

Research Article

Can studying a topic through a reception studies approach improve the quality of Year 7 students' creative responses to the ancient world?

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Introduction

The lessons planned in this essay were designed for a group of Year 7 students in an independent girls' school in London. Their course of study for Classics in Year 7 was a general introduction, involving beginners' Greek and the rudiments of Latin, but largely focused on learning about Greek mythology, Homeric epic and Roman culture. Wright's *Greeks & Romans* textbook was often used in class, but the content was chosen and materials designed by the class teacher. I began teaching this class just as they were finishing Greek mythology and beginning to study the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The sequence of four lessons, based around the Underworld was intended to provide a re-cap of the Homeric material after they had studied the two epics, as well as exploring in further detail episodes which I had skipped over for the sake of brevity in the previous sequence, such as the *Odyssey's katabasis*. It also looked forward to studying Roman material in the next module by introducing the *Aeneid* in translation.

This research question stems from looking at a group of Year 7s' work during the course of their introductory module to Classical Civilisation, in particular their creative responses to certain myths. While many students were capable of producing nuanced responses when asked to re-tell, for example, the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur in a contemporary setting, others struggled to walk the line between regurgitating a shortened version of the myth and veering entirely from the original. For this age group, creative writing tasks seem a valuable way of checking understanding of narratives, but simply asking them to re-tell a myth, and giving students no notion of how others have approached re-telling myths, seems to neglect a potentially valuable dimension of these kinds of task. Aside from simply checking understanding, creative writing tasks can be used to encourage numerous other skills (Tompkins, 1982), some of which will be more relevant to certain age groups and within certain subjects than others. Given that creative writing tasks were ubiquitous in the schemes of work followed, it seemed worthwhile to equip students with the skills to engage with these at a higher level.

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To this end, I decided to exploit the potential of classical reception studies in allowing students to take their role as receivers of a classical tradition seriously. By shifting the focus away from creative writing as simply checking understanding, the aim was to encourage the development of skills associated with creativity in this subject, including developing students' meta-cognitive understanding of creative processes. This aim seemed expedient given a current interest in and increased awareness of the value of creative writing in a number of subjects, for both students and teachers: others have noted gaps in research (Anae, 2014, p.127), and reported on the successes and limitation of schemes encouraging creative writing in education (Millard *et al.*, 2019).

Literature review

Firstly, this section reviews existing approaches towards the teaching of classical reception, including its use as a pedagogical tool for teaching classical literature. Unlike previous research into the potential of classical reception studies in the senior school curriculum, it considers the ways in which reception studies *per se* can act as a component in Classics curricula which involves both intellectual and creative mastery of the subject. This combination, of academic and creative achievement, is inherent not only in examples of high-quality classical reception, but also in the theory and scholarship surrounding the discipline. Secondly, it considers the potential of classical reception studies to cultivate high-level creative skills among students, including intellectual self-awareness and the ability to reconcile ambiguities, within the context of current research on the definition and assessment of creativity among school students.

What are the potentialities of classical reception studies in a secondary school classroom?

Recognition of the potential of reception studies to enhance school-age students' engagement with the ancient world is nascent, and case-studies are limited at present. However, a turn towards reception as a potential pedagogical tool has occurred alongside reception studies' rise to an important place within the nexus of subjects termed 'Classics'. Forde (2019) has identified the potential role of classical reception in sharpening (both in the sense of clarifying and heightening) students' responses to the *Odyssey* in

translation in order to improve performance in the OCR A level in Classical Civilisation. Reception studies is used in this instance to provoke students' interest in the texts before confronting them with scholarship (Forde, 2019, p. 19) and to achieve assessment objectives demanded by exam boards. However, in this essay I examine how pupils might engage with classical reception minus the strictures of an exam syllabus, and whether reception studies can be meaningfully taught at a Key Stage 3 level with its own specific set of learning objectives, rather than subordinated to objectives conditioned by preparation for mainstream examinations.

At any level of education, reception studies have occupied a shifting, negotiable place in relation to more 'traditional' Classics curricula. Debates are rife over what content and approaches are suitable within the discipline. Some have reacted against the ancillary role which the subject has played in university education thus far by pointing out its centrality and inseparability from the study of Classics as a whole (Martindale, 2013, pp.175–77). However, attempts to locate the unique features of classical reception (see, for example, Billings, 2010), as opposed to other kinds of reception studies, have not passed without criticism (Martindale, 2013, pp.174–5). While there is reason to be sceptical about any intrinsic uniqueness of classical reception studies as a discipline, its development by interested academics has lent it a number of features which distinguish it from traditional Classics. Of course, there is still abundant scope for the discipline to develop in many different directions in the future, and a good curriculum would not operate to the exclusion of these potential routes. This is something which I kept in sight when planning this sequence of lessons. However, certain developments have so far given the discipline pedagogical potential for use in a curriculum which values creative thinking as much as analytical skills.

Take, for example, the idea of 'the transhistorical' in reception studies, which encompasses ideas related to engaging in dialogue with the past, and awareness of how a text's 'future' conditions our readings of it. In an article by one of its key proponents, there is clearly discernible ambiguity about whose role it is to engage in transhistorical work, and whether this is the role of the reader or of the creator of works of reception. Initially, it seems that the reader of works of classical reception is implicated as another receiver, and must partake in a dialogic process of understanding, 'backwards and forwards' (Martindale, 2013, p.171). Further into the idea's exposition, we find the transhistorical advocated as the seeking out of communalities across history, that is, something which could be the role of either the creator of works of classical reception or their reader (Martindale, 2013, p.173). Ultimately, however, the transhistorical emerges as a dialogue instigated by the creator of works of reception: in this case, Martindale notes Walter Pater's 'version of reception, a layered transhistoricism', which is present in order to be discerned by the reader. It is the role of practitioners such as Pater to read, here, 'back from the present... through Winckelmann, through the Renaissance, to the antique' (Martindale, 2013, p.179). The ambiguity of who is responsible for this dialogue, reader or practitioner, is not always noted in other discussions of the topic. For example, in her account of implementing aspects of reception studies in classical pedagogy at a university level, Friedman seems to see 'the transhistorical' as something done by the reader: students are encouraged to 'read backward and forward' (Hardwick, 2003) for themselves, rather than to look for instances of this in others' work which engage them in a significant dialogue with antiquity (Friedman, 2013, p.236).

This is arguably not an example of inconsistency in the scholarship, but an ambiguity which reveals something about the nature of

the discipline. The discipline, even in its theory, struggles to confine itself to disinterested, academic appreciation of material which comes within its ambit. There is even acknowledgement that more creative, participatory approaches to its study, such as recreating ancient performance, might advance the discipline (Martindale, 2010, p. 77). Much as there have been clear-sighted recent attempts to note the debt which scholars and practitioners of classical reception owe to one another (Hardwick, 2020, p.16), the artistic and scholarly results of this cross-fertilisation reinforce the ambiguity between these two classes of receivers. Creation and re-creation have a role within the discipline, perhaps more so than in traditional Classics curricula.

Additionally, this ambiguity can be put to pedagogical advantage, if we accept a sufficiently broad idea of what skills a school education should encourage: ambiguity as to whether concepts such as transhistoricism apply to the works themselves, or to our intellectual responses to them, highlights the fluidity between practitioner and reader, and how creation can be informed by research. This method models for students of whatever age that they themselves are in a continuity of receivers of a classical tradition, and so can hold themselves to high creative standards. Within the entire discipline, regardless of the theoretical slant with which it is approached, works of reception have aspects of original creation while also being responses to pre-existing original works: both reflective and creative strands are present within them.

So far, the potential of classical reception studies has been exploited at a Key Stage 5 level as a means to achieve other pedagogical aims outside of those associated specifically with reception studies, and, at a university level, to help students appreciate how subsequent readings affect the reception of a classical text. Still remaining to be considered is, firstly, how reception studies can be made accessible to younger students, and how the ambiguities emerging in a discipline with many theoretical divergences can be utilised to create a natural pairing of academic and creative work, rather than being a source of confusion. I hope to explore how feasible it might be to exploit this latent potential in the series of lessons which I teach as part of this research, along with developing a definition of 'creativity' suitable for application in assessments of work in this subject specifically.

Differing concepts of 'creativity'; measuring and assessing creativity

A benefit of teaching an almost entirely freely chosen curriculum is that I also had freedom in what type of student progress I could assess, particularly in a school where end-of-year assessments had been abolished for Year 7. This meant that, while still adhering closely to the school's marking and tracking policies, I was able to approach the skills which I wish a reception studies module to cultivate in students more experimentally, and was able to attempt to measure more supposedly abstract skills such as creativity. Teachers are also able to nominate Year 7 students as Gifted and Talented, a label which will remain with them throughout their Key Stage 3 studies, and so I was hoping to assess students' creative potential partly out of a hope that a fully rounded perspective, taking into consideration things other than academic, sporting, musical, etc. achievement can inform whether a student is considered to be Gifted and Talented.

Problems in creating school-appropriate assessments of creativity

A huge number of contributions towards defining creativity exist. Even excluding those formed in the historical development of

the subject (Runco & Albert, 2010), an idea of the scale can be gained from Treffinger's (1996) summary of the findings of over 100 studies. Because of this proliferation of posited definitions and perceived components, the assessment of creativity is a similarly complex subject with a long history (Plucker & Makel, 2010). A particular problem when attempting to assess school-age students' creativity is that existing assessments which might be of use within a school context look, albeit sometimes distantly, to creativity measurement in adults: past studies have simply involved adults more often than children (Treffinger *et al.*, 2002, viii). They have their origin in the context of psychology rather than education: many past instruments for measuring creativity aim to find traits of the 'creative person', and aim to assess personality, attitude and activities (Plucker & Makel, 2010, pp.56–58). These kinds of psychometric tests seem, generally speaking, designed to measure fairly static characteristics, while educational exams are designed to measure the application of skills. However, given that it is ultimately not possible to wholly separate the intrinsic from the learnt, these two broad categories of assessment, the psychometric and the educational, are not completely incompatible, and can inform one another.

Psychometric tests, for example, run the risk of treating creativity as something static or intrinsic. More desirable in a school context is to treat it as a mind-set which can be grown, an approach which can be complemented by the principles of Assessment for Learning (Black & Wiliam, 2009). Others have advocated the 'grow-ability' of creative mindedness (Lucas & Claxton, 2010). This outlook seems compatible with the idea that student achievement is not fixed and that feedback is central to improvement (Black & Wiliam, 2009). This approach is again complemented by the fundamental differences between undertaking research as an involved practitioner rather than an impartial observer: the research inevitably counts as 'action research', which seeks to improve learning outcomes (Verma & Mallick, 1999, p.93), not simply to measure them. However, as creativity assessments have often been developed with a psychometric end in mind, or to measure the 'innate' capabilities of children already deemed Gifted and Talented (Shively *et al.*, 2018), there is something of a conflict between existing creativity assessments, which have their roots in measuring something perceived to be 'innate', and the principles of Assessment for Learning, in which it is stressed that *work* rather than *ability* is commented on in feedback (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p.145). I hope to try to compensate for the bias towards regarding creativity as 'innate' by developing ways in which it can be encouraged to develop through assessment.

Additionally, this enquiry operates against a background of limited existing research into how creativity might be differently defined with regard to children and adults. Recent research into children's creativity does not necessarily acknowledge the problems which this poses (Kupers, 2018). The difference between past measurements of creativity, which have largely been designed with adults in mind, and the aim of assessing creative potential in school-age students, is a problem which should be borne in mind, but which cannot be actioned within the scope of this research. It is hoped that an assessment process tailored to the needs and abilities of the students in this particular context will mitigate this issue.

Towards a reception studies-specific definition of creativity

Given that there are so many ways of assessing creativity, it is also desirable to adopt a definition and an approach to assessment which are suitable to the subject specifically, or even to a specific task: this point has been made with reference to adult training programs (Barbot, 2011, p. 130), and the same is arguably true of school education. Rather than asking how a subject is suitable for assessing

qualities or skills which have been arbitrarily decided on as components of 'creativity', it seems more productive to ask what creativity means, and how it can be encouraged, within that specific subject and against a particular cultural background. This is especially true if a potential definition of creativity as reliant upon interactions between a person and their environment is incorporated (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). An approach of largely formative assessment therefore seems desirable once again, combined with a notion of creativity which is specific to the subject, to the age-group under consideration, and to a school context.

There are several factors which make reception studies a discipline suitable for encouraging the development of skills associated with creativity. While far from unique in the combination of academic and creative skills required in the subject, the discipline is developing in such a way that there is much emphasis placed on the importance of readers as participants in, not merely observers or critics of, the classical tradition. There is therefore an argument for assessing skills other than those assessed in other classical subjects, such as the explanation and analysis of factual knowledge. For example, an integral part of the discipline is the resolution of ambiguity, the fitting of old stories to new contexts. The resolution of ambiguity is also a recurring idea in the definitions of creativity: Treffinger's meta-analysis records the desire to resolve and the tolerance for ambiguity as mentioned in eight separate studies on defining creativity (Treffinger *et al.*, 2002), although this is the result of reviewing literature which itself is not necessarily the result of systematic research. It would be possible to test for students' sensitivity to how well ambiguity has been resolved by asking students to analyse how successfully others have done this, but there are benefits to assessing how well students are able to do this themselves. Knowledge of narratives and contexts is a necessary underpinning for success in resolving these kinds of ambiguity and so creating meaningful works of reception. Incidentally, this fulfils a key idea behind Bloom's taxonomy as guidance for assessment (Case, 2013): assessing a higher-order skill necessarily means assessing for at least one lower-order one. Consequently, my working definition of creativity within this discipline involves the originality which comes from awareness of self (and others) as receivers of a tradition, the ability to resolve the ambiguity of old stories and new contexts, and sufficient knowledge of narratives and contexts to produce and select ideas.

Educational researchers and practitioners have made a number of rubrics and criteria for assessing creativity publicly available. However, many of these will be more suitable for assessment in some subjects than others. For example, although Shively's rubric for anchoring assessment criteria on the definition of creativity (Shively *et al.*, 2018, p.150) is a useful template in some ways, especially as an exemplar rather than a functional rubric, its capacity to be used in other contexts is limited. It adopts Guilford's definition of creativity, which includes fluency, flexibility, elaboration and originality (Guilford, 1950), with only minor selectivity and adaptation of the definition: it adds the criterion of taking the user's needs into consideration. The final criterion, that of 'usefulness', has meaning within a science project, but it is less clear what an equivalent would be in the humanities. In order to avoid the pitfall of being overly-general, I designed my own criteria for assessing creativity which was specific to the subject which I was trying to teach, but which was made with reference to pre-existing models of creativity assessment, in this case Treffinger's 'creativity characteristics'.

The rubric used (Figure 1) is based on three of Treffinger's four categories of 'creativity characteristics', excluding the category Openness and Courage to Explore Ideas (characteristics from this

	1) Generation and selection of ideas	2) Synthesis / reconciling ambiguity	3) Originality and quality
3	Students generate a few low-quality ideas or one mid/high-quality idea; they have not compared ideas in a meaningful way.	Students do not successfully reconcile ambiguity or fail to address this aspect at all.	No evidence that students have considered perspective or style when writing their piece.
2	Students generate a few mid-quality ideas, and have made some comparisons between them.	Students have attempted to reconcile disparate elements, but with limited success.	Students have utilised perspective (their own or that of others, including transhistorical touches, if applicable) and style in a limited way.
1	Students generate several high-quality ideas and have successfully made comparisons between them.	Students have attempted to reconcile disparate elements with some success.	Students have utilised perspective (their own or that of others, including transhistorical touches, if applicable) and style to create an effective piece of writing.
Merit	Students gave generated numerous high-quality ideas, have demonstrated through comparisons that they thought about their ideas' implications, and have justified their final choice well.	Students find original and successful ways to reconcile ambiguity, and have thought in depth about how a different context will alter the telling of a myth on multiple levels.	Students have utilised perspective (their own or that of others, including transhistorical touches, if applicable) and style with sophistication and thoughtfulness, to produce high-quality work.

Figure 1.

category seemed heavily based on more personal characteristics rather than what was observable through a student's work). The generation and selection of ideas (1) equates to Treffinger's *Generating Ideas*, which can be measured through tests of a student's level of divergent productivity; its other aspect, that of selecting promising ideas to develop, would be more subjectively assessed by a teacher. Synthesis or reconciling ambiguity (2) overlaps with Treffinger's *Digging Deeper Into Ideas*, and originality and quality (3) partly with his *Listening to One's 'Inner Voice'*, which is advisedly best assessed through self-report inventories (Treffinger *et al.*, 2002, p.48). The 'originality' aspect of (3) is certainly based on this, but the additional criterion of 'quality' was introduced to distinguish this rubric from more psychometric assessments of creativity referred to in section 2a. The series of lessons was designed to improve students' use of perspective and style when writing creatively, and not simply to measure their 'innate' capacities to this end. However, the rubric does not entirely eradicate the measurement of skills which have not been explicitly taught within the lesson sequence: for example, students will be reliant on their own capacity to generate ideas during their final project. This mixing of approaches is perhaps one of the rubric's key limitations. I created the rubric used in line with the marking system which the school uses at Key Stage 3, where 3 is given to lower-quality pieces of work, 2 for acceptable, 1 for good, and a merit for outstanding.

Ethics

All names and other identifying features have been anonymised: the class '7A' referred to in the lesson plans is a pseudonym. The scope for collecting data during this project was unfortunately non-existent owing to school closures, and so gaining consent and other ethical questions were not relevant.

Lesson Plans and Evaluations

I was working with an unusually committed class, who contributed often and well, so the amount of work which I expected them to complete might seem challenging for a Year 7 level. The school environment was also extremely well-funded, hence the use of school-provided iPads by students. This may affect the transferability of this specific sequence of lessons to other contexts, although not necessarily the ideas and objectives underpinning the sequence.

The learning objectives of each lesson are meant to increase students' knowledge as well as their skills. The acquisition of knowledge is an important component of high-quality reception studies: presenting ancient material in new ways requires considerable knowledge of different historical contexts and of classical literature. This means that large parts of each lesson will aim at students absorbing and putting information to use, both about the classical texts studied and, in the case of Lesson 3, about other historical periods. Aside from knowledge-based Learning Objectives, each lesson aims to reinforce an objective based around the creative writing skills which reception studies can encourage and develop. For example, Lesson 1 considers writing from different perspectives, encouraging students to think about how their own perspective might lead them to present a characters' thoughts in different ways (see Figure 2 below).

An important overarching focus of the creative aspects of the lesson sequence was the encouragement of creativity as a growable mind-set: feedback from teachers and peers, questioning, discussion and learning-checks were used to support pupil progress in this area. These come into play to an increasing extent as the lesson sequence progresses: the first lesson is designed to bridge previous lesson sequences with this new, reception-studies approach, as well as ensuring that students have secured the basic information about the Underworld in Greek and Roman thought.

The final slide on each PowerPoint (see Appendix 3, slide 15) is intended to point towards resources, without drawing attention to them obtrusively or unnecessarily, for students who might find considering death more distressing than others.

Lesson Sequence

Lesson 1

In this lesson, students are introduced to the ancient Greek idea of the afterlife and compare it with their own beliefs (see Figure 3).

Figures 4a and 4b are examples of the activities which students undertake to compile information about the myth of the Underworld.

Drawing (implicitly) on their own beliefs and ideas, they share at the start of the lesson whether they think the notion of the Underworld is fair, once they have been introduced to its ideas via a PowerPoint presentation in class. Various activities (see figures 3 and 4) then reinforce information about the underworld in the *Odyssey* which they compile on a chart (see Figure 5).

An extension (see Figure 6) gives students the opportunity to engage with classical texts in a more critical way.

Students in this school are introduced to the rudiments of feminist theory in Year 7 English lessons, and so may be able to consider the 'Catalogue of Women' passages from the *Odyssey*, which I included as a point of connection with previous learning (the mothers of various heroes whom the students had already encountered are present in it), and note, in simplified form, how the passage gives 'the impression that female identity is derived from connections to males' (Doherty, 1991, p.167). Realising how women, even in the Underworld, are circumscribed owing to how they are remembered and presented by Odysseus, could inform their homework task in engaging ways.

Lesson 2

This lesson (see Figure 7) begins with students peer-assessing one another's work, so that each writer gets a sense of whether their 'aim' for their piece was achieved in the subjective view of another student.

Lesson 1 Plan Overview	
Class 7A	Topic Odysseus Book 11 – The Underworld
Date & Time Week 1	
<p>General Comments e.g. Reference to Scheme of Work/Links with previous/future lesson(s)</p> <p>Students will have just finished a 4-lesson sequence on the major episodes of the <i>Odyssey</i>: (1) Telemachus on Ithaca, (2) Nausicaa and the Phaeacians, (3) the Cyclops and Odysseus' other tales, minus the underworld, (4) Odysseus' return home.</p>	<p>Inclusion (e.g. support, reinforcement, extension)</p> <p>The lesson-structure is designed so that there are several repetitions of information about each character. A number of activities can be done to greater or lesser levels of detail if students are working slowly.</p> <p>Extensions: further research on the underworld (e.g. the river Lethe) and questions on Odysseus' encounters with the women of the underworld, with reference to Ss pre-existing knowledge about the <i>Odyssey</i>.</p>
<p>Aim(s)</p> <p>A lesson introducing students to the <i>katabasis</i> as a literary theme and to writing from different perspectives, encouraging students to think about how their own perspective might lead them to present a characters' thoughts in different ways</p>	
<p>Learning outcome(s)</p> <p>Students know at least some residents of the Greek epic underworld, including those they have already met in the <i>Iliad</i>, and their characteristics.</p> <p>Students can adopt the perspective of a character and write from it.</p>	<p>Success criteria</p> <p>Students can recall the names and roles of key characters in <i>Odyssey</i> 11, and describe their characteristics.</p> <p>Students can write a passage from the perspective of one of the characters encountered in the lesson.</p>
<p>Assessment, including learning checks and feedback</p> <p>A number of checks can be done through marking books after the lesson and checking how work is going during the lesson, but the main learning-check can be done after the acting activity: with 8 names, 8 characteristics and 8 locations to feed back, there is the opportunity for the vast majority of the class to contribute and for discussion to be had.</p> <p>Feedback for the writing task will be based on whether they present a character acting/thinking in accordance with what they know about them; extra credit will be given for managing to reconcile this with anachronistic elements.</p>	

Figure 2.

This is in order to enhance their sense of audience: the requirement for creativity to serve a purpose within a social context is one often adopted by those seeking to define and assess it (Shively *et al.* 2018; Runco & Jaeger, 2012). An adequate equivalent for this criterion within this particular learning context is for the students' creativity to have a desired effect on an audience. Peer assessment will be later moderated by teacher feedback when books are handed in at the end of the lesson, meaning that the feedback process will be

fresh in students' minds before their final project is introduced at the end of the next lesson.

Students are then introduced to key scenes in Virgil's *Aeneid* 6. Using a whiteboard-like function on their iPads, students are shown a series of pictures which represent one of the five characters they have met so far, and are asked to write down which character they think is being shown. Students use visual clues to corroborate their image of the character gained from the mini-lecture: even if

Lesson Plan 1		
Class 7A	Date/Time Week 1	Topic: The Underworld: Odyssey 11.
Learning outcome(s) Students know at least some residents of the Greek epic underworld, including those they have already met in the <i>Iliad</i> , and their characteristics. Students can adopt the perspective of a character and write from it.		Success criteria Students can recall the names and roles of key characters in Odyssey 11, and describe their characteristics. Students can write a passage from the perspective of one of the characters encountered in the lesson.
Introduction/Starter Activity using 2 post-it notes of different colours: Write down a) What you think happens after you die (don't have to share!) b) Ideas about what the Greeks thought would happen after you died? (share) T informs students about the basics of the idea of the Underworld using PowerPoint. Final question, to be discussed with a partner, written down and shared: is the Greek afterlife system fair? [0-10 minutes]		
Teacher Activity 1 Supervision of activity and provision of help if needed.		Student Activity 1 Students complete the sheet as a 'map' of the Underworld. [10-20 minutes]
Learning check The aim is that students know what features the locations in the Underworld have: the learning check can partly be done while T perambulates, and is checkable once books have been handed in (i.e. do students' routes avoid the more unpleasant parts of the Underworld?). It is also reinforced by the next activity: the next learning check involves seeing if students put each character in a plausible location in the underworld.		
Teacher Activity 2 Choosing students to read out loud, assisting students with gap-fill if needed. Selecting students to act; supervision of activity.		Student Activity 2 Reading aloud extracts before filling in blanks on the sheet. [20-30 mins] 8 students remain in their seats, having been given an Underworld character to act out (without giving away which character it is): the rest of the class travels around filling in their sheet from the clues given by the actor (30-40). Students then add any characteristics of the character they can recall, and suggest a location for them in the underworld (40-45).
Learning check Questioning (no hands up) about answers which students gave for 'characteristics' and 'location in the underworld.' (45-50) All students will have completed the sheet with the names of each character's actor, using their knowledge of the residents of the underworld. T will be able to confirm this while students are engaged in the plenary activity, or when books are handed in.		
Plenary activity Write a first-person piece in the style of a diary entry, from the perspective of an underworld resident whom we have met today, with an added challenge of including a view on whether their existence in the afterlife is fair. [50-60 minutes]		

Figure 3.

1) Imagine you are going to journey through the underworld to find Hades and Persephone... Draw a map with all the major landmarks, and your route through them (**avoiding the more unpleasant ones!**). Don't worry, there are no right or wrong answers: no one has produced a definitive guide to the Underworld!

Avernus (the entrance)

Tartarus

Cerberus

Erebus

Asphodel Fields

Elysian Fields

Persephone & Hades' palace

Your route

Avernus [the
entrance]

2) If you have time, draw in the 4 rivers:

Phlegethon

Cocytus

Acheron

Styx

3) If you have even more time:

In your exercise book, research and write an encyclopaedia entry for the **river Lethe** in the Greek underworld.

Figure 4a.

Characters who occur both in the Iliad (alive!) and in Book 11 of the Odyssey (in the Underworld) include _____, _____ and Ajax

Agamemnon tells Odysseus the story of how _____, his wife, and Aegisthus, the man who she was having an affair with, killed him when he returned home to Argos.

Achilles is not happy to be dead, even though he was the most honoured mortal when he was alive. He is concerned whether his _____ and _____ are still prospering on earth.

Ajax is _____ because Odysseus once won Achilles' armour in a contest. When Achilles died, Odysseus and Ajax competed over who should get his armour. Odysseus won (some accounts say he cheated), and Ajax felt so dishonoured that he committed suicide.

Tantalus was an excessively _____ mortal, and in the Underworld is condemned to be eternally hungry, but never able to eat.

Sisyphus was a crafty, scheming mortal, and in the Underworld is punished by having to roll a _____ up a hill, only to have it roll back down again every time he thinks he has completed the task.

Odysseus also meets an array of famous women; or rather, the mothers of famous heroes, including _____, mother of Pollux, _____ and _____, and also Alcmena, mother of _____.

	Agamemnon	son
Leda		
Achilles	angry	Castor
	Clytemnestra	greedy
Father	boulder	Helen

Figure 4b.

Hades (king of the Underworld)	
Agamemnon	
Achilles	
Tantalus	
Sisyphus	
Ajax	
Alcmena (Hercules' mum)	
Leda (Castor, Pollux and Helen's mum)	

Figure 5.

The part of the epic in which Odysseus meets the famous women of the underworld is known as the Catalogue of Women.
a) Odyssey Book 11 is part of a sequence of stories which Odysseus tells to Nausicaa's parents. Her mother is Arete, a wise and influential woman. Why might Odysseus include this long list of famous women?
b) What are all the women in this list famous for? Are they famous in their own right, or because of their connection to men?
c) Why do you think this might be? Answer with reference to Homeric society.

Figure 6.

all students provide the correct answer, there is an opportunity for discussion when asking students how they came to the right answer.

Students are then given a choice of which passage from *Aeneid* 6 they would like to look at in detail. Using worksheets, students then compare in detail the two versions of the passage, one from Seamus Heaney's translation of the *Aeneid*, and one from a prose version of the *Aeneid* (see Figure 8).

Finally, they swap passages, and attempt to create their own version of that passage with a particular stylistic aim in mind. The activity should not take too long and not be set for homework, as some students may still struggle to understand why you might want to write something very similar to a pre-existing text, even when having been exposed to the idea of translation.

Lesson 3

For details of the lesson, see Figure 9.

Students are introduced to a new underworld myth, that of Orpheus and Eurydice. While the story is told to them through the IWB, they are asked to make and fill in a graph on Eurydice's emotional state at each point in the story (see Figure 10). This will both keep students' attention focused and hopefully will elicit differing views about Eurydice: what if Eurydice wasn't having such a bad time in the Underworld, etc.? At this point in the lesson, effective questioning will be utilised to contribute to students' creative thinking: the discussion of different ideas will open up the creative possibilities of looking at a myth from different perspectives, reinforced with relevant follow-up activities (Black & Wiliam 2004, pp.12–13).

We then look at a 3-minute extract from Offenbach's *Orphée aux Enfers*, a parodic opera of the myth which presents Eurydice, unhappily married to violin-teacher Orpheus, as having an affair with Hades, and questioning students about whether Orpheus and Eurydice seem very happy together (they do not). This introduces the idea of altering a myth by putting it in a new context, here for comic purposes. Following on from this, another musical form of the myth is then introduced, this time the popular folk-opera album and Broadway musical *Hadestown*, which reimagines the Orpheus myth with a 1930s American aesthetic, a context which is common to other typical set texts in English such as Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* and Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. An introductory video is played to engage pupils' interest, followed by a slightly 'drier' section on how the musical utilises a particular period of history: this should be done as quickly, clearly and dynamically as possible, in order to avoid losing class interest. The next activity should hopefully regain any lost interest: the class then watches 3

further short extracts from the musical, and, using the mini-white-board function on their iPads, suggests which historical events might have informed each song (see slides in Figure 11).

Students then render in the form of a table how the myth is viewed through a particular time-period: being provided with some aspects of the raw material of the original Orpheus and Eurydice myth, they then fill in the table with suggestions of both what changes the resulting artwork (*Hadestown*) makes to the original, and how the lens through which the myth is viewed and re-shaped (1930s America) might have informed this (see slides in Figure 12).

Finally, their end-of-module project is introduced. Students are given a sheet to produce ideas on and a 'draft' sheet, so that they can justify and develop their ideas fully. This is especially relevant for those who might not take to the lengthy nature of the project, with its mix of class time and homework time. In keeping with the rest of the sequence, students are encouraged to produce a draft version and comment in the margins on what the effect of certain words or phrases will be on the reader, using techniques which they practised on poetry in Lesson 2. This will help to draw their learning together and ensure that skills learnt in previous lessons are put to use.

In terms of assessing students' work through this project, the aim was to give students a number of possible routes to success: while they might choose to utilise other historical contexts when re-telling their myth, there is no obligation to do this, as long as their choice of characters gives them the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to reconcile ambiguity. This is especially important in a subject such as reception studies, when a number of different approaches are viable. For example, a performance as a work of classical reception can indeed be seen as 'an embedded event in culture and in history' (Goldhill, 2010, p.69), and the work of reception studies is to recover the context of this as accurately as possible. This scheme of work and its assessment methods inevitably underplay the side of historical inquiry, in favour of emphasising creative processes and drawing attention to how the use of historical contexts can lead to new creations, but ideally it should avoid promoting one aspect at the total exclusion of others.

Lesson 4

For details of the lesson, see Figure 13

This lesson does not aim to introduce much new material, as students will have already begun their final project. Through the myth of Demeter and Persephone, and a game (see slides in Figure 14) it aims to give students the opportunity to practise a key skill for creating works of classical reception, that of reconciling a classical

Lesson Plan 2		
Class 7A	Date/Time Week 2	Topic: The Underworld in the <i>Aeneid</i>
Learning outcome(s)		Success criteria
Students know the key characters and stories which inform the <i>Aeneid's</i> Underworld.		Students can reformulate the information given to them about key residents of the <i>Aeneid's</i> underworld.
Students appreciate the effect of style on how a myth is re-told.		Students can re-write a prose version of a myth into poetry, with a particular stylistic aim in mind.
Introduction/Starter		
Peer-assessment activity of homework [0-10]		
Teacher Activity 1		Student Activity 1
Delivering introductory PowerPoint.		Listening to information. [10-15] Creation of fact-files on each character. [15-25]
Learning check		
5 uncaptioned pictures (featuring Dido, Salmeoneus, Cerberus, Charon and Anchises) appear on the IWB: students use their ipads or rough books to indicate which character they think is being depicted, i.e. they use the information orally/verbally delivered to de-code a visual stimulus: their own notes (fact-files) will assist them in this. [25-30]		
Teacher Activity 2		Student Activity 2
Introduce activity (including the idea of translation), hand out sheets, and assist if necessary.		Following the instructions on the sheet, students make a comparison of prosaic and poetic translations of the <i>Aeneid</i> , with an extension activity if they have time. [30-45]
Learning check		
Questioning on feedback: teacher asks for examples of two contrasting ways of translating the same thing, and asks students for their views on what the effect of one of the ways is. [45-50]		
Plenary activity		
Students swap extracts, and re-write a prose version of the extract, paying attention to the style and effect. Students are asked to think about the atmosphere/emotions created by the scene and how to bring this out when translating. [50-60]		

Figure 7.

The Golden Branch

Source 1

*Then when they came to the fuming gorge at Avernus
They swept up through clear air and back down
To their chosen perch, a tree that was two trees
In one, green-leafed yet refulgent with gold.
Like mistletoe shining in cold winter woods,
Gripping its tree but not grafted, always in leaf,
Its yellowy berries in sprays curled round the bole –
Those flickering gold tendrils lit up the dark
Overhang of the oak and chimed in the breeze.
There and then Aeneas took hold of the bough
And although it resisted greedily tore it off,
Then carried it back to the Sibyl's cavern*

Source 2

Then, when they reached the foul jaws of stinking Avernus, they quickly rose and, gliding through the clear air, perched on the longed-for dual-natured tree, from which the alien gleam of gold shone out, among the branches. Just as mistletoe, that does not form a tree of its own, grows in the woods in the cold of winter, with a foreign leaf, and surrounds a smooth trunk with yellow berries: such was the vision of this leafy gold in the dark oak-tree, so the foil tinkled in the light breeze.

- 1) Compare at least 5 words or phrases from the two translations.
- 2) Pick your favourite pair, and explain why you think that one version is more effective than the other.

Figure 8.

myth or text with a different context. This is intended as a rapid game, as it could quickly become less interesting for more focused pupils: it is meant partly as a counterpoint to the long, involved work required for their projects. To bring the game to a close, students will then be asked to pick their favourite two cards and write up, in the form of a short story, a new version of the myth.

Finally, in preparation for sustained work on their projects, a plenary for the whole topic takes place in the form of a structured discussion. Students are asked what kinds of classical reception they have enjoyed or not enjoyed looking at, and why, in order to develop criteria for what they consider to be valuable works of reception. This is intended to give students a sense of agency in their creative processes: much as there are subjective aspects to assessing quality, particularly in creative fields, there are processes which can be undertaken to determine whether an instance of creativity is a valuable contribution or not (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). The remainder of the lesson will be devoted to silently working on

their projects, with *Hadestown* as background music to encourage a state of creative 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

Conclusion

Although I can only speculate on the outcome of these lessons, it has nonetheless been productive to consider the pedagogical potential of classical reception studies in its own right. Much as providing the subject with its own discrete learning objectives was not a simple undertaking, when so many other skills and areas of knowledge from different disciplines inform the subject (such as writing skills from English, and factual knowledge from History and from Classics), I believe that the subject does have a capacity to encourage discursive and creative thinking, owing to how essential the reconciliation of ambiguity is to it. Planning this scheme of work has allowed me to think in detail about how creativity can be developed among all students, and how progress in this area can be

Lesson Plan 3		
Class 7A	Date/Time Week 3	Topic: The Orpheus and Eurydice Myth
Learning outcome(s) Students know the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Students can relate historical information to pieces of classical reception. Students can identify differences between original myths and their adaptations.		Success criteria Students have responded to the myth by charting a character's experiences. Students have matched historical events to references to them in song lyrics Students have created a table of links and differences between myths and adaptations.
Introduction/Starter Introduction to the myth: students create a chart; T tells Ss the story using the IWB while students fill out their chart with Eurydice's different emotional states. [0-10]		
Teacher Activity 1 Plays <i>Orphée Aux Enfers</i> extract (3 mins), and questions pupils. Plays introduction to <i>Hadestown</i> . Delivers historical information on 1930s America, questioning pupils to ensure attention/understanding while doing so.		Student Activity 1 Watch video, considering questions and relation to the myth. Watches <i>Hadestown</i> introduction and listens to historical information. [10-20]
Learning check Using the mini-whiteboard function on their iPads, the class then watches 3 further short extracts from the musical, and suggests which historical events might have informed each song. [20-30]		
Teacher Activity 2 Introduce activity and provide help if necessary.		Student Activity 2 Students fill in table, carrying out further research as an extension [30-45]
Learning check T questions students on their responses. T asks a further question: how does knowing that Hades' wall is based on the Alphabet Agencies change how you feel about him? [45-50]		
Plenary activity Introduction of project, answering any questions which students might have, handing out of sheets. [50-60] Referring to <i>Hadestown</i> , and indicating that one way of doing the project might be inventing an Underworld with reference to a different context/time-period.		

Figure 9.

encouraged through assessment. In particular, the idea of peer assessment comes into its own when creative assignments are being assessed: owing to the subjective nature of determining quality in creative writing, awareness of the effect which a piece of writing has on a reader creates useful guidelines for further development.

However, having planned this scheme of work, there are a number of underlying areas of research which I would have ideally considered before planning the sequence. Uppermost of these is the possibility of creating a reception studies curriculum that is genuinely suitable for school-age students. As development of the pedagogy of classical reception studies has thus far been almost

exclusively confined to universities, inspiration regarding materials, aims and methods often came from that quarter. Much as I naturally compensated for this in the kinds of material and activities used, there are numerous differences, such as the likely motivation and interest of students, the format of teaching and the assessment methods, between schools and universities. Without considering the ways in which educational setting has affected the development of the subject, it is difficult to advance its pedagogy, especially when the school environment has made such a strong and long-lasting impact on how classical language and literature are typically taught.

Orpheus and Eurydice

Very							
Happy							
OK							
Sad							
Very sad							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Key

1 – Orpheus and Eurydice live happily married

2 – Eurydice is bitten by the snake and dies.

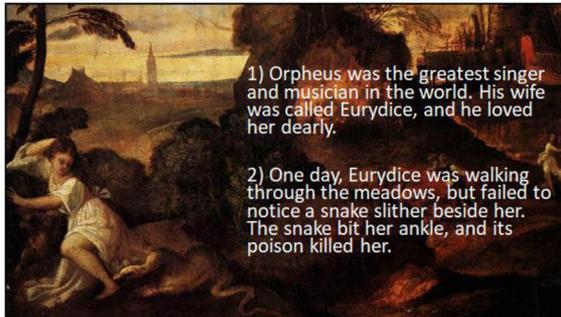
3 – Eurydice lives in the Underworld

4 – Orpheus comes to rescue her

5 – They start travelling home

6 – Orpheus looks back at her

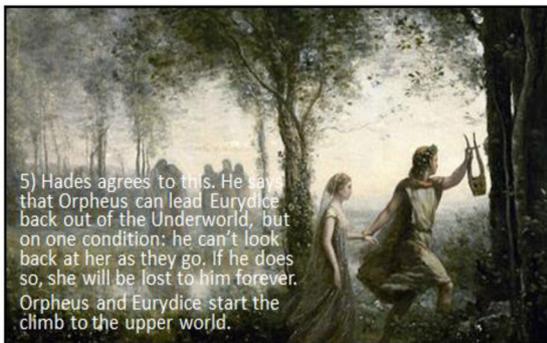
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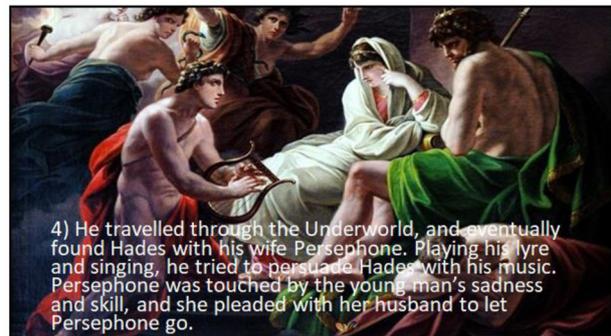
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3



5



4

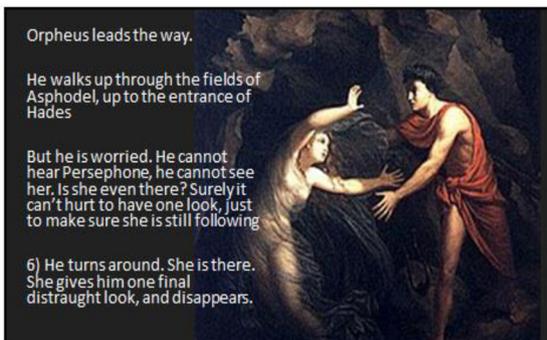


Figure 10.

Orphée aux Enfers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvxrJJkxxfM>

(7.35 – 10:35)

Who do you think the man in the picture is?

How would you describe Orpheus and Eurydice's relationship..?

7



Figure 11.

Classical reception studies have not yet achieved stable form: a healthy level of revision and questioning of tenets exists within the discipline, and earlier mantras are frequently scrutinised. For example, the broad applicability of Martindale's dialogic approach has been recently challenged by Hardwick (2020, p.17). She notes that the high status of the approach, in particular its use as a rationale for the study of classical reception as a whole, has left it treated as unchallenged fact rather than hypothesis: a range of other approaches may be more suitable depending on the characteristics of the unique work of reception under consideration. The discipline remains in a state of high theoretical complexity owing to this

kind of instability. Its current state is excellent for inspiring further scholarly debate and research, but what elements of this should filter down into school-level pedagogy, where a greater level of clarity and simplicity may be required to effect good teaching, remain uncertain. It is certainly worth questioning how we ought to frame the relationship between school-level and university-level classical reception studies: it may not prove ideal for school-level pedagogy to precisely mirror the theoretical development of the subject within universities. Instead, there is scope for the development of a pedagogy of classical reception studies suitable for use in schools specifically.

The Great Depression



The Great Depression was a severe worldwide economic depression* that took place during the 1930s, beginning in the United States.

Wealth and living standards had increased massively in the 1920s, but this ended in the 1930s. Millions of people became unemployed and were plunged into poverty.

*An economic depression is when prices become low, buying and selling are difficult, and many people suffer from poverty.

Prohibition



Alcohol was banned in the US between 1920-1933. The ban was called Prohibition. However, many people tried to illegally import and sell alcohol in the US. These people were known as bootleggers.

The New Deal

The New Deal was a series of public work projects and financial reforms enacted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the US in the 1930s, to help the country recover from the Great Depression.

Part of the New Deal was the creation of the Alphabet Agencies (called so because they were abbreviated into letters of the alphabet: the Civil Works Administration was the CWA, etc). They provided the unemployed with paid work, even if the work itself was not essential: sometimes people were paid to dig holes and fill them in again! But many of the projects were useful and important, including building roads, schools, parks and hospitals.



tell me, if you're able, going to lay the wedding table? being what they are:

Hara and getting harder all the time.

- Wedding song

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Un9XTim_Z4

The New Deal Prohibition The Great Depression

Hades: Why do we build the wall, my children?

Workers: The wall keeps out the enemy; The enemy is poverty; And we build the wall to keep us free:

That's why we build the wall, We build the wall to keep us free.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1VDxMe540g>

- Why we Build the Wall

The New Deal Prohibition The Great Depression

The god of the underworld	Dies		Greek/Roman Myth	Hadestown	1930s America
Workers who build Hades' wall	Working for the alphabet agencies	The underworld is...	The land of the dead		
A factory/industrial quarter	Goes to the underworld to escape poverty	The human world is suffering with...			
Hades' wife	Nothing in particular	The people in the underworld are...			
A bootlegger		Hades is...			
Poverty and famine	The workers' boss	Persphone is...			
A singer	The Great Depression	Orpheus is...			
Ghosts/souls	The land of the dead	Eurydice...			
Also a singer					

Extension: on your iPad, look up further lyrics and clips from Hadestown. Add any other characters, places or things to the table, comparing them in myth and in Hadestown

Come here, brother: let me guess It's the little things you miss: Spring flowers, autumn leaves. Ask me, brother, and you shall receive.

.....

I got the wind right here in a jar; I got the rain on tap at the bar; I got sunshine up on the shelf; Allow me to introduce myself...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvasNemR_Dl0

- Our Lady of the Underground

The New Deal Prohibition The Great Depression

Project

Pick:

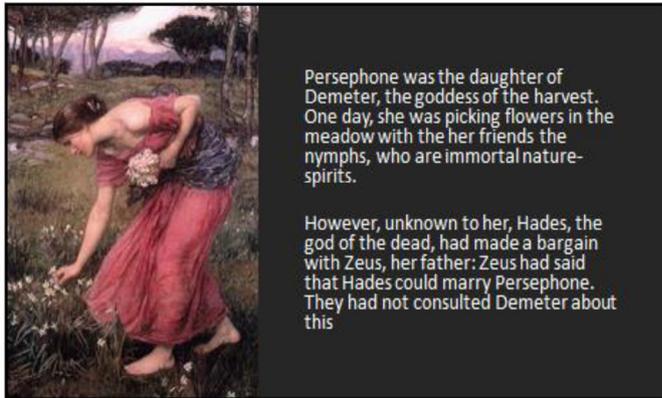
- a version of the Underworld inspired by the Odyssey or Aeneid, or create your own version. Credit will be given for putting your own spin on it, and describing it well.
- any mythological character we have met so far who is dwelling in the Underworld.
- another character who will be journeying in the Underworld. You can choose a pre-existing one (e.g. Orpheus, Aeneas, Odysseus) or invent one.

Write about these two characters meeting, including some of their dialogue. It can be a story, lyrics, poetry or script. Aim to write at least a double page in your exercise book. This will be your homework for the next two weeks.

Figure 12.

Lesson Plan 4		
Class: 7A	Date/Time: Week 4	Topic: Demeter and Persephone
Learning outcome(s) Students can use their knowledge of different time periods to imagine new contexts for a myth.		Success criteria Students have written up a reimagined myth in the form of a summary of a story.
Introduction/Starter Students listen to the Demeter and Persephone myth (0-5)		
Teacher Activity 1 Explains the game, hands out cards. [5-10] Encourage the class to come up with different contexts and to write these on their blank cards: the teacher can simply ask what time-periods and places they have been learning about in other subjects.		Student Activity 1 Students divide into 6 groups and are each given several blank cards of one colour, and one card of a different colour with 'Demeter and Persephone' written on it. Students play the game (see powerpoint) with just the 'Demeter and Persephone' card. [10-15] Ss are given further cards on which they can write other myths which they have learnt about this year: shuffling their two sets of cards, they then pick one from each set at a time, and play their round of 'consequences' with them. [15-20]
Learning check Sharing some responses and checking for any difficulties experienced by students. It is expected that they might struggle with matching myths and contexts: a useful technique to offer them might be locating the main idea of the myth (e.g. quest, war, returning home), then thinking of a modern equivalent for this, and then retelling the story using the modern equivalent. [20-25]		
Teacher Activity 2 Supervise and assist if needed.		Student Activity 2 Students pick their favourite combination of cards and write it up into a summary of the story they had imagined involving these cards. [20-30]
Learning check A quick think-pair-share activity: were any of the contexts you had seen on the yellow cards suitable for retelling the Underworld with? (The activity is designed to encourage them to do this in their project, while still giving the opportunity for them to create high-quality work through other means) [30-35]		
Plenary activity Plenary for whole course, discussing what types of classical reception they had liked/not liked, and why, e.g. whether they prefer sticking close to a myth (e.g. translating) or changing it radically (and recalling examples of this), whether they like re-workings which criticise/make fun of the original texts, or prefer ones which just re-tell the story in a serious way. [35-40] Time for working on project [40-60]		

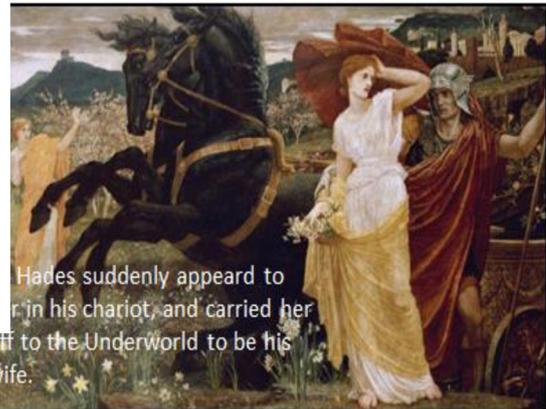
Figure 13.



Persephone was the daughter of Demeter, the goddess of the harvest. One day, she was picking flowers in the meadow with her friends the nymphs, who are immortal nature-spirits.

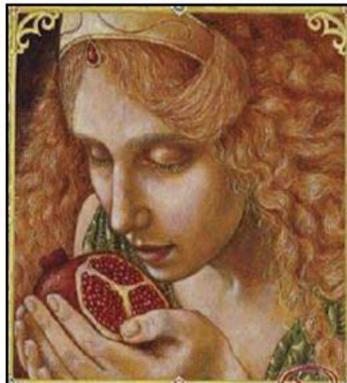
However, unknown to her, Hades, the god of the dead, had made a bargain with Zeus, her father: Zeus had said that Hades could marry Persephone. They had not consulted Demeter about this

2



Hades suddenly appeared to her in his chariot, and carried her off to the Underworld to be his wife.

3



Zeus sent the other gods to Demeter to ask for her forgiveness, in the hope that she would stop starving the mortals. She refused, until Zeus offered her a bargain: if Persephone spent nine months of the year above ground, and three in the Underworld, would Demeter stop her anger? Demeter agreed. And Persephone would never be able to return to the upper world entirely, as she had eaten food in the Underworld: a few pomegranate seeds.

5



Demeter was furious that her child had been kidnapped to marry Hades. She was so angry that she roamed across the world and prevented the harvest from coming up that year. The humans were starving, and the gods were not receiving any gifts from the humans.

And so Persephone went back to her mother, and all the flowers of spring came with her as she returned. But she knew that when autumn came and winter was approaching, it would be her duty to return to her husband Hades.



7

Context Consequences: Instructions

- After we have written down some more contexts on the pink cards, match your yellow card with various pink cards.
 - Then each person in your group can fill in a blank on your sheet, using characters from the myth, but in a new location and time:
 - Once [female character] met [male character] at [location] in the year [year]
 - He said: [speech].
 - She said: [speech].
 - The consequence was [consequence].
- Unlike real consequences, you can look at what the other people have written down before you 😊

Next...

- Pick your favourite combination of cards.
- Write the idea you came up with for them into a **summary of a story**.
- Only take around five minutes over this!
- Don't worry if it doesn't feel like a very good idea: we're just practising putting myths into new contexts!

Figure 14.

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