

# Sample: Ancient Egypt/Ancient Greece

Unlike other curricula which depend on certain books, *TruthQuest History's* commentary brings depth to any reading. Our topic-specific booklists simply show the rich possibilities! Relax; choose from whatever is available. (\*Starred books were in-print at the time of this writing.)

## 4É Greek Beliefs (Mythology)

Cinch your belts! We're about to wrestle down the most important aspect of the ancient Greeks—their beliefs. Remember, the force which shapes people's thoughts and actions is what they believe to be true about life's two most critical questions: *Who is God?* and *Who, then, is mankind?* In fact, what one believes about God (*Big Belief #1*) completely determines what one believes about mankind (*Big Belief #2*), and what one believes about *both* shapes everything else: government, war, art, science, mathematics, literature, architecture, business, family life, and more! In other words, no matter what any person or nation thinks, their God-relationship is at the core of their entire life!

### É Myths

You can see, then, that to understand the Greeks, we must know their *Big 2 Beliefs*: what they thought to be true about God (or gods) and themselves. What are these beliefs? They are a people's religion and philosophy. So, we'll explore the deepest beliefs of the Greeks, but this raises a tricky issue, for the Greeks did not serve the true God, Jehovah. Instead, they devised their own stories of creation, as well as numerous gods and goddesses. Furthermore, they concocted many religious legends—called *myths*—about these characters, and you'll notice these gods and goddesses displayed highly *human* character qualities! No wonder!

*What happens when mankind makes 'god' in his own image?* This is not just a question about the past, but is very much about the present and future, for many people today have taken the liberty of whipping up a 'new and improved god' who turns out to be very much in their own image. This new 'god' is said to be the force of self-exploration, self-affirmation, self-actualization, self-empowerment, self-fulfillment, and all the other buzzwords you hear nowadays. This is a classic case

### É Humanism

of *humanism*: making humans the center of the universe, not the Lord God. As you get to know the Greeks, and see what came of their land, you'll begin to have a sense that throughout history, mankind has tried to replace the True God with himself—whether the self-emphasis be on human government, the human body, human ideas, human achievements, human pride, human desires, etc. We do this as nations and as individuals—even as Christian individuals—hugely or in quiet little corners of our own hearts. You see, we have something in common with the Greeks—maybe too much!

└ You *must* know what God said about the Greek gods by reading Acts 17:16-34.

But it's not just in spiritual matters that we can identify with the Greeks, for Greek thinking is still revered and embraced in western civilization. It has had an enormous impact through the

centuries—both for good and for bad. As Greek thought still shapes our view of the world, it is terribly important to understand it down to its very roots. That way, we can much better recognize it, and then sort out the good from the bad.

*However, any youth studying the Greeks' religion must be grounded in God's Word and firmly committed to his beliefs, for even in this historical and analytical context there is potential for spiritual confusion. This is especially true because some elements of Greek mythology are a close counterfeit to biblical elements (which is hardly surprising since deception is the speciality of darkness). Only you, the parent, can prayerfully determine your student's readiness. I hope this caution has not overly frightened you, though, for there is good reason to explore Greek beliefs from the strong foundation of truth on which we stand, not doubting the truth when we face a counterfeit.*

If you decide to proceed, do not be swept away by the drama and color of the Greek myths, for the Greeks were great storytellers. Keep your focus instead on discerning the *Big 2 Beliefs* revealed in each of the myths. Remember, you will be watching how the Greeks made gods in their own image: gods and goddesses who embodied the characteristics most admired by the Greeks, and who 'acted' so that the Greeks didn't appear 'guilty' for their own actions in comparison. How convenient!

### *ThinkWrite: Investigation Supreme!*

We're not studying the Greeks just to gain a little more knowledge! In fact, the Bible says (I Cor. 8:1) *knowledge puffs up!* What we want is *wisdom!* That's deep understanding of the truth. You'll get a good gulp of wisdom by studying the Greeks *if* you do the hard work of cracking the Greek code.

What's the Greek code? It's the beliefs they held deep in their hearts about the most important issues in life: *Who is God? Who, then, is mankind?* I call these the *Big 2 Beliefs*. So, let's find out, Sherlock. What did the Greeks believe? Look for clues! Probe deeply, and you'll spot them.

And here's where you start: *Did the Greeks know, believe, and obey the true God?* That's *Big Belief #1*. No, the Greeks devised their own gods, and you can probe deep into the Greek heart by seeing what *kind* of gods they made. In whose image were they made? What characteristics were important to them? How did they say their gods behaved?

There are two parts to this code you'll be cracking. *What value did Greeks place on human life? What was the basis for that value?* Knowing the 'behavior' of the Greek gods, how did Greek people behave? How did they care for the weak, the young, and the elderly? What qualities made people respected? What goals did they strive to achieve?

These *Big 2 Beliefs* show up in all Greek art, architecture, literature, drama, science, and philosophy! Try to pick one aspect of Greek culture and show how it is an outworking of their beliefs.

Of course, you can't answer these questions *yet*, but you older students *can* as you work through this study. Each time you come across a point, jot it in your notebook and assemble it as a major report—the *Investigation Supreme*—due at the end of this study.

Hint: When meeting the Greek legends of demigods (half-god/half-human), don't forget that Satan is a counterfeiter. He wanted to despoil the beauty of Christ's virgin birth.

To keep focus on the *real* reason for studying Greek mythology, have your students now begin the crucial *ThinkWrite–Investigation Supreme!* in the sidebar. They will work on this throughout their study of ancient Greece, as it will help them sift down to the real issues at stake and bring in correlating truth. Don't forget that God gives us wisdom when we ask, as the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth!

If you parents decide not to proceed with this topic, you should at least read the teacher notes on the *Investigation Supreme!* in Appendix 1 at the rear of this guide, so you can know the heart of the spiritual issues surrounding the Greeks and their influence on our world today. This is the root of Greek culture *and much of western civilization*, and all study without a grasp of that root will be superficial and valueless.

Remember, much of Israel's rich history was occurring at the same time. The Greeks thus had the opportunity, it seems, to hear of the true God. It's interesting to discover what was happening in Greece when King David was on the throne of Israel, for example. Hopefully you have a trustworthy timeline resource (such as *\*Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*, by John Walton) which points out some intriguing historical intersections.

Ready? Let's dive in!

#### 4aÉ General resources

*Don't be overwhelmed here or be 'guilted' into a lengthy study of Greek mythology. My basic recommendation is to pick up one compendium (the books listed in this section); I've highlighted two favorites below. Then pick up one book on King Midas from the subsequent section on individual mythological characters. You'll have given your children a taste of Greek beliefs and enough familiarity with them to understand the many phrases in our modern language which link back to Greek mythology.*

- \* *Story of the World*, by Susan Wise Bauer, Ch. 23 Gr. 3-6
- \* Greenleaf's *Famous Men of Greece*, Intro and Ch. I-VI Gr. 3-7
- \* *Story of the Greeks*, by H.A. Guerber, Ch. VI, VIII-XII Gr. 4-9
- Book of the Ancient Greeks*, by Dorothy Mills, pp. 42-59 Gr. 6-12
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- \* *Child's History of the World*, by V.M. Hillyer, Ch. 10 Gr. 1-4
- \* *d'Aulaire's Book of Greek Myths*, by Ingri & Edgar d'Aulaire Gr. 1-6  
This is the preferred choice of many families for their young children! It has rich tone and artwork, and is 'safer' in many cases.
- \* *Greek Gods and Heroes*, by Alice Low Gr. 1-6  
This is a nice second option for young children, if the d'Aulaire book is not available. (Also published as *Macmillan Book of Greek...* and *Simon & Schuster Book of Greek...*)
- Olympians: Great Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Greece*, by Leonard E. Fisher Gr. 1-6

\* *Adventures of the Greek Heroes*, by Mollie McLean & Anne Wiseman Gr. 2-9

*Stories of Gods and Heroes*, by Sally Benson Gr. 4-9

*The Heroes*, by Charles Kingsley Gr. 4-12  
Classic author retells the myths for youths.

\* *Tanglewood Tales* **and** \* *A Wonder Book* Gr. 4-12  
by Nathaniel Hawthorne  
A highly prized version and good choice for middle and older students! Esteemed author retells the myths with less darkness.

Ⓛ Remember! Grade listings in the booklists refer to reading level, not content! Many of these topics are too dark and too intense for most young'uns! And I've not even seen most of the modern books. Parents, you must carefully decide what, and how much, to read!

\* *Greek Myths*, by Olivia Coolidge Gr. 5-12

\* *Tales of the Greek Heroes*, by Roger Lancelyn Green Gr. 6-12

\* *Mythology*, by Edith Hamilton Gr. 8-12  
Hamilton is respected for her knowledge of ancient Greece.

\* *Theogony*, by Hesiod Gr. 10-12  
A famed Greek poet of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC lays out Greek mythology. Hesiod's works are discussed and included in: \* *Ancient History from Primary Resources*, by the Bluedorns. You may want their commentary before diving into Hesiod.

## Fiction

\* *Mount Olympus Basketball*, by Kevin O'Malley Gr. 2-5  
I've not seen this, but it introduces the main Greek gods by having them in a basketball game with modern players, using their various 'specialties' to win the game.

## 4bÉ Stories of individual mythological characters

*There are stand-alone volumes on many individual mythological characters in picture-book format for young children. I discovered that there are also a few new, novel-type books on individual characters for older students, but the descriptions seemed so dark that I couldn't bring myself to list most here. All these characters are covered in the compendium books listed in the previous section, so there is really nothing anyone 'must' do in this section, but some of the King Midas books are wonderful and his story is one students should know.*

## É Aphrodite

*Two Queens of Heaven: Aphrodite and Demeter*, by Doris Gates Unknown

## É Atalanta

\* *Atalanta's Race*, by Shirley Climo Gr. 3-7

## É Cadmus

- \* *There's a Monster in the Alphabet*, by James Rumford Gr. 3-6  
Retells the story of Cadmus and his gift of the alphabet.

## É Cupid

- \* *Cupid and Psyche*, by M. Charlotte Craft Gr. 2-7  
I've heard this has gorgeous illustrations!

## É Demeter

- Two Queens of Heaven: Aphrodite and Demeter*, by Doris Gates Unknown

## É Heracles (Herakles/Hercules)

- \* *Hercules*, by Robert Burleigh Gr. 2-6

- \* *Twelve Labors of Hercules*, by James Riordan Gr. 3-7

- Adventures of Hercules (Legacy)* Gr. 3-8  
by Clifton Fadiman  
This is in a nice older series.

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- \* *Hercules: Complete Myths of a Legendary Hero*, by Georges Moroz Gr. 4-12

- Mightiest of Mortals: Heracles*, by Doris Gates Gr. 4-12

## É Jason

- \* *Story of the Greeks*, by H.A. Guerber, Ch. VI Gr. 4-9

- *Jason and the Golden Fleece*, by Leonard Everett Fisher Gr. 2-6

- Golden Fleece*, by John Gunther (Legacy) Gr. 3-8

- \* *Golden Fleece and the Heroes Who Lived Before Achilles*, by Padraic Colum Gr. 6-12

- Clashing Rocks*, by Ian Serraillier Gr. 7-12

## É Midas

*Every youth should know the tale of King Midas, for you often hear it said that someone has the 'Midas touch!'*

- King Midas*, by Neil Philip Gr. 1-4

- \* *King Midas: A Golden Tale*, by John Stewig Gr. 1-4

<i>King Midas and the Golden Touch</i> , by Al Perkins	Gr. 2-4
<i>King Midas &amp; the Golden Touch</i> , by Eric Metaxas	Gr. 2-5
<i>Golden Touch</i> , by Nathaniel Hawthorne I've read the version illustrated by Paul Galdone, and like it very much. I see that Kathryn Hewitt also illustrated a version by the same title, though her rendition is more about art anachronisms. There is also a version of Hawthorne's telling which features sign language and is published by Gallaudet Press: * <i>King Midas</i> .	Gr. 2-7
* <i>King Midas and the Golden Touch</i> , by Charlotte Craft This is <i>gloriously</i> illustrated!	Gr. 2-7
<i>King Midas and His Gold</i> , by Patricia McKissack (Start Off Stories)	Unknown

## É Pan

* <i>Tales of Pan</i> , by Mordicai Gerstein	Gr. 1-5
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## É Pandora

* <i>Pandora</i> , by Robert Burleigh	Gr. 2-6
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## É Pegasus

* <i>Flying Horse</i> , by Jane Mason (All Aboard Reading 1) One commentator said the story and images in this book are too intense for young children; I've not seen it.	Unknown
<i>Pegasus: The Flying Horse</i> , by Jane Yolen	Gr. 1-5
* <i>Pegasus</i> , by Marianna Mayer I've heard this has gorgeous illustrations!	Gr. 3-7

## É Persephone

<i>Persephone</i> , by Warwick Hutton	Gr. 1-5
<i>Persephone and the Pomegranate</i> , by Kris Waldherr	Gr. 1-5
<i>Pomegranate Seeds</i> , by Laura Geringer The story of Persephone.	Gr. 2-6

## É Perseus

<i>Perseus</i> , by Warwick Hutton	Gr. 1-5
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## É Zeus

*Lord of the Sky: Zeus*, by Doris Gates

Gr. 4-12

### 4cÉ Links to language

*Many of our modern language roots and 'figures of speech' come from Greek mythology. This can be a fascinating topic for language lovers.*

\* *It's Greek to Me!* and \* *By Jove!*, both by Michael Macrone

Gr. 7-12

Both these books show roots of Greek (and Roman) mythology and language in our modern-day language. I've not read them, but have seen them in homeschool catalogs.

*Words from the Myths*, by Isaac Asimov

Gr. 7-12

This book is hard to find, but is quite interesting.