

Can you think of another woman you've met in the stories so far?

Student: Salvius' wife, Rufilla

Teacher: Rufilla had an important role in the household but couldn't really make all of her own decisions. However, Boudicca ruled the Iceni **with** her husband, King Prasutagus.

1. Everything changed when Boudicca's husband, Prasutagus, died.
2. The Romans started to demand the Iceni's land for taxes.
3. Boudicca refused to hand over her lands to the Romans and so they captured her and her daughters and tied them to a post and beat them. The Romans had hoped this would make Boudicca give in and hand over her lands.
4. However, Boudicca did not give in. She and her people were outraged and decided to fight back.
   [3 volunteers to represent Boudicca and her daughters from the left-hand side of the room come to the front of the classroom. Pupils are told those remaining now represent the rest of Boudicca's family and tribe]
5. Boudicca gathered an army and marched them to attack the Roman city at Colchester. [Camulodunum pointed out on map in textbook]
6. Boudicca and her army took control of Colchester easily. They took all the valuables from the city, destroyed most of the buildings and killed many Romans.
7. When other tribes found out about Boudicca's success, they joined her army.
   [The central block of the room will represent the other tribes. 3 pupils volunteered so I allowed them all to come up to the front]
8. With such a huge group of fighters, Boudicca decided to attack Saint Albans (Verulamium) and London (Londinium). The Romans tried attacking them on their way but didn't affect them at all.
   [Cities pointed out on map]
9. Boudicca and her army destroyed Saint Albans (Verulamium) and London (Londinium). Again, ruining the cities and killing Romans.
10. Their next task was to defeat the Roman Governor, **Suetonius**, and **his army**.
11. Battle of Watling Street
    Boudicca marched North. Suetonius marched south. Boudicca's army was much bigger than Suetonius'. Boudicca encouraged the families of her warriors to come and watch the battle, so that they could watch them defeat the Romans once and for all. But the Romans' tactics were better than Boudicca's. They were well trained and organised. When Boudicca tried to leave the battlefield, she and her tribe were blocked by their supporters. The Romans killed Boudicca's army and then her supporters. It is said that Boudicca did not want to be humiliated and so couldn't let herself be killed by the Romans. Instead she and her daughters chose to take poison.
12. Romans then took control of East Anglia.

The Night Raid (*Iliad* X)

Jordan Hawkesworth

I presented to my Year 8 Classical Civilisation class the story of 'The Night Raid', based on Book X of the *Iliad*, in an attempt to improve oracy (both my students' and mine), compare the effectiveness of the *War with Troy* audio recordings with a live performance, and supplement our ongoing module on the Trojan War. While I was able to successfully engage the students and teach them an interesting and memorable lesson, I do not believe I met my first goal as successfully as I could have due to my method of assessment, which was to fill out a worksheet. I also learned that my students were not as fond as the *War with Troy* audio recordings, which we had listened to in several prior lessons, as I had previously assumed, at least in comparison to my own performance, due to the latter's humour and interactivity, a discovery which has already altered my future lesson plans. These qualities certainly did lead to a successful lesson, however.

To aid in my telling of 'The Night Raid', which took approximately 13 minutes, I used rudimentary puppets, with famous actors and actresses representing each character (See Figure 5). These 'roles' had been assigned at the end of the previous class, in which I gave the students a brief description of each character and asked them who they would cast.

This lesson was in fact the fifth in our module on the Trojan War, meaning the students had already encountered most of these characters and understood the context of the scene. This eliminated a common difficulty with narrating stories from the Trojan War (as experienced by Morden and Lupton while making *War with Troy*, for instance (Lister, 2005)). Although it was apparent that the students were often simply naming whoever came into their heads

Figure 5. Puppets for retelling the Night Raid

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first (as evidenced by the amount of hands raised before I had read off a character's name or description), most of their selections were at least plausible, if not surprisingly fitting (e.g. Arnold Schwarzenegger as Agamemnon). This 'casting call' also had the benefit of building students' anticipation for their next lesson. When students walked into class on the day of the lesson and saw the puppets lying face-down on a table, some immediately deduced what they were, and excitement filled the room.

One unexpected effect from using these puppets, however, was the large amount of noise that occurred every time I uncovered one, e.g. at the reveal of Arnold Schwarzenegger as Agamemnon or Brie Larson as Athene. This was always light-hearted and involved though, as evidenced by the students' laughter and remarks such as 'Hey, Arnold!' during the former, or 'Oh, it's Captain Marvel' during the latter. These puppets also at times increased student engagement, as when one wondered aloud who was playing Odysseus (amusingly, I believe this was said by the student who had cast him as Jonny Depp the previous week), and they undoubtedly injected humour into my performance. Having taught this group several times over the previous weeks, I knew I might struggle to hold their attention with a completely serious story (which Book X of the *Iliad* certainly is), especially since the class was after lunch and thus more energetic. I accordingly attempted to create a lighter environment by allowing the students to occasionally speak and having fun with the puppets, being sure to shake them up and down when they talked. These efforts were noticed and appreciated by the students, as heard in the resounding laughter the first time two puppets spoke, and in the students' assessments of the lesson (see below). To further increase student engagement, I was also sure to change the speed of my voice at certain times to match the events of the story and emphasise dramatic moments, often eliciting reactions from students.

While student engagement and enjoyment are obviously of great importance, it is also necessary to ensure that the performance is actually educational. I therefore ended the class by having them fill out a worksheet, making them think critically about the story in a way that allowed me to evaluate how much they retained and what they had thought of the lesson (Figure 6).

It is here I believe I missed an opportunity to further strengthen my students' oracy. I am following Mercer *et al.* (2014) here in their definition of oracy as 'skills in using spoken language… [which all children] need for educational progress, for work and for full participation in democracy'. The method of developing this skill is bipartite, however; it requires both oral and aural training (Reedy & Lister, 2007). While my performance was certainly beneficial to my students' aural capabilities, my worksheet unfortunately provided little aid to their oral ones. There was still strong evidence of student retention and learning, however, in their ability to connect the story to previous lessons and create one continuous narrative. The majority of students seemed to understand my joke about Patroclus' death, covered last lesson, and one student was even able to trace a reference to Achilles' horses back through several lessons, recalling first that the Greeks had possession of them and then that they had been a wedding gift of Poseidon's to Peleus and Thetis, something mentioned almost casually in our first lesson on the Trojan War two weeks prior. There is indeed some evidence that these oral performances can aid in students building a larger narrative in their heads (Lister, 2005), as is clearly shown here.

Turning now to the worksheet, many students experienced some difficulty filling out Question 1, being unsure of the names of actors and subsequently requiring help from me or other students. Despite this, they almost unanimously answered for Question 2 that they considered my use of the actors to in fact be helpful in following the story, with only one student possibly stating it was not (their response is incomprehensible, although it seems to be in the negative). Most students reported that having actors they knew represent the characters helped them understand what those characters' personalities were like and to visualise the story, something they had previously struggled with. Students generally were able to infer from the story the answer to Question 3, although many did not, but most answered to Question 4 that Diomedes and Odysseus were the good guys of the story, despite their murdering of sleeping soldiers. It is reasonable to infer this is because I portrayed them as the protagonists, with one student saying as much: '[They are] a good guy in this story because it is from there points of view [*sic*].'

Ignoring the unavoidable confounding variable inherent in me asking this question, the students were unanimous in stating for Question 5 that they enjoyed watching me perform more than listening to the *War with Troy* audio recordings. More significant than this preference, as big an ego boost for me as it might be, are the reasons why they prefer me. The most common answer was that it was easy to interact with me and ask me a question during the story, something intrinsically impossible with the audio recordings. Another frequent response was that I have 'on point story telling skills' or simply that my story was funny, with one student even clarifying: 'I think audio recordings are dull and boring'. The visual components of my performance were also appreciated by some. Two students specifically stated that my body language was useful to them, an interesting statement for two reasons: 1) because both were ESOL students and thus often require more clues to follow a story, and 2) because they were sat alongside one another while filling the worksheet out, perhaps indicating some 'teamwork' in writing this answer.

My puppets and movements also seem to have greatly benefitted several students in a significant way, and their answers to Question 5 are reproduced (with slight editing for comprehensibility) below:

> Student 1: *You telling the story, because we could all see the same thing instead of having different ideas of it.*
> Student 2: *It helps me lots seeing it, as sometimes words go blank but pictures help as I have a good memory.*
> Student 3: *Because we could see it as a representation of them instead of a painting* [this might refer not to the audio recordings but instead my PowerPoints, in which I would deliver a narrative with simply pictures of the scene alongside factual bullet points or short bits of dialogue].
> Student 4: *I think it was more enjoyable to listen to you telling a story because you can see what happens.*

In these responses, as well as those of the ESOL students above, we can see an argument against a purported benefit of listening to only a narrative without visual aids, namely that it 'has been very successful in triggering children's imagination – in the literal sense of creating images in their minds' (Lister, 2005, p.407). It is perhaps relevant here that this class is a bottom set, and many of the students have some sort of learning disability, which could make creating such images more difficult.

In conclusion, my performance of 'The Night Raid' and the subsequent worksheet was beneficial to my students in many ways, including interactivity, engagement, critical thinking, and building a larger narrative. It was not as successful as I had initially hoped in developing their oracy, however, which would have required a more oral method of feedback from the students, for instance a large class discussion, organised debate, or retelling of the story by the students themselves Significantly, some of these benefits are absent from listening to the *War with Troy* audio recordings, which is something for me to keep in mind when teaching these students or those like them in the future.

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The Night Raid

1. Match the character from the story with the actor I used to depict them.

a.	Odysseus		Arnold Schwarzenegger
b.	Diomedes		Horses
c.	Agamemnon		Brie Larson
d.	Menelaus		Tom Holland
e.	Athene		Chris Hemsworth
f.	Hector		Jack Black
g.	Dolon		Jonny Depp
h.	Horses		Tom Cruise
i.	Rhesus		Josh Brolin

2. Do you think me using these actors was helpful in following the story? Why or why not?

_____

_____

3. Why do you think Diomedes killed Dolon?

_____

4. Are Odysseus and Diomedes the good guys or bad guys in this story? Explain.

_____

_____

5. Was it more enjoyable to listen to me tell a story or the audio recording? (*be honest!*) Why?

_____

_____

6. If you were Dolon, and you'd been caught by Odysseus and Diomedes, what would you do? How would you escape with your life? (*Draw a comic*)

Figure 6.

Jason and the Golden Fleece

Eleanor Barker

I decided to tell a mythological story to my Year 10 Latin class of 28 students. This has been my main class and I thought the students would benefit from a different style lesson in order to broaden their experience of the ancient world. It was also an opportunity to try and engage those students who rarely contribute in regular Latin lessons. The initial plan was to share the story of Heracles, a central myth that I felt was important for any Classics' student to know. However, after discussion with my mentor and a few Sixth Form students in my other classes, I felt that most of the Year 10 students would have a good knowledge of the myth already. Therefore, I finally settled on the myth of Jason and the golden fleece. This myth has a number of exciting episodes and introduces the colourful character of Medea which I thought would provide opportunities for discussion within the lesson. My principal lesson objectives were for students to gain an understanding of Jason and the golden fleece, and to engage with the characters of Jason and Medea.

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I largely used students' responses during the lesson and reading through the written work in their exercise books to evaluate the effectiveness of my storytelling and their learning.

My retelling of Jason and the golden fleece arose from researching the myth and selecting the key moments that were not only exciting, but ensured the story as a whole flowed well. To help prompt good listening from my students - something that has been challenging in previous lessons - I warned them at the beginning that there would be a quiz later in the lesson on the material covered. In order to make my retelling engaging, I tried to vary my tone of voice and evoke responses through this means. For instance, when recalling how Jason was set the task of sowing dragons' teeth in a field, I emphasised the 'minor' detail that Aeetes leaves out from his instructions: that the teeth will grow up into fully-grown armed men! This elicited some laughs and smiles from the students. I also tried to include instances of direct speech in order to make the characters seem more real and immediate. Aeetes had a number of lines attributed to him and I was able to use my tone of voice to communicate the character's thoughts: for example, when Aeetes responds to Jason's initial request for the fleece, I demonstrated his obvious disingenuity. Using the present tense was also a choice I made to try and encourage students to imagine themselves in the story, hearing it unfold before them. Furthermore, I frequently asked direct questions to the class throughout. Some were to give students the opportunity to share any previous knowledge, for example giving the name of Jason's ship; more often I was questioning in order to help engage them with the characters, and use their understanding so far to predict what they thought would happen next. This was particularly seen when asking about Medea's situation once Jason had the fleece: 'What's the problem now for Medea?' I felt it was important for students to spend a moment realising that Medea's actions went against her father and so the escape that follows was the inevitable consequence.

I decided not to use any physical props as I felt that it would distract rather than enhance my storytelling for this group. I tried to use gestures to liven up the story and provide a sense of movement. For example, I pretended to throw a stone when relating Jason's actions against the armed warriors; I also gestured with my arms when describing how the dragon was 'so large that its body could fit around an entire ship'. These seemed to be effective as students were following where I was pointing. I could have made a greater use of movement around the classroom as I largely stayed stationary. Although there were no physical props, I did decide to project images on the screen behind me for the students to look at whilst I told the story. I thought this would be effective as another means of encouraging learning, especially for the more visual learners, and also helpful for a summary quiz at the end. These images were carefully selected to correspond with each key moment in the myth. I also included a small family tree as I felt my explanation of Jason's family would be much clearer if I could point to the characters on the screen. After I had finished, I showed the images again on the screen, this time with a small Latin phrase or word which I could refer to in my revision questions. For example, on slide 12, I asked students to identify who was being shown and they were quick to respond with 'the daughter of Aeetes' i.e. Medea. I also tried to include Latin words that formed part of the next few written activities to increase familiarity. I felt that the images strengthened my storytelling by providing a visual focus, and also had the benefit of providing prompts for myself.

My chief learning objective was for all students to know the basic outline of the story of Jason and the golden fleece. Reedy and Lister have written that oral storytelling promotes 'high levels of engagement and inclusion, leading to enhanced understanding by the pupils' (Reedy & Lister, 2007). This engagement was present, encouraged through the use of gesture, images etc. that form part of an oral retelling. It was especially evident that this different style attracted students. Inclusion was also an area that I was keen to work on. To this end I carefully selected the vocabulary used in my storytelling in order to promote accessibility and ensure all students could understand the story. The different lesson style also seemed to have this effect: students who usually have to be specifically asked were volunteering responses to questions throughout the story and during the following discussions. Through the class' responses, I am confident that this learning objective for all was achieved.

When planning the lesson, I also aimed that most students would be able to form, and defend, their opinion of both Jason and Medea. In order to prompt and develop this, I planned a few written activities to follow my storytelling in the lesson. First, students were each given an image of Jason and Medea and asked to label them using the Latin adjectives given on the board. To complete this task, students had to look up any unfamiliar vocabulary - textbooks were provided - and evaluate which adjectives seemed appropriate for which character. This promoted useful discussion and. reviewing exercise books following the lesson, all students were able to carry out this task. Some students had time to supply reasons for their choices but most were able to do this orally when asked as we went through the adjectives. Students were clearly engaging with the characters with some arguing that *fortis* (brave) could be applied to both Jason and Medea, and others concluding that Jason was *felix* (lucky) to have had Medea's help.

A final activity was for students to discuss in pairs, 'Should Medea be blamed for her actions?'. This explicitly followed the lesson objective that most students should be able to defend their opinion of Medea. In fact, all students were able to write a sentence with their view. Most thought that Medea largely should not be blamed because she was made to fall in love; however the general conclusion was that it was her choice to slow down her father by violently killing her brother. It was encouraging to hear students defend their views during the feedback discussion for this activity, and also to see students responding to each other in an informal debate. This is evidence that such an activity can be used effectively to develop students' communication skills, the importance and desirability of which by future employers has been emphasised by Mercer *et al.* (2014). Such skills are currently neglected in the school curriculum.

My main assessment methods for monitoring the quality of my teaching and students' learning were oral responses from students arising from the lesson and a few written activities. I felt that solely assessing students' learning from written work would unfairly disadvantage those who struggle with literacy. My starter consisted of students studying a painting of the golden fleece myth and spending a few minutes discussing what they could identify in pairs before feeding back as a class: no written work was required. This was an effective gauge of who in the class had any previous knowledge of the myth: this only applied to a couple of students. My summary quiz was also all verbal and I was careful to include feedback discussions after each written activity to reinforce learning. Lister argues for the effectiveness of follow-up discussions to allow teachers to gauge how well 'students have grasped the thread of the narrative' (Lister, 2005, p. 404). As well as a recap activity, I wanted to test students' understanding of the characters by challenging them to use what they had heard to make judgements about both Jason and Medea. This was effective as students had to use knowledge recalled from earlier in the lesson to make and

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justify their decisions. There was a variety of responses from the class which suggested that students were engaging with the myth and forming their own opinions. For instance, some students argued that the adjective *non fidelis*'(not faithful) only partially applied to Medea since she was loyal to Jason but not to her father. The class was warned here that Medea's story continued with a number of violent twists: slide 21 was shown as a quick taster of what they could research in their own time. To take my assessment further, I could have selected a few students and carried out a quick survey after the lesson, asking for in-depth feedback on how effective they felt my storytelling was. In order to assess whether this learning had formed part of their long-term memory, I could have quickly gathered what students knew in the following lesson to reinforce the knowledge gained.

In conclusion, my telling of a mythological story was effective in engaging the Year 10 students, both as I told the story and in the following written activities and discussion. Any initial concerns that this age group of students would not respond well in a storytelling lesson were soon allayed. The use of gestures and direct questions prompted students to imagine themselves in the world of the myth, analysing the emotions of different characters and predicting what was about to happen. Asking students to recap the story in a quick summary quiz helped assess their learning so far in the lesson. This was taken further as students were asked to analyse the characters of Jason and Medea. Assessing through pair discussion and class feedback alongside written work enabled students whose literacy is weaker to demonstrate their understanding and contribute to the lesson. It also provided an opportunity to develop students' oral skills, especially when promoting a debate on the character of Medea and the judgement of her actions. I could have undertaken a more in-depth study but these methods enabled me to assess the quality of learning for the whole class, both during the lesson itself and afterwards looking through exercise books. A number of students asked questions about the future of Jason and Medea which is evidence of real interest in the story. I believe lessons with this focus on oracy should be used more frequently in the curriculum.

Transcript

Teacher: Today we're going to have a slightly different lesson. You've been looking at myths about the Trojan War and its causes - with Paris and the golden apple etc. Today we're going to look at a Greek myth that takes place before the Trojan War. Now I'm going to give you 2 minutes to look at this picture [See slide 1]. Talk about what you can see with your partner - can you identify any of the characters?

[Students discuss - some recognise golden fleece]

Teacher: OK, Year 10, what did you talk about with your partners? What can you see here?

[Students identify dragon, golden fleece, man with a club, identified with teacher's help as Hercules]

Teacher: So, if we have the golden fleece here, who is this person? Does anyone know?

Student N: Jason.

Teacher: Excellent! So, we're looking at the story of Jason and the golden fleece. Now I'm going to tell you this myth - while I'm talking you need to be listening carefully, looking at the pictures on the screen behind me and thinking about what they're showing. There'll be a quiz at the end so pay attention to the details.

[Slide 2] Ok, so our story starts with Jason - he is the son of Aeson. Before Jason was born, his uncle Pelias took the throne instead of Aeson. So, Jason's father should be ruling but instead it's Pelias. But Pelias has received an oracle warning him that one day a descendant of Aeson will come and take revenge. Pelias believes that this is Jason. So, what do you think Pelias wants to do with Jason?

[Students call out answers - 'kill him', 'get rid of him']

Teacher: Exactly. Pelias wants to kill Jason! But he can't just do it himself - it wouldn't look good, it might cause unrest, so what he does is Pelias sends him on a mission.

[Slide 3] Pelias sends Jason on a mission that he believes in impossible. He thinks Jason will be killed, that he'll never see him again - his problem is solved. Jason's mission is to steal the golden fleece. This was from a golden ram of Zeus so incredibly valuable. You might wonder, 'Why is this impossible?'. Well, firstly the fleece is owned by King Aeetes of Colchis so Jason can't just come and take it. And also, it's guarded by a dragon that is said to be so large that its body could fit around an entire ship. It also never sleeps so you know, not very easy for Jason to slip by and take the fleece. So first, owned by King Aeetes; second reason, guarded by a dragon. Pelias feels pretty confident. [Slide 4] So what does Jason do? He recruits 50 of the best heroes from Greece - people like Heracles that we saw in the picture earlier, Orpheus also who you might know. They sail with him in a ship. Does anyone know the name of this ship?

Student B: The Argo.

Teacher: Excellent. So this voyage is the Argonautica which you might have heard of. Now most Greek heroes have the support of a god or goddess to help them with their missions. Jason is no different - he is helped by the goddess Hera. Can anyone tell me who Hera is?

Student N: Zeus' wife.

Teacher: Brilliant. Yes, she's the wife of Zeus. So, she enlists the help of another goddess, Athena, to help create this ship. So, they sail to Colchis, they have an adventurous journey, lots of things happen and eventually they arrive in Colchis. Now Jason doesn't just sneak in, try to take the fleece and leave - he goes straight to King Aeetes and asks for the fleece. How do you think King Aeetes responds to this? Someone has just come and asked to take away the fleece - do you think he says, 'Yes of course you may take the fleece that's so valuable that I have a dragon to protect it?'

[Students call out 'No!']

Teacher: Of course not! Aeetes has no intention of giving it to Jason. But he says to him, 'You can have the fleece, but you have to complete these challenges.' Aeetes sets him challenges that he's sure Jason will fail. Can you see a theme here? Pelias sets Jason a challenge that he's sure Jason will fail; Aeetes also sets him a challenge he thinks he'll fail. But we can see why Aeetes was confident.

[Slide 5] Does anyone know who this woman is?

[Students look unsure - one guesses Hera]

Teacher: Not Hera, but good guess. This is Medea - she's the daughter of King Aeetes. She's got divine origins; she's clever; she's crafty; she has magical powers. She is not a normal Greek woman! Now the goddess Hera is worried about Jason and the tasks he's been set so she asks the goddess Aphrodite to make Medea fall in love with Jason. Do you think this would help?

Student T: Well, Aphrodite's the goddess of love.

Teacher: Yes, she is the goddess of love and by making Medea fall in love with Jason, this ensures that Medea now uses all her powers to help him. He's got a powerful ally on his side.

[Student calls out: But you won't necessarily help someone because you love them. Other students react to this - whole class having conversations countering this thought]

Teacher: [Slide 6] So this brings us on to Jason's challenges. First Jason must plough a field using two fire-breathing bulls. Not normal bulls - fire-breathing bulls! Jason clearly cannot do this on his own. But he has Medea on his side now: she gives him an ointment that protects him from fire for a day. So, Jason is able to complete this task.

[Slide 7] For his second task, Aeetes tells Jason to the sow the teeth of a dragon into the field. But Aeetes leaves out a 'minor' detail. What Aeetes doesn't tell him is that once Jason's sown these teeth into the ground, they'll sprout up into fully-grown armed men - an army - and kill Jason. Or so Aeetes hopes. So only a minor detail that Aeetes leaves out here. Fortunately for Jason, Medea knows this. Medea tells Jason that these

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armed men will sprout up and she also tells him how to defeat them. She tells Jason that if he throws a stone in the middle of the soldiers, they'll be confused, they won't know who threw it, where to look - that they'll turn on each other and kill each other. So this is what Jason does: he throws a stone, the soldiers are confused, they turn on each other and kill each other. So how do you think King Aeetes is feeling at this point?

Student J: A bit annoyed really.

Teacher: Yes, annoyed. A bit worried, anxious - he didn't think Jason would be able to complete these tasks and now there's still this threat to his golden fleece. Remember that he doesn't know that his daughter Medea has been helping Jason. So, Aeetes says, 'Ok, fine. You can have the fleece. But you have to kill the dragon that guards it.' Remember this is the dragon that doesn't sleep and is so large that its body fits round a ship. So how is Jason going to do this? Who steps in to help him?

[Slow to respond]

Teacher: Who has helped him plough with the bulls and defeat the soldiers?

[A few students call out 'Medea']

Teacher: Exactly. Medea steps in, she gives Jason some magic herbs to make the dragon fall asleep. So, Jason uses these, the dragon falls asleep and Jason is able to sneak past and grab the fleece from the tree where it's hanging. He's now got the fleece! What's the problem now for Medea? What's her situation? What has she done?

Student D: Well, she's gone against her father. She's betrayed him.

Teacher: Excellent, ——. She betrayed her father: she's helped Jason to get through all these challenges, and to take the fleece that belongs to her father. So, she now has to escape Colchis. Jason needs to escape because he's taken the fleece which Aeetes did not want to give up; Medea needs to escape because she's betrayed her father.

[Slide 9] So they have to flee. But as they flee, they're pursued by Aeetes. Medea begins to show her true colours here - she does something pretty awful. She kills her brother [*students murmur*] and then cuts up his body - it's really not nice is it - and throws the pieces in the sea. She does this to distract her father, to slow him down. Can you think why this would be an effective way to slow her father down?

Student T: Well he would need to collect the pieces to bury him, wouldn't he?

Teacher: Exactly! Aeetes has to stop and collect all the pieces in order to give his son a proper burial which was really important to the Greeks. So, this is where we leave our story. Jason and Medea go back with the golden fleece to his home, where Pelias was still ruling. Pelias doesn't want to give up the throne so Medea plots to kill him so Jason can become king.

Medea

Clare Mahon

I chose to retell the myth of Medea because of the contentious nature of her actions and the visceral reactions that arise in people because of that. I am fascinated by the idea that, despite this 'sacrilegious crime' (Johnston, 2008) that she commits, directors, translators, and even, arguably, Euripides himself ask us still to see her somewhat sympathetically. I wanted to focus on the creation of that sympathy for the character of Medea and how - and if - that should be done. I also wanted to focus on the idea of 'retelling' a story and how each incarnation of a myth has a different agenda, a different bias, and a slightly different story to tell. Finally, I wanted to look at the way in which these fantastic stories that we have from the Greek world are introduced to pupils and to try to consider whether or not there is a better alternative to what we do at the moment. Due to the awful nature of Medea's actions and the theoretical nature of the topics covered, I chose to do this session with Year 13. I also chose this year group because of a sense of trust which I believe has been built up between the pupils and myself before the session, and because there is a high chance, if they do not choose to study Classics beyond this year, that they will never learn about the myth of Medea which I believe would be a huge loss for them. I was extremely excited to do this project and have decided that oracy and storytelling are tools which I would be very keen on including more in my lessons in the future.

The intent of my session was not to explore with the class whether or not Medea is deserving of pity and sympathy. In fact, that is an angle which I am conscious that I will have to be careful to avoid given the limited time frame (a single, 35-minute lesson). Instead, the focus is intended more to be introducing the pupils to a version of Medea that they should have little problem feeling sympathy for before revealing her crimes as opposed to the other way around which is how it is so often done in teaching. I have tried to do this by providing heavily cut versions of a script (as neutral a script as possible which I accessed online) that shows Medea as powerless as possible with the only other speaker being Jason who is shown in as sexist a light as I could manage while still being accurate to the story. My original plan was to have pupils read the parts of Medea and Jason, but, after I ran through the lesson with some fellow postgrads I found that this meant that, firstly, the reading was likely to be more stilted and therefore less accessible to other members of the class, and, secondly, that it resulted in some students relying on the written script. This undermined the purpose of the session and so, instead, I decided to read the part of Medea and asked the class teacher to read Jason's lines. I also decided to have selected quotes (indicated in bold on the script) displayed on the board that pupils would be able to refer to if they were really struggling with a question, but I tried to keep these to an absolute minimum. I was also careful to give pupils enough context to the myth to be able to understand the passages, but to keep it vague enough (mainly through eliminating names of people and places) that pupils who may have heard of the myth, but not directly heard it told would not have their memory jogged. Furthermore, I encouraged them at the beginning of the lesson to rely on my version of the story rather than any prior knowledge they may have and to 'play along' for the whole session. This was why I needed the element of trust in the pupils because the lesson hugely relied on them trusting me to fill in the gaps and me trusting them not to spoil (in the sense of give 'spoilers' to the plot) for the rest of the class.

One of the reasons why I was so keen to focus on avoiding 'spoilers' for Medea killing her children even though this act is not presented as a plot-twist in the play is because I think the way in which we introduce our pupils to these stories needs reconsidering. When my A Level texts were given out, Medea was described to me as 'the play where she kills her babies'. Although, at the time, this blasé way in which the plot was summarised did not bother me, I think that it is an example of the way that emotive, brilliant, and complex texts can be treated so poorly simply because they are being read by schoolchildren. In school is one of the few times that a story would be treated in this way: we would be horrified if the cashier at the local book shop spoiled the end of our new book just as we were buying it. An argument can be made that, for the purpose of reading these texts fully and critically, pupils need to know what is coming to pick up on foreshadowing. There is also an argument that the Ancient Greeks would go to see these plays

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knowing the myths beforehand, but I think that there is a lot to be said about the first time someone hears a story. Although after that they may have to go on and analyse it in minute detail, I believe that this trivialising and undermining of stories may be what causes pupils to so often not enjoy the texts that they study in school. If we treat them - even if only for a single lesson - as a text which can be surprising, engaging, and shocking rather than just informing, we might find that pupils end up actually enjoying the texts that they are reading.

Finally, something I wanted to focus on was the idea of retelling and re-performing a story. Again, this is one of the reasons that I chose a play as my myth because it is easy for the pupils to grasp the 're-performance' aspect of that form of text. I was keen to highlight the idea that each writer of the myth, each translator, each director (or a whole production team) would have a different focus and agenda that they were trying to draw out with the story. Even then, I wanted to go deeper and encourage the pupils to think that each person in the theatre on the same night, watching the same performance, might have a different take on that performance depending on their own personal schema. Finally, there is the idea that each of those members of the audience is then going to pass on a slightly different version of the story afterwards and thus the chain continues. I was inspired in this by the quote by Lupton that 'When you're telling a story, the person you heard it from is standing behind you as you're speaking etc.' (Bage, cited in Lister, 2005, p. 403) I wanted the pupils to be aware that, even though the retellings of the myths they already know may well be have a much more subtle way of transmitting this agenda than the method I used, that does not mean it does not exist, but it also does not mean that it is conscious. I will encourage them to consider that, for example, a man may well have a different attitude to the play to a woman and that a woman with children will likely have a different attitude to a woman without children or who has lost children and so on. This is partly to encourage them to be critical not only of the texts that they are studying in class - not only in Classical Civilisation, but in English, History, and other subjects, but also to encourage them to seek out retellings of other plays and myths even if they already know them. I have used this opportunity to potentially introduce them to a new myth that they may not have had exposure to if they do not continue with Classics, but I am hopefully also using the experience to inspire them to seek out other retellings - either of new stories or of ones with which they are already familiar.

Reflection

I was very pleased with the way in which the class interacted with the story and with the ideas I presented to them through this activity. I was satisfied that, although I think some members of the class did work out which story was being told, they all interacted with the story that was being presented to them rather than relying on their own knowledge. I think especially the accessibility of the text made the activity especially interesting with this class as I have noticed that, with written texts, there tend to be one or two pupils who seem to be quicker at absorbing and processing written information and therefore can slightly dominate the conversation. I was happy to hear in the discussion that most of the pupils took time to speak. I do not know if this is to do with the reduced pressure on them in this class (I told them previously it was me being assessed not them and so they may have been keen to speak up to come to my aid) or to do with the fact that they did not have to read or take notes, only listen.

The part of the storytelling I think I was the most nervous about was the actual reading of the story. Although I am confident in front of a class - Year 13 especially - I can still find that I trip over my words or speak too quickly if I am reading off a piece of paper rather than adlibbing. This would have made the reception of the story difficult for the pupils, but I was adamant that I wanted to stay as close to a script version of the story as possible. Therefore, to make my reading as fluent as possible, I read the script aloud to myself and to others many times in the two weeks leading up to the lesson. This helped me not worry about the lines that were coming up and to focus on the section in front of me. As well as this, I really wanted to be conscious of my tone of voice in reading the story. I wanted my voice to be markedly gentler reading the first six passages and to come across as much harsher in the seventh to try and fit the picture of Medea that I was painting to the pupils. This was something I also practised leading up to the lesson and I am very pleased with how it came across. I think if I were to do the lesson again, I would focus even more on making the difference more notable - especially if I were to do the lesson to lower years of the school - but, as I am not a natural actor, I was pleased with only two very minor stumbles in my reading.

This practical assignment has definitely shown me how important oracy is in the classroom. I am passionate at closing the gap between private and state school and I believe that including oracy and oral work as much as possible is key to this especially with the Spoken Language section of the English GCSE no longer being formally assessed (AQA, 2019; Mercer *et al.,* p. 2014). This assignment has also encouraged me that talking is a valid and recognised way of teaching and stretching pupils as it is something I was already including in my lessons, but it is good to know that this is supported by educational studies (English & Media Centre, 2015). I think this assignment also showed me the value of letting discussion - especially in Year 13 classes - be directed more by the pupils than by the teacher where possible. The pupils usually end up at a similar end point and seem to get much more out of the exercise than if they were just answering questions that I had set with a certain end point in mind. I have tried to use more oracy especially in literature classes where possible with getting pupils to sum up and retell sections of their texts. I also plan to do a similar exercise to this assignment in a Year Eight assembly. It has also been very interesting seeing how the oracy element of this assignment runs into a debate club I have been involved with at school and it is something I would be very keen to replicate in future placements. I strongly believe in oracy as a tool for classrooms and for storytelling and I hope to incorporate it into as many lessons as plausible in the future.

Transcript

Question on board as they enter:
What is the worst thing a person can do to someone else?

Context given before reading:

Teacher: So, back to the question on the board. I'm not going to discuss it with you because it's a bit much this early in the day - any time of day, but I did notice, like, the discussion, nobody sort of talked about oath breaking or breaking a promise, but I'm going to pose you a theory.
Say you were a woman, in Ancient Greece, so you don't have much, sort of, anything. You're also an outsider, so you don't belong to - you're not a Greek. You've met someone and they've married you and you've been living in another city and you're now being threatened with exile from that city. Not only exile for you, but your two young children as well. So, everything you have is under threat. Maybe that person would be more inclined to say - especially if the person who'd broken that oath was their

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own husband. Maybe they'd be more inclined to say that that was the worst thing that someone could do. And that is the situation that our character is in.

First passage: There's no justice in the eyes of mortal men./ Before they know someone's deep character,/ they hate the sight of her, though she's not hurt them./ But in my case, this unexpected blow that's hit me/ has destroyed my heart.
My life is over, / dear friends. I've lost all joy. I want to die. / The person who was everything to me, / my own husband, has turned out to be / the worst of men. This I know is true. / Of all things with life and understanding, / we women are the most unfortunate. / We women have to look at just one man. / Men tell us we live safe and secure at home, / while they must go to battle with their spears. / How stupid they are! I'd rather stand there / three times in battle holding up my shield / than give birth once.
But your story and mine / are not the same. For you have a city, / you have your father's house, enjoy your life / with friends for company.
But I'm alone. / I have no city, and I'm being abused / by my own husband. I was carried off, / a trophy from a barbarian country. / **I have no mother, brother, or relation / to shelter with in this extremity.**

Questions:
Do you think she's talking to women or talking to men?
Do you think she is expecting them to be sympathetic and, as an add on, so you think she expects us the audience to be sympathetic?
Are we sympathetic to her?

Context:
Teacher: So, some back story, she has helped a man who then married her and became her husband. He couldn't take her back to his city so they've been living in a different city with their two children, but he's just decided that he wants to marry the princess of the city and, sort of - for social security for himself, but the king has decided that the woman and her two children can't stay there because of that. So, they're being kicked out and, in Greece, you know, exile - that's losing everything. She already has nothing and she's losing the little tiny things she has left.
So, under the threat of that exile, she's going - in this next passage she goes to the king and she's, sort of, begging them not only to let her stay, but to let her children stay. And I'd like you to think about the power balance in this next passage.

Second passage: Don't fear me. **It's not in me / to commit crimes against the men in charge. /** Besides, in what way have you injured me? My husband's / the one I hate. In my view, you've acted / in this business with good sense. So now, / I'll not begrudge you your prosperity. / But let me remain here, in this country. / Although I've suffered an injustice, / **I'll obey the rulers and stay silent.**

Questions:
What is the power balance?
If it was men versus women in this passage what would the power balance be?
How do you think she's feeling? Other than sad.

Context:
Teacher: So, begging the king doesn't work - doesn't go to plan, and her lovely husband decides to come along and rub salt in the wound because he's just really charming and lovely. So, she's still under threat of exile and now you get to meet him. And what I'd like you to think about in this bit is which side a Greek man might take watching this play and which side we, as a modern audience, might take.

Third passage:
WOMAN: For you I raised the light which rescued you / from death. I left my father and my home, / on my own, and came with you. **My love for you / was greater than my wisdom. /** To my family I'm now an enemy. / **I go into exile, leave this land, / with no friends, all alone, abandoned, / with my abandoned children.**
HUSBAND:
You women are so idiotic— / you think if everything is fine in bed, / you have all you need, but if the sex is bad, / then all the very best and finest things / you make your enemies. What mortals need / is some other way to get our children. / **We ought to have no female sex and then / men would be rid of all their troubles.**

WOMAN:
Keep up the insults. You have your refuge. / **I'm alone and banished from this country.**

Questions:
Firstly, which side are you on?
Which side do you think a Greek man would be on watching the play?

Context:
Teacher: Okay, so, he's clearly got no sympathy for her, but, luckily, there's another king visiting the same city that is an old friend of hers that - she goes to him and begs for refuge in his city and I would like you to listen out for the bargaining chip that she uses in this.

Fourth passage:
I beg you by your beard, / and at your knees implore you—have pity. / Take pity on me in my misfortune. / Don't let me be exiled without a friend. / Accept me as a suppliant in your home, / your native land.
If you will take me in, / may the gods then answer your desire / to have children. May you die a happy man. / You don't know what a lucky one you are / to find me here. **I'll end your childlessness. / I know the sorts of medicines to use, / and I can help you have many children. /**

Questions:
What is the bargaining chip?
Why is having children so important for Greek men?
With that, do you think women were more important to women or to men?

Context:
Teacher**:** So, she manages to make it so that the king visiting will give her refuge in his city, but there is a change of heart and the decision is that the children can stay where they are. So, she's now preparing to leave that city and go, without her children, and I'd like you to think about the sacrifice that she's making in this scene leaving her children.

Fifth passage:
O children, my children, you still have / a city and a home, where you can live, / once you have left me to my suffering. / You can live on here without your mother. / **But I'll go to some other country, / an exile, before I've had my joy in you.**
I raised you— / and all for nothing. The work I did for you, / the cruel hardships, pains of childbirth— / all for nothing. Once, in my foolishness, / I had many hopes in you—it's true— / that you'd look after me in my old age, / that you'd prepare my corpse with your own hands, / in the proper way, as all people wish.
But now my tender dreams have been destroyed. / **For I will live my life without you two, / in sorrow, and those loving eyes of yours / will never see your mother any more. /** Give me your right hands, children. Come on. / Let your mother kiss them. Oh, these hands— / how I love them and how I love these mouths, / faces—the bearing of such noble boys. / I wish you happiness—but somewhere else.
You must go inside. Go. I can't stand / to look at you any more like this. / **The evil done to me has won the day.**

Questions:
Do you think the sacrifice she's making is the right choice?
Think about how you feel about her, and her role, what she's been through.

Context:
Teacher: So, she sends the children into the house as you've heard, and then she follows them in and, as the audience, we then hear sort of terrible cries from inside the house. The princess and the king are both murdered and then so are the two children, but at the last minute, the woman, who's descended from the gods, gets saved and then this last speech is a speech that happens between her husband - her husband comes out and sees her about to leave - and it happens between them.
Sixth passage (read by 'Medea'): **You, shameful murderer of your children. /** Let me lament my fate. I'll get no delight / nor will I ever speak / to my own living children, the two boys / I bred and raised. **They're lost to me. /**

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Questions:
What do we think has happened?
So, she's kind of lost everything now, hasn't she?

Context:
Teacher: So, we've reached the end of the play, we've not reached the end of my story. So, this speech is one that comes almost dead centre in the, sort of, order of the ones I've read you. I would like you to think about the difference that it would have made, maybe, to your attitude towards this woman if you'd heard this speech earlier on.

Seventh passage:
Then I'll ask / if my children can remain. My purpose / is not to leave them in a hostile land / surrounded by insulting enemies, / but **a trick to kill the daughter of the king. /** I'll send the children to her with some gifts. / They'll carry presents for the bride, as if / requesting to be spared their banishment—
If she accepts those presents / and puts them on, she'll die—and painfully. / And so will anyone touching the girl. / But the next thing I'll do fills me with pain— / I**'m going to kill my children**. There's no one / can save them now. And when I've done this, / **wiped out my husband's house completely**, I'll leave, / evading the punishment I'd receive / for murdering my darling children, / **a sacrilegious crime.** You see, my friends, / I won't accept my enemies' contempt. / So be it. What good does life hold for me now? / I have no father, no home, no refuge. / I was wrong to leave my father's house, / won over by the words of that Greek man, / who now, with the gods' help, will pay the price. / **He'll never see his children alive again, / the ones I bore him, nor have more children / with his new bride, for she's been marked to die /** an agonising death, poisoned by my drugs. / Let no one think that I'm a trivial woman, / a feeble one who sits there passively. / No, I'm a different sort—dangerous / to enemies, but well-disposed to friends. / Lives like mine achieve the greatest glory.
(silence)

Sixth passage repeated (this time read by 'Jason' as it is in the play):
You're not a woman. You're a she-lion. / Your nature is more bestial than Scylla, / the Tuscan monster. / But my insults, multiplied a thousand-fold, / don't hurt you. /
Your heart's too hard for that. / So be off, you shameful murderer of your children. / Let me lament my fate. / I'll get no delight from my new bride, / nor will I ever speak to my own living children, / the two boys I bred and raised. / They're lost to me.

Questions:
Was there anyone who didn't know?
Could you discuss how you would feel different towards Medea and also towards Jason if you'd had that middle bit of speech going along?
What about Jason? You would be even an inch more on his side?

The Judgement of Paris

Jaspal Ubhi

For the purpose of this assignment I decided to practise my storytelling with a Year 7 Classical Civilisation group. I felt that this would be both a relatively unobtrusive choice (the Year 7 scheme of work is built around the University of Cambridge School Classics Project's *War with Troy*) and a potentially fecund one, given that the class was 26 strong. This size would be slightly more challenging to teach, but easier perhaps to get usable feedback from.

I was offered the choice of a beginning class (Episode 1, which I have since taught to another group) or a group further along the course. I chose the latter and decided to observe a few lessons before taking over for the final lesson (Episode 12). This allowed both myself and the class to acclimatise to one another and for me to understand their tastes. Episode 12 of *War with Troy* is divided into three sections. I decided to write and perform a script that would introduce sections one and two and totally replace three.

As this was the last lesson in the series, my first aim was to make sure they could recall the previous events. I therefore started with some ancient artwork and some prompt questions, asking the students to raise their hands and answer. As a group we fleshed out the previous episode and talked about our expectations.

I then anticipated my later use of props. After this, I recited and played a small introduction before playing the first segment of Episode 12. Throughout this, I did not expect the students to do anything but listen.

Following this, I gave them a worksheet which contained various tasks such as a cloze which was to be filled in whilst we listened to the second segment. After some debate as to where we thought the story was developing, I then launched into the third and final part myself with my script and my lyre. The more formal assessment then followed.

I printed out 'golden apples', that is a picture of a golden apple with a quotation taken from an earlier episode. Each apple and quotation signified a goddess and their own words as to why they should be given the apple. I asked students to argue in their groups orally for/against their own goddess, then write down their best arguments on mini white-boards, and we then went over the answers as a group.

This allowed me to ensure every group understood the story, practised recall and formulating opinions, and to discreetly take feedback on my own storytelling.

Rationale behind writing the script

I decided that for any script to be useable it would have to be comprehensible to the Year 7 students. This necessitated not just curtailing lexical choice and plot complexity, but also involved creating a level of verisimilitude to the canonical *War with Troy* recordings. The less discordant they felt the situation to be, the more they would focus on listening and understanding.

The script would have to adequately resolve any remaining plot lines and be roughly akin to what the canonical recordings would cover, so as not to put the students at a disadvantage against their peers over the coming academic year.

Finally, any new script would have to fit within the school's ethos and, wherever possible, the taste hitherto expressed by the students. One surprise in this direction was the level of blood and gore. I had assumed that the level should be kept as low as possible and clad in euphemism. Having observed three classes (including the one I was to take over), I noticed that the students frequently expressed approbation whenever something bloody happened. These were often taken up vociferously in the discussion activities. Whenever their regular teacher presented the students with a counterfactual, many would try to make the canonical script *bloodier*.

The following exchange is emblematic. It comes from the final lesson of another group, during a review task (students were asked to write book review-style feedbacks and then debate with one another). The students were discussing Menelaus finding Helen and Paris and killing the latter.

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Student 1 (interjecting): …and then Menelaus should have killed her too.
Student 2: Yes!

To this end I wrote lines such as: 'bashed the baby's brains against the rock; from up high, death took all he would never ever be'. This allowed me to introduce some poetic features (consonance), a canonical event (the death of Astyanax), and hopefully cater to the students' taste. This balancing of blood and taste seems to have been an issue during the composition of the *War with Troy* recordings too, where the authors had the task of relating Homer but without 'the raw vividness that could give children nightmares' (Lister, 2005, p. 406). I myself was perhaps too cautious at times in toning down the violence.

I borrowed heavily from the *War with Troy*'s narrative style throughout the script. For example, the use of poetic counterfactual/conditions ('Would that his were a happy song', 'I wish that I could say'), Homeric epithets, and subordinating clauses clustered around a repeated word ('She remembered….She remembered when…She remembered that…'). This was partially through attempting verisimilitude to both the *Iliad* and the *War with Troy* and partially as an experiment: I wanted to see if students were able to appreciate complex poetic imagery in live speech.

I was pleasantly surprised, during my feedback session I would ask questions such as 'What did Menelaus look like?', the responses tended to show that the students grasped the basics of the epithet system.

Teacher: What did Menelaus look like?
Student 1: He was big and strong, he killed, he killed…
Student 2: Paris!
Student 1: He killed Paris and -
Student 3: He had red hair
Teacher: How do you know?
Student 1: 'Red haired Menelaus'!

One thing I was conscious of was my use of voice. I suffer from the tendency to speak very fast, whereas teaching in general seems to require slower, steadier, speaking and some repetition. A story is a perfect example of where a more deliberate speaking style should be cultivated. In preparation, I listened to the entirety of the *War with Troy* recordings and followed along with the official transcripts until I could replicate the pace and style of the narrator.

Use of a prop

I elected to use a lyre as a prop to aid my storytelling. I felt that this would work rather well given the amount of verisimilitude present in the canonical script in terms of Homeric language – why not borrow some elements from the original performance as well? The presence of a musical instrument would also prove to be a good teaching point.

During the starter section of the lesson I inserted a slide with an image of a Greek poet with a lyre. The students were invited to comment as to what he was doing, what kind of story he was telling, how the music could impact the story and so on. The main assumption was that the music would serve as a kind of ancient 'soundtrack'. This makes sense given that hitherto the students would not necessarily have encountered extended narratives in verse.

I then revealed the presence of the lyre and asked students if they could recall its name and some of its uses (based on the discussion we had just had). I gave them some cursory examples of its use against a few lines of Greek hexameter and we went into another brief discussion about the interplay between music and storytelling.

I used the lyre in two ways, outside of teaching historical culture: The playing of two small refrains, this was to set the mood and provide a soundtrack in between breaks and to try and heighten the sad emotions of the final chapter. The Phrygian mode provides some discordant and unsettling note combinations which were useful for some of the horror scenes, I used individual notes and cacophonous chords as sound effects, e.g when mentioning a murder.

The prop was useful not just in making the storytelling experience more enjoyable and easier (it allowed me to rest my voice), but in directing the overall narrative. One thing that concerned me was how much my voice and the lyre would carry (it is not electronic). To this end, I did not stand still but moved around the classroom throughout. This allowed me to make sure all pupils were staying focused as well as able to hear.

Conclusion

'Storytelling' writes Banerjee is '…is many things to many people…a fun way of passing on history, a way of teaching…an art that anyone can participate in' (Banerjee, 2008, pp.147-8) and all these factors became apparent during the lesson. The students reported having *fun*, which is important for further retention.

Storytelling served in passing on the (his)tory as many of the students were able to recall details from my narrative, including the description of Menelaus (above). Retention and recall of detail are important when we consider Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives; Bloom (1956) arranges tasks by difficulty with knowledge (e.g. of facts) at the bottom and critique at the top. Using storytelling ensured all students had the basic knowledge in order to progress to the more critical tasks later.

For me, the best bits of the lesson were the attendant activities such as the 'Golden Apple' debate and the review session which tested higher order skills. This put the students at front and centre of their own learning experience. The students were patently engaged and even though, given their age, their argumentation needed work and their recall needed prompting, I felt that they truly understood the story.

Returning to the Banerjee quote above, how much did *everyone* participate? One of the issues with a text-heavy subject like Classics is differentiating the core tasks. As Hunt (2009, p.3) states, many students can quickly complete tasks, whilst others are left behind and require extra support. Oral storytelling allowed me to ensure everyone moved at the same pace. I believe that over time this might even help the self-confidence of the slower readers.

Moreover, oral storytelling allowed me to divorce the content (the story) from the usual format (written words). The effect was a lively classroom discussion that all felt they had some ability to contribute to.

There has certainly been some effect on my own teaching. Since teaching this lesson I have taught Episode 1 to another group and being able to improvise in the narrator's style allowed me to bridge the gaps between episodes and set the mood/draw attention before the recordings start. This is useful given that I prefer to break up the mini episodes with activities to solidify learning. I have since had to explicate myths for a Sixth form group and it was due to this experience that I decided to linger over the myths a little more. The older students too seem to retain more of the stories told this way.

An unexpected outcome has been the change to my Latin teaching. My Year 8 students have been tackling the stories in stage 7 of the *Cambridge Latin Course* which concern the supernatural. I chose to frame three lessons in a meta-story of a Roman dinner party in which the guests were exchanging

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stories. This allowed me to elicit and pre-teach relevant vocabulary and grammar, but also focus on what made the stories *effective*. This effectiveness was discussed in terms of word choice, pace, the use of second or third person and overall believability. By focusing on the story, all other linguistic elements seemed naturally to fall into place.

At the end of my experimental lesson, I showed the slide of the ancient singer again. I reminded the students of their very first lesson, which discussed how ancient the story truly was and asked the class if they could understand why the story had lasted so much longer than anything else they have read. The answer, happily, was a resounding yes.

Eris and the Golden Apple

Giorgio Molteni

When I first observed lessons in a UK school, back in April 2018, I was surprised to come across a subject called 'oracy', whose specific function, despite the evident connection with orality and spoken language, was not immediately clear to me. The Head of Classics later explained that this subject had been recently introduced in several UK schools in a further attempt to overcome disparities in students' fluency and articulacy. Such an initiative may be seen as a positive response to the appeal launched in an article by Mercer *et al.,* (2014) on *The Conversation*, in which the authors suggested tasks aimed at reinforcing pupils' oral skills (and at the same time enabling teachers to monitor their actual development). It was very interesting for me to observe activities where pupils were required to repeat an episode from the *War with Troy* in their own words, even acting it out, or repeat a character's speech in several tones of voice, so as to provide different rhetorical effects. Not only did students clearly enjoy the 'game', but I could easily see the benefits deriving from this kind of activities, whose roots stretch back to antiquity. I can also remember, with a certain fond nostalgia, when my Classics teacher at school organised such activities to help me and my classmates improve our fluency, and I can easily recognise the benefits it brought to me.

As well as reinforcing pupils' oral skills, these activities are far more likely to engage all students, even those who usually find reading 'boring'. As Lister noted, while reporting two pupils' responses to the *War with Troy* CDs, 'listening to the story, rather than reading it, gave them the time to think about the story and *get the actual thing* in their heads' (Lister, 2005, p. 407). A similar reaction may be expected from pupils normally discouraged by written tasks. In other words, pupils who might find it hard to express their views in a written form feel more stimulated to express them in an oral, apparently 'informal' way (Reedy & Lister, 2007, pp. 4-5). Moreover, if they are encouraged to participate, they are also more likely to learn, to broaden their views and to enrich their vocabulary, with remarkable benefits for their writing skills as well. This does not mean that we should overlook the importance of oral proficiency itself, as Walker observes (2018), but that oral practice may have positive effects on another form of expression that many students tend to find intimidating.

In view of these considerations, I started planning the telling of a mythological story in my training placement schools. I agreed with my mentor to teach a lesson on the Apple of Discord, from the goddesses' fight over the apple thrown by Eris into Peleus and Thetis' wedding party up to Paris's judgement. We made this choice because her classes were currently covering the Trojan War and I thought I could easily communicate my enthusiasm for this particular part of the Trojan saga to pupils. I would tell this story in two Y8 classes at school, so that the evaluation of my lesson in the first class might suggest some adjustments before telling the same story to the second one.

My lesson's objectives set out that pupils should be able to retell the story in their own words, establishing connections between causes and effects, identifying the different sections of the story in a logical order, developing and expressing their own opinions on facts and characters. As well as their individual contribution to general discussion, I originally intended to check their learning by two final activities focused on characters and facts respectively (the first one written, the second one oral). My original plan proved unfortunately impossible to stick to when I taught the lesson in the two classes. Although prompt adjustments are definitely reasonable when they respond to pupils' needs (and they might ensure the eventual success of the lesson, in terms of pupils' understanding and learning), the outcomes were quite different between the two classes.

I had the impression that the first lesson I taught was more successful than the second one. In order to stimulate pupils' imagination and critical thinking, I showed them some pictures depicting scenes/characters from very famous stories (Adam and Eve picking the apple, Snow White being offered the poisoned apple by the evil witch, Maleficent from *Sleeping Beauty*), and I asked them which connections they could spot between these pictures and stories (a tricky apple and two evil witches). One of my objectives was also to get them to think critically about the many common elements we can find in different stories (archetypal narrative elements), including a magic apple (playing a significant part in lots of ancient myths, like Atalanta and Hippomenes, Cydippe and Acontius, etc.). I asked them why these witches were so angry, guiding them through the definition of resentment and vanity. I told them to note down the concepts explored, because they might find them useful for the activities they would be doing. Then we moved on to a quick recap of the previous episode of the story, from Zeus' infatuation with Thetis to the nymph and Peleus' wedding, including the gifts made by the gods and goddesses to the newly married couple.

The mix of modern and classical images proved to be an effective introduction to the topic: since they were familiar with the images shown on screen, students were encouraged to engage and contribute to the lesson. A similar effect was achieved by a comparison I made between the wedding party on Mount Olympus and last year's Royal Wedding. 'Provocative' pictures of the 'nude' wedding party (from a painting paying tribute to classical nudes) got the students' attention: they were curious and full of questions.

As well as telling the story through my own voice, gesture and thought-provoking questions, I had also planned some activities to help pupils reflect on the story told. In the first part of the lesson. After dividing them into four groups, I asked them to discuss the possible events leading from Thetis and Peleus' wedding to the War of Troy, drawing on the elements given at the start of the lesson (a tricky apple, a powerful woman, resentment and vanity). Since some pupils were already familiar with the story, I asked them to discuss who they thought was the greatest goddess among Hera, Aphrodite and Athena. After comparing the four groups' versions, I gave a sticker (a kind of reward they incredibly appreciated) to

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every member of the group whose narrative proved closer to the development of the Golden Apple's myth.

After being guided through the best-known version of the story up to Paris' choice, pupils were asked to discuss Paris' judgement, with some of them trying to persuade the others to opt for this or that goddess's offer. At the end of the activity, 'goddesses' read out their points and 'Parises' had to justify their choice, thus pointing out the most persuasive 'goddesses'. All these activities aimed at reinforcing pupils' oral skills by engaging them with the story (at the same time testing their actual understanding).

Although I had to skip the two final activities in order to get to the end of the story (but pupils themselves did not appear very eager to do them, when they read the instructions on screen), students were generally engaged with the myth, constantly asking/answering questions (although some of them were extremely quiet and reluctant to take active part in discussion). My main regret about this lesson is that there was no time for the last planned activities (that I might have squeezed in by reducing my own storytelling), but the class' lively contributions and the fact that they were able to recap the story's key points at the end of the lesson showed that my narration had been clear and effective.

The lesson in the second Year 8 class was not as successful as the one I had taught two days before. I really think I did my best to make the explanation as engaging as possible, by drawing comparisons between the myth and modern fairy tales, and constantly questioning pupils about elements of the story, asking them what they thought would happen next, why something had gone in a certain way and which effects it might cause. By doing so, I was trying to create that sort of environment where the teacher collaborates with students through dialogue and discussion, in a common effort to understand the meaning of the story (Reedy & Lister, 2007, p. 7). I also listened to a recording of myself teaching the lesson, and I was relieved to find myself clear and appropriate, something I still had not had the opportunity to check out. Also, pupils appeared engaged with the story and some of them, especially in the front row, were really keen to answer questions and give contributions. Nonetheless, I could see many of them were struggling to grasp and retain the many details of the story. Although I had prepared some activities which might have helped them orient themselves better through the story, I decided to remove half of them after realising I might not get to the end of the story (due to time pressure). Also, I was not certain pupils would be able to conduct independent discussions on events and characters that they struggled to remember and connect to each other. This was immediately clear when I asked them to recap the previous part of the story (Zeus making Peleus fall in love with Thetis). Pupils struggled to recall names and events, so I thought it would be more useful to spend the lesson discussing the story together, rather than having them do activities on their own.

However, when I finished telling the story, I asked pupils to retell the whole myth in different turns. The first one would be given a symbolic apple, which they would pass on to the classmate they would like to tell the following section of the story. All the sections would be shown on the whiteboard in a random order. They would get one sticker for every section they would get right. Any pupil who could get at least three stickers would be given a sweet as well. It was quite comforting to realise, at this point, that some of them were able to recall the main sections of the story and put them in order, but it was also sad to see some of their classmates struggling to recall some details. I therefore realised that I should have focused on a smaller bit of the story (Eris, the Golden Apple itself and the three goddesses fighting over it), giving pupils more time to familiarise themselves with it through concrete, independent activities. This is exactly what I think I will do when teaching another lesson of this kind.

Transcript

Who can remember what happened when Zeus fell in love with the sea nymph Thetis?

> There was a prophecy telling him that Thetis' firstborn son would be stronger than his father. Zeus, as you can imagine, did not want to be overthrown by anybody, let alone his own son. So he decided to make a human being, Peleus, fall in love with Thetis, so that he might make her pregnant with her firstborn son. After the child's birth, Zeus would be free to enjoy Thetis' company without any fear…
>
> Once the two of them were in love, they decided to get married. And what place do you think they chose, among all places on Earth, to celebrate their wedding?
>
> The place where all the gods live… very high… unreachable for men… it is a mountain…
>
> Mount Olympus, exactly! The most glamorous place you would have chosen at that time to celebrate such an event! This is the party we mentioned at the start of the lesson as one of the keywords we might use to describe this story.
>
> Don't be too surprised! Everybody is always naked in every painting of sculpture of the ancient world. People are often depicted naked in order to celebrate the perfection of the human body, even though most of these bodies might seem not really attractive to you. Beauty has been seen in many different ways over centuries, with the result that today we often consider ugly what ancient people viewed as beautiful, and the other way around.
>
> Peleus and Thetis' wedding party was the event of the year on Mount Olympus and no divine celebrity would have never missed it! It was that kind of event that you would expect every important and famous person to attend. It could be compared to last year's most glamorous and talked-about wedding, that of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex. Can you remember how long people talked about that wedding and discussed who might be invited and who might be left out?
>
> Well, as it often happens in such circumstances, someone was probably left out. I am not referring specifically to last year's royal wedding, even though I am quite sure something similar happened on that occasion too, but I am generally referring to this kind of exclusive events, when some people who would expect to receive an invitation, on account of their fame and importance, are eventually left out. These people were so eager to participate in the event, so eager to show off their invitation and be envied by everyone for having been involved in such a unique and exclusive celebration… and when they do not receive the expected invitation, they feel very sorry, disappointed… even offended and outraged… Can you remember the other keyword outrage? Sometimes these people get very resentful, which means angry with the people who should have invited them…
>
> And here comes the apple I showed you at the beginning of this lesson, the first element I asked you to focus your attention on, as it was inherited by later stories like 'Snow White'.
>
> All the gods attended the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, bringing splendid presents. Can you remember who brought what?
>
> But someone, as you might have figured out by now, was not invited. And this person was…
>
> Eris, goddess of arguing, the only immortal not to be invited to the wedding party. The gods probably thought that, since she was the goddess of arguments, it was a good idea not to invite her to the party, as she might ruin it by causing some of the gods to argue. She really enjoyed this kind of things, seeing people getting angry with each other. They did not realise, though, that by doing so, I mean not inviting her, they would make her even angrier, and more determined to ruin the party, by sowing anger among the guests. And things went exactly this way…

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Eris, as her descendant Maleficent would also do in the famous fairy-tale, felt so outraged that she found a way to sneak into the hall where the party was taking place, and she also brought a gift for the newly-married couple. It was a golden apple, with an inscription on it, 'To The Fairest' or 'To The Most Beautiful'. She threw this apple in the middle of the crowd, enjoying some of the goddesses' reaction to what they read on it. As the apple was supposed to belong to the most beautiful among them, a serious argument arose between three goddesses. This is the vanity we were talking about at the beginning of the lesson, when someone is so stupidly obsessed with their physical appearance, that they would kill their stepdaughter, as the evil queen tries to do in 'Snow White', or start a silly fight over a golden apple, that will eventually cause a war and thousands of dead.

Each of the goddesses claimed the apple for herself, since she was convinced to be the most beautiful one and that the apple had been designed for her. The three goddesses Hera, wife of Zeus, Athene, daughter of Zeus, goddess of war and wisdom, and Aphrodite, aunt of Zeus and goddess of love and beauty. Such an argument gave Zeus a terrible headache, because the goddesses kept demanding him to choose the most beautiful among them. But Zeus didn't want to make this choice… Why, in your opinion?

Because whichever goddess he might choose, he would make the other two totally mad at him, and he didn't want to have hysterical goddesses shouting at him all the time, especially his wife Hera, who you should already know was not the kind of person you would like to have as your enemy. Her rage was relentless and unstoppable, once you had offended her, and she would do anything she could to destroy you and your beloved ones…

So, which solution did Zeus figure out? He decided to ask someone else, a mortal man, to make the choice in his place. This man was called Paris and you might have already heard about him.

Paris was a prince of Troy, one of King Priam's fifty sons, and his mother was called Hecuba, one of Priam's many wives. When the royal couple was expecting the baby, Hecuba had a dream, a nightmare actually. In this dream she was giving birth to a flaming torch which burned down the city. Priests interpreted Hecuba's dream as a prophecy, warning that the baby Hecuba was expecting would cause the destruction of Troy. But when the baby was born, King Priam could not find the courage to kill him himself, so he gave the baby to the chief of his herdsman, ordering him to take the baby to an isolated place in the mountains and kill him… but the baby was so beautiful that the herdsman did not have the strength to kill him. He decided to raise him as his own son, and Paris was brought up as a shepherd in the mountains near Troy.

Zeus appointed him to judge the goddesses' beauty for two main reasons. He was himself a beautiful youth, and as you can tell from this picture, where he is admiring himself in a mirror, he was also quite vain. So, he was quite knowledgeable about beauty. At the same time, he had a reputation for being a very impartial judge, which means he didn't take his personal interests into account, when it came to judging a competition. It means that if you have to judge a competition and one of your friends is a competitor, you will not let him win only because he is your friend. If someone else is better than him, they will be the winner. This makes you an impartial judge. Once Paris had offered a golden crown to any bull that might be able to defeat his own bulls in a running contest. When Ares, god of war, transformed himself into a bull and easily won the contest, Paris gave him the crown without hesitation. So, he was an expert on beauty and an impartial judge.

Zeus therefore asked his own messenger, Hermes, to escort the three goddesses to Mount Ida, near Troy, where Paris was herding his cattle, as we can read in this passage from a famous Greek tragedy.

When Paris saw the goddesses and was explained by Hermes what he should do, he could not carry out the task. Why, in your opinion?

Because they were all goddesses, after all! They were all beautiful! How could you decide who is the most beautiful among them?

Then Paris asked them to strip naked, so that he could observe their whole bodies and have a better idea of who might be the most beautiful. But even now, he could not make a decision. At this point, since the three goddesses were losing their patience, they decided to convince him by bribery. Each of them offered him a splendid gift, so that he might award her the golden apple. Hera offered power over Europe and Asia, which corresponded to the whole known world at that time. Athena offered military skills which could make him invincible in war. And Aphrodite… she offered him the love of the most beautiful woman in the world. What do you think Paris might have chosen?

Paris was not a warrior or a politician… he was not interested in power and military success… he was far more interested in women. It was not difficult for Aphrodite to bribe him. Paris awarded her the golden apple, as you can read in this extract from an ancient Greek play. But this also implied that the rejected goddesses, Hera and Athena, would become the worst enemies of Paris and the Trojans.

The consequence of Paris' choice was that Aphrodite kept her promise and made Helen of Sparta, the most beautiful woman in the world, fall desperately in love with Paris, when he came to Sparta on an official visit. The two of them were so madly in love that Helen abandoned her husband and daughter and fled to Troy with Paris on a Trojan ship. As soon as her husband, Menelaus, king of Sparta, found out his wife had left him for another man, he declared war to Troy, supported by many other Greek kings, chieftains and leaders, including his brother Agamemnon. And this was the beginning of the War of Troy, that you are going to explore in further detail in your next lessons…

Dido

Rachel Hambly

Bage makes the point that 'spoken stories have longer educational lineage than [their] literary cousin' (Bage, 1999, p.34), yet despite this, the presence of oracy in the English school curriculum has been waning. Oral skills are widely recognised to benefit people in later life. However, when asked, my students said that they were rarely read to and that they were not given many oral-based tasks, since the pressures of written exams were high. Storytelling is naturally one way in which students could be exposed to these beneficial oral skills and I set out to investigate how effective it was in my class. I took a 50-minute lesson to tell the story of Dido and Aeneas to my Year 10 Latin class, which consisted of 12 students. The class was made up of three boys and nine girls and featured a whole range of abilities, with the lowest GCSE target grade there being a grade 4 and the highest a grade 9. All the other students were of roughly similar ability, with their GCSE target grades around the 6-7 mark, and one of these students has English as an Additional language (EAL). In the following essay, I shall explain how I went about planning and delivering my chosen myth and prove just how useful it was as an exercise, for I was pleasantly surprised at how easily students were able to complete the tasks that followed the storytelling, and generally also at the high quality of argumentation that was produced.

When it came to choosing a myth to tell to my students, the choice was obviously dictated by and (to some extent limited) to myths that would be useful for them to hear. Given the class chosen for this exercise were Year 10, I was also aiming for something that would introduce them to some more 'formal' Latin Literature, in preparation for the literature that they would then have to explore in their GCSE preparation later on in the school year. A quick perusal of the GCSE literature specification revealed that one of the excerpts

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that my students would be required to study is Dido's cursing of Aeneas in Book 2 of the *Aeneid* and I felt that this fulfilled both the criteria above that I had set out for myself. I had initially intended to try and give my students a condensed summary of the entire *Aeneid*, but I soon realised that to do so would have eliminated any of the suspense and momentum building that had rendered other oracy projects (such as the *War with Troy*) so successful. Lister states that the episodic nature of the recordings, with each episode containing 'a story inside a big story', was what allowed the story tellers to 'sustain the momentum of the story' and to have 'a strong element of suspense at the end of each episode' (Lister, 2005, p 40). I decided as a result of this that to try and recount the entire *Aeneid* in the space of 15 minutes was impossible if I was to make it truly interesting as a piece of oral narrative, for it would have had nowhere near enough detail within each episode. As such, my narrative was limited to recounting the story of how Aeneas left Troy, his arrival in Carthage, his meeting of Dido and his departure to go to Italy. In doing so, I believe that I was able to recreate a slightly more episodic retelling, that was essentially four 'mini' chapters in the story of Dido and Aeneas. In line with Bage's theories on storytelling, this meant that my oral retelling would also have carefully 'select[ed] enticing evidence of a human question for the story's heart' and some kind of central narrative ideology and thematisation (Bage, 1999, p.83).

This question of 'human emotions' was one that I tried to emphasise right from the outset in my retelling, starting my class off with a simple picture starter, which asked them to evaluate what kinds of emotions a modern-day refugee from a war-torn country might feel. This was followed by two more pictures which prompted discussions on how the children might feel if they were in a stormy sea or if they were faced with a forked path (or a big decision less metaphorically). I took great care to emphasise that the emotions that they were grappling with in this five-minute starter activity were emotions that Aeneas would have had to cope with over the course of the myth and thus, I believe that the students were able to enter into the mindset of the protagonist a bit better. This initial class collation of 'human questions' (in Bage's words) was supplemented by four probings of student understanding and empathy over the course of the retelling (see Appendix). I found students reacted very well to this 'sensitive' engagement with the story, and to some extent that this aligned with the positives that Reedy and Lister had associated with oracy. They mention that oracy generally stimulates 'collective knowledge building' in which 'students [are] presented with a source and [are] just asked to react/respond' (Reedy & Lister, 2007, p.7) and it is more widely believed that this kind of idea collation, where there is no real 'right' response to the stimulus, encourages contributions from even those who would have otherwise been reticent to participate (Reedy & Lister, 2007, p. 9).

The class as a whole, when asked for feedback at the end of the lesson, reported that the non-verbal stimuli (the picture starter mentioned above and some pictures that I put on the board whilst I told the myth) as well as the constant interrogation of their emotions actually helped them understand the plot better than if they had merely been reading the story from a book. They reported that they recalled my explanations of the plot and my delivery of certain key moments (Such as Dido's impending suicide) because they were 'vivid' and 'personalised', responding to the specific reactions that they had had to the events of the story. I was genuinely surprised by this, because I had assumed that students would simply switch off when faced with a protracted period of a teacher talking to them. Instead, in a class of 12, 10 said that they would prefer to study all their texts in this way because it ensured that they were able to get all the 'important points' without skipping information. This latter reason was voiced most clearly by the two weakest students in my class. One of the two, a student with EAL, stated that if she has to read a long text, she often gets tired and distracted by the hard nature of the exercise, and skips words or misses the sense of sections. The second of these students, who has a predicted target grade of 4, repeated this student's opinions, and actually thrived in the oral task that followed my retelling of the myth of Dido and Aeneas and was able to articulately explain himself, making reference to the story that I had told the class.

In order to ensure that my students hadn't forgotten any central plot points or characters, I had decided to integrate a 'summary' task immediately after I told the tale, which required the students to recall what each character on my list had done in the story. Looking back, I think I could possibly have given them this list before starting my myth in order to avoid a few moments of confusion about who was related to whom and in what capacity, but by and large I believe that this recall task demonstrated that a) my students had retained an enormous amount of detail about the plot itself and that b) they were already starting to formulate their own opinions on the key players. In being asked to actively recall facts in this way, I believe that the students were well supported and prepared for the second of my lesson objectives for that session (to develop AO3 analysis of the characters of the *Aeneid* as a result of oral storytelling). The first lesson objective (to understand the sequence of events of Aeneas/Dido's excursus in the *Aeneid*) was amply proven in the students' relaying of the characters' actions in this task too.

The next task that the students were set was that they were all assigned a character from the excerpt of the *Aeneid* that had been told to them and were asked to put themselves in a hierarchy of importance. The character they believed was most important to the plot of the *Aeneid* was to be at one end of the class and the one that was least important at the opposite end. After debating with one another as to which order they were in, they also had to explain their reasoning to me, with some adjustments to this order happening as they explained this order to me too. This process was repeated a second time, with each student keeping the same 'identity', only this time rearranging themselves in order of the 'most morally in the wrong' to the least. This task was an extremely effective assessment of the students' learning in my eyes, for it demonstrated that the Learning Objectives had been achieved by all 12 students, with all of them volunteering pertinent and interesting reasons for their place in the hierarchies, defending their position where necessary. Even though, when asked, the two students of highest ability had said that oral storytelling was not their favourite way of being exposed to information because they couldn't go at their own pace, I believe that the oral exercise that stemmed from it benefitted them immensely. Mercer *et al.* (2014) and Walker (2018) stress how important oracy is to employment and to generally succeeding in high profile positions (such as in 'politics and top professions') and the confidence in their own oracy is something that my character-sorting task hopefully allowed them to develop. I feel that their eloquent insight into their assigned character's motivations and their articulation of these beliefs to their peers proved both that oral storytelling worked in teaching them a large amount of course content and also that they could use this mode of delivery to 'train up' (for want of a better description) for later life.

Thus, to conclude, I would like to say that my telling of a myth to my Latin class was surprisingly successful. Despite my initial fears that the students would be uninspired if a lesson was so teacher-directed, the feedback received from students was overwhelmingly positive (one girl even asked me as I walked into the next lesson if they could 'do more Aeneas' that day!). The oral nature of the

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storytelling and of the task that followed it allowed for a classroom that was more inclusive of a whole range of abilities and my assessment methods very effectively demonstrated that the whole class had managed to understand the plot sequence of the *Aeneid* and to cast their own verdicts on certain elements of the characters' actions and attitudes. I thoroughly enjoyed the audience engagement and participation present from the outset and I will definitely be attempting more oral tasks like this one in my future lessons.

Transcript

Teacher: Okay, it's time to move to literature now! You know how last week we looked at Cupid and Psyche, this week we're going to jump around a little and have a look at another famous couple from mythology – Dido and Aeneas. We will come around to do look at Cupid and Psyche again, but Ms N—- and I decided that it is more useful to see Dido and Aeneas right now because it is actually a story you will see again next year in your literature paper! I am going to give you some context so that you can pick it up again more easily next year. We're going to start with some starter pictures! In your pairs, discuss what these pictures make you feel and think of.
[Show picture of refugee + circulate]
Ok, what were we thinking then?
Student: War.
Student: Suffering.
Student: They don't look like they're having a good time, miss.
Teacher: No, they really don't, do they? Do you think they have a lot of possessions with them? How would you feel in this situation?
Student: I wouldn't be very happy – they look in so much pain .
Teacher: Can anyone tell me what we call a person who is escaping war like the people in the picture?
Student: A refugee.
Teacher: Exactly. Well done! Try to remember the emotions and thoughts you had just now looking at the picture, because as you will find out later, Aeneas was also a refugee, and it is quite possible that he experienced many similar things to the people we have just seen in the picture.
What about this picture? What do you think when you see this one?
[Show picture of boat in stormy seas]
Student: It's scary.
Student: You're powerless.
Student: You might die.
Student: The boat looks tiny in comparison to the waves
Teacher: These are all fantastic suggestions – the sea is a massive unit and it can be quite scary to have to cross it in a small boat. We are going to hear that Aeneas has to cross the sea like this, and remembering that they are refugees makes this obstacle so much harder to overcome. It's a hugely daunting voyage.
Right: last one before we listen to the myth:
[Show picture of a split road + discussion in pairs]
Teacher: What are your thoughts on this one?
Student: It's a hard decision
Student: Both paths are identical
Student: You could get lost
Teacher: Exactly right! Aeneas will have a series of big decisions to make over the course of his journey from Troy to Rome, which will have a huge impact on his development as a person. His options aren't identical like the paths in the picture, but they are both confusing ones and ones that require a lot of thought on his behalf.
Now we've explored the emotions that Aeneas might be feeling at points in his journey, I'll start to tell you the story of how Aeneas travelled from Troy to Rome and the experiences he had along the way. I want you all to listen carefully because I will be asking you at specific points to comment on what you think might happen next or how the characters might be feeling.
[Story telling from here on in is supplemented by pictures to illustrate what I am saying]
Aeneas came from a place called Troy, which had been torn apart by war for many years by this point. The Greeks had been fighting the Trojans, and eventually the Trojans were beaten -
Student: - Miss, is this the story with the Trojan horse!?
Teacher: Yes! The Trojan horse with all the Greek soldiers inside it is how the Trojans were defeated. As the horse was let into the city and the men came out of the horse, Aeneas realised he had to escape the city if he was to stay alive. He picked up his father Anchises on his shoulders, and brought his son along with him and rushed out of the city. All around him flames were licking at their feet and the city was falling to rubble, and in the midst of all this confusion, Aeneas' wife, Creusa, fell behind. She tells Aeneas that he has a great future waiting for him and that he shouldn't wait for her, and as a result, Aeneas struggles off with the other two members of his family with him.
Student: Miss, what happens to his wife then?
Teacher: Unfortunately, Creusa dies; but she dies knowing that she has let her husband and son survive, and knowing that they are destined to do incredible things for the population that is to become the Romans.
Student: But that's unfair! Why didn't he just leave his dad behind? He was going to die anyway? At least he could have been happy with his wife?
Teacher: Yes, it is unfair, I agree. But you also have to bear in mind that ancient societies were slightly different to our modern ones, and to the Ancient Greeks and Romans, it was the males in the family that mattered. The women weren't nearly as important because they couldn't inherit the family name and reputation and pass it on, so unfortunately that meant that Creusa simply wasn't a priority for Aeneas when it came to escaping. He, of course, was very upset that he was leaving her, but as a dutiful son and father, he had to honour his family line over her. And remember, they are refugees – if you think back to the pictures we saw at the beginning of the lesson, there is only so much that a refugee can physically carry with him, and in Aeneas' case, his wife was one person too many.
Anyway, they have left Troy now, and have safely boarded a boat, which is to take them to Italy. But things are never as simple as they seem, because Juno hated all Trojans and the thought of Aeneas escaping the battle was not something she was happy with.
Actually, does anyone remember who Juno was, we saw her in some sentences we did a few weeks back?
Student: Was she a god?
Teacher: Yes, but she was a very powerful one – married to Jupiter? Does that ring any bells?
Student: I remember something, but I can't tell you -
Teacher: Anyone? No? Ok, so Juno was the queen of the gods and she hated the Trojans because they had offended her. So, she gets Aeolus (god of the wind) to unleash a storm on the Trojans as they are travelling to Rome. Aeneas and his men, after all they have already been through, start to be buffeted around and are tossed from side to side, with waves breaking on them and the elements battering them from all sides.
How do you think Aeneas feels at this moment? Is what is happening to him fair? Remember the picture of the sea at the start – can you link this to the emotions and feelings that we had brainstormed earlier?
[Class discussion]
Ok, thoughts?
Student: He must be pretty upset – he has experienced a lot of pain already and it's just wrong that he has more.
Student: He might be missing home?
Student: He's probably scared that he's going to die in the sea.
Teacher: Absolutely, these are all perfect suggestions for what Aeneas might be feeling right now. It's not an easy journey by any stretch of imagination! Anyway, he is saved from a watery death, because Poseidon realises what Juno had started in his seas and forcibly calms the storm. This allows Aeneas to keep sailing, but by this point, he is a little off course, and arrives at this beautiful, deserted beach on the coast of Africa. Of course, Aeneas has no clue where he is at this point, but he is at least safe for the time being. He and his men get off the boat and start walking into the forest that there is next to the beach and happen to bump into a girl, dressed in leopard-skin and some special boots who tells them where they are and directs them to the palace, where Aeneas will finally meet Dido. Now Aeneas doesn't know it when he starts talking to this hunting girl, but she is actually his mum, the goddess Venus, and she is directing him to Dido on purpose because she wants him to fall, in love with her.
Student: Hang on, so Venus was his mum? How does that work?
Teacher: Yes! Gods had children with humans all the time, so technically Aeneas was half god and half man, and Venus was his mum. Anyway, so Venus sends Aeneas to the palace to meet Dido, and sends Cupid (another one of her sons) to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas, too. He disguises himself as Aeneas' son

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to get close to Dido and shoots her with one of his magic, love-inducing arrows and she and Aeneas start to live their life as a happy couple.
What do you all think about this situation and how Aeneas and Dido met and fell in love? In your pairs discuss whether this is natural? Fair? How does this impact on Aeneas' mission to go to Italy and found Rome?
Student: I don't understand why his mum is trying to make him fall in love – surely if she wants the best for him, she should leave him to be happy and fall in love on his own?
Teacher: Yes, so I can see why you think that, but can you really fault Venus for wanting to ensure that her son gets some love and affection after the terrible things he has had to experience in Troy? Sure, it's not very positive or transparent behaviour on her part, but you can also see where she is coming from, I think. Any thoughts on Aeneas and Dido falling in love?
Student: It's just a bit weird isn't it? The gods are getting far too involved in everything … can't Aeneas just ignore what they want him to do and just be happy by himself?
Teacher: It's unfortunately not that simple – you remember Juno sending the storm after Aeneas? That was a product of her hatred for him and for all the Trojans more generally, imagine if all the gods were following you like that because you had ignored them. It wouldn't be a very pleasant life for you would it! Ok so, Dido and Aeneas are hopelessly in love and Juno convinces them that they have got married in a forest, so they believe that they are going to be living together, happily ever after like in all good fairy tales. That is at least until Jupiter sends a message to Aeneas via another god to tell him that he has to leave, that he is wasting time and that a greater future is waiting for him. Aeneas is heartbroken, but he knows that Jupiter is right and decides that he actually needs to leave. Dido is now even more heartbroken than Aeneas and starts crying desperately. She has now lost everything that is dear to her in her life. Because she had fallen in love with Aeneas, she had kind of let her city go. Her people no longer respected her because she had married a foreigner, her husband had now just left her and she had no kind of family of her own (other than just her sister). It is important to remember that her first husband had been killed by her brother who then forced her to flee her home town, so things are not looking pretty for Dido if I'm being honest. Dido really at this point is deeply unhappy, and tells her sister so, asking her to collect enough firewood for a massive bonfire. Dido doesn't really see the point in living alone anymore and goes to collect all the possessions that reminded her of Aeneas.
What do you think will happen next?
[Class discussion]
Student: She could jump in?
Student: She could burn down her city?
Student: To keep her warm while she cries?
Student: She could make s'mores?
Teacher: Erm, I don't think they had s'mores in Dido and Aeneas' time, but yes that is a possibility I suppose! Think about what she might do with Aeneas' things? What do you think people normally do with their ex's leftover belongings?
Student: Burn them, Miss!
Teacher: Exactly right! Dido tells Anna to build this bonfire so that she can burn all of Aeneas' things, but the minute Anna leaves her, Dido sets the pyre on fire, stabbed herself with Aeneas' sword and fell into the bed of flames that flickered in front of her. In dying, she cursed Aeneas and this is where you guys will pick up the story again in Year 11, because one of the texts you will have to read is the Latin for this curse. It is so beautifully written and you can imagine the emotion that runs through it as Dido curses him with her last words – It's just stunning! However, for now we will leave it at Dido dying, with Aeneas sailing off into the distance. As he sailed, one of his men caught sight of the pillar of smoke that was coming from the shore, and told Aeneas, who wondered what might be happening in Carthage and how Dido was …
Student: So, Miss, he didn't know it was Dido burning?
Teacher: Nope, not a clue. He wasn't to know what effect his actions would have on her and there was no real, fast way of getting information from person to person, so it takes him much longer to realise what was going on in Carthage as he set sail!
Right so now I want everyone to recap what role these characters had in the story [point at ppt and discuss the main features of each character. Assign each person a character] I now want you to get yourselves into order, with the character that you think is most important here closest to the door and the least important to the plot, closest to the window. I then want you to explain why you thought that your character was or wasn't that important!
[Students all reason with each other as to the order that they should be lined up in and then explain it to me. Process is repeated, getting the same students to rearrange themselves in order of the 'most to least morally in the wrong'.]

Perseus and Medusa

Aleksandra Ruczynska

Storytelling can be a very useful educational tool, beyond familiarising students with the plot of the story itself. Bage suggests that as stories consist of 'meaningful words', the telling of them 'promotes literacy', and certain stories can expand knowledge further, as, for instance, 'if set in a place, it will lead to understanding more about history and geography', and a powerful story can raise 'questions of personal, social and moral education' (Bage, 1999, p. 141). Oral storytelling can be especially effective, as Reedy and Lister remark that, in response to the *War with Troy*, 'teachers and pupils were unanimous in emphasising how much they enjoyed and became involved with the story' (Reedy & Lister, 2007, p. 4), indicating that oral storytelling can promote more inclusive learning and engage students of all abilities. This is especially important in light of the views of Mercer *et al.,* (2014) who suggest that oracy is a necessary skill for life, which many children are never sufficiently taught. In light of this, the learning objectives for my lesson were to encourage the students to consider the features of ancient myths, and what makes a good story, as well as to expand the students' listening, speaking and creative writing skills.

I chose the myth of Perseus and Medusa as it fitted the criteria which I had set based on my research about storytelling. I hoped to recreate something of the grand, epic style of storytelling similar to the work of the *War with Troy*, although on a much smaller scale, and the myth of Perseus provides a good balance between the more fantastical search for, and slaying of Medusa, as well as the interpersonal relationships between Perseus and his grandfather or Perseus and the king Polydectes. Furthermore, as Lister describes that the focus on Achilles in the *Iliad*, replicated in the *War with Troy*, 'provides the story with its very strong and well-defined backbone' (Lister, 2006, p. 398), I wanted to keep the focus of my own storytelling around a single hero. Within the story of a fated hero on a mission, I was also able to slightly elevate the language in order to mirror the style of epic poetry. Lister argues that 'visual descriptors help the listener to build up a picture of the various cast members' (Lister, 2006, p. 399), and although in my own telling the number of characters was more limited, I attempted to refer, in particular, to the gods through consistent epithets, e.g. 'thunder-bearing Zeus', and to include some repetition in each instance of divine intervention, although this was an area in which I was not entirely successful (discussed below).

In composing my version of the myth and delivering it, I referred to the qualities which the author Crossley-Holland identifies as crucial for storytellers: memory, thoughtfulness, accuracy, vividness, changes of mood, use of face and hands, and delight. I delivered the myth in a

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single, ten-minute telling, and made sure not to rely on any text but to accurately retell the story from memory, while maintaining a very pleasant manner to encourage the students to take delight in the story. I mimicked some features of fairytale storytelling, combining these with aspects of epic style. I made reference to a collective audience, e.g. 'We begin our story…' and referred to Perseus as 'our hero' on occasion, as well as addressing the listeners directly, for instance in saying 'I'm sure you'd agree…'. I varied my tone and the pacing of speech at specific moments in the story, lowering my pitch in narrating dangers to Perseus, such as in the description of the king of the island, varying between softer and slower speech for 'beautiful ringlets' and emphasising the sibilance in 'hissing serpents', and increasing the pace at 'one sharp blow of his sword'. I also included some direct speech in order to make the story more vivid, which I marked by speaking more loudly, and at a different pitch to the narration. These helped to signal the changes in mood of the story at different points and to make the story more vivid, and, most importantly, to allow students to enjoy the story and the departure from regular lessons. However, some more performative aspects of storytelling were a weakness of my delivery. In particular gestures, which I attempted to use at these same moments, were quite insignificant in my storytelling as I used them sparingly and they were not very emphatic. Additionally, due to time restraints I did not consider rearranging the classroom, but I think this could have helped to mark more clearly the departure from regular lessons, and as Lister highlights the importance of establishing 'a sense of community essential for an effective group listening' (Lister, 2005, p. 404), this could have been achieved more easily in an altered classroom setting.

I also used a slideshow with images representing particular scenes or characters from the story, but I used these sparingly so that the focus would not be removed from the oral storytelling, especially as the language I used was very descriptive. Although I am not sure that the images made a significant contribution to the storytelling, they did capture the students' interest, and provided a springboard for discussion. On the other hand, some of the discussion indicated that the images distracted from the story, as one student asked why Perseus and Medusa's faces looked the same in the statue. Although it was interesting to discuss different art forms, this was not the intention for the lesson, so it may have been better to either omit the images or make more careful choices regarding these.

The discussion which followed provided a means to assess the effectiveness of my storytelling. The initial questions which the students asked about the myth indicated that they had listened carefully and were interested to know more. Some asked about the fate of Perseus' grandfather, while others pointed out alternative versions of the story, which prompted a very useful discussion as a class of the ways in which these stories were originally transmitted (orally), and how this could lead to different versions of the same myth. In answering the question of what makes a good story and what makes a good hero, the majority of the students drew on the story they had heard: they suggested that there should be some kind of mission or objective ('something has to happen'), there should be an enemy or a monster for the hero to defeat, and the hero should be somehow fated (either in birth or his mission) or have some kind of superpower or special weapon. These are, of course, quite common features of any hero story, but the students drew on aspects of the story to back up their answers which indicates that they had listened attentively and were able to pinpoint the aspects of the story which were interesting. Some also suggested improvements to the story. One student commented on the lack of a battle scene, and suggested that a more suspenseful and extended fight would be more realistic and more exciting. Another suggested that some storytellers may wish to use humour 'to lighten up the story'. I agree, and although it was my intention to maintain a more suspenseful and serious tone, I can certainly see the advantages of inserting more humour, especially for a younger year group, as it could make the story more engaging and more memorable. The student in question, when the class was asked to create their own myths, reflected his suggestion in his own retelling of the myth of Persephone, in which he broke up the narrative with short humorous remarks, such as 'and what better surprise than our own gloomy Hades'. This indicates that the student was able not only to draw inspiration from my storytelling in his writing, but to reflect on it to improve it.

The students' own work clearly indicates that the objectives of the lesson were met. Most of those who came up with their own stories followed a similar plot-line to the story I had told, but varied these depending on their interests. Of the 13 pieces of work I had collected, three featured a prophecy about a child, four featured dangerous monsters, two featured banishment, two featured women refusing marriage to kings, and three accurately retold the story of Perseus (often using similar phrasing to my own), and two more retold the story of Persephone. While it is predictable that the story which preceded the task would have significant influence over the students' work, this suggests that my storytelling was successful in making these themes stand out to the students, as they identified these as important to their own storytelling. In terms of the quality of the students' writing, it is difficult to gauge the extent to which it can be directly linked to my storytelling, especially as the students in this class were already good writers. However, there were some students whose work was more descriptive and used more elevated language in comparison to their previous creative writing task (a letter describing Caecilius' villa). This may indicate that, as the topic held a great deal of interest for them, — indeed, one of these students demonstrated his passion for mythology throughout the lesson through the questions he asked me about both Perseus and other myths — perhaps this interest encouraged the students to produce work of higher quality. However, I think an area in which my storytelling was not particularly successful was in prompting the students to use more complex literary and oral devices such as repetition or epithets. I intended to mirror the study carried out by Hannah Walker (2018) who encouraged students to use more oral devices through a sequence of lessons which centred around storytelling. However, I did not use these features extensively enough in my own storytelling to make these obvious, nor emphasise these in the discussion which followed, and if I repeated this lesson with this objective in mind, I would ensure that these features were more prominent. On the other hand, as my primary objective was to expand the students' writing and speaking skills more generally, and these features are only an aspect of these, I do not consider this to have had a very significant negative impact on the effectiveness of the lesson.

Finally, one of the greatest successes of the lesson was in the students' own tellings of their stories. Although they had all written their stories in their exercise books, each of the five volunteers (in itself an encouraging number) who shared their stories with the class chose not to read out their stories but to tell them. In previous lessons I had observed of this class, creative written tasks were always read out by the students verbatim from their books, so this indicates that listening to a story delivered by the teacher encouraged students to attempt telling rather than just reading out their work. This also allowed some students to go beyond what they had been able to compose in their books as a number of students told longer stories with at least an indication of how these would

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conclude, but when I checked their books later, they had only written one or two sentences, indicating that students who are not very confident writers were able not only to participate, but even excel, in this lesson. It also encouraged students to take risks and not rely on having pre-prepared work to read out, which is especially encouraging as the class is a top set, and sometimes wary about taking risks for fear of getting things wrong.

The classroom discussion and work produced by the students were very effective methods of assessment in determining whether my storytelling had achieved its objectives, however, I think that additional discussion with individual students some time after the lesson could have been helpful in determining the students' perceptions of the lesson, as well as to assess the extent to which the story or its features had remained memorable after the lesson. Nevertheless, based on the assessments I did carry out, I consider my storytelling to have helped significantly to achieve the lesson objectives. Besides becoming much more familiar with the story of Perseus, the students all considered some of the features of myth, and used this knowledge to compose their own retellings, or original stories based on the same structure. The work produced by the students reflects that my storytelling was memorable, and the themes present in it left an impression on the students, while the intrinsic interest of the topic of mythology encouraged some to work hard to produce high-quality work. The students' willingness to deliver their own stories orally without reading these out indicates that the format of the lesson also helped to develop the students' confidence in their own storytelling, and, by extension, their speaking skills, and most importantly, to encourage participation from a wider range of students, promoting a more inclusive learning environment.

Echo and Narcissus

Lawrence McNally

I decided to tell the story of Echo and Narcissus to my Year 7 Latin class. I chose this myth because the teachings of the story are still relevant to modern society. I think that by presenting a myth to students with which they can resonate is important for their willingness to engage in listening to the story and completing the subsequent activities. I chose my Year 7 class because they had just finished writing their own horror stories, so the telling of a mythological story fits in with what they had previously been studying.

I started the lesson by telling the students what myth we would be looking at, and I asked if they already knew it. Some of the students said they had already looked at it in previous years but were not fully confident in remembering the details. After the class had been made aware of what we would be looking at, I told them that while listening to the myth, they needed to be thinking about what the moral of the story is. I decided to tell them the question beforehand, so they knew which elements of the story were most important to pay attention to. To make sure instructions were clear to the students, I asked if they knew what I meant by 'moral of the myth'. Some were confused by what 'moral' meant, so before the reading, I asked the students to give me their definition. One student described it as a lesson, or a warning, teaching you to do something or not do something. Although some were initially confused, students were then immediately aware of what they should be looking out for while the myth was being told.

It was also important to choose a version of the myth at an appropriate reading level for the students in the class. As I was reading the mythological story to a class of Year 7 students, I made sure to select a version with accessible language, and that was also not too graphic. I believe that the version I chose worked well; it was long enough for the students to become engaged and interested, but not too long that they got bored and distracted. Similarly, the choice of vocabulary used was not too difficult, so understanding of the story was manageable for the class. Protherough argues that 'trivial, undemanding books spell everything out; they leave nothing for the reader to do; stock formula stories eliminate all sense of the unexpected' (Protherough, 1983, p. 28). I agree with this point - I could have chosen a version of the myth that only used simplistic language; however the enjoyment for students would have been drastically reduced, as they would have been denied the opportunity to actually imagine for themselves. Furthermore, as Protherough (1983) argues, it is more beneficial for students to be challenged when learning, as they are more likely to retain the knowledge if they have been pushed further. The section of the mythological story which focuses on the death of Echo proved to be a highlight for the class, precisely because of the vivid description of her bones rupturing from her skin. Other translations go into more graphic details; however this one is age-appropriate for the class, while still retaining a narrative authentic to the original.

I also decided to let the students know I intended to record the telling of the myth. This was primarily so that I could have a transcript from which I could base my evaluation, but also so that the students knew they had to be quiet, as any noise would interfere with the recording. This method worked well as students were consciously trying to prevent any noise from being made, in the hope of not disturbing the recording.

The myth took just over seven minutes to tell to the class, as the translation I selected was brief and concise. I made the decision to alter my voice when switching between character dialogue, in order to help the students better differentiate between the persons talking. In addition to this, I read sections of the text quicker than others, when a faster pace in the narrative was beneficial. One example of this is when Narcissus first encounters Echo and pushes her away in anger. Similarly, when Narcissus leaves Echo, I slowed down the reading of the repetition of 'alone' to create a sense of internal struggling and sadness. When the reading finished, I paused for a few seconds at the end to give the class time to contemplate the myth for themselves, and additionally this gave the students time to consider their answer to the question asked at the beginning of the myth - what is the moral of the story? Overall, I think the telling of the myth was effective and engaging for the class. I made the decision to stand in one place, rather than move around the room, when reading the mythological story. While moving around the classroom might have added an increased sense of dynamism to the telling, I think that it would instead have proved a distraction to students who just wanted to focus on the actual words of the story, rather than be unable to concentrate because they were instead transfixed on the teacher moving around.

After this, I asked the students what they thought the moral of the myth is. I utilised targeted questioning, to get a better understanding of which students understood what I had asked them. Overall, the students seemed to have accurately been able to

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provide their interpretation of the mythological story's moral - the most interesting of which was that it aims to teach readers not to be so transfixed with themselves that they lose all sense of their own surroundings.

Following this, students were then given post-it notes after the telling of the myth with three questions: What did they learn? What did they enjoy? and What would they change? I decided to tell the students that these notes should be filled in anonymously so that they were honest in their responses and did not feel any pressure to hide their opinions because their name was included. This form of feedback worked quite well. Students were critical of the lesson in a productive way, and offered constructive feedback and suggestions for the next telling of a mythological story. I also think it is important to assess students' learning in this way to see if they have properly understood the lesson objectives, namely, to be able to define the moral of the mythological story of Echo and Narcissus.

I used the first question to see if students were actually paying attention to the myth, or if they were instead otherwise occupied. The majority of responses to the first question were insightful and focused on individual details of the story, showing that students had considered the myth in its entirety and picked out their favourite section. One student said that they enjoyed learning about how the Narcissus flower is named after a character from the myth, and another said that the vivid description of Echo withering away helped their imagination create a mental image of what was happening.

Most students said that they enjoyed having pictures on the board while the story was being told. When I asked why this was, students replied that the images helped them with their understanding of the plot. Interestingly, one student wrote 'I enjoyed that we didn't watch a video, so you could imagine more even though there were pictures.' Students were captivated enough by having pictures on the board, and a video would have prevented them from using their own imaginations. Lister notes that 'listening to the story, rather than reading it, gave the students the chance to think about the story and get the actual thing in their heads' (Lister, 2005, p. 407). From the evidence collected in my own telling of a mythological story, I would agree with this argument. By just listening, students are able to focus on the content of the story, rather than their ability to actually read the text. It is for this reason that I decided not to hand out a transcript of the text. However, if I were to do this again, it would be a good idea to hand this out after the first reading had been completed, so that students could then explore the text for themselves if they missed any particular section.

The third question proved to be a greater challenge for students. Some students asked for an animation to be created which could be played alongside the telling of the myth. However, I think this would just be a distraction and diversion away from the core objective of the lesson - the telling of a mythological story. The addition of other features, such as an animation or storyboard, would only serve to lead students away from the actual content of the myth and instead focus on irrelevant elements. Further still, when the myth is told in its most simple form, with the teacher reading it aloud to them, all students are concentrating on the exact same information. A sense of collective involvement is created within the class, as the absence of distractions creates a strong bond between those listening to the narration.

Further additions could have been added to the telling of the mythological story to improve it for students. Firstly, I made the decision to isolate the telling of the myth to a small section of the lesson, lasting only 30 minutes. Increasing the length of time spent on this myth, and changing it from a singular activity to a full lesson, would have perhaps further engaged students and made them more invested in the story. Instead, the activity was followed by a regular Latin lesson in which students were asked to complete a translation and then a vocabulary test. If I were to teach this again I would have added further activities on top of the feedback, to encourage the students to become more familiar with the story. A set of comprehension questions after the reading would have been useful to consolidate their understanding of the plot, which in turn would have also aided their ability to answer the question of what the moral of the myth is. Further still, an activity which encourages creativity amongst students would have been beneficial. An example of this could be a writing exercise, in which they must adapt the story for a modern audience. This would have further motivated students to consider the underlying themes of the story in a way simply listening to the narration could not. Overall, the telling of the mythological story of Echo and Narcissus worked well. Students were engaged throughout, they were assessed on their understanding through question answering at the end of the activity, and they were all able to meet the lesson objectives.

Transcript

Teacher: Today we're going to look at Echo and Narcissus for our myth of the month. We need to be silent while the myth is being read, so that the recording can pick it up. After we've gone through it, I'm going to ask you what the moral is. Do you know what I mean by 'moral'?

[Class nods]

Teacher: Great. Can someone tell me what it means?

Student A: It's like a lesson, or a warning, teaching you to do something or not do something.

Teacher: That's exactly right, well done. So, while I'm reading the story, make sure you're thinking about what the moral of the story might be. There are some pictures on the whiteboard to help you. Here we go.

There once lived a man, a prophet, who could see into the future the way you and I remember our pasts. His name was Tiresias. One day a woman came to him. She'd given birth to a child she'd named Narcissus, and Narcissus was so beautiful he broke hearts as he wriggled in his cot. She was afraid one of the immortals would envy his beauty and destroy him. Tiresias shook his head. 'The gods pose him no threat. He will have a long life, unless he learns to know himself.' Shaking her head, the woman walked away.

Years went by and with every passing day Narcissus became more beautiful. Wherever he went women fell in love with him. But they never approached him because of his flaw. He wore about himself a glassy pride that kept his suitors at bay.

Up on Olympus Zeus was about his usual pursuits: chasing, kissing nymphs, goddesses, travelling to the earth in disguise, pursuing women. He barely bothered to hide his misbehaviour from his wife. He'd enlisted the help of a nymph called Echo. If ever Zeus' wife Hera came too close to catching Zeus in the act, Echo was to distract her with an endless stream of pointless prattle until Zeus had finished.

They played this trick once too often. Zeus' wife Hera saw through it. 'Nymph, always you want the last word. From now on you shall have nothing else.' Echo opened her mouth to answer and out came 'Nothing else. Nothing else. Nothing else.' From then on she could not speak for herself. She was condemned to trail behind others, stealing meaning from their last few words. She went to the earth. By chance she saw that lovely young man Narcissus. She fell in love with him at once.

For months she followed him, waiting for the words to come with which she could proclaim her love. At last, the moment came. Narcissus and his friends went hunting in a forest. They became separated from one another. Narcissus called, 'Is anybody here?' Echo joyfully stole the word: 'Here!' 'Then come to me, come to me!' She ran to him. She put her arms around him. He pushed her away. 'Get off

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me! What are you? I suppose like all the others you love me.' 'Love me,' she said 'Love me.' 'I would rather die' said Narcissus 'than let you lie with me.' 'Lie with me,' she said 'Lie with me.' 'Leave me alone.' He fled. 'Alone,' said Echo 'Alone. Alone.'

Poor Echo was a slender thing. Her sorrow made her slighter still. She became spindly, bony, pale, gaunt, feeble, frail. One morning when she tried to stand her sharp bones ruptured through her thin skin. Her body collapsed in on itself. Only her voice survived, hiding in caves, hiding among high hills.

Weary of that stupid nymph Narcissus went to a pool to drink. It was a perfect pool, as smooth as any mirror. He leant over the side and saw a face of such beauty that suddenly he was filled with another kind of craving. He leant forward to kiss it but it broke into wrinkles. He gave a cry of anguish. He lay beside the pool like a fallen statue. He was transfixed by it. Time and again he tried to capture it. He mistook this image for the other person who would complete him.

And so, the prophecy of Tiresias was fulfilled. Narcissus had learned to know himself, and his awful torture began. No thought of food or drink would take him from the spot. His eyes could never have their fill. At last he said, 'You, please, come to me. Lie with me. Love me. When I laugh, I see you laugh. When I smile, you smile. When I cry, you shed tears. You give me every indication that you love me and yet we do not embrace. I think I understand: I am in love with myself. Always we will be together and yet always we will be apart. I have loved you in vain.' Echo took the words: 'I have loved you in vain. I have loved you in vain.'

Narcissus closed his eyes and lay his head upon the ground. His soul drifted out of his open mouth beneath the crust of earth, down a steep flight of stairs, into the underworld, into the land of many guests, the realm of the dead. As his soul drifted across the River of Forgetfulness it left behind all memory. Even so, some urge too powerful to resist drew it to the edge of the river, where it leant over the side and stared at the greasy smear of a reflection that quivered on the surface of the water.

Up on the earth rumours reached a village: lovely Narcissus was dead. So, the people searched the forest to burn the corpse with proper honours. But they never found a body. Instead they came upon a delicate flower with white and yellow petals leaning over the edge of a pool as if gazing at its own reflection.

Okay, so I hope you enjoyed that. I'm going to give you a few minutes, working in pairs, to discuss what you think the moral of the story is.

[3-minute break]

Teacher: Right, can we be quiet and face the front please. Does anyone think they have an idea about what the moral might be? (Teacher picks student with hand up)

Student B: It could be about… like… you need to love yourself to love other people.

Teacher: That's an interesting idea. Did Narcissus love himself? (Students nod their heads). And did he love other people? (Students shake their heads). Right okay, so perhaps the moral might have something to do with not being too obsessed with yourself, right? (Teacher picks another student with their hand up)

Student C: Maybe it's about not, like, loving yourself too much because then you can't love anyone else.

Teacher: I think that's spot on, well done. And do you know what word we get from Narcissus? (Student C shakes head) (Teacher picks student with hand up)

Student D: Narcissistic?

Teacher: That's exactly right, well done. Being narcissistic means that you love yourself too much.

Theseus and the Minotaur

Benjamin Connor

Which myth should I choose? Although I loved the idea of doing the *Iliad* as Cambridge School Classics Project 's *War with Troy* did, for a single hour lesson, it was clear that this would be far too long. Lister also makes a fair point that it would be difficult to just take one element such as the death of Hector without having to explain how on earth this war started in the first place (2005, pg.398). However, I wanted to make sure the myth was still one that would have a wide appeal: action, monsters, human relationship and tragedy. It was for this reason I decided to cover 'Theseus and the Minotaur'. It has the young men and maidens taken to be sacrificed which I felt the students might connect with, a fearsome monster, a young hero, the terrible treatment of poor abandoned Ariadne and the tragic death of Aegeus.

Following this, it was a question of which year group? My mentor and I decided that the Year 7s might be the best class for this as they are new to the ancient world, the older GCSE years probably either know many myths or that we didn't want to take them away from GCSE work (assessments, grammar lessons, *Cambridge Latin Course* etc.). I questioned the students beforehand with their familiarity of Theseus and the Minotaur and was pleased to see that out of the 26 students, only three put up their hand to say they knew the story (thankfully they promised not to reveal any spoilers).

And yet what about engaging the students? I was worried that if I just stood in front of the class and told the story, they would potentially be disengaged, especially if not told well. I felt that the solution to this was to first make sure that there were pictures and maps. This could help less imaginative students to picture the events and be aware of where it was taking place and to help them remember important parts such as Theseus' promise regarding the sail. Originally, I wanted to have text with each of the pictures, but I felt that this would distract them from listening to me due to reading.

My other ways to keep them engaged were to use props, an activity and to ask questions. For props, I had two mystery bags. The first was to introduce them to the concept of drawing lots. I did this by having a bag with seven ping pong balls, one being orange. I then chose seven volunteers. Whoever picked the orange ball was to be 'sent to the Minotaur' thus including an activity within the story. The other bag contained the two gifts of Ariadne: a very large ball of wool (1040m worth) and a plastic Greek-style sword from the local fancy dress shop. Asking questions was to make sure they were following the story and to see if they could guess what might happen next.

In order to see how the students felt, besides watching them, I also provided a questionnaire. This survey asked 'What were your favourite parts of the story? What did you like about how the story was told? Is there anything you would change, and would you have a lesson like this again?' The second question included a table which had different elements of the storytelling such as the story itself, the tone of voice, props, the pictures, the questions and how interested they were from strongly agreeing down to strongly disagreeing. I made sure to tell them not to put their names down so that their responses would be anonymous which I felt would mean that they would be more honest with their responses rather than afraid that they might upset me. Furthermore, I wanted to see how they remembered the story and so I set them some homework: to recount the story through any method they'd like whether that was a timeline, a PowerPoint, a short story, a comic book, etc.

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I must admit, overall, the storytelling seems to have gone over very well. Throughout the story, they were silent and looking at me and the pictures very intently. This also seems to be supported overall by their responses on the questionnaire. The students overall enjoyed the story, 77% strongly agreeing with this and 33% agreeing and 92% strongly agreed that overall, they were interested, though I must admit I wish I had rewritten this question to say 'engaged'. They also had a wide range of choice when it came to their favourite part. I must admit, I learnt an important lesson on prejudice: I assumed that the most popular bit would be the death of the Minotaur (23% said this), but it was Ariadne being abandoned (33%). Some students showed a deep empathy with Ariadne, feeling that she had been taken advantage after all she did for Theseus, though one student enjoyed this scene as it was 'savage'. Perhaps the preference of scene is due to the human element or I should have made the monster more terrifying. Another sign of engagement was merely after I had told the story, the number of questions that students had was quite impressive.

In terms of the story's delivery, they seemed to have liked my gestures and tone of voice. The students also appreciated the pictures, as one student wrote 'the pictures helped me to picture the story'. Furthermore, the lots provided not just an explanation but also a way for the students to interact with the story and to have some fun. Through this storytelling, I really learnt the importance of fun interactive moments and its importance in the reinforcement of memory, as not only did they have fun, it also taught them the concept of the term 'lots' and they seem to have remembered it. But to see the true impact, I asked them as a homework to retell the story in any way they liked. I ended up with a wonderful mix, some students recounting my version of Theseus and the Minotaur almost word for word, some doing detailed timelines, others drawing comics and others drawings of their favourite scenes. Overall, the students remembered the story very well, though some did make minor mistakes, my favourite being 'the Minotaur had a rhino's head', right next to a picture they got from online of a Minotaur, with a bull's head. I was amazed at how an oral telling of a story can have such an impact as Reedy and Lister showed with the *War with Troy* recording in terms of enthusiasm for reading and writing and engagement (Reedy & Lister, 2007, pp.4-5). What also made me very happy was that one student not only made an amazing 93 slide video with lots of pictures and information but had bothered to research further into information for Crete and Athens out of his own sense of curiosity.

However, this is not to say that there were not things that I would not improve on. Referring back to the homework, I have to admit as much as the efforts were impressive, giving them such a wide range of what was acceptable for their homework meant that some students only did one favourite scene which ranged from great detailed work that clearly took a lot of effort to sketches that were pretty rushed and quick. At minimum the timeline showed a recollection, but I feel it is a shame that clearly some students put in such a huge amount of work in retelling Theseus and the Minotaur such as long rewrites or even a half-hour long video, compared to those who did the former. I certainly think I would set the homework to be a bit more specific in some ways such as 'retell the WHOLE story in any way you like' rather than give the option of 'portray your favourite scene'. Additionally, as much as overall they said they enjoy the questions, looking at the transcript, I realise that over a 20-minute story, I only asked six questions (originally seven but I pressed to the next slide too early thus giving an early reveal of Ariadne's fate). I also reckon that they were probably too simple. I'm happy that I used them as a method to check they were paying attention, but again, each time I asked for volunteers. I possibly should have asked random students to get a wider range of answers and to see a) if they were really paying attention, and b) what they thought might happen next. One of my surveys also had an interesting comment regarding questions stating: 'write some stuff down like a quiz'. I thoroughly agree, I believe this student was asking for more of a challenge. After the story, some questions and the survey, the total of which took around 35 minutes, we all carried on speaking about myths in general, the culture of ancient Minoan Crete and the importance of bulls, and explaining the homework and giving them some time to plan it. I think it would have been good to have given them a quick quiz to see how much they had remembered in the short term and gone through the answers of said quiz so that they would have had the story reinforced in their memory.

Another point that I would have to consider is the interactive activity itself. Two claimed they disagreed that they enjoyed the props which includes the lots. One specifically referenced it, but I am not taking it too seriously as a comment as I surmise it is the young lady who got the orange ping pong ball of death as it says 'I do not like that orange ping pong ball'. The other, who also stated that they wanted more of a quiz element, mentioned that she wanted to 'interract [*sic*] more'. A third comment appeared in my survey in which a student stated that even though she really enjoyed the lots, in fact it was her favourite part of the lesson, 'everyone needs a go'. I was so worried about drawing lots taking too much time if I did it with the whole class that I decided to do a limited interactive exercise. The students enjoyed it and laughed, but I believe that this specific questionnaire reveals a deep, mostly not admitted, sentiment: it was not fair that not everyone got a turn. Therefore, I feel that should I tell a story like this again, I will either have to create an interactive activity that is fun and inclusive of the entire class or a series of smaller interactive moments that allow for everyone to have a turn. The former may have to involve less intrusive interactive bits; I estimate doing the lots for every student would have taken far too long and it would have been harder to settle all the students down after the event. The latter could be done, but I worry that it would create too many breaks during a story. Inevitably, you can't please everyone. Perhaps I could have done something like printed out a complicated labyrinth for them to find the escape from, but this feels far too simple. This is something I will do in the future in order to have more activities relating to the story, not all in an ostentatious manner.

I believe that my last two points really lead to a single conclusion: this lesson could have been planned better as storytelling lessons lend themselves to many possibilities. I believe that I was worrying too much over which myth and how to tell it and how long it would take and a survey that I neglected to do better planning for the lesson. Due to my mentor being absent, I also did not check with her how my lesson was planned, and I should have checked it with somebody. However, the most important lesson I learnt was not to panic. I can narrate a story and the kids do seem to really enjoy it. However, I seriously need to consider: how to ask more and varied questions to the students regarding the story to challenge them more, to set a homework that better reflects the students' ability and doesn't give them a way to take the 'easy way out', and to make sure that I have more interactive abilities during the whole story that will help them remember more and that are more inclusive.

Transcript

Storyteller: Shhhh… Our tale begins thousands of years ago when the Greek gods lived atop Mount Olympus and watched the affairs of mortal men. On the island of Crete, there was a mighty king called Minos. Minos was a powerful

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man and a cruel tyrant with a mighty army. He lived at Knossos in Crete, in a beautiful palace with many guards and many slaves and the company of his intelligent and beautiful young daughter, Ariadne.

However underneath his palace, there was something very disturbing. A very complicated maze which no mortal man nor beast could ever escape. This was good for the labyrinth, as you can see here…

With all of its windings and twisting and dead ends, kept within it a terrifying beast, known as the minotaur. The minotaur was a huge man with the head of bull, enormous horns, red eyes and sharp teeth and covered in dark fur. It looked somewhat like this. Now what do you think it ate? Yes?

Student: People.

Storyteller: It ate human flesh and Minos had to send poor victims into the labyrinth in order to be eaten. One day, Minos decided that he wanted to expand his kingdom. That is when he decided to take his navy and his army across the sea to invade Athens.

At this time Athens was a small town ruled by the fair and kind King Aegeus, an old man who cared deeply for his people. Once he saw the armies of Minos coming on the shore, he knew there was nothing he could do. The Athenian army was powerless against them. They would surely be destroyed. So, Aegeus ran down to the beach, fell down on his knees in front of Minos and begged him: 'Please King Minos you are so powerful, do not destroy my beloved Athens'.

Minos thought for a second and stroked his big long black beard and with his cruel eyes looked down on Aegeus and said, 'I will spare Athens, providing that you give me seven young men and seven young girls to be eaten by my minotaur.'

Aegeus obviously did not want to do this; however, he had no choice. Either the city would be destroyed, or he would have to sacrifice these children. The Athenians people, obviously, were very unhappy. The mothers of these children were crying. Who would be chosen and sacrificed? Well Aegeus came up with a fair way to choose who would be sent. He decided that the victims would be drawn by lot. Does anyone know what it means to be drawn by lot?

Student: That is randomly.

Storyteller: Randomly picked, yes. I need 7 volunteers, oh gosh, you were very excited, you.., you as well, you, you, you, you. How many is that? … one, two, three, four, five, six…, there we go.

[Students get a bit excited]

Storyteller: Everyone… calm down.

In this bag, I have 7 ping pong balls. The Athenians were very fond of ping pong!

[Laughter]

Storyteller: Unfortunately, that is not true. One of them however is a different colour. Whoever gets the one of a different colour is going to be the Athenian victim who is sent to be eaten by the minotaur?

Now, I want you to put your hand in the bag, don't look at the balls, just hold in your hand and when I say to reveal the ball, put your hand up in the air and show everyone what colour you've got.

Student: Got it!

Storyteller: You first, don't look

Student: There is nothing in there! Oh no..

[Laughter]

Storyteller: That was the trick! Ok there we go. Who is going to be eaten?

[Students are commenting]

Storyteller:All the balls are white but one, one is orange. Orange is the colour of death.

Student: It is going to be me… it is going to be me…

Storyteller: OK, everyone? Shall we see which of our poor Athenians is to be sent to the Minotaur. Can you raise your hands in the air? In front of everyone?

[Lots of laughter]

Storyteller: Ho! Ho ho ho! I am sorry you are going to be one of the first Athenian children sent to be eaten by the Minotaur. You can return the balls to me.

Student: I told you it's gonna be me!

Storyteller: Maybe they will spare you, you clearly have the ability to tell the future, you might be an oracle, I'll have to send you to Delphi. Delphi is where the oracle was.

Student: Did you get that from Horrible History?

Storyteller: No. OK, settle down everyone, we are returning to the story.

[Everyone goes very quiet]

Storyteller: Now, this was done every seven years. Every seven years, seven young men and seven young women were chosen. On the third try, after 21 years, Theseus was chosen. Now, this upset Aegeus deeply because Aegeus was Theseus' father. He did not want to send his son to this horrible place to be eaten by a minotaur so he begged his son 'Please, Theseus, don't go! I am the king. We can change the result.' Theseus however said no. 'I have been chosen by the lot just like previous Athenians have been chosen by the lot. It would be unfair for me not to go. But father I plan to go and I will slay the minotaur and save the victims or die trying.' Aegeus was deeply moved by his son's words and so, he agreed that his son should go but before he went, he made him make a promise. 'Theseus my son, when you go, when the ship returns, I want you to make sure that if you are dead, because the minotaur has killed you, the ship will sail under a black sail. If, however you are alive, the ship will return with a white sail'.

Theseus who loved his father very much hugged his father and promised that he would sail the ship under a white sail if he was alive or the ship would return with a black sail if he were dead.

At this point, the Athenians, including Theseus, were led onto the ship and were taken all the way across the sea to the island of Crete. There, they were led by the guards, in chains to the throne room of Minos. The Athenians held the heads down low and shuffled along slowly trying to avoid the gaze of terrifying king Minos, whose cruel eyes were watching in pure delight that he had more food for the Minotaur. All the Athenians, that is bar one, Theseus. He was not afraid, he walked in his head held high, his long hair flowing showing absolute bravery. And who should see him but the daughter of king Minos, princess Ariadne. Now she saw Theseus and how handsome he was and how brave he was. She could not resist. She fell in love at first sight. And so, she fell so deeply in love that she decided she would be willing to betray her own father, king Minos. That night Theseus was brought to a cell. He was to be the first to be sent to the Minotaur. As he tried to sleep, he suddenly heard the door creek open. He woke up startled. 'Who's there?'

Who do you think it was?

Student: Ariadne.

Storyteller: Ariadne was there. And Ariadne was holding a bag and she came up to Theseus and she said 'Oh, brave Theseus. I've seen you from a distance and I have fallen deeply in love with you. I want to help you, but I will only help you if you promise to marry me.' Now, Theseus heard this, and he was not exactly fond of the idea of getting married to a complete stranger. Would you want to get married to someone you hardly knew?

Students: No, no… potentially… [lots of laughter]

Storyteller: Theseus however knew that he needed all the help he could get to slay the Minotaur. So, he turned to Ariadne and said 'Of course. O beautiful princess of Crete, I promise that I will take you far away from Crete back to my hometown of Athens and there I will marry you'. Ariadne was so happy that she immediately handed over the bag.

What do you think was in the bag?

Student: A sword…

Storyteller: Very good, you are correct. There is a sword. You need a sword to kill a minotaur… and?

Student: Some string?

Storyteller: Why string?

Student: To have him to be able to follow the path back

Storyteller: Yes. Did you get that as well (redacted)?

Student: Yes.

Storyteller: Good. And so here is the wool. If you want to know when I bought that I did not realise that this was a thousand meters worth of wool. So, it is probably just right for the labyrinth. It is quite a big amount.

The next morning, Theseus was brought by the guards into the dark, frightening labyrinth. And so, when the guards closed the door, the first thing he did was, he got out from under his cloak the wool and tied it to his belt and he tied the other end to the door, so that no matter how far he went he would always find his way back. Holding his sword beside him he began to walk through the labyrinth. It was terribly dark he felt terribly alone except for a slight groaning he could hear deep down. And suddenly footsteps going through the labyrinth. Theseus knew the minotaur was approaching. He started to run forward to try and face it. He turned to the left, there was nothing there. He turned to the right, again, nothing there. Finally, as he carried on walking, he could hear it getting closer but he could not see it and he found himself at a dead end. When he turned around to find another way, that is when he saw the minotaur. The huge beast roared and charged at him. Theseus barely had time to draw his sword. He rolled out of the way. The monster crashed into the wall and picking up a fallen brick threw it at

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Theseus in anger. But Theseus was too quick he jumped backwards, managing just about to avoid the stone hitting him. After this he began to pull out his sword and to fend it off, he started to push back at it but the beast was not afraid. It began to claw at him.

However, when it did its final charge, Theseus, full of courage, stabbed the beast straight in the throat. The beast began to let out a low gurgling sound as blood began to fill its throats. Soon the minotaur fell to its knees, rolled on to the floor and was dead. Theseus then knew this was his chance to escape. He ran back following the string and he managed to open up the door. He ran to Ariadne. He said, 'Ariadne, we have no time we have got to go and free the other Athenians. Let us go now.' Ariadne had stolen the keys from the jailer. She opened up all the cells and the Athenian men and women ran out and ran with Theseus and Ariadne to the ship.

By the time Minos heard the news, he looked out of his palace window and saw the ship was sailing across the horizon. He screamed in anger, he screamed in absolute rage, 'Curse this Theseus, you have killed my minotaur,' and he went to the throne room to sulk.

Meanwhile, Theseus and Ariadne were happily sailing away. Theseus was being told by Ariadne about how happy she was about their future relationship together. 'Oh, Theseus, isn't it going to be wonderful? We are going to be happily married. Your father will be so happy when there is a white sail and that he's got a new daughter in law'. Theseus hearing this managed to suppress a sigh. He was not going to marry her. It was then he saw an island and Theseus had the terrible idea. 'Oh, Ariadne, isn't that island rather beautiful? I have just defeated the minotaur, the Athenians are free, do you want to be my wife? Why don't we go onto that island and celebrate?' Ariadne thought it was a wonderful idea. They all went onto the island and they began to drink enormous quantities of wine. They ate delicious food from the animals of the island, like rabbit and boar. And they played games, they raced each other, they wrestled.

Suddenly Ariadne was overwhelmed with the excitement and she fell asleep. When she woke up, however, she found that the island was quite quiet. There was nobody there and she looked out onto the horizon and saw the ship sailing away. How do you think she felt?

Student: Depressed.

Student:Betrayed.

Student: Sad.

Storyteller: You are entirely correct. Ariadne was heartbroken. This man had promised to marry her and what had he done? He had taken her away from all after all the help she gave him and abandoned her on a deserted island. Ariadne pulled at her hair and screamed the heavens. 'O gods, make it so that Theseus forgets his promise to his father just as he forgot his promise to me'. The gods heard this, and they agreed. So, Aegeus waited on the cliff edge out of Athens, watching the sea. He was desperate to see his son return.

But what colour sail do you think he saw?

Student: Black.

Storyteller: Correct. He saw a black sail because the gods had made Theseus forget to change the sail. Theseus was well and truly alive; he had just forgotten because of the gods. But Aegeus did not know this. As soon as he saw that black sail he was filled with grief. 'My poor boy has died all alone in a horrific labyrinth and is being eaten by a monster as we speak'. He could not face it anymore, and so Aegeus jumped off the cliff -

[Students whispering 'Oh no']

Storyteller:- and fell to his death. Now Theseus returned to Athens a hero and returned to Athens a king but at the cost of breaking his promises.

And that is the story of Theseus and the minotaur. There we go.

Student: You know how his dad killed himself, isn't that a little bit like Cleopatra and her husband?

Storyteller: Cleopatra did kill herself using a snake, it was an asp. Actually, as an interesting fact, the sea around Athens is named after Aegeus. It is called the Aegean Sea. So, there we go. Yes?

[Lots of enthusiastic conversations…]

Storyteller: When someone asks questions, you should be polite and listen to your peers -

Student: How did he get into the labyrinth with the sword?

Storyteller: He stuck it under his cloak. You are right, if they had found the sword they would have immediately confiscated it.

Student: Surely the minotaur could have figured out how to get out?

Storyteller: I am going to assume for now that the minotaur is not very bright. He does have the body of a human but he does have the head of a bull. And I do not think a cow is quite as intelligent as a man! Maybe you could fool me!

Student: The question is how is the minotaur alive?

Storyteller: Because he is being fed by human flesh.

Student: How was he created in the first place?

Storyteller: It was a punishment from the god Poseidon. Essentially it was the son Minos, it was a punishment however because he had received a white bull, which proved he should be king of Crete. He was meant to sacrifice it though and give it to Poseidon, he liked the bull so much he did not. So as a punishment Poseidon made sure he had a son that had the head of a bull.

[Students are asking how he could survive without water]

Storyteller: We could assume that there is a well in there, or maybe water fell through somehow?

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