

Title: Discovering the Mediterranean: Italy: New Places, New Ideas, New Experiences

Grade Level: 6-8; 9-12 Curriculum Focus: Social Studies, English/Language Arts

Video Segments:

[Culture and Religion](#) (02:13)

[Pompeii: Life Before the Roman Empire](#) (02:33)

[Greek Mythology and the Role of the Gods in Human Destiny](#) (01:46)

Program Description: These video chapters explore the culture, the people, the contributions, and the legacy of Italians. Students will learn how Italian culture and religion are a part of the very fabric of Italian identity. These video chapters will also allow students to explore the historical connections between Italy and Greece with regard to classical mythology.

Learning Objectives:

After viewing these videos students will be able to:

- Compare and analyze societal patterns for preserving and transmitting culture while adapting to environmental or social change
- Explain how language, art, music, belief systems, and other cultural elements can facilitate global understanding or cause misunderstanding
- Analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding

Classroom Connections:

A: From the video chapter on Italy, you found out that culture does impact many facets of daily life; with regard to Italians, religion is “embedded into Italian culture.” Discuss the variety of cultures represented in your class; make a working list of them. Next, explore what influences an outsider would experience that define your culture, such as religion, unique practices, or observances.

Finally, discuss as a class what you have learned about each other’s cultures and origins from this activity.

B: As the Romans conquered nations, they blended their culture with each nation’s culture, such as that of the Greeks. The Romans, for example, accepted the Greek gods and the myths. However, the Romans changed the names of the Greek gods in order to make them more Italian: Zeus becomes Jupiter or Jove; Athena becomes Minerva; Poseidon becomes Neptune; Odysseus becomes Ulysses. In both cultures these gods and the myths reflected their efforts to understand “the forces of nature” and “the nature of man,” as the narrator in the video chapter states.

This activity has two parts:

1) The term *myth* means an anonymous narrative that shows supernatural episodes as a way of understanding, or interpreting, natural events. Every literature, and therefore, every culture have a mythology. Discuss as a class what the 20th/21st century mythology is, as you understand it. Who are the mythic heroes? Be sure to provide specific examples in your discussion, and your examples and definitions may include not only printed text but also film and television. **(Grade Band 6-8)**

2) Select several myths, such as episodes from *The Odyssey*, the myths of Hercules, Perseus, Persephone, or Jason and the Argonauts, for example. Break into groups, with each group taking one myth to read. Once everyone has read the assigned myth, discuss how you think this myth helped the Romans understand either the “forces of nature” or the “nature of man.” Document your findings. Next, discuss whether your myth “speaks to,” or informs your present. In other words, why should we still read this myth, and what should we learn from it. Document your findings. Be prepared to present your myth and your research to your class. **(Grade Band 9-12)**

C: Writing Prompts:

Fate and Destiny

The Three Fates of Greek mythology, Klotho, Lakheis, and Atropos (sometimes called Moira) determined the fates, or destinies, of all humankind from birth to death. Write a persuasive essay in which you agree or disagree with this concept of one’s destiny being determined by an outside influence.

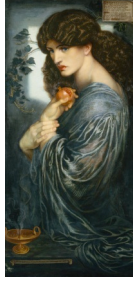
The Hero and Literature

This is an image of the Trojan Horse Odysseus used with his Greek companions to trick the Trojan soldiers in Homer’s epic, *The Odyssey*. Write a critical essay in which you discuss the hero of the last novel you read. Discuss the challenges this hero encountered and defend how he chose to overcome them.



The Role of Mythology

This Pre-Raphaelite painting of Proserpine recounts the Greek myth of Proserpine, her mother, Demeter, goddess of the earth, and the evolution of the seasons. Greek mythology, as do many fables and myths from other cultures, provides explanations for humans to understand nature, the universe, and even themselves. Write an expository essay, discussing humankind’s need for such stories. Include some of your favorite myths or fables in your discussion.



Myth and Culture

This image recounts Apollo's unquenchable passion for Daphne and the moment her river-god father, Peneus, transforms her into a laurel tree for her protection. This myth addresses the themes of unbridled passion versus innocence. Cultures around the world have myths that help explain their history and beliefs, and define their identity. Choose a myth and explain in an expository essay how it reveals something about a culture or an aspect of life.



Target Vocabulary:

Vatican: 1: the papal headquarters in Rome 2: the papal government; **Vatican City:** independent papal state within commune of Rome, Italy; created February 11, 1929 *area 109 acres (43 hectares), population 467*

Papal: of or relating to a pope or to the Roman Catholic Church

Basilica: 1 : an oblong building ending in a semicircular apse used in ancient Rome especially for a court of justice and place of public assembly 2 : an early Christian church building consisting of nave and aisles with clerestory and a large high transept from which an apse projects 3 : a Roman Catholic church given ceremonial privileges

Philosophy: **a:** pursuit of wisdom **b:** a search for a general understanding of values and reality by chiefly speculative rather than observational means **c:** an analysis of the grounds of and concepts expressing fundamental beliefs

Mythology: a body of myths: as **a:** the myths dealing with the gods, demigods, and legendary heroes of a particular people

Pompeii: ancient city S Italy SE of Naples destroyed A.D. 79 by eruption of Mt. Vesuvius

*All definitions from *Merriam Webster Dictionary Online* <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

** Definitions are from video

Academic Standards:

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidance for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

- Understand the significance of studying culture and cultural diversity
- Understand global connections and interdependence

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has developed national standards to provide guidance for teaching English/Language Arts. To view the standards online, go to <http://ncte.org>

- Read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience
- Read a wide range of print and nonprint texts [fiction and nonfiction] to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment