

The School of Storytellers

Key Processes:

Speaking

- Present information and points of view clearly and appropriately in different contexts, adapting talk for a range of purposes and audiences, including the more formal
- Use a range of ways to structure and organize their speech to support their purposes and guide the listener
- Vary vocabulary, structures, and grammar to convey meaning, including speaking standard English fluently
- Engage an audience, using a range of techniques to explore, enrich, and explain their ideas

Assessment Focuses:

- AF1 Talk in purposeful and imaginative ways to explore ideas and feelings, using non-verbal features for clarity and effect
- AF3 Adapt and vary structures and vocabulary according to purpose, listeners, and what is spoken about, including selecting and using the features of spoken standard English effectively

Class Speaking and Listening Tasks

Everyone tells stories, from jokes and family anecdotes to what happened in a soap opera. They are an important way of connecting with and learning from each other.

Traditionally stories are memorized and told orally. They create a way of communicating from generation to generation so that things are not forgotten. Good storytelling is an art and includes different elements, including structuring the story, recreating a picture in a listener's mind, and effective use of the voice.

In this unit, students will use ancient classic stories to serve their storytelling apprenticeship.

1. The school of storytellers

This introduction to the topic is designed to get students thinking about the task. Encourage them to share their ideas. Show the presentation on **Screen 1.1**.

Ask students to work in pairs and talk about what they know about the Ancient Greeks, particularly their stories. They could create a list of the stories and discuss how they know them, e.g. through cartoons, films, storybooks. Encourage students to think widely about how we tell stories, such as jokes, anecdotes, family tales. Ask them to think about the last time someone told them a story orally (not from a book) and to describe what it was about.

2. Know your gods and goddesses

Explain to students that great storytellers usually have an excellent knowledge of the gods and goddesses who had a great influence on Greek myths. Storytellers will readily bring their supernatural presence into stories.

Support students in doing the drag and drop activity on **Screen 1.2**. Ask them to note down the names and descriptions of any gods and goddesses they are not familiar with.

The correct matches are:

- 1 Ruler of the heavens, supreme father of gods and men – *Zeus*
- 2 Queen of the gods, consort of Zeus – *Hera*
- 3 Ruler of the sea and god of earthquakes – *Poseidon*
- 4 Brother of Zeus, dreaded ruler of the realm of the dead – *Hades*
- 5 Wise and just daughter of Zeus – *Athene*
- 6 The youthful and swift messenger of Zeus – *Hermes*
- 7 Terrifying and destructive god of war – *Ares*
- 8 Laughter-loving goddess of love – *Aphrodite*
- 9 God of the sun and prophecy – *Apollo*
- 10 Huntress and goddess of the moon – *Artemis*



3. 'The Odyssey'

Ask students to share what they already know about the Greek hero, Odysseus. (He is known for his wisdom and cunning. Probably the most famous stories relate to him planning the Wooden Horse and also outwitting the Cyclops, Polyphemus.) You may wish to tell students that Homer was the great storyteller who related Odysseus's story in the *Odyssey*. Homer used certain adjectives (epithets) for Odysseus, including 'wily', 'crafty', and 'long-suffering'.

Explain that students are going to tell part of Odysseus's story. He journeyed to Troy, fought in a ten-year war, and then it took him ten years to sail home again. Introduce the interactive map on **Screen 1.3**, which traces a suggested route for Odysseus's journey and from which they can read about the people and adventures Odysseus encountered.

Ask them to consider what sort of person Odysseus's travels and experiences made him into. They should then create a sentence or two to introduce the drama of his story.

4. The journey begins

Explain that stories which are told orally tend to change slightly each time they are told, as the storyteller does not read from a book. This means that each storyteller has his or her own way of telling a story.

Play one storyteller's version of the opening of 'The Odyssey' on **Screen 1.4**. If necessary, allow students to hear the story twice. Ask them to work in pairs to:

- (a) retell the story, as they remember it, to their partner
- (b) talk about any memorable words and descriptions
- (c) share what they recall of Odysseus's character
- (d) think about what they liked about how the story was presented and read to them.

Give them time to discuss their responses to the story. Encourage them to recall details and then to consider why such details are memorable, e.g. striking descriptions, unusual words, simple words.

As far as the presentation and reading of the story are concerned, draw out the use of sound effects at particular points (e.g. the opening, when they set sail) and the clear, measured voice of the storyteller, which does not impede the story in any way.



Focus on Creativity

- Look at different ways of performing the story, e.g. through dance, a musical, a poem.
- Work on a performance of the story suitable for a primary school class.
- Create recordings or podcasts of their stories.
- Create their own myth involving Odysseus.
- Use the map of Odysseus's journey to research some of the places he supposedly visited.

Beyond the Classroom

- Investigate suitable websites (e.g. that of the British Museum) to find out more about myths including those in different societies.
- Listen to a professional storyteller to appreciate storytelling skills firsthand.
- Create a link (perhaps through video conferencing if available) with a Classics or Ancient History Department in a college or university to find out more myths and legends.

Students are now ready to begin a series of tasks on their own. The Core questions are printed here. The CD-ROM contains Foundation and Extension questions in addition to the Core ones.

Student Speaking and Listening Tasks (Core Questions)

Question 6 Key process: Use a range of ways to structure and organize your speech to support your purposes and guide the listener

It's important to start a story by setting the scene well. A storyteller must:

- state who's involved
- say where the action is taking place
- describe what's happening
- hook the interest of the reader.

(a) Working with a partner, identify whether each of these happens in the passage below.

The sea grew rough as it washed Odysseus's ship onto the sandy beach. Odysseus looked up at the island. It looked safe enough, dotted with sheep and flowers. Sheep meant food. Odysseus looked back at his men. 'Food!' he grinned. He didn't think to ask who the sheep belonged to.

(b) Discuss what elements could be changed or improved.

Question 7 Key process: Vary vocabulary, structures, and grammar to convey meaning, including speaking standard English fluently

When Homer wrote the story of Odysseus thousands of years ago, he took care to describe people and places distinctively. He often referred to 'cunning Odysseus' and the 'wine-dark sea'.

Look at the nouns listed below. Think of suitable adjectives to describe them distinctively.

Odysseus	
cave	
island	
Zeus	
Cyclops (one-eyed giant)	
sailor	
ship	
fire	
death	

Question 8 Key process: Engage an audience, using a range of techniques to explore, enrich, and explain your ideas

A storyteller must use the flexibility in his or her voice to help tell the story. How you deliver the words will influence the story.

Working in pairs or small groups, practise saying these sentences in each of the ways suggested. For each sentence, decide which way works best and why.

Story extracts	Types of delivery
As the men sat at the back of the cave, the footsteps grew closer and closer.	(a) in a whisper (b) getting louder (c) getting slower
They heard his shrieks and screams coming from the cave.	(a) all together (b) fearfully (c) loudly
The Cyclops suddenly seized one of the men and dashed him against the wall of the cave.	(a) slowly (b) starting fast, then slowing (c) angrily

Question 9 Key process: Engage an audience, using a range of techniques to explore, enrich, and explain your ideas

A storyteller can also use body language, expression and sound effects to help tell a story.

Working in pairs, look at the sentences below. Think of what body language, facial expression, or sound effect would enhance the meaning of each one.

Story extracts	Body language, facial expression, or sound effect
The great beast glugged back the wine, swayed a little, then fell flat on its back.	
Odysseus couldn't believe his eyes. The Cyclops was enormous.	
He drew his sword and silently crept up to the beast, but a puny sword was no match for this great monster.	

Question 10 Key process: Engage an audience, using a range of techniques to explore, enrich, and explain your ideas

Working in pairs or small groups, look at **Resource 1**, which gives the outline of the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops. Build the outline into a story. The story should be spoken, rather than written.

Remember to:

- set the scene
- describe people and places
- consider how to use your voices
- consider body language, expressions, and sound effects.

Practise your story a few times so that you remember it before you perform it to your teacher or your class.