



ICARUS AND THE FATES

Retold by Anna Kerz
Illustrated by Larry MacDougall

TEXT TYPE: Fiction: Traditional Narrative—Myth
GUIDED READING LEVEL: W/X



SUMMARY: This Greek myth tells how the Fates intertwined the life of Daedalus with the lives of his son Icarus and his nephew Perdix. Through the Fates' will and the characters' actions, all of them meet with tragedy, and Daedalus is left a haunted man.

FOCUS COMPREHENSION STRATEGY

- predicting

FURTHER COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

- self-monitoring
- inferring
- making connections: text to text, text to world

ORAL LANGUAGE OPPORTUNITIES

- Say Something strategy
- sharing ideas
- presenting a self-written monologue (option 3 in Focused Rereading)

WORKING WITH WORDS

- language predictability: using textual definitions to work out word meaning

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Observe each student's ability to:

- use text and images to make predictions about characters and plot
- cite evidence in support of predictions
- monitor, follow up, and revise predictions
- self-monitor comprehension and use relevant fix-ups when needed
- make connections to other myth-related texts
- make inferences/visualizations that require problem solving/creativity

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Select from the following:

- Predicting Strategy Checklist
- Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record

TEXT FEATURES

- two-column format
- highlighted introductory text

VISUAL LITERACY

- illustrations
- pages bordered with image of winding thread

TEXT SUPPORTS

- strong illustrated support
- topic of interest to students
- unfamiliar vocabulary and historical references are described or defined within text

POSSIBLE TEXT CHALLENGES

- mythological, historical, and geographic references
- some unfamiliar vocabulary, e.g., 'artificer,' 'apprentice,' 'haven'
- subject-specific words and names, e.g., 'Daedalus,' 'Acropolis,' 'Crete'
- students must resolve unanswered questions through own interpretation

First Session (first page)

BEFORE READING

Making Connections: Text to Text

Activate and build prior knowledge

- The plot lines, characters, and settings of Greek myths are often very appealing to students at this age. Before beginning this Guided Reading session, take some time to identify and explore other Greek myths students might have some background knowledge of, or previous experience in reading or viewing. Before distributing the text, explain that the Fates have an important role in this and other Greek myths. They are important and recurring characters in many Greek myths.

ESL NOTE: For your ESL students you may need to expand their knowledge of Greek mythology. Consider displaying a map of Greece, showing its place in the world. You may wish to draw attention to such things as the Olympics and its significance to the ancient Greeks. Additionally, you might provide students with something visually engaging by bringing in objects to the classroom such as picture books, photographs of the famous structures of ancient Greece, pictures of Greek artifacts, gods, warriors, and so on.

Inferring: Visualizing and Predicting

- Next, read the highlighted introductory text to the group and then ask them to create a mental image of the Fates (do not have students open their texts as you read). While you read the introductory text ask students to jot down notes and keywords, as well as predictions. Ask students to share their mental images of the Fates and predictions as to the path this story might take after reading this text aloud. How do they envision the Fates? What do they see? What do they think is going to happen in this myth based on what they have just heard read aloud?

Text and Visual Literacy Features and Predicting

- Ask students to consider the information from the text that they have accumulated thus far (the title, highlighted introductory text read aloud, their visualizations of the Fates) to predict what the story will be about. Tell them to keep their prediction in mind as they read during this first session, and be willing to alter it if necessary. Students should keep in mind that it is a good idea to remain flexible and alter predictions if needed. Sometimes the author does something different than what we predict will happen. This is okay. Checking and modifying predictions is very important.

Visual Literacy Features

Introduce supports and challenges

- Hand out the text to the group and direct their attention to the image of the Fates at the bottom of the page. Take time to compare the images they envisioned with this illustration in the text. Ask students, *How does this illustration help you?*

Language Predictability

- Tell students that, since myths were written long ago, they often contain words that are unfamiliar. Look at the following sentence

found in the fourth paragraph: “He is the greatest artificer in all of Athens.” Focus the group’s attention on the word ‘artificer.’ Explain to them that authors often help out the reader by giving information about these unfamiliar words in the text itself. For example, demonstrate how the following passage helps to define this word:

‘His father, Daedalus, was a man of imagination and skill. He had already made construction jobs easier by inventing the axe, the wedge, and the carpenter’s level.’

From this passage we learn that ‘artificer’ must mean a skilled craftsperson or inventor. Emphasize the importance of developing an awareness of looking for definitions and explanations such as this when coming across words that at first are unfamiliar and challenging. Sometimes these explanations need not be found in a dictionary but in the text itself.

Self-monitoring

- Explain to students that strong readers always self-monitor their reading and understanding. If readers are unsure of a tricky word like ‘artifice’ they might want to pause and ask themselves what they can do to improve their understanding. In this case, reading on is a fix-up strategy they can use. Yet different challenges require using different strategies in order to help alleviate confusion, and it is a good idea for students to continually think of methods and strategies that will benefit them as different challenges arise.

Predicting

Set a purpose for reading

- Ask students to read to the bottom of the first page. As an introduction to their purpose for this session’s reading, draw three threads on the board. Say, *These threads represent the lives of the characters in this story: Daedalus, Perdix, and Icarus. Each of these lives is controlled by three goddesses called ‘the Fates.’ As you read, collect information on what is known about each character and their fate and put it on their thread.* Tell students to think about the information they’ve recorded on each thread and then write a prediction about what they feel will happen next based on what they’ve recorded. The prediction and the evidence provided for it can be written on a sticky note placed at the part of the text students are to read to in this session. The sticky note should be written as follows:

I Predict: _____
The reasons for my prediction are:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Provide for early finishers

- Students should be aware that illustrators work carefully with authors and publishers to ensure that their images capture the words or ideas in a story. Early finishers may wish to examine the text closely and search for the words that the illustration brings to life.

DURING READING

Monitor reading

- Ask individual students to choose a section that he/she has already read to read aloud to you. Before they begin, ask him/her what has happened up to this point. Listen for fluency in their reading and their level of comfort with the text. When they finish reading, ask the student what they think will happen next.

Observe

- Provide constructive feedback on students' reading, referencing something specific that you've noticed. For example, *I noticed that you rushed through this section a bit. Are you sure you understand this part? Tell me about what you think is being said here.*

AFTER READING

Revisit the purpose for reading

- Return to the author's words: 'I wonder. I wonder.' Discuss with students their own wonderings, and their predictions about what will happen as they read on. Have students provided three items that support their prediction? Remind them that citing evidence in support of their prediction is as important as the prediction itself.

Check on outstanding challenges

- Your observations will help you work out other challenges students experienced. Discuss and clarify at this point, e.g., a difficult or unfamiliar word such as 'apprentice.' Provide extra assistance to students who are still unsure of the nature of the Greek mythological references in this story.

Note successful strategy use

- Use your notes to share specific observations about a successful strategy used within the group during this session. These observations may include: how one student's prediction and supporting evidence made you think about something in a different way (predicting); how one student may not fully understand the story but is still working hard to gather information to interpret it (analyzing); how one student worked through a sentence or section a few times to achieve greater clarity (self-monitoring).

Predicting

Second Session (pages 2–4)

BEFORE READING

Analyzing

Activate and build prior knowledge

- Take a minute to review what information has been gathered so far by reviewing the plot and content of students' threads.

Self-monitoring

Introduce supports and challenges

- In this section, students will continue to encounter unfamiliar historical and mythological references, vocabulary, and characters. Remind students to self-monitor what they do and don't understand. If they come across a character or mythological concept that puzzles them encourage them to think of ways they can better understand the text. This might include asking a fellow student or the teacher questions. Students should ask questions when confronted with a challenge. Given that, for many students Greek mythology and its characters will be new, it is expected that there will be questions that require answering.

Predicting

Set a purpose for reading

- Ask students to track their predictions made in the first session. Did they work out? Do they want to adjust them?
- Tell students that as they read they should also continue to add information about the characters and their lives to their threads. They should also use the information gathered to make a new prediction as to what they believe will happen in the myth—this time citing two items of evidence. Students should write their final prediction after reading the following sentence (final paragraph of page 3): 'In the early morning, they flew over water that gleamed like liquid silver.' The prediction and support points can be written and placed near this text on a sticky note, as done in the first session. Once predictions have been recorded hold a Say Something activity (see Oral Language Strategies in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*) where students share and discuss their predictions with a partner, using the Predicting stem starters provided in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide* if you wish. (If there is time, ask students if discussing their prediction with a partner benefited their understanding of the story. Perhaps listening to someone else's ideas sparked a new thought. Perhaps discussing their predictions clarified something not previously understood.)

Provide for early finishers

- Early finishers can be invited to do some research on the references to Theseus, the Minotaur, or the golden dreams of Midas. This would be a good activity for learning more about Greek mythology.

DURING READING

Monitor reading

- This section of text contains many unfamiliar words, phrases, and references (e.g., ‘Princess Ariadne,’ ‘Theseus,’ ‘the Minotaur,’ ‘Crete,’ ‘Acropolis,’ and so on). As they read independently, ask individual students to read a section aloud to you. As they read, make note of their accuracy of word pronunciation and fluency.
- Provide prompts such as the following to encourage the use of different reading and comprehension strategies:
 - *Describe the image those words create.* (inferring)
 - *What’s happened in the story so far?* (synthesizing)
 - *What events have led up to this?* (sequencing)
 - *Based on what’s happened so far and what you know of the characters, and possibly Greek myths, what do you anticipate will happen next?* (predicting, making connections: text to text)
 - *How is your prediction working out so far? Would you like to change it based on what you’ve read since making the prediction? Why or why not?* (predicting)
- Focus on students’ abilities to search for clues in the text that provide insight on or define unfamiliar words or images such as:
 - ‘poisonous pustule’
 - ‘scoffed’
 - ‘... they whispered behind their hands, their eyes narrowed, they frowned, they turned their heads and looked away.’
 - ‘banished’
 - ‘engendered’

Observe

- Make observations on your assessment tools. (See the *Predicting Strategy Checklist* and the *Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record* in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*.)

AFTER READING

Predicting

Revisit the purpose for reading

- Review with students the sticky notes on which they have recorded their second prediction, along with the examples (at least two) they cited as support. Discuss with the group that even though they had based their prediction on available evidence, their prediction may not have been correct. This is fine. Predictions don't always work out—sometimes the story goes in a different direction than predicted. It is equally important to remember that strong readers are always monitoring, following up on, and revising their predictions. It is important to remain flexible and include ideas or information that might not have been available previously.

Check on outstanding challenges

- Ask if there were sections of the story that were unclear or unresolved. Spend some time discussing the author's technique of letting the reader establish their own interpretations of the myth. This is evident when the author asks 'I wonder. I wonder,' and near the end of the story when a series of questions and theories are posed to the reader, followed by 'Perhaps. Perhaps.' Ask students, *What was the author's reason for doing this?* A possible response might include that a certain amount of inferring or evaluating might be required of readers. If readers are tasked to come up with their own answers and ideas the myth can function in several different ways, depending on the reader's interpretation of the events and characters. Looking back over these two sessions, students should think about:
 - What conclusions they can draw about the characters of Daedalus and Icarus.
 - Why the Fates chose Icarus to die.
 - What the most important thing is that they've learned from reading this myth.

Note successful strategy use

- Share some observations with students about your discussions with the members of the Guided Reading group, pointing out examples of effective strategy use. Be specific, or ask students to discuss their own example of using a strategy successfully. Students can pick up a lot about effective strategy use when it is described in their own words, stemming from something they've experienced themselves.

FOCUSED REREADING

Three options are provided for focused rereading in the next Guided Reading lesson. Choose an activity that meets the needs of your students, or you might select a Reader Response activity from the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*.

TEACHING TIP:

Take advantage of this topic of high interest to many students of this age. Have additional sources of Greek myths in the classroom; borrow books on Greek mythology from the library, list Internet sites, and provide key names and words for added research. In your search, you'll find that Greek mythology is presented in a wide range of forms: short stories, movie posters and advertisements, illustrated coffee-table books, comics, graphic novels, and so on.

Making Connections: Text to Text and Text to World**Written**

- Students can write a one-page report on why they believe Icarus dies in this myth. Students can first reread the two paragraphs on page 4 that begin, 'And then it was that the Fates interfered, snatched his life thread and snapped it in two.' What message is imparted, or lesson learned, from Icarus' fate? Students must review their reports to ensure that punctuation is used properly, particularly when including dialogue and quotation marks from the text. Grammar must also be used appropriately, most notably in regards to personal subject and object pronouns (e.g., 'I,' 'me') and present, past, and future verb tenses.

Making Connections: Text to Text and Inferring**Artistic**

- Students may wish to search for other text references to Icarus (including those found on-line) and note the variety of ways over the centuries artists have portrayed his image. These portrayals range from classic artwork to modern graphic representations. Students can also create their own vision of Icarus flying over the sea. This can be in any form available to the students: illustrated, model construction, collage, and so on. Students should also choose one phrase or short passage from the text to include with their artistic creation that they feel is relevant to and encapsulates their work.

Predicting and Inferring

- Note that the character of Perdix is brought to life again in another form. Ask students to think about the characters of Daedalus and Icarus and to choose an incarnation in which they reappear. Ask students to defend their choice by connecting characteristics of their former life and their reincarnated one.

Inferring**Oral/dramatic**

- Based on what students have learned about the Fates and their impact on the lives of the characters in this story, ask students to give a voice to one of the Fates. In so doing, the student will write and present a monologue in which a Fate talks about the life of a character, how she observed his decisions and actions, and how they impacted her role in controlling that character's fate. Students should read with fluency and appropriate expression, adjusting their voice and tone to mirror the content as they read.