

A detail from Raphael's fresco 'The School of Athens'. On the left, Plato is seated, wearing a yellow robe, with his right hand pointing towards the sky and his left hand holding a book. On the right, Aristotle is seated, wearing a yellow and purple robe, with his right hand held palm-down and his left hand holding a book. The two figures are facing each other, and a thin line of light connects their hands. The background is a warm, brownish-gold color.

The Inquiring Eye:
**CLASSICAL
MYTHOLOGY**
IN EUROPEAN ART

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Teaching Packet
National Gallery of Art, Washington

NOTE TO THE READER

Myths are recounted in brief outline only. Consult ancient sources and comprehensive anthologies listed in the bibliography for complete texts.

In general, the Greek forms of names are used, but Roman names appear where more appropriate. See the Who's Who for Greek and Roman equivalents of the twelve Olympians.

CREDITS

Unless otherwise specified, all works illustrated are from the National Gallery of Art.

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Goals and Contents

Introduce the importance of Greek and Roman mythology as a pervasive cultural phenomenon

Discuss the ways in which mythology is depicted in later Western art
Suggest activities and provide resources (including twenty slides and six color reproductions) for classroom teaching

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Myths have no life of their own. They must wait for us to give them body. — Albert Camus, "Prometheus in the Underworld," *Summer*

Introduction

SINCE PLATO'S TIME, at least, people have sought to understand what myth "really is." Today the inquiry is expanded by our knowledge of non-Western mythologies and by the contributions of anthropology, linguistics, psychology, and other social sciences. If anything, a simple definition has become harder to reach. Yet, speaking generally, we can hazard a few elements common to all myths: they are time-honored, action narratives, which often rely on the supernatural; and they occur in non-historical time to link a mythic past with the human present. Myth's role can be seen as both archetype and its communication, at once embodying and expressing fundamental truths about a particular society, or all of humankind.

We can identify the kinds of knowledge myths communicate. They explain natural phenomena, for example, or the origins of human customs and institutions. They evoke a lost golden age and embody moral precepts, or serve as admonitions. A more difficult question is, where does this knowledge come from? We tend to understand myth today as a product of the human psyche. Depending on intellectual fashions and individual inclinations, we might regard myth in the way Sigmund Freud did, as expressing something that is repressed, analogous to dreams and daydreams. Or we might, instead, see it as Carl Jung did, revealing the "collective unconscious" of the human race through archetypes. We could follow Ernst Cassirer in viewing myth as one of the mind's essential symbolic forms, like language and science. Or we could agree with Claude Levi-Strauss that myth depends on the structure of the human mind itself.

Myth will always invite new interpretations, and this has allowed it to be reinvented for each generation. Whatever our theories about the nature of myth, the gods and heroes of the ancient world have remained an important part of the cultural language of the West, a vocabulary shared by artists and audiences for three thousand years.

Myth and Its Audience

ANTIQUITY

Gods and heroes in Greek myth

Greek myths are peopled by gods and heroes — immortals and men. In Homer's *Iliad* Apollo declares "there is never equality between the race of deathless gods and that of men who walk the earth." Yet the Greeks made their gods very much like themselves. Their bodies are those of men and women, only more perfect. Their emotions human, only larger. Their passions and weaknesses the same. It is immortality that separates them. The gods do not age, they do not eat human food, and they do not die.



Hellenistic, *Procession of Twelve Gods and Goddesses*, c. 1st century B.C., marble, The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore

When this relief was carved the pantheon of twelve gods was an established idea, but their identities still varied. Here Hermes, Ares, Poseidon, Hephaistos, Zeus, Apollo, Athena, and Artemis are distinguished by their attributes, but the identity of the other goddesses is uncertain.

Their ranks were swelled by nymphs, satyrs, and various divine offspring. Despite the appearance of satyrs and centaurs, and a few outright monsters, Greek mythology relies very little on powerful animal spirits. It is a mythology of men and anthropomorphic gods. The worlds of god and man intersected in the lives and deeds of heroes, mortals who lived with godlike brilliance in a time when the gods themselves were more active on the earth.

Like men and heroes, the gods also sprang from different generations: the Olympians were descended from the Titans and overthrew them under Zeus' leadership.

The twelve Olympians — Zeus, Hera, Apollo, Artemis, Athena, Hephaistos, Ares, Dionysos (or sometimes Hestia), Demeter, Hermes, Aphrodite, and Poseidon — were honored throughout the Greek world, but the notion of them as a fixed group was a relatively late invention. In any one place, a lesser-known deity or even a hero might have been revered. Also, different aspects of the Olympians were worshiped almost as separate deities: in Athens, for example, Athena was Polias (protector of the city), Promachos (warrior), and Ergane (patron of crafts).

Greek myth did not arise from a single source. It sprang from an oral tradition, changing constantly, even after writing had been introduced. Its many layers reflect different times and cultures. When Greek-speaking peoples first settled in the Aegean, they encountered an indigenous population. Many of the stories of Zeus' amorous conquests may reflect a time when the Greeks' male god was supplanting various female fertility deities worshiped by the original inhabitants. Records from the Mycenaean civilization, which flourished in Greece between the fifteenth and twelfth centuries B.C., preserve the names of several gods, including Zeus, Hera, and Poseidon, but the customs and institutions we regard as typically Greek evolved after the Mycenaean civilization collapsed. It was at this time that poets began to sing of the gods as we know them.

Mythology and Greek religion

Greek mythology is not identical with Greek religion, at least not in the way we are accustomed to thinking about it. There was no church in our sense or systematic statement of belief—no Old or New Testament, no revelations to Mohammed. We cannot regard the stories of mythology in any sense as a Greek Bible. Myths were recast time and again to suit various purposes, such as promoting a local ruler, instructing young soldiers, or justifying a political decision. Young girls very likely received a different message from the many tales of female abduction than did their brothers. There were as many versions of a myth as there were poets—and poets, not priests, were its creators. Already in the fifth century B.C., Herodotus recognized that Homer and Hesiod had given the Greeks their gods.

To us Greek mythology seems strangely amoral, but it was not concerned with sin or redemption, and little interested in questions of the afterlife. Public religion was largely a practical matter, designed to reinforce the social and familial bonds—and behavior—that ensured order. By the fifth century B.C. many people had adopted a kind of tolerant skepticism toward the traditional gods and their messy, embarrassing lives. What seem to us to be inconsistencies between those scandalous stories and the majesty of Zeus at his temple in Olympia, for example, were not irreconcilable to the Greeks. Public rites—integral to public order—were maintained until the very end

of antiquity, even as what we might call the secularization of traditional religion accelerated. When the gods were used as propaganda to promote the political aims of rulers in the Hellenistic period (fourth century B.C. – first century B.C.), they lost more of their majesty and divine aura, lapsing into sentimentalized versions of their former selves.

Greek religion, however, also had a more private side. Many public rituals held deep significance for participants. Some Greeks developed personal systems of belief, others joined mystery cults, so-called because they initiated members with secret rites. Their adherents chose ascetic lifestyles, focused on questions of guilt and salvation, and turned their attention to the afterlife. During the Hellenistic and Roman periods, mystery religions attracted ever greater numbers.

Roman religion

We usually think of the Romans as having simply adopted the gods of Greece, but they saw themselves as the most religious people on earth. “In the worship of the gods,” Cicero believed “...we are by far preeminent.” Our word “religion” comes from the Latin *religio*, which had no counterpart in the Greek language. Its root suggests scrupulous observance or a kind of bond. And, the two strongest features of Roman religion are an insistence on formula and procedure, and an almost contractual relation between gods and men.

Through contact with Etruscans and with Greek cities in Italy, Rome had become familiar with the gods of Greece by the early republic. In 431 B.C., a temple to Apollo was



Roman, *Roman Holding Busts of His Ancestors*, c. 1st century, marble, Museo Capitolino, Rome (photo: Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.)

Roman men carried marble busts of ancestors in religious processions. Some scholars believe the practice originated with death masks and helped foster interest in realistic portraiture.

built on the Aventine, probably following a plague. From then on Greek religious art and architecture predominated. The very existence of sculpted images of the gods seems to have increased their acceptance. The Romans, however, tried to avoid some of the scandalous anthropomorphism—the human passions, vices, and deceits—of Hellenic religion. A Roman god, more than its Greek counterpart, was defined by its function and power, and less by its life story told in myth.



Sir Peter Paul Rubens, Drawing of a Silver Drachm Showing Alexander the Great as Herakles, from *Sketches of Heads from Ancient Gems or Coins*, c. 1620s or 1630s, The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, Ill, 162

Here Alexander wears the lion-head helmet of Herakles. On other coins he has the horns of Zeus-Ammon. After conquests in the Near East, Alexander adopted some Eastern modes of kingship. He was the first Greek ruler to be deified.

This supported, and was supported by, a distinctly Roman tendency to create deified abstractions. It found expression in personifications of, for example, Rome, Abundance, Peace, and the Genius, a household deity that embodied the male force of the paterfamilias. Romans maintained a strong material and factual bias, often combining history and myth. Portraits of ancestors were kept along with images of the gods in most household shrines. And when emperors and empresses came to be deified, the boundaries between myth and history grew even less distinct.

Mythological tales continued to delight, however, and were retold with eloquence and wit by Roman poets such as Ovid (born 43 B.C.). It was largely through the works of Ovid, especially the *Metamorphoses*, that European audiences in the Middle Ages and Renaissance would come to know these stories. Greek texts all but disappeared from the West.

In the later years of the Roman empire, foreign religious influences increased. Eastern cults with ecstatic rituals and the promise of individual salvation grew in importance. The best-known new religions were centered around Astarte, Cybele, Mithras, Isis, and, of course, Christ.

THE MIDDLE AGES

In the late fourth century, almost eighty years after the emperor Constantine embraced Christianity, the old gods were outlawed by the emperor Theodosius. He ordered their temples closed and forbade celebration of the ancient sacrifices. How, then, do we still know them

today? In large measure, the gods survived because they masqueraded as something else, and in the process underwent a drastic transformation.

Euhemerism and other “normal” explanations of myth

In the fourth century B.C., Euhemerus of Messene had described an imaginary voyage to islands in the Indian Ocean, where a golden column recorded the deeds of Zeus, Cronos, and Uranos — while they were kings. The idea that great men might later be worshiped as gods by a grateful people was especially believable when Euhemerus was writing, since ruler cults, in which the king was deified, were being established for the first time in the Greek world.

Euhemerus’ manner of explaining myth as the embroidered legends of great men was embraced by early Christian apologists because it explained the gods’ existence in a way that did not admit divinity. Along the same lines, Lactantius (born 240) proposed a number of “logical” explanations for many myths, suggesting, for example, that when Zeus rained down on Danaë in a golden shower, it reflected payment for a prostitute.

Celestial gods

Belief in the pagan gods did not stop with the advent of Christianity. Especially in isolated areas, old practices, or least echoes of them, continued for a thousand years. Some of the gods’ attributes were transferred to saints; other gods, such as Pan, were reduced to the status of demons.



Andrea Pisano, *Religion*, 14th century, relief from the campanile of Santa Maria del Fiore, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence (photo: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.)

The bell tower of Florence's cathedral included a series of reliefs depicting the planetary gods. Here Jupiter appears dressed in the robes of a monk and holding a chalice and cross. The representation may stem from Arabic descriptions of Jupiter/Marduk. Since Jupiter was the planet that held sway over Western (that is, Christian) lands, Arabic astronomical works specifically presented him in Christian guise.

More significant, the names of the gods remained familiar because of their presence in the sky as constellations, planets, and signs of the zodiac. As the zodiac was integrated with the natural sciences, the medieval system of elements and humors, the planetary gods assumed physical connections and were felt to affect personality and specific parts of the body. We continue to characterize individuals as "saturnine" or "mercurial."

Attempts were made to Christianize the zodiac and the stars. It was suggested that the apostles replace the twelve pagan signs or that Aries be called the Lamb. Saint Paul

wanted to eliminate the pagan names of weekdays. Obviously none of these efforts were successful: French *mercredi*, for example, is from the Latin *dies Mercurii* (Mercury's day). "Wednesday" is only a transposition of Woden, the northern god.

Allegorical interpretations

Another way in which the gods survived was through the protective coloration of allegory. This process began long before the end of the ancient world, fostered by the Roman predilection for abstraction and personification. The Stoics had used the gods as cosmic symbols to embody moral principles. In Herakles, for example, they found virtue—the highest good.

In Christian times, this trend intensified. Around 500 Fulgentius wrote several influential works offering allegorical interpretations of myth consistent with Christian belief. He relied on fanciful etymologies and other bizarre explanations, but his method proved enormously enduring. A treatise on Fulgentius was published as late as the fourteenth century, and it continued to be used long into the Renaissance (see nos. 10 and 18).

Similar interpretations were produced throughout the Middle Ages, especially of the works of Ovid. The best-known and most imitated example was the French *Ovide moralisé*, which appeared around 1320. Its anonymous author was clear about his guiding principle: "tout est pour nostre enseignement" (all is for our instruction). His poem provided myths from the *Metamorphoses* with specific Christian meanings. For example, Phaeton, who attempted but failed to drive the chariot of the sun (see no. 16), is equated with the rebel angel Lucifer.

THE RENAISSANCE

The word "renaissance" describes a literal rebirth of the ideals of classical culture. Especially in Italy, the Renaissance was stamped with the learning and the secular, man-centered outlook of Greece and Rome. In educated circles, pagan myths were no longer routinely cast in strictly Christian terms. Herakles, for example, was invoked not only to exemplify virtue, but also the more worldly qualities of individual fame and human achievement.

Neoplatonism and pagan mythology

Mythological themes were embraced by Renaissance philosophers, poets, and artists. Ancient myths were particularly attractive to the Neoplatonists, who sought to integrate the pagan philosophy of Plotinus with Christian belief. They saw the universe as a kind of spiritual circuit. Divinity, like an electrical charge originating in God, penetrated the heavens and descended through the elements to matter and man. Images of purification and the removal of earthly trappings suggested the way men could shed the various layers of being that separated them from the divine. The constant yearning of Psyche for Cupid, for example, or the flaying of Marsyas (see no. 15) were often cast in this way. And since beauty provided men with a way to apprehend the divine, images of a pure, celestial Venus figured prominently. These references are often esoteric and difficult to assess. Some of the most famous mythological paintings of the Renaissance, Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* for example, remain enigmatic.

The Return of the gods to classical form

The appearance of the old gods had been transformed during the Middle Ages, when visual models had been almost totally lacking. Reliance on written sources had resulted in guises quite foreign to their ancient natures. Zeus had been cast as a medieval monk, goddesses, as fashionably dressed ladies. Illustrations from Arabic astronomy texts show Herakles armed with a scimitar.

With the Renaissance the gods were reunited with their classical forms — Ares, fierce and armed for battle, Aphrodite with the coolly detached beauty of a marble statue. An increased knowledge of the ancient world was largely responsible for this restoration, but it was at this time, too, that men recognized, really for the first time, that they were no longer the living legacy of the classical world. Acknowledgment of the distance between themselves and a remote past permitted

Renaissance men to study the civilizations of Greece and Rome in a way that had never occurred to medieval scholars who saw themselves as simply the latest members of late classical society. Now, artists and patrons alike sought authentic representations, and they looked increasingly for ancient models.

A number of specialized manuals were written to supply Renaissance poets and artists with imagery of the ancient gods. For painters the most important of these was published in the mid-1500s by Vincenzo Cartari. Cartari was especially interested in providing a pictorial reference for the way mythological characters should look. A 1571 edition of his work included engravings, though his representations still relied more on ancient literary rather than visual sources.

The Influence of ancient art

The remains of classical art had never completely disappeared. Ancient sarcophagi, for example, had frequently been taken over for Christian burials and used as altars in early medieval churches. In the early Renaissance, however, these works became the focus of analysis and study. A few Western travelers went to Greece, notably Cyriacus of Ancona (d. 1455). But it was Rome that lured most students of ancient culture. Even those unable to travel could experience Roman monuments through an explosion of published catalogues.



Top: Greek, *Herakles*, 5th century B.C., bronze, Musée du Louvre, Paris (photo: © R.M.N.)

In this typical Greek depiction of the hero, Herakles is a mature, muscular man with short beard and hair, heroically nude, wielding his favored weapon, a (now missing) club.

Center: *Herakles*, from 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Šūfī, *Book of the Fixed Stars*, 15th century, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, ms. arab. 5036 (photo: © Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

Though this figure has the same stance, he is now fully clothed and holds a scimitar in place of a club — the points are stars in the constellation.

Bottom: Albrecht Dürer, *The Northern Celestial Hemisphere* (detail of Herakles), 1515, woodcut, Rosenwald Collection

The points of the Arabic star map are reproduced; the hero, however, regains his ancient weapon and appearance, and is shown nude.

Engravings in these books brought the art of the ancient world wider exposure, not just in Italy but in northern Europe as well.

The first examples of classical art that many people saw were coins and engraved gems. Collectors, including scholars, politicians, churchmen, and the occasional artist, competed to acquire these tokens of classical culture as evidence of their own erudition and taste. In an inventory completed after the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, ancient cameos were more valued than paintings by artists as celebrated as Fra Angelico.

In the early 1400s relatively few works of ancient sculpture were known, but this changed as statuettes and even monumental marbles were discovered beneath the streets of Rome. By the early 1500s a sculpture garden was established in the Vatican Belvedere, and powerful popes ensured that highly prized ancient statues, including the *Laocoön* (see no. 4), found their way into the Belvedere collection.

We can gauge changing attitudes toward these works. In the 1300s, at the behest of city officials, a fragment of an ancient statue of Venus was removed from Siena and reburied—in enemy territory. It was regarded with superstition and suspicion. A hundred years later, ancient statues commanded a very different kind of authority;

torsos and limbs, inviolable in their fragmentary states, were displayed with a reverence approaching awe. By the early 1500s, however, when the *Farnese Hercules* (see no. 3) and *Laocoön* (see no. 4) were uncovered in Rome, ancient works were routinely restored. The best sculptors of the day replaced missing parts, based on ancient models and their own imaginations. Ancient works were corrected and completed in a way unimaginable only a few decades before—no longer specimens of the past, they were part of the Renaissance present.

Ancient art and Renaissance style

The ideals of Renaissance humanism found comfortable expression in the naturalism and harmonious balance of ancient art. A new man-centered outlook fueled a desire to portray the natural world realistically—that is, the way men experienced it—and rekindled interest in the human figure.

Artists only began to employ live nude models to learn anatomy around the 1470s and did not dissect corpses, a practice frowned on by the church, until a bit later. It was in large measure by studying ancient statues, statuettes, and engraved gems that early Renaissance artists learned to recreate a believable structure and sense of motion in the human form. What Renaissance, and later Western, art would have looked like without these ancient models is hard to imagine, so completely did the Renaissance adopt the classical style of ancient art as its own. Mythological subjects, now portrayed once again in a form that

ancient audiences might recognize, gave artists an opportunity to experiment with the nude and to show the human body in a greater variety of active poses than most religious subjects had suggested.

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

In the seventeenth century, artists were better educated than ever before about ancient myth and history. Mythology had become, for educated people, a common cultural language. Its pictorial forms had gained wide dissemination—and instant recognition—through published engravings. Handbooks and dictionaries also gave ready definitions for visual symbols, allowing viewers to equate Zeus, for example, with his eagle and Hera with her peacock.

Mythological subjects accommodated the century's most divergent artistic temperaments. Dramatic narratives offered rich opportunities for the energy, voluptuous forms, and exuberant color of baroque artists, while gods and goddesses of timeless perfection served equally well the still, balanced style of French classicism.

French classicism and the Academy

As strong national rulers emerged in several countries, they looked to the ancient world for imagery to express and enhance their pres-

tige. Mythological subjects were increasingly turned to contemporary political ends. In France, Henri IV appeared as Mars, Hercules, even Jupiter. Louis XIV styled himself the “Sun King” and identified with Apollo.

The association of powerful monarchs with the subjects, and the style, of ancient art conferred on both a mantle of official sanction. They became institutionalized in the French Academy, which was established by Louis XIV to regulate the arts. Academicians placed the greatest value on what they called history painting, that is, on noble subjects taken from the Bible, ancient history, and mythology. A standardized, theoretical system of teaching based on ancient art systematized the formal qualities of classical style. In 1666, the French Academy in Rome was established to permit the most promising young artists to study directly two great paragons: ancient art and the classically inspired Raphael. Students learned to draw, not from live models, but first from statues and casts. They read ancient literature and history. French classicism insisted that painting appeal to the intellect above the senses. Drawing took precedence over color, and nature was perfected according to rigid rules governing proportion and composition.

For the first time landscape, which was just beginning to attract the interest of artists as an independent genre, was combined with mythological subjects. The pastoral worlds described by ancient poets had

appealed to the Renaissance taste in literature, but landscape had played little part in painting. In the seventeenth century a similar longing for the idyllic simplicity and lost pleasures of Arcadia, where love transports men beyond the mundane, was expressed again: for example, in the distant and luminous vistas of the painter Claude Lorrain (see no. 18).

THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

In the early decades of the eighteenth century, a very different approach to the subjects of mythology was adopted by artists working in the lighthearted, delicate rococo style. Although history painting continued to be held in the highest official regard, patrons and artists increasingly sought charm and playful frivolity. They found the pink bodies of lovely young goddesses and plump cupids well suited to the pastel colors they preferred. Their pleasure-seeking sensibilities were piqued by the amorous pursuits of gods and goddesses, nymphs and satyrs. These perfumed works were created for intimate settings and intended to delight the senses. Even before midcentury, Enlightenment critics were decrying their lack of serious purpose.

The Rage for antiquity

The frivolity of rococo was supplanted by more sober styles and subjects. Neoclassicism had many roots—not only in Enlightenment philosophy and political and social change, but also in a vogue for all things ancient. In fact, a wealth of “new” classical material had come to light. In 1738 the buried Roman city of Herculaneum was discovered



Louis XIV dressed as the Sun God in dramatic performance, 1653, watercolor, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, (photo: © Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

Lavish theatrical productions helped to promote Louis' image of absolute monarchy. He appeared in the role of the Sun God during a performance of the ballet *Le nuit* in 1653.

near Naples, and ten years later active excavations began in neighboring Pompeii. Never before had so much information been available. Artists labored to increase the accuracy of their depictions of the ancient world, and they mined ancient art for decorative motifs. Vase shapes were carefully copied; lamps, beds, chairs, and all manner of furnishings were reproduced to satisfy a growing *goût grec*.

The picture of the ancient world had relied overwhelmingly on Rome, but in the eighteenth century Greek art increasingly informed the most advanced tastes. The Greek temples at Paestum in southern Italy were rediscovered and joined Pompeii and Herculaneum as important stops on the Grand Tour. More travelers went to Greece itself, including members of the English Society of Dilettanti, whose motto was "Grecian taste; Roman spirit." They commissioned a systematic survey from James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, whose engravings, which began to appear in 1762, brought the ancient monuments of Greece to the attention of wider audiences.

Greek and Roman artifacts were energetically collected. Museums are filled with ancient works acquired at this time. Sir William Hamilton, who was English envoy in Naples in the 1760s, shipped home thousands of Greek and Etruscan vases, bronze statuettes, terra-cottas, and other goods, most taken from ancient tombs. He published his collection in four large volumes that became, with others like them, important sources for artists.



Sir William and Lady Hamilton assisting at an excavation, frontispiece from Sir William Hamilton, *Collection of Engravings from Ancient Vases*, 1791, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, N.Y.

Hamilton and his wife Emma, most famous as the mistress of Admiral Nelson, stand by as "excavators" open a tomb near Nola. Despite appearances here, Hamilton was ahead of his contemporaries in recognizing the need for a more scientific approach to archaeology.

Winckelmann and the idealization of Greek art

In 1764 Johann Winckelmann published *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, a monumental study of ancient art. It was an enormously influential work that laid the groundwork for both classical archaeology and modern art history. He analyzed the stylistic development of Greek art through several stages. Though he relied on Roman copies and never went to Greece, Winckelmann proclaimed "the superior humanity of the Greeks." He wrote effusively about the perfection of Greek art and urged contemporary artists to emulate its "noble simplicity and sedate calm in Gesture and Expression."

Neoclassicism and Romanticism

Whether inspired by Winckelmann or not, artists did begin to paint in a new style that sought to recapture the clarity and restraint of ancient classical art. Uncluttered compositions recall the appearance of relief sculpture. Their emphatic contours and intense concentration seem almost to impart a stamp of

moral certitude. In France, neoclassicism triumphed in the work of Jacques-Louis David and became the art of revolution. Painters returned to grand and noble themes, using myth and, more often, instances of valor and personal sacrifice from ancient history to stir men of their own generation to action. In a literal sense, the French Revolution was clothed in the republican spirit of the ancient world: men wore Phrygian caps as emblems of liberty, women shed elaborately structured dresses for the simplicity of Grecian gowns.

In succeeding decades this stern, even puritanic, rationality gave way to emotion and the imagination. Romanticism prompted a new way of looking at the ancient world, substituting fantasy for archaeological authenticity. Many artists were inspired by mist-shrouded subjects—the Middle Ages, Celtic and Norse mythology, and such wholly invented legends as those of



Pablo Picasso, *Minotauromachy*, 1935, etching, Rosenwald Collection

Picasso inverts the story of the minotaur. In Greek myth the maiden Ariadne led the hero Theseus from the labyrinth where the bull-headed monster lived, but here a young girl leads the blinded minotaur instead. Subject of often conflicting interpretations, the etching is sometimes seen in Jungian terms. The girl with the candle can be viewed as an incarnation of the archetypal hero-child, a fearless bearer of light, who is unafraid to confront the forces of darkness

MODERN TIMES

In this century mythology has undergone new interpretations about its nature and function, and these have indelibly affected our reaction to it. The complex relationships drawn between myth and the psyche have prompted many artists to use myth as a means to explore the mental landscape in ways that are necessarily diverse and individual. For some the ancient gods and heroes still evoke the glories of a lost age. Others make ironic comment on modern heroes and the very concept of heroism. Many use myth to speak to the artist's own role as godlike creator. Today the idea that a myth is more than simply a good story is itself part of our "mythology."

Ossian—but they did not abandon the sunlit mythologies of the ancient world. Antiquity—its life, art, literature, and myth—was held out as an expression of the Ideal.

Romanticism's emphasis on the essential role of the artist as a creative force encouraged a more personal use of all myths to express interior states. This was even more true of the symbolist movement at the end of the nineteenth century. These artists, painters and poets alike, sought to free themselves from the artificial restrictions and the limitations of physical appearances. They wanted instead to capture products of intuition and imagination, a visual expression of an inner life. Rather than produce an obvious narrative, symbolist painters such as Odilon Redon (see no. 20) challenged viewers to piece together visual clues and supply their own imaginative connections.

Works in Focus

The Gods in Stars, Seasons, and Sorcery (nos. 1–2)

In large measure the gods survived the Middle Ages because they had come to personify natural and celestial phenomena. Pagan deities were identified with the constellations, the planets, and the seasons. Many mythological characters also became part of the zodiac and so acquired a wide range of magical powers. Other figures were used on talismans, amulets, and magic stones. The works examined in this section trace their lineage to this tradition, although they were made in later periods.

The Afterlife of Ancient Art (nos. 3–4)

The Renaissance study of ancient sculpture helped reunite the subjects of mythology with the look of classical art. Each of the works in this section was inspired by an antique statue. In the *Farnese Hercules* the correspondence between the original and the Renaissance copy is remarkably close; in the *Laocoön*, made sixty years later, the ancient work provides inspiration only.

Patrons of the Gods: Poetry, Propaganda, and Self-Promotion (nos. 5–8)

Each of these works explores the connections between patrons' motives and their use of mythological subjects. Illustrations of classical literature could showcase learning and advanced taste. Allegorical amplification could extend the meaning of pagan subjects to embrace Christian and Renaissance philosophical ideals. Myths were also commonly used—as they had been in the ancient world—to promote political goals.

Heroes: Mirrors of Fame, Virtue, and Personal Ideologies (nos. 9–12)

Each generation has its own heroes, characters of superhuman achievement who embody, and help us understand, the values of their time. Their virtues vary widely. Some of the works in this section reflect primarily public and external virtues; others, a more interior struggle, sometimes that of the artist himself.

Portrait of a Goddess: Style and Subject (nos. 13–14)

Diana, or one of her nymph-companions, is recognizable in two very different works. One used classical sculpture as a starting point but softened the image with the sinuous line and playfully erotic tinge of rococo. The other, a rigorously “modern” bronze, recaptured the geometry of Greek archaic art.

Telling Tales (nos. 15–20)

The Greek word “myth” originally described something that was spoken. It was a telling of tales before it became the tale told. The word was also used to signify structure, a stringing together of events, so that eventually it came to be used in the sense of plot. These works illustrate several different approaches to storytelling and narration. Some artists, like the poet of the *Iliad*, put us in the middle of the action. Others depict quiet moments in which the narrative is only suggested by the dramatic potential of what is portrayed.

The Gods in Stars, Seasons, and Sorcery



I
Alfred André
French, 1839–1919

Pendant with the Head of Medusa

1885/1890

Chalcedony, enameled gold and
gems

Height .120m (4 11/16 in.)

Widener Collection

THIS CAMEO depicts the face of Medusa, snakes knotted under her chin. Since ancient times, it was believed that her image could guard against a variety of dangers. Perseus gave her severed head to Athena, who put it on her aegis, a protective cloak fringed with snakes at the hem. Because the monster's terrifying image could turn men to stone, it was a powerful defense.

Shields and other types of armor were frequently decorated with a Medusa head, recalling that Perseus had looked on her image reflected in his shield. By the second century Medusa was a common device on Roman pendants, which because they hang close to the face have often been worn as talismans. The power of a pendant could be boosted by magical properties believed to exist in the stone itself. Chalcedony, generally, was held to protect the wearer, and varieties like jasper were believed to staunch the flow of blood. Cameos acquired amuletic value in their own right. In the Middle Ages, ancient cameos were thought to have been made by the tribes of Israel and were assigned many magical properties.

In the Renaissance, however, cameos were prized precisely because their Greek or Roman origin was understood. Medusa had become less important as a magical charm and more valued as a memento of classical culture. Though made in the nineteenth century, this cameo was meant to have the look of an ancient gem preserved by an admiring Renaissance collector in the finest setting of that age.

REVIVAL JEWELRY

Historical jewelry enjoyed wide popularity throughout Europe during the nineteenth century, as travelers to Italy returned home with souvenir cameos, mementos of Renaissance cities, and “Etruscan” gold. Artisans copied the designs and techniques of ancient and Renaissance gems with such success that distinguishing genuine pieces from those only inspired by the past is sometimes difficult. And many, unfortunately, were sold as outright forgeries.

Long thought to have been made in sixteenth-century Italy, this pendant has recently been recognized as the work of Alfred André, a nineteenth-century Parisian. André was sought-after as a restorer of old jewelry. In addition, he created new works of great quality by copying from pieces he repaired. The setting of this pendant, for example, reproduces a tendril pattern from a sixteenth-century casket he restored in Spain.

PERSEUS AND MEDUSA

Medusa was one of the three Gorgon sisters, who lived at the western edge of the universe. She had a horrible face and snakes in place of hair. Simply looking on her was enough to turn men to stone.

Perseus, the son of Zeus and Danaë, was set the task of procuring Medusa’s head. Armed with gifts from Athena and Hermes — a shield, a sword, winged shoes, and a cap of invisibility — Perseus traveled to the river Okeanos and encountered Medusa. He used his shield to reflect the monster’s image — only by looking at this reflection could he approach her — and with the sword severed her head. From the monster’s neck sprang forth two unborn sons, Chrysaor and the winged horse Pegasus. The healing god Asklepios collected her blood, which ran as a magical healing potion from one vein, and as deadly poison from another.

For ancient accounts, see Apollodoros 2.34; Ovid *Metamorphoses*, bk. 6; and Hesiod *Theogony* 250–290.



Greek, *Gorgon*, terra-cotta metope, 7th century, Museo Archeologico Regionale, Syracuse (photo: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.)



The Rondanini Medusa, Roman copy of a 5th-century Greek original, marble, Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München

In the fifth century B.C. Medusa was given a classically beautiful face on the shield of the huge statue of Athena inside the Parthenon — a statue so influential that afterward beautiful renditions became the norm. The Rondanini relief, once thought to copy the Parthenon Medusa, was quite well known in the nineteenth century. André probably used it as a model for his cameo.

2



Antoine Watteau
French, 1684–1721

Ceres (Summer)

1715/1716

Oil on canvas

1.416 x 1.160 m (55 7/8 x 45 3/8 in.)

Samuel H. Kress Collection

CERES IS a familiar representation of Summer. She holds a scythe and is surrounded by sheaves of grain—evidence of summer’s bounty. Her crown is formed of wheat and the summer blooms of poppies and cornflowers. Here Ceres is also accompanied by the signs of the summer zodiac: the twin youths of Gemini, the crab of Cancer, and the lion of Leo.

This is one of four paintings of the seasons in mythological garb that Watteau painted for Pierre Crozat, a wealthy banker. They probably hung over doors in the dining room of his Parisian home. The other paintings in the series are lost, but we know what they looked like from engravings: Spring was represented by Primavera, autumn by the wine-god Dionysos, winter by the north wind Boreas.

Watteau lived briefly in the Crozat household, where he was able to study Crozat’s impressive art collection. The silvery brightness and lively pastel colors in Ceres—a warm mix of pink and golden tones—reflect the influence of Venetian painters Watteau admired, especially Veronese, who worked in a city surrounded by light and shimmering reflections. The delicacy of Watteau’s color and the brightness of his light soften the image of Ceres, whose massive figure is otherwise rather formal and imposing. Although Watteau painted Ceres, he probably followed sketches made by an older artist. Their collaboration stands at the transition between the monumental forms of the preceding century and the lighter style of eighteenth-century rococo.

ANTOINE WATTEAU

When the French court moved from Versailles following the death of Louis XIV, they built elegant homes in Paris and decorated them in a new delicate style. Known as “rococo,” it emphasized pastel colors, sinuous curves, and patterns based on flowers, vines, and shells. Painters turned to the sensual delights of color and light, leaving weighty religious and historical subjects for more intimate mythological scenes.

It was Watteau who first merged these ingredients into a new style. Born near the Flemish border, he arrived in Paris with minimal training. While working for a painter of theatrical scenes, he seems to have been inspired to mingle the real and imagined. As Watteau’s reputation grew, he was able to study the art collections of wealthy connoisseurs. Influenced by the works of Rubens (see no. 16) and Venetian artists of the Renaissance, Watteau developed a free, delicate painting technique and a taste for warm, shimmering colors. His most famous works are *fêtes galantes*, lyrical garden scenes in which elegant young people enjoy flirtations and romance.

CERES/DEMETER

Ceres was a grain goddess whom the Romans identified with the Greek Demeter. Through Demeter’s power, the land produced a harvest each year so that men could avoid famine. Since she controlled the fruits of the land, she was also associated with the underworld—realm of the dead but also the place where seeds are nurtured.

Demeter’s daughter Persephone was abducted by Hades, god of the underworld. As Demeter wandered, grief-stricken, in search of Persephone, the fertility of the earth was in jeopardy. Zeus demanded that the maiden be released, but since she had eaten some pomegranate seeds, Persephone was compelled to return to Hades for a portion of each year.

See *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.



Roman, *Four Seasons*, 2d–3d century, floor mosaic, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, The Adolph and Wilkins C. Williams Fund (photo: © 1991 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)

Allegorical representations of the seasons, which point to the abundance that comes from the regular harmony of the universe, were popular decorations for dining rooms beginning in the Hellenistic period. They were particularly common as floor mosaics and are found in excavations wherever classical culture penetrated—from England to north Africa and the Middle East.

The Afterlife of Ancient Art

3



Florentine 16th Century

Farnese Hercules

c. 1550/1599

Bronze

Height .568 m (22 7/8 in.)

Gift of Stanley Mortimer

A MATURE and obviously weary Hercules rests after the completion of his labors. Hidden in his right hand are the apples of the Hesperides, the fruit of his final task. He slumps on his club for support, head bowed, the power in his heavily muscled body creating an ironic contrast to his exhaustion.

This was one of the most popular representations of Herakles in antiquity and probably reflects a work by Lysippos, a sculptor of the fourth century B.C. In the 1540s an ancient marble version, more than twice life-size, was discovered in Rome. It entered the collection of Alessandro Farnese, and since then the weary Herakles type has usually been called the Farnese Hercules. As it had in the Hellenistic period, the image of the weary Herakles appealed to Renaissance delight in rhetoric and antithesis. The hero's superhuman efforts and strength are contrasted with his yearning for immortal existence and his final exhausting achievement. The weary Herakles type was adopted by the Renaissance, as it had been by Stoic and Cynic philosophers, as a symbol of human aspiration and effort.

This bronze is extremely faithful to the original marble, giving the hero the same hugely muscled physique, the same cropped hair and beard, the same deeply cut features. This fidelity can be seen as a kind of homage to the ancient work. The very fact of its ancient pedigree enhanced the popularity of the Farnese Hercules in the sixteenth century. Antiquities were revered as products of Greek and Roman civilization, and valued, too, as expressions of their owners' learning and culture. By copying ancient works—at first coins and gems, later bronze statuettes and marbles—artists in the early Renaissance recombined classical subjects with the look of classical art. By the time this Farnese Hercules was made, the naturalism of ancient art and its dedication to the human form, especially the nude, had already made an indelible impression.

THE SCULPTOR

This bronze was probably made in Florence during the sixteenth century, but the identity of the sculptor remains unknown. The weary Herakles type was an extremely popular subject and versions by many different artists are known today. They copy the original with varying degrees of fidelity. In this case, the statue is so close to its ancient model that identification of the sculptor on the basis of his own style is made all the more difficult.

HERAKLES AND THE GOLDEN APPLES OF THE HESPERIDES

Herakles was an ancient hero whom the Romans called Hercules. His last labor was to retrieve the golden apples of the Hesperides, nymphs who lived in a garden at the western edge of the world, where evening is found. They were daughters, some said, of Atlas, the giant who supported the heavens on his shoulders, and they guarded a sacred tree given to Hera by the earth. In the most familiar version of the story Herakles acquired the apples of immortality by guile rather than force. He sought Atlas' help, offering to hold the heavens while the giant retrieved them from his daughters. Atlas, seeing an opportunity to be rid of his burden, gladly accepted. When he returned, however, Herakles tricked him into reshouldering the heavens.

After completing this last labor, Herakles could assume his place among the gods. The order of Herakles' labors varies, but this is usually among the final three, all of which involve the hero with death and immortality.

His labors are described by many ancient authors; see especially Apollodoros 2.74.



Roman, *Farnese Hercules*, 3d century after a 4th century B.C. bronze, marble, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples (photo: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.)

Hendrick Goltzius, *The Farnese Hercules*, c. 1592, engraving, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Henry Walters

The Farnese statue was probably made in the third century for the Baths of Caracalla in Rome. Like the bronze from Florence, Goltzius' engraving reproduces sixteenth-century restorations for the legs and hands, which were missing when the colossal statue was found. The restorations were probably based on another ancient statuette. They remained in place even after the original legs and hands were recovered some years later. In the eighteenth century, new attitudes about the ancient world and the first scientific excavations at Pompeii and elsewhere heightened awareness of "authenticity," and the statue was "re-restored" with the ancient parts.

4



El Greco (Domenikos
Theotokopoulos)
Spanish, 1541–1614

Laocoön

c. 1610/1614
Oil on canvas
1.375 x 1.725 m (54 1/8 x 67 7/8 in.)
Samuel H. Kress Collection

LAOCOÖN wrestles with a snake sent by the gods to destroy him and his sons. Behind them, a small horse, the Trojan Horse, trots toward the distant city. This is not Troy, however, but El Greco's own Toledo, whose walls, gate, and famous water wheel appear in other views El Greco painted of that city.

Because *Laocoön* is the only known mythological subject that El Greco painted, and then only at the end of his life, it has long invited speculation. Laocoön, as an exemplar of noble suffering, was considered an appropriate model during the Counter Reformation for Christian martyrs. Was this a commentary on contemporary religious controversy in Spain? Was it a moralizing allegory or, perhaps, simply a reference to the local tradition that Toledo was founded by Trojan heroes? The enigmatic figures, probably gods, who look on from the right might provide clues, but they are unfinished—notice the extra head and limbs still visible after a figure was partially repainted—and so they only contribute to the mystery.

What does seem clear is that El Greco was inspired by a famous work of ancient sculpture. In 1506, the marble *Laocoön* praised by Roman writer Pliny as “surpassing anything in the arts of painting or sculpture” was rediscovered in Rome. Michelangelo called it a “miracle of art.” He advised others to be inspired by it rather than to attempt imitations. *Laocoön* stood as a gauntlet to contemporary artists, however, and they rushed to reproduce it despite Michelangelo’s admonition. Countless versions of the statue appeared, painted in oil and fresco, sculpted in bronze and marble, even drawn in caricature.

El Greco, by contrast, used the ancient work as a starting point rather than a template. His *Laocoön*, though it remains enigmatic, may be the most successful attempt to match the power of the ancient work. At the end of his life the desire to meet this challenge may have been motivation enough.

EL GRECO

Born on Crete, Domenikos Theotokopoulos acquired the name El Greco, the Greek, in Italy and Spain. After working as an icon painter, he left Greece to study Western art in Italy. In Venice, he learned to apply pigments in a free and sketchy manner and acquired a preference for rich colors. In Rome he encountered mannerists, who abandoned the attempt to portray the world as it looked in favor of a more subjective view that existed only in the intellect. Their highly self-conscious and artificial style compressed space, relied on bizarre colors, and contorted figures into serpentine poses.

Failing to win major commissions in Italy, El Greco moved to Toledo, where he remained for the rest of his life. Isolated in Spain from the artistic mainstream, he pushed mannerism to its limits while contemporaries still in Italy turned to new, more naturalistic representations (see no. 6). El Greco put his art in the service of the Counter Reformation, for which its haunting intensity and highly charged emotional timber were well suited.

LAOCOÖN

Laocoön was a Trojan priest who warned against accepting the Trojan Horse, which the besieging Greeks brought to the city gates as a dedication to Athena. They claimed to be giving up their long war and sailing for home. The gift, however, was a ruse; the horse concealed Greek soldiers. They could be heard to moan when Laocoön hurled a spear at the horse's side, but the Trojans, fooled by a Greek spy, did not heed the priest. When serpents rose out of the sea to kill Laocoön and his sons, it seemed to signal the gods' displeasure with him and was judged punishment for doubting the horse. Different accounts of the story offer various motives for the gods' action, but the outcome is always the same: the horse was led into the city, and the combat that ends with Troy's destruction was unleashed.

See Virgil *Aeneid* 2.40–56, 199–231 and Apollodoros *Epitome* 5.17–18.



Attributed to Francesco Xanto Avelli, Urbino, possibly with assistants, *Bowl with the Death of Laocoön and His Two Sons*, 1539, maiolica, Widener Collection

Roman, *Laocoön*, probably 1st century after Hellenistic or Roman original, marble, Musei Vaticani (photo: Hirmer Fotoarchiv)

The *Laocoön* was long considered a Hellenistic work, but many archaeologists now believe it was a Roman creation. Its style is close to sculpture made for a grotto of Tiberius, and it seems to rely on Virgil, not Greek sources, for narrative detail.

5



Dosso Dossi
Ferrarese, active 1512–1542

**Aeneas and Achatas
on the Libyan Coast**

c. 1520
Oil on canvas
.587 x .876 m (23 1/4 x 34 1/2 in.)
Samuel H. Kress Collection

THIS PAINTING was part of a frieze illustrating the *Aeneid*, which Dosso painted for Duke Alfonso I d'Este of Ferrara. The court of Ferrara was one of Europe's most brilliant, employing the painters Titian and Raphael, the poet Ariosto, and musicians of the Della Viola family.

One painting was created for each book of the *Aeneid*. They were installed in Alfonso's private room, called the *camerino d'alabastro* after its alabaster reliefs. Dosso's approach to storytelling makes it difficult to recognize the narrative, but this painting is usually thought to illustrate book I: as the luckless Trojans rebuild ships lost off the North African coast, Aeneas speaks to his friend Achatas about their fate. (Because the painting has been cut down, it may no longer include the figure of Aeneas; the two conversants at the right seem a bit old to be Aeneas and Achatas.) Dosso clothed his Trojans in the fashions of his own day and gave them vessels of the kind that were then undertaking exploration of the New World.

Alfonso's *camerino* also boasted several larger paintings, which hung below Dosso's frieze. Two of the large panels copied themes of ancient wall paintings as they were described in the *Eikones* (Images) of Philostratos, a third-century author. His descriptions presented a challenge to Renaissance painters to match the conception and artistry of ancient art, and allowed patrons to showcase their familiarity with the art of the past. By combining these larger paintings with Dosso's frieze, it seems likely that Alfonso was deliberately attempting to re-create what he understood to be the look of an ancient Roman villa.

Alfonso may also have had another motive for combining the *Aeneid* frieze with the larger paintings. They depicted bacchanals, amorous romps in which the powers of Venus, as goddess of love, were much in evidence. Aeneas, as all who visited Alfonso's chamber would remember, was Venus' mortal son.

DOSSO DOSSI

Little is known about Dosso's early career. We do not know where he received his training, or even where he was born. He may have been a native of Ferrara, where he became court painter for the powerful Este family. His style shows influences from Venice and Rome, but Dosso's work is strongly original. He was best known for feathery landscapes and scenes of everyday life tinged with whimsy. At times, inventiveness makes it difficult to identify his subjects. Energetic brushwork, intense colors, and strong patterns of light give his work unusual vitality.

AENEAS

Following the Trojan War, Aeneas struggled to establish a new land in Italy. There, his descendants were destined to found the greatest power the world had ever known: Rome. As Aeneas and the other refugees sailed toward Italy, winds unleashed at Hera's bidding drove them to the African coast. While walking along the beach, the city of Carthage in the background, Aeneas summed up the tragic conception he held of his own destiny in his famous speech to his friend Achates: "Sorrow is implicit in the affairs of men..."

See Virgil's *Aeneid*.



The Descendants of Venus and Anchises (detail), manuscript illumination, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, ms. lat. 5888 (photo: © Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

Many Italian families, including Julius Caesar's, traced their descent through Aeneas. This illustrious family tree, painted for the Visconti, begins at the top with the marriage of Venus and Aeneas' father Anchises, presided over by Jupiter himself.

6



Annibale Carracci
Bolognese, 1560–1609

Venus Adorned by Graces

1590/1595

Oil on panel transferred to canvas
1.330 x 1.706 m (52 7/8 x 67 1/8 in.)
Samuel H. Kress Collection

DURING THE fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the amorous dalliances of the gods were common subjects for wedding pictures. These sometimes bawdy stories were felt to be appropriate, even propitious, for a fruitful union. Venus, as the goddess of love, held sway over marriages. Here she is attended by the Three Graces. Her son Cupid holds a mirror in which she sees her beauty reflected. In the background at right, the goddess' husband Hephaistos converses with Ares—perhaps to negotiate his adulterer's fee.

This painting belonged to the Tanari family in Bologna. It has been described as a wedding picture because of its resemblance to this wedding poem written in 398 by Claudian, usually regarded as the last poet of classical Latin. These lines celebrate the marriage of the emperor Honnorius and Maria:

One [of the Graces] pours a rich stream of nectar over Venus' head, another parts her hair with a fine ivory comb. A third, standing behind...braids her tresses and orders her ringlets in due array, yet carefully leaving a part untended: such negligence becomes her more. Nor did her face lack the mirror's verdict....While she surveys each detail and approves her beauty she notes the shadow of her son... (lines 99–110)

This poem was known in the sixteenth century, but Annibale probably relied on the illustrated handbook of mythological subjects by Vincenzo Cartari published in 1571. Cartari noted, for example, that by including both Hephaistos and Ares, the image would convey the heat of passion needed for procreation.

Wedding poems, called epithalamia, were often written for aristocratic families in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, and the form was revived by Renaissance poets steeped in Greek and Roman classics. Artists contributed similar images as expressions of good wishes. Many painted epithalamia, often done as frescoes, were part of the general redecorating undertaken to greet a bride in her new home.

ANNIBALE CARRACCI

Unlike most of his contemporaries, Annibale was interested in observing the natural world and in faithfully transcribing its form, texture, and light. In the early 1580s, with his brother Agostino and an older cousin Ludovico, Annibale founded an academy in Bologna with the express intention of reforming Italian painting by moving away from the artificiality and high style of mannerism (see no. 4) and returning to the naturalism of the Renaissance.

In 1595, Annibale went to Rome and his painting assumed a more classical look, influenced by the city's ancient monuments and the harmoniously balanced compositions of Raphael. He decorated a series of ceiling frescoes with pagan subjects whose foreshortened overhead figures and painted architecture created an illusion of real space. They were praised as models of classical art for the next two hundred years. When he died, Annibale was laid alongside Raphael in the Pantheon in Rome.

THE TOILETTE OF APHRODITE

Aphrodite, the goddess of love, was married to Hephaistos, lame god of the forge, but she enjoyed an amorous liaison with Ares. News of their affair reached Hephaistos, who determined to catch the lovers in the act. He fashioned a fine metal net over his bed and, while Aphrodite entertained Ares, ensnared them both. He called the other gods to witness the outrage. For modesty's sake, no goddesses came, but the male gods were enormously amused by the ridiculous sight of fierce Ares so encumbered. Hephaistos demanded repayment of what he had spent to woo and wed Aphrodite, the normal adulterer's fine, and Poseidon guaranteed it. The pair was released, Ares heading immediately to Thrace and Aphrodite returning to her home on Cyprus, where she was bathed by the Graces and clothed in wonderful garments.

See *Odyssey* 8.265–365. For English examples of epithalamia, see those of Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser.



Titian, *Venus with a Mirror*, c. 1555, oil on canvas, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

A favorite conceit of Renaissance love poetry is the lover's envy of the mirror that holds his beloved's reflection. Poets and Neoplatonic philosophers also used the yearning of lovers as a metaphor of man's desire for God.



Jean-Marc Nattier
French, 1685–1766

**Madame de Caumartin
as Hebe**

1753
Oil on canvas
1.025 x .815 m (40 7/8 x 32 in.)
Samuel H. Kress Collection

MADAME DE CAUMARTIN was the wife of a government official, but here she appears on Mount Olympus as Hebe, holding the ewer from which flows the nectar of the gods. Undoubtedly Hebe's everlasting youth and fresh beauty recommended her as a model for portraits. Nattier's sitters were given Olympian perfection, like the gods themselves: timeless, faultless. They are above blemish, almost above individuality. Nattier painted a number of women as Hebe — each with the same familiar perfection. Casanova was greatly impressed, noting that by some inscrutable means — and while remaining faithful to the truth — Nattier could make even unattractive women appear beautiful. The flawlessness of Madame de Caumartin's beauty is mirrored by the polish of Nattier's painting. Each brushstroke disappears into his glasslike surface. Extreme refinement is found in his thinly applied glazes, delicate details, and elegant line.

The popularity of Hebe for portraits may also reflect the sitters' political ambitions. Members of the French court probably welcomed the comparison between their allegiance to Louis XV and Hebe's faithful service to Zeus, who appears here in the guise of an eagle. It was reported that after Nattier had depicted members of France's expanding bourgeoisie as Hebe, aristocratic women were no longer interested.

The pitcher that Madame de Caumartin holds suggests the decoration of ancient metal work that was just then being uncovered in Pompeii and other early excavations. Such disciplined, crisp patterns were one of the first manifestations of the neoclassical style, which supplanted the frivolity of rococo. When this was painted, mythological portraits were already a bit old-fashioned, replaced by a new, more natural type that revealed sitters' interests and personalities more directly.

JEAN-MARC NATTIER

Nattier entered the Academy, which regulated the arts in France, as a history painter, specializing in the noble themes from the Bible, ancient history, or mythology that were held in highest official regard. History painting, however, was not particularly appealing to the pleasure-seeking patrons of the early eighteenth century, who preferred more lighthearted subjects.

After he suffered substantial losses in a shaky investment scheme, Nattier was forced to turn from history painting to the more popular and lucrative business of portraiture. Before long he was the most fashionable painter in Paris, enjoying great success with members of the French court by casting his sitters in mythological or literary roles.

HEBE

Hebe was a daughter of Zeus and Hera. Eternally young, she was the gods' cupbearer until she was replaced by Ganymede. As the one who dispensed the nectar of the gods, she was believed to have the power to make the old young again. The word *hebe* in Greek conveyed the strength and, especially, the freshness of youth. In Greece today, a popular mineral water has the same name. After Herakles joined the immortals on Mount Olympos, he and Hebe wed.

Stories about Hebe are scarce in ancient literature. She is usually mentioned as a small player in scenes of Olympian domesticity. Alexander Pope's translation of the *Iliad* describes her:

Immortal Hebe, fresh with
bloom divine
The Golden Goblet crowns
with purple wine.



Jean-Marc Nattier, *The Duchesse d'Orléans as Hebe*, 1744, oil on canvas, The Swedish National Art Museums, Stockholm (photo: Statens Konstmuseer)

This portrait of the king's kinswoman prompted many other sitters, including Madame de Caumartin, to request portraits as Hebe.



Joseph Wright
British, 1734–1797

The Corinthian Maid

1782–1784

Oil on canvas

1.063 x 1.308 m (41 7/8 x 51 1/2 in.)

Paul Mellon Collection

RELIEF SCULPTURE and the legacy of ancient potters were of keen interest to this picture's patron, Josiah Wedgwood. His scientific knowledge, acute business sense, and good taste built England's most important pottery. Already in 1782 his plant was powered by steam and serviced by a network of canals. While porcelain manufacturers sought to reach only the wealthiest buyers—and other potteries, only the poorest—Wedgwood intended to satisfy all classes of society.

Wedgwood employed such neoclassical artists as John Flaxman to supply designs based on Greek vases. Wedgwood's pottery copied the shapes of ancient vessels as well as their decoration, borrowing motifs from ancient glass, cameos, and relief carvings. The blue and white jasperware he introduced in 1774 can still be bought today. Like Wedgwood's own products, this painting strives for an accurate picture of the ancient world. The figure of the youth is modeled after a sleeping Endymion (see no. 17) Wright had drawn from a relief in Rome. The sparse furnishings, garments, and even the woman's hairstyle are all based on archaeological evidence.

Wright wrote to his friend, the poet William Haley, "I have painted my picture from your Idea." Haley had described the Corinthian maid in *An Essay on Painting*, a long poem:

Pleas'd she beheld the steady shadows fall
By the clear lamp upon the even wall.

Haley's adjectives—steady, clear, even—describe equally well Wright's canvas and the characteristics of English neoclassicism. The figures are arranged with carefully measured rhythm along a narrow stage, as in a frieze or vase painting. The colors, illuminated only by candlelight, are somber and restricted.

Wright and Wedgwood corresponded extensively as work on this painting progressed. He even supplied vases and the kiln tools seen in the distance for Wright to copy.

JOSEPH WRIGHT

Wright was trained as a portraitist, and most of his paintings record middle-class society of his native Derby. He also drew on his interests in science and his friendship with leaders of the Industrial Revolution to produce paintings of scientific experiments and factory scenes. Early on, Wright became intrigued by the lighting effects of seventeenth-century Dutch painting, calling his own deeply shadowed compositions candlelight pictures.

He spent nearly two years in Rome, where he recorded ancient monuments and sculpture in his sketchbooks. After his return to England in 1775, Wright concentrated on landscapes and literary themes, giving all his work minute and accurate detail.

THE INVENTION OF RELIEF

Dibutades was the daughter of a potter in ancient Corinth, a city whose wares first helped to establish the fame of Greek pottery. Hoping to keep a record of her lover, who was departing the city, Dibutades traced the outline of his shadow on a wall while he slept. Her father filled in this silhouette with clay and fired it in his kiln; it was the first relief sculpture.

See Pliny *Natural History* 35.151–152.



Joseph Wright, *Sleeping Endymion*, f. 2v from the Rome sketchbook, 1774, pen and brownish-black ink, British Museum, London

Wedgwood, *Immersion of the Infant Achilles*, 18th century, black basalt ware inkstand with relief decoration, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Ferdinand Hermann

Because it was believed that the red- and black-figure vases being found in Etruscan tombs were of Etruscan manufacture, Wedgwood named his new kiln Etruria. In fact, the vases had been imported from Greece. This Wedgwood vase, fitted with inside compartments to hold ink and writing implements, is decorated with an ancient scene drawn by John Flaxman, who worked for Wedgwood in the 1780s and 1790s.

9



Neroccio de' Landi and Master
of the Griselda Legend
Sienese, 1447–1500;
Umbrian-Sienese, active late
15th century

Claudia Quinta

c. 1494

Tempera on panel

1.048 x .460 m (41 1/8 x 18 1/8 in.)

Andrew W. Mellon Collection

CLAUDIA QUINTA holds a small ship, emblem of her vindicated virtue. In the distance at right she frees the mired ship with Cybele's statue. On the pedestal is a Latin inscription:

I was Claudia the chaste but the people did not believe me. And yet that which I was the prow proved as my witness. Prudence and virtue triumph, and the Mother of the Gods, the gracious one, is pleasing to the people and protects them when invoked through me.

This painting was one of a set of eight works dedicated to paragons of virtue, four men and four women, from the ancient world and the Bible. They were renowned for chastity and fortitude. Exemplars were not a new phenomenon. In late medieval France the Nine Worthies, three heroes each from pagan, Old Testament, and Christian tradition, were held up for emulation. In civic buildings in Italy, similar works in fresco focused on men of political courage. Because this group contains so many women and concentrates on the more domestic virtues of chastity and continence, it was surely done for a private dwelling.

The cupids on the pedestals hold crescents associated with Siena's Piccolomini family. Apparently the series was begun about 1490 and completed in stages by many artists over many years as the palace of Giovanni di Nanni Piccolomini was built. This, no doubt, explains the participation of so many artists. The chivalry and temperance of these heroes and heroines from the past reflected virtues he wished to have ascribed to his household and underscored the ancient nobility of his family.

NEROCCIO DE' LANDI AND MASTER OF THE GRISELDA LEGEND

Neruccio de' Landi, born to a noble Sienese family, was equally at home painting and sculpting. The refinement and fluid line of his work follow the tradition of earlier Sienese artists like Simone Martini.

Claudia Quinta was part of a set of paintings, and Neruccio only one of several artists who worked on the project. Neruccio was assisted by an anonymous artist known as the Master of the Griselda Legend. Neruccio painted the elegant, almost airy figure of the young woman, but left the landscape background for his assistant. The Master of the Griselda Legend seems to have completed the project and given it an overall unity.

CLAUDIA QUINTA AND THE STATUE OF CYBELE

Claudia Quinta was a quintessentially Roman heroine. Her legend is based on an historical figure who embodied the greatest virtues of Roman womanhood: chastity, piety, and fortitude.

She lived at the time of the Second Punic War, when the first Roman histories were being compiled. At this time, too, the cult of the Great Mother, Cybele, was introduced in Rome. Cybele was an Anatolian fertility goddess worshiped with bloody ritual, but her cult was transformed in Rome, where she became like a grandmother to the people.

It had been prophesied that Cybele's presence in the city would bring the Romans victory. A stone representing the goddess arrived in 204 B.C. by ship at the mouth of the Tiber River near Rome. There it stopped, mired in mud, despite efforts to free it. Though Claudia was a chaste young woman, she was falsely accused of impropriety (wearing fancy clothes, speaking boldly with men). She prayed to Cybele for a sign to prove her innocence. On Cybele's advice Claudia took a cord and slipped it over the bow of the ship. With the goddess' help the young woman easily pulled the vessel free.

See Ovid *Fasti* 4.305–316 and Pliny *Natural History* 7.120.



Master of the Griselda Legend, *Eunostos of Tanagra*, c. 1495/1500, tempera on panel transferred to canvas, Samuel H. Kress Collection

This work, cut down on the bottom, was painted entirely by the Master of the Griselda Legend, and was from the same series as *Claudia Quinta*. Notice how the two landscapes seem to be continuous. They were probably painted as a male-female pair.

IO



Workshop of Maestro
Giorgio Andreoli of Gubbio
Italian, 16th century

**Shallow Bowl with Hercules
Overcoming Antaeus**

1520
Maiolica
Diameter .248 m (9 7/8 in.)
Widener Collection

HERAKLES, the greatest hero of the ancient world, was adopted with enthusiasm by the Renaissance. He had survived the Middle Ages as an embodiment of virtue and fortitude. The Renaissance, however, celebrated him because he exemplified human achievement and fame. His battles with irrational forces of the underworld also fit well into the Renaissance humanists' scheme of thought.

Already in the early sixth-century writings of Christian apologist Fulgentius, the hero's struggle with Antaeus was held up as a contest of virtue against lust. In the fifteenth century, philosopher Cristoforo Landino gave the story a Neoplatonic interpretation: in lifting Antaeus off the ground Hercules separated him from the material bonds that interfere with men's attainment of the divine. Landino, a member of the Medici inner circle, recorded such a discussion about Hercules in which Lorenzo de' Medici himself participated.

The hero seems to have held particular significance for Lorenzo. Some of the first large-scale paintings of mythological subjects we know to have been made in Renaissance Italy depicted the labors of Hercules. These were painted, probably for the Medici family, by the Florentine artist Antonio del Pollaiuolo.

MAIOLICA

The word “maiolica” comes from the Spanish island of Majorca. It designates a type of decorated tin-glazed earthenware pottery. Techniques for making it entered Europe, probably by way of Spain, from the Middle East, where it had been invented and perfected by Islamic potters. In Renaissance Italy important centers for the production of maiolica developed in the towns of Gubbio and Deruta, where some workshops specialized in added luster glazes. The process for achieving the metallic sheen of these luster glazes was difficult and a highly valued secret. One sixteenth-century writer noted “often only six pieces out of a hundred come out well; but... when the pieces are good they seem like gold.”

HERAKLES AND ANTAEUS

On his way to the Hesperides (see no. 3), Herakles arrived in Lybia, where he encountered the giant Antaeus, a son of the earth goddess Ge. Antaeus challenged all who came into his territory to test their strength against his, and he wrestled each of them to death. He was inevitably successful because he never tired; his mother gave him added vigor every time he touched the earth. Herakles, warned of this, bested Antaeus by holding him off the ground and crushing him in his powerful grasp.

See Pindar *Isthmian* 4 and Appollodorus 2.115.



Antonio del Pollaiuolo, *Hercules and Antaeus*, c. 1460, oil on panel, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (photo: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.)

Paduan 16th Century, *Hercules and Antaeus*, c. 1525, bronze, Widener Collection

The canvas original of this small replica has been lost since the late fifteenth century.

In the sixteenth century, artists and patrons delighted in rhetorical games and startling juxtapositions, such as these two figures embracing in mortal combat. The composition itself is unified and yet pierces space in many directions.

II



Arnold Böcklin
Swiss, 1827–1901

The Sanctuary of Hercules

1884

Oil on wood

1.138 x 1.805 m (44 ⁷/₈ x 71 ¹/₈ in.)

Andrew W. Mellon Fund

CLOUDS HANG HEAVY and dark. As winds stir the sea and sky, we can almost feel a chill and imagine the thunder that accompanies lightning flashes on the horizon. Fallen leaves blow about, littering the sanctuary enclosure, and the men are wrapped in heavy cloaks.

The stones appear warm and glowing against the dim. Böcklin captured the polished surface of the smooth marble floor and rougher texture of the carefully fitted wall blocks. The contrast between this precision and the emotional turbulence of the sky only makes the scene more mysterious. Böcklin felt that an artist should not record nature but use it to reflect his own vision. For all its seeming “truth,” this painting does not record a real place. Instead it is a mental landscape where the artist meets not a hero but his own concept of heroism.

A statue of Herakles looms over the enclosure at the right. With jutting beard, it is stiff and stylized in the manner of archaic Greek art (see no. 14). The hero’s image, overwhelmed by dark trees and sky, seems unable to overcome the surrounding gloom. Three warriors kneel in homage, but the fourth looks off—defiantly perhaps?—into the distance.

When Böcklin painted this, Friedrich Nietzsche was publishing the third book of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. The feeling of longing in *The Sanctuary of Hercules* captures Nietzsche’s sense that the old gods have died and will be replaced by man as superman. Perhaps this autumn landscape can also be seen as an image of the *Götterdämmerung* (twilight of the gods).

ARNOLD BÖCKLIN

Böcklin studied art in Düsseldorf, Brussels, and Antwerp, but spent long periods in Italy and settled finally outside Florence. The Italian countryside was an important source for his moody landscapes. Today his work is not widely known outside Germany and Switzerland, but it exerted a surprising influence. Although Böcklin was a contemporary of impressionist painters in France, his style could hardly be more different. He was one of a group of artists who called themselves German-Roman. Their paintings were filled with archaeologically accurate detail and drew on a strong education in the classics. On the other hand, their depiction of the past was overwhelmed by an emotional and subjective response inherited from German romanticism.

Böcklin's late work became increasingly morbid and anticipated the Freudian imagery of the twentieth century. The psychological ambiguity and dreamlike anxiety of Böcklin's paintings also fascinated early twentieth-century surrealists, including Giorgio de Chirico and Salvador Dalí.

HERO-CULTS IN GREECE

In addition to the imposing temples we are familiar with, countless small shrines to gods and heroes were scattered throughout the ancient Greek countryside. Archaeologists look for such sites in the most dramatically beautiful spots. The Greeks, though not necessarily the Romans, selected places of great natural beauty for temples and sanctuaries of all kinds. Sanctuaries did not always have buildings or statuary. Sometimes the focus of the cult was a grove of trees, a cave, or a spring.

Herakles (see nos. 3 and 10) was the most "international" of the Greek heroes, claimed especially by the Peloponnesians but revered throughout the ancient world. Many minor local heroes were also the focus of cult activity. Hero-cults, many centered around Mycenaean burials (from the fifteenth to twelfth centuries B.C.), are of great interest to archaeologists studying the rise of the city-state in later Greek history.

I2



Barnett Newman
American, 1905–1970

Achilles

1952

Oil and acrylic resin on canvas
2.416 x 2.010 m (95 1/8 x 79 1/8 in.)
Gift of Annalee Newman, in Honor
of the 50th Anniversary of the
National Gallery of Art

BARNETT NEWMAN often named his works after members of his own family, places out of American literature, or aspects of Greek culture—such as the mythological heroes Odysseus and Achilles. Frequently these titles were assigned long after the works were completed. The titles, Newman explained, were not meant to describe the image, but were metaphors, cues, for his state of mind as he created them. “It’s not literal, but a cue,” he told an interviewer.

Newman compared the “red and fiery” shape in this painting to a shield—presumably the one Hephaistos made for Achilles. Its color captures the fire of Hephaistos’ volcanic workshop. One critic has suggested that Newman used the shield to express the heat of creation and to extol his view of the artist as god. The red color may refer as well to Achilles’ anger—in the *Iliad*, the very first word is wrath.

For Newman the zip was a compositional fulcrum. It created movement, measured the canvas into proportional zones, and carried his metaphysical meaning. Unlike most of Newman’s zips, the red swath of Achilles’ shield does not extend the full length of the painting. It ends in a jagged edge. At the bottom the background is applied over the red. These darker, more opaque pigments were painted with uniform brushstrokes to give a flat appearance. In the red shield, however, the color is more lively. There, variations in Newman’s brushwork give the impression of color modulation, although the hue does not change.

BARNETT NEWMAN

Newman was born in New York City and assisted in his father's clothing business until it closed following the 1929 Wall Street collapse. He studied at the Art Students League and City College. In the 1930s he occasionally worked as an art teacher in public high schools and was active in local politics, even running for mayor in 1934.

In the 1940s Newman concluded that all the "isms"—cubism, constructivism, surrealism, and American social realism—had run their course and that radical change was necessary. He destroyed most of his earlier paintings and began experimenting with unified areas of color that covered his entire canvas. He interrupted these color fields with usually vertical lines of paint he called zips. Newman was one of the artists—including Mark Rothko and Robert Motherwell—who helped work out the principles that would inform abstract expressionism.

THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES

Achilles, mortal son of the goddess Thetis, is the great hero of the *Iliad*. His short life was compensated by its brilliance and *arete*, an aristocratic concept of virtue based on pride and valor. Achilles' wrath was incurred when Agamemnon took a young woman who had been Achilles' prize. He withdrew his efforts from the Greek cause with devastating effect. Only after his friend Patroklos was killed did he re-arm himself with fine armor fashioned by Hephaistos, god of the forge.

Achilles' shield is described in great detail: earth, sky, sea, sun, moon, and constellations are depicted. Two cities appear, one at war, the other at peace, along with scenes that reveal the great variety of human life: a marriage celebration; armies facing off; farmland and the harvest of grapes; a young boy singing. The ocean—boundary of the universe—encircles all. This all-encompassing picture provides context and perspective for the hideous violence of war and Achilles' own anger.

See Homer *Iliad*, bks. I (wrath) and 18 (shield).

I 3



Jean-Louis Lemoyne
French, 1666–1755

A Companion of Diana

1724
Marble
Height 1.825 m (71 1/4 in.)
Widener Collection

THIS STATUE, possibly Lemoyne's finest work, reveals his embrace of rococo, a style of delicacy and charm that was just beginning to capture French tastes in the early eighteenth century. At first glance, Lemoyne's nymph seems to resemble two other works: an ancient statue of Artemis and a portrait by Lemoyne's teacher Coysevox. These two statues can be seen as a kind of family tree for Lemoyne's nymph.

Both French statues owe their general conception to the ancient work: an athletic goddess clad in a short, breezy costume and accompanied by her stag or hound. The harmonious balance of the antique goddess' stance, the naturalistic treatment of her body and drapery, and the calm detachment of her expression are hallmarks of classical art—a standard of beauty adopted by the official French Academy of Painting and Sculpture in the seventeenth century.

It is likely that Coysevox's portrait provided an even more direct model for his student's work. Lemoyne's nymph, however, is more long-limbed and graceful, her elegant body enlivened by a dancelike pose. She seems lighter on her feet and more playful. Lemoyne's drapery has a transparent thinness that flows and swirls around her, falling in sinuous lines and wrapping around her spear. She gazes, not outward with the cool aloofness of the other two, but down toward the hound at her side. The adoring dog licks the flesh of her exposed thigh. This intimacy—so often tinged with playful eroticism—was typical of rococo.

This statue was one of a group of nymphs commissioned from ten different sculptors for the gardens of the king's hunting chateau at Marly, a wooded setting appropriate for nymphs.

JEAN-LOUIS LEMOYNE

Lemoynes was born in Paris to a family of artists. He was trained by Charles-Antoine Coysevox, greatest of the sculptors working for Louis XIV, and assisted in the mammoth effort to build, decorate, and landscape Versailles. He was known for portraits in the grandiloquent style of his teacher, but seems to have been among the first sculptors to appreciate the lighter forms of rococo (see no. 2). Lemoynes remained active for most of his ninety years, living to see his own reputation overshadowed by that of his son, also a sculptor.

NYMPHS

Nymphs were youthful female spirits associated with natural phenomena. The Greeks divided them into general classes: dryads were tree nymphs, naiads water nymphs, nereids sea nymphs, and so on. Woodland nymphs were particular companions of Artemis (Roman, Diana), Pan, and the satyrs. Acting something like fairies in Western folklore, they were capricious, generally kind, but also capable of great cruelty.

See Theocritus *Idylls* for an enticing description of the arcadian world populated by nymphs and satyrs.



Roman, *Diana of Versailles*, 2d century, marble, Musée du Louvre, Paris (photo: © R.M.N.)

Charles-Antoine Coysevox, *Duchesse de Bourgogne as Diana*, 1710, marble, Musée du Louvre, Paris (photo: © R.M.N.)

Diana of Versailles may copy an older Greek statue of Artemis made in the fourth century B.C. Coysevox's portrait of the duchesse de Bourgogne as Diana was made for Versailles. She was a favorite of Louis XIV, and he may have commissioned the nymph companions, including Lemoynes's, as homage to her.



Paul Manship
American, 1885–1966

Diana and a Hound

1925
Bronze
Height 1.647 m (64 7/8 in.)
Gift of Mrs. Houghton P. Metcalf

MANSHIP designed Diana to be seen with Actaeon. He began work on the pair in 1915, experimenting with several models, and completed them in 1925. This work is one of a number of casts and reduced versions.

His impression of archaic Greek art was still fresh when Manship fashioned Diana. The surface of his bronze is an interplay of contrasting textures: smooth rounded forms in her body, and deeply chiseled patterns in her hair and the dog's furry ruff. Geometry takes precedence over nature. Her hair is a repeating series of tight waves. Her eyes are almond-shaped and framed by brows that continue the curve of her nose and forehead. Drapery, streaming back to emphasize her movement, does not fall as gravity demands, but flies out from her shoulders in rhythmic folds. These artificial and stylized forms are characteristic of archaic art. Even her pose — one knee bent, the other extended behind—recalls the archaic convention for running figures. The suppleness of Diana's form, however, and the fluidity of line are Manship's own.

His Diana is modeled fully in the round, yet her movement is narrowly compressed between two flat planes, making her almost two-dimensional like a relief. Unlike Lemoyne's nymph (no. 13), this statue could be sketched with line alone, almost without shading. Hard lines and severe forms give her an aloof coolness and emotional detachment very different from the intimate charm of Lemoyne's nymph.

In 1912 Manship gave a talk in Rome about Greek sculpture:

So in these statues we feel the power of design — that feeling for structure in line — that sense of the harmonious in the division of spaces and masses....It is the decorative value of line that is considered first, its truth to nature secondary. All nature is formalized to conform to the artist's idea of Beauty.

PAUL MANSHIP

Manship was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota. After high school he moved to New York, studying at the Art Students League and later in Philadelphia. In 1909 he won a three-year fellowship to the American Academy in Rome. There he encountered the highly stylized, geometric forms of archaic sculpture and vase painting done in the sixth and early fifth centuries B.C., which provided him with the basis for his style. When he returned to New York, his work won immediate popularity among progressives for its “modern” look, as well as among conservatives for the precision and excellence of his bronze technique and for, perhaps, the historical foundation of his style. He was given such major commissions as the Prometheus fountain at Rockefeller Center.

Although he never called his own work Art Deco, Manship was its patron saint. His sleek, linear sculpture established a taste for the streamlined style that dominated design in the 1920s and 1930s, marking everything from bus stations to movie sets with the uncluttered look of machines and a sense of speed.

ARTEMIS AND ACTAEON

The Romans knew Artemis, Greek goddess of the hunt, as Diana. She was also a protector of childbirth, women, and girls, but chose for herself an athletic life in the woodland, remaining a virgin and avoiding the company of men.

Actaeon was a young hunter who came across the goddess as she bathed with her nymph companions. Angered that the youth had seen her naked, Artemis transformed him into a stag, and he was torn apart by his own dogs.

See Ovid *Metamorphoses*, bk. 3.



Paul Manship, *Actaeon (#1)*, 1925, bronze
National Museum of American Art,
Smithsonian Institution, Washington,
Gift of Paul Manship

Providence Painter, *Artemis and Deer*,
c. 480–470 B.C., red-figure lekythos,
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Rogers Fund

Manship drew on the decorative surfaces and geometric patterning of archaic art, but a nude Artemis would have been unthinkable in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.

I5



Michelangelo Anselmi
Parmese, 1491/1492–1554/1556

Apollo and Marsyas

c. 1540

Oil on panel

.559 x 1.170 m (22 x 46 1/8 in.)

Samuel H. Kress Collection

USING A wide horizontal format, Anselmi told his story about Marsyas with three successive episodes. At right, Athena — identified by the helmet at her foot — plays the pipes she has invented and peers at her image reflected in a pool. Seeing the ungainly distortion of her face will cause her to throw the pipes down for Marsyas to discover.

In the center, Apollo and Marsyas compete. The satyr is seated, holding the pipes — the red and yellow are perhaps the heraldic colors of the family who commissioned the painting. Apollo, lithe and graceful, plays his favored instrument, the lyre. Here it is not the traditional Greek kithara but an instrument more familiar to Renaissance audiences, the *lira da braccio*. In the late 1400s, the popularity of solo performances on instruments like the *lira* increased. Before then, the subject of Apollo and Marsyas was not often painted.

Anselmi portrayed Apollo, god of reason and light, as serene and youthful. His unlined face and buoyant stance suggest the sublime harmony of his celestial music, unfettered by earthly bonds. The satyr, a creature of unrestrained passions, has more animated, more “animal” features: unruly hair and beard, and small horns. Even the colors of the two figures — Apollo light, the satyr dark — underscore the contrast in their natures.

At left, we see the brutal consequences of Marsyas’ boast. Apollo, bracing his foot against the tree, cuts the skin from the satyr’s body. He remains passionless even as Marsyas contracts in pain and horror, blood running from his wounds to form a river.

MICHELANGELO ANSELMI

Anselmi was trained in Siena but produced most of his work after moving to Parma. He took with him a typically Sienese taste for warm colors — reds and yellows particularly—and a style that employed broad areas of flatly applied paint, sharply defined forms, and excited movements. Though his early work seems to have had some influence in Parma, his later paintings were, in turn, molded by the city's better-known artists Correggio and Parmigianino. Although Anselmi was not widely known elsewhere, he apparently enjoyed considerable popularity in his adopted home.

THE CONTEST OF APOLLO AND MARSYAS

Marsyas was a satyr who entertained his woodland companions by playing the reed pipes. They had been invented by Athena, goddess of crafts, but when she realized how they puffed out her cheeks and turned her face red, she threw them down in disgust. Marsyas picked them up and became an accomplished player. He foolishly challenged Apollo, the god of music, to a contest. The two played equally well, Apollo on his lyre, Marsyas on the pipes, but Apollo won because he was able to play his instrument upside down. The winner's prize was freedom to do whatever he wanted with the loser. Apollo chose to flay Marsyas, and as the skin was removed from his body, the satyr's blood ran to form a river that then bore his name. Others, however, say it was created by the tears of his friends. The story warned against vanity and the dangers of challenging the gods.

Several fragments from Greek authors relate the story of Marsyas, but it was almost better known through a famous painting and sculpture group. Also see Ovid *Metamorphoses*, bk. 6.



Roman, *Marsyas and Knife Sharpener*, marble, copies after Hellenistic originals, c. 2d century B.C., Archaeological Museum, Istanbul, and Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (photos: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.)

Ancient artists did not often dwell on the actual flaying of Marsyas. This famous statuary group, for example, implies the outcome by showing the satyr bound to a tree while a slave sharpens the knife. Renaissance interest in the flaying itself may have been enhanced by Neoplatonic interpretations, which saw in it the kind of purification necessary to reveal the beauty of the inner self.

I6



Sir Peter Paul Rubens
Flemish, 1577–1640

The Fall of Phaeton

c. 1605

Oil on canvas

.984 x 1.312 m (38 7/8 x 51 7/8 in.)

Patrons' Permanent Fund

THIS IS AN IMAGE of almost frightening confusion. Rubens created a tumult of bodies and horses head over heels, of the heavens and time itself in chaos.

A few simple devices identify the story: the youth who plunges headlong, the massive horses broken away from their chariot, and the burning globe of the earth in the lower right. More interesting is the way Rubens created the drama and action, vividly describing the energy and disarray unleashed when the normal order of the universe is upset. Deep shadow and bright highlight are juxtaposed abruptly. From the upper right, a diagonal swath rakes across the canvas. It illuminates, not whole figures, but only those upturned parts of tumbling bodies that happen to be within its path. This is the thunderbolt of Zeus, his most destructive weapon. The constant shifting of light and dark keeps us off balance.

Confusion like this requires crowding—and this Rubens accomplished by including additional figures. The females with butterfly wings are personifications of the hours and seasons. For Rubens, these falling bodies also symbolized the disruption of time by Phaeton's failure to pilot the sun in its daily course across the sky. In the upper left, spokes of light, representing the wheel of the zodiac, reassert the normal rhythm of the heavens.

Rubens' figures plummet. Flailing and clinging for support, they are elements in the overall cascade of the composition, as well as individual vignettes of disaster. Dramatically foreshortened, they are shown from every position imaginable. Some of the figures were inspired by battle scenes by Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo.

SIR PETER PAUL RUBENS

Rubens was the most sought-after painter in northern Europe during the early seventeenth century. His rich colors, energetic brushwork, and lively compositions epitomize the exuberance of baroque art. Dominated by restless motion, Rubens' dynamic and emotional style is created through strong contrasts of color and light.

The son of a lawyer, Rubens was a noted linguist and scholar, well schooled in ancient history and classical languages. He served the courts of Europe not only as painter and portraitist, but also as a diplomat, sometimes carrying out delicate negotiations while working on foreign commissions. While in Italy from 1600 to 1608, he studied ancient art and the work of Renaissance masters. He developed a passion for antiquities and collected ancient coins, gems, and decorative works.

THE FALL OF PHAETON

Phaeton was a mortal son of Helios, who drove the chariot of the sun across the sky each day. Some later versions call Phaeton the son of Apollo, who had assumed many of Helios' functions. When the boy was taunted for claiming a god as his father, he asked Helios for proof of his parentage. When Helios agreed to give him whatever he asked, Phaeton's request was to drive his father's chariot. Although Helios realized that the boy lacked the strength and skill to control the horses, the promise had been made. With dread, Helios handed over the reins.

The horses veered, first heavenward, cutting the swath of the Milky Way, then to earth. The blazing chariot scorched fields, darkening the skins of people in Africa and creating a desert in once-green Libya. The earth's very future was threatened. Zeus, called on to intervene, hurled a thunderbolt at the chariot, sending it in a fiery plunge to earth. The boy's mother and sisters wept continuously beside his bones; eventually the sisters were turned into poplars and their tears became amber.

See Ovid *Metamorphoses*, bks. 1–2.

17



Jean-Honoré Fragonard
French, 1732–1806

Diana and Endymion

c. 1753/1755

Oil on canvas

.950 x 1.370 m (37 ¹/₈ x 53 ⁷/₈ in.)

Timken Collection

THIS IS A NOCTURNE, one of a set of paintings that presented the times of day by using various mythological scenes. The story is told in Diana's gesture and Endymion's pose, but even more in the cool nighttime colors Fragonard used.

The moon goddess descends on a silvery crescent whose pale light washes over the sleeping shepherd. Perhaps this is the moment of their first encounter. As she approaches, the goddess draws back slightly with arms flung wide, her fingers spread. This is almost the only sign of motion in the painting. She remains a reserved distance away, watching with fond attention. The small cupid holds his arrow idly — its work unnecessary. The cool blue tones, pale light, and tranquil sheep all contribute to a sense of calm, and the light passing across the nose of a drowsy hound is an amusing touch. We realize that Endymion will remain in this tranquility for eternity. Only the orangey red of his cloak seems to retain the heat and activity of the world; its color complements the blue in Diana's robe.

This painting was done while Fragonard was still Boucher's student. And, for many years, the older artist was thought to have painted it. The scene is based on tapestry designs Boucher created for Madame de Pompadour, an influential mistress of Louis XV. Another of the paintings in the set illustrates Aurora, the dawn. These over-door decorations originally had a gracefully curved kidney-bean shape. In *Diana and Endymion* this would have echoed the oval pool of light in a way its present rectangular frame cannot.

Although Fragonard was quite heavily influenced by Boucher at this early stage of his career, *Diana and Endymion*, nonetheless, displays the rich colors and fluid handling of paint — notice the wispy strokes in Endymion's face and hair — that would become so important to his own style.

JEAN-HONORE
FRAGONARD

It was said that Fragonard was fired by the Parisian notary who employed him because he used his pen more often for drawing than for doing figures. He began to study painting, first with Jean Siméon Chardin and later with François Boucher, whose delicate manner and lighthearted subjects Fragonard adopted.

Fragonard's style is free; his technique was called by one contemporary "swordplay of the brush." He blurred the distinction between sketch and finished painting, using brushwork itself as an element of design.

His popularity made him wealthy, but he outlived his own era. Even before the French revolution, more sober neoclassical styles were replacing the giddiness of rococo. Fragonard was forced to flee France as the world he portrayed, like the patrons he served, fell to the guillotine.

SELENE/DIANA AND
ENDYMION

Selene, a goddess of the moon, was associated with Artemis (Diana) probably by the fifth century B.C., and in later times some myths were transferred from one goddess to the other. In many accounts of this myth, for instance, Selene encountered the shepherd youth Endymion. Coming across him while he slept, the goddess was so struck by his beauty that she asked Zeus to preserve him in eternal youth. This Zeus granted by putting him into a permanent sleep. On nights of the new moon, the goddess left the sky, going to Endymion with kisses he never knew. In other versions, Endymion requested eternal sleep, and thus immortality, for himself. He was, not surprisingly, a popular choice for decoration of sarcophagi.

See Apollodoros I.56.



Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Aurora*, c.1743/1755, oil on canvas, private collection

In the companion painting, Aurora appears "rosy fingered" just as Homer described her.



Claude Lorrain
French, 1600–1682

The Judgment of Paris

1645/1646

Oil on canvas

1.123 x 1.495 m (44 1/4 x 58 7/8 in.)

Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

THE GROUP of figures, though small in the vast landscape, stands out. Strong light catches their flesh and gives brilliance to the color of their robes.

The three goddesses parade before Paris to offer their gifts. The golden apple is scarcely visible in his lap. Apparently, he has not yet awarded the prize. Aphrodite is accompanied by her son Eros. She modestly wraps a garment around her creamy flesh. Nearby, seated on a rock where she has placed her helmet and arms, Athena begins to remove her sandal. But Hera, with the peacock that is her traditional symbol, commands the most attention. She has majestic presence. Her red and blue costume, only she remains clothed, punctuates the more subtle colors around her; her gesture heavenward is emphatic. This must be the point when Hera offers the shepherd worldly power. Her prominence is somewhat unusual because painters more often depicted the moment when Paris offers the apple to the victorious Aphrodite.

During the Renaissance comparing a person's judgment to that of Paris became a way of complimenting him on his universality, the kind of multifaceted life that is behind the phrase "Renaissance man." This had come about because earlier writers, such as Fulgentius, had used the three goddesses to embody the three modes of life: Athena symbolized the contemplative life, Hera the active, and Aphrodite the sensual.

The man who commissioned Claude to produce this picture was an outstanding example of the active life: he was a marshal in the French army, a counselor of state, and ambassador to Rome. Perhaps he chose Hera as the primary focus in Claude's painting.

CLAUDE LORRAIN

Claude (born Claude Gellé) is universally called after the region of his birth, the duchy of Lorraine. While still a boy he began to work as a pastry cook and moved to Rome. There he went into service with a landscape painter and changed his profession, far surpassing his former master to become the most important landscape artist of his day.

Claude remained in Italy, finding in the Italian countryside his chief inspiration. Using mellow light that glows in the distance and a strict structuring of space, he transformed the nature he saw into a timeless, idealized world—a place where gods and mortals could meet.

THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS

The Judgment of Paris is one of the most familiar stories in ancient literature. It began with the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, and ended with the Trojan War. All the gods were invited to the wedding except Eris, whose name means strife. In retaliation she tossed a golden apple among the guests labeled “to the fairest.”

Which goddess—Hera, Athena, or Aphrodite—was this? Zeus wisely passed the decision to the mortal shepherd Paris, a son of the king of Troy.

Each of the three goddesses approached Paris with a bribe. Hera offered to make him a powerful ruler, Athena to make him victorious in war. But he awarded the prize to Aphrodite, who promised him the love of the world’s most beautiful woman. This was Helen, married already to the Greek king Menelaos. When the two lovers escaped to Troy—or, in some versions, when Helen was abducted—the long Trojan War ensued.

Homer accepted the Judgment of Paris as the cause of war, and it was related by many later authors. Ovid in *Heroides* (V, XVI, and XVII) described the contest in the form of letters between Paris and Helen (and Paris’ first wife).



Marcantonio Raimondi, after Raphael, *The Judgment of Paris*, engraving, Gift of W. G. Russell Allen

Raphael's *Judgment of Paris*, copied in this engraving, was an extremely influential work. It illustrates the moment—Paris awarding the apple to Aphrodite—that most artists chose to depict. Claude clearly used Raphael's figure of Paris for his own painting.

I9



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo
Venetian, 1696–1770

Apollo Pursuing Daphne

c. 1755/1760

Oil on canvas

.688 x .872 m (27 x 34 1/2 in.)

Samuel H. Kress Collection

TIEPOLO chose to paint the moment of highest drama in this story, intensifying its energy and emotion with a flash of vivid color and an animated painting style. His figures are lively and created with energetic brushstrokes.

Apollo rushes headlong up the crest of a steep hill, his left leg hidden by the precipitous rise, his cloak billowing behind. His head is surrounded by the glow that reveals him as the god of light, but his face is drawn with astonishment and anguish. He points to direct our attention to the scene before him. Tiepolo arranged a series of visual signals—the foreground oar, the triangular fall of Peneus' robe, the angles of legs and arms—to lead our eye to this same point left of center.

By placing the focus of his composition off center, a favorite device of Venetian painters, Tiepolo heightened the scene's emotional impact and intensity. There, Daphne is in the very process of being transformed. The nymph rests against her father, his hair matted with reeds, and on the water urn that symbolized river gods. Behind them Eros hides to witness the scene. Apollo's gesture and rush of movement seem almost to propel the nymph backward, but her left leg is already rooted to the ground. It grows into a tree trunk, anchoring her fall. The hair at the nape of her neck seems to be thickening into woody bark. She raises her arms and they begin, like the crown of a tree, to sprout. Silhouetted against the sky, she appears at first to hold small branches, but where her fingers were before, now are leaves. Already Apollo wears a wreath of them.

Tiepolo's paint is heavy and opaque, but his touch is light. Trace the movement of his brush—crinkly squiggles of highlight enliven the surface. No hard line can be found, only vibrating edges that mimic the energy of radiant light. The colors—the vivid red of Peneus' robe, the blues of the background, the gold tones of Apollo's cloak—give the illusion of brilliance.

GIOVANNI BATTISTA
TIEPOLO

Tiepolo was the most important painter in eighteenth-century Venice, the city of his birth. He was apprenticed to a painter following the death of his father, who had been part-owner of a merchant vessel. He studied with the city's leading artists and learned from the great masters of the Venetian High Renaissance, especially Veronese. While in his twenties, he had already won an international reputation that led to important commissions across Europe.

Tiepolo's palette is bright, and his figures are light; they seem to drift through sunny skies. His style is marked by this lightness, clarity of color, superb draftsmanship, and scintillating brushwork.

APOLLO AND DAPHNE

Apollo, a mighty archer, once ridiculed Eros' small bow and tiny love-tipped darts. To avenge himself the young god shot two arrows, a golden one at Apollo, another with a lead tip at the beautiful woodland nymph Daphne. The golden arrow caused Apollo to fall madly in love, but the lead one had the opposite effect on Daphne; her indifference equaled the god's ardor. Still, Apollo pursued her across the land. She fled to her father, the river god Peneus, and begged his help, reminding him that he had promised she might remain a virgin. As Apollo drew close to Daphne, Peneus turned her into a laurel tree. Her legs became rooted to the ground, her lovely limbs grew into branches adorned with shimmering leaves. In her honor, Apollo adopted the laurel tree as his own. Ever after, he and the poets who sang his songs wore wreaths of laurel, for which the Greek name is "daphne."

See Ovid *Metamorphoses*, bk. I.

20



Odilon Redon
French, 1840–1916

Pandora

1910/1912

Oil on canvas

1.435 x .629 m (56 1/2 x 24 1/4 in.)

Chester Dale Collection

WHAT IS NOT SEEN can be as significant as what is. Nothing in Redon's tranquil painting hints of the hateful plagues concealed in Pandora's box. The sky seems as luminous and transparent as light itself. It is hard to imagine that darker clouds will ever obscure the horizon. Redon painted the world before it was afflicted by plagues and suffering. Yet he made certain that we also "see" the less idyllic future. His painting relies on our knowledge of Pandora's story.

Whereas Rubens in *The Fall of Phaeton* (no. 16) provided us with full action and detail, Redon left it to the imagination to complete the picture. What Redon wanted to paint was beyond appearance or narrative. He sought, he said, "to put the logic of the visible at the service of the invisible."

Pandora, her figure softened by the slight billow of classical robes and a graceful sway in her stance, appears serene. She holds the box calmly. Redon ensured that we notice the box by making it the darkest area of the canvas and by placing it just to the left and above center. Today commercial artists and advertisers take it as a maxim that this is the spot to which the eye is first drawn.

The colors lend serenity. Pastels — turquoises, mauves, and pinks — preponderate. These are punctuated by brilliant spikes of color. A riot of reds, blues, and greens at Pandora's feet begins as flowers but soon dissolves into pure spots of pigment, floating up as if disembodied into the sky. In some areas, paint barely covers the canvas, leaving its rough texture visible. In other areas, more thickly applied paint smooths out the surface. The effect is that of brocade.

ODILON REDON

Redon was born in the same year as Claude Monet, yet his art was untouched by impressionism. He decried both the sterile forms of academic painting and impressionism's total reliance on appearance. He believed that art should convey an inner experience, something more mystical than mere surface reality. He found like-minded artists and poets among the symbolists, including Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé. Redon's early works were done in charcoal and reproduced as lithographs. These images—his “noirs”—reveal bizarre and dreamlike states, often macabre and disturbing.

Redon turned to color when he was about fifty years old, after the birth of his son. It reflected a new optimism and tranquility. His work became lyrical and luminous. His pastels and oil paintings are celebrations of color and form, though they continue to be driven by Redon's highly personal vision. Among his last works are flower paintings he called “my exquisite prodigies of light.”

PANDORA'S BOX

Before Hephaistos created Pandora out of clay, humankind was all male and lived without strife or struggle. Zeus ordered Hephaistos to make the first woman to punish Prometheus for assisting men. Each of the gods gave the new creature a gift. From Athena she received fine clothing, from Aphrodite beauty so that men would fall under her sway, and from Hermes guile and treachery. The gods also gave Pandora a sealed container with all the evils that would ever plague mankind, and at the very bottom of this chest was hope.

Prometheus, whose name translates as “foresight,” warned his brother Epimetheus, “hindsight,” not to accept gifts from Zeus. But Epimetheus was smitten with Pandora and took her as his wife. When Pandora opened the sealed container, all the world's troubles were unleashed. Only hope was left inside.

See Hesiod *Works and Days*, lines 60–89 and *Theogony*, lines 570–606.



Roman, *Spring*, c. 1st century, perhaps based on Hellenistic model, from a wall painting at Stabiae, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples (photo: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.)

The eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D. destroyed a third town along with Pompeii and Herculaneum: Stabiae, where this small painting decorated a villa. The delicate figure of Spring resembles Redon's *Pandora* but, without Pandora's untold story, lacks the same interior mystery. Some scholars, however, prefer to see her as Persephone (see no. 2), giving her back the resonance that our shared knowledge of myth can communicate.

Teaching Activities

ART PROJECTS

1. Representing the abstract

Antoine Watteau, *Ceres* (no. 2)

Jean-Honoré Fragonard,
Diana and Endymion (no. 17)

Mythological personages are often used to personify an abstract idea, such as abundance or peace. Discuss the identity of Ceres and how the different symbols around her point to summer. Explain to students that this painting was one of a set of four works representing the seasons. Have them draw their own set of seasons on four posters, using symbols in the way that Watteau did. The symbols can be modern ones; an ice skate or Santa Claus, for example, may point to winter. Students may also do a long mural or collage of the seasons, using changes in color and texture to evoke different times of the year.

Look at the zodiac symbols shown in *Ceres* and discuss how they are based on the patterns of the stars

and planets in the night sky. Using star charts, have students choose a constellation, rename it for another myth, and identify its connect-the-dot outlines with a new mythological character. Ask them to devise for it a zodiac symbol (like the scales of Libra).

Use *Diana and Endymion* to help students think about representing the intangible. Artists do this not only through the shorthand of symbols, but also with the more subtle evocations of color and mood. Have students try to describe what Fragonard's matching picture of *Aurora* (The Dawn) looked like. Point out the ways that Fragonard represented night—through the colors, composition, characters—and speculate how he would have depicted day. Would figures recline or stand? Would colors be bright, pale, or dark?

Have students draw personifications of four different emotions or concepts, such as joy, evil, justice, and jealousy. Exhibit the completed drawings by category and comment on whether students used similar imagery for a particular concept; for example, was evil represented as a devil, or justice as a woman holding scales? Discuss the shared mythologies.

2. Telling a story

Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Apollo Pursuing Daphne* (no. 19)

Michelangelo Anselmi, *Apollo and Marsyas* (no. 15)

Artists can represent a narrative that occurs through time in many ways. Sometimes they use what is termed *continuous narrative* to illustrate a sequence of events, repeating characters in the manner of a film strip. For example, in *Apollo and Marsyas*, the story reads from right to left, and we see the major players several times. Another method is to telescope time into a single scene by including details from future events; this is often called *synoptic narrative*. In *Apollo Pursuing Daphne*, for example, Tiepolo chose to paint the high point of the action, yet he also indicated the story's outcome by showing Apollo wearing the laurel wreath.

Have students create a picture containing a continuous narrative portraying a myth or an experience or

occasion from their own life story. Instruct students to tell the story through the selection of moments and the figures' gestures, expressions, and placement.

Read a myth to the class and discuss the story's high point and denouement. Have students select a historical event—such as Paul Revere's midnight ride, their own or an ancestor's arrival to the U.S., the civil rights movement—and illustrate what they consider to be the crucial scene while alluding to the story's ending. Discuss the illustrations. What types of moments were chosen—moments of strong action, dramatic tension?

3. Emblems

Florentine 16th Century, *Farnese Hercules* (no. 3)

Jean-Marc Nattier, *Madame de Caumartin as Hebe* (no. 7)

Throughout history, rulers, families, and individuals have used mythological characters as emblems of their abilities and ambitions. Have the class analyze why Herakles and Hebe were such popular symbols. Have them brainstorm captions or mottos for these two works.

Ask students to design and draw a personal or family emblem by choosing and combining attributes of mythological figures (attributes are listed in the Who's Who: Zeus' eagle, Hermes' winged shoes). Have them complete their emblem with a motto that sums up their qualities. Ask students to think of ways to use their emblems (on plaques, stationery, t-shirts).

Teaching Activities

WRITING PROJECTS

1. Myth and history

Neroccio de' Landi and Master of the Griselda Legend, *Claudia Quinta* (no. 9)

The discovery of the ancient cities of Troy and Mycenae in the late 1800s resulted from Heinrich Schliemann's stubborn belief that Homer's epics were based on fact. Tell the story of Claudia Quinta and discuss which elements of the story have the ring of historical truth and which seem to be elaborations of fact. Ask students to name familiar legends that are also derived from the lives of historical characters (for example, Santa Claus, George Washington and the cherry tree, Saint Patrick, Johnny Appleseed).

Have each student write a biography of a historical or contemporary person who might be a model for a future myth (for example, Elvis Presley, Malcolm X, Mother Teresa, Michael Jordan). Ask students to reflect on what is or was exemplary about this person's life.

2. Explaining how something came to be

Joseph Wright, *The Corinthian Maid* (no. 8)

Odilon Redon, *Pandora* (no. 20)

Some myths explain how natural phenomena or human customs came to be. Ask students what explanation the myth of Pandora gives for how trouble came into the world. What is their opinion of this explanation? Why has the myth of Pandora remained so popular?

Show *The Corinthian Maid* slide, which illustrates the origin of relief sculpture. Ask students to choose a natural phenomena or human custom, and to research the myths about its origin. Have them write an imaginative explanation of some phenomenon (rainbows, why people shake hands, how different races come to be, why we wear black at funerals).

Discuss whether the explanations myth offers are as useful as those provided by science or history.

3. Myth today

Barnett Newman, *Achilles* (no. 12)

Myth survives because it is adapted to the concerns of each new age. Have students prepare a character sketch of the Greek hero Achilles based on descriptions of him in book I of the *Iliad*. His *arete* (excellence), in Homer's world, is an external quality, something that comes from the judgment of others about him; he chooses fame and a short, brilliant life over a longer, less celebrated one. Barnett Newman felt that myth still had meaning in the twentieth century because it expressed the "tragic and timeless." Have students also prepare a character sketch of Newman's Achilles. Discuss how this interpretation differs from that of the ancient Greeks. Have students debate the relevancy of myth today.

Teaching Activities

DISCUSSION

1. Myth in our culture

Organize teams to compile (in 10–15 minutes) lists of product or trade names that derive from mythology. Have them explain whether the names are appropriate or not. The game can be expanded to include civic, scientific, or psychological terminology.

2. Myth in other cultures

If possible, balance Greco-Roman myths with those from other cultural traditions. One source is the anthology *World Mythology*, compiled by Donna Rosenberg.

Many remarkable parallels can be found among the world's mythologies in terms of characters and stories, such as the creation of the earth, the great flood, and the epic hero. Have students compare the similarities and differences between the Greek myth of Phaeton (no. 16) and the Chinese myth of Yi the Archer. Ask students to consider the following questions: What do you think accounts for the similarities and differences of the two myths? Are Phaeton and Yi archetypes? What other myths resemble the story of Yi the Archer?

Yi the Archer and the Ten Suns

Once, when the world was young, ten suns rode across the sky rather than just one. Their mother was the wife of Di Jun, the god of the east. She would bathe her ten children in a pool of hot water located in the Tang Valley, at the far end of the eastern part of the world. Then the suns would rest, like birds, in a huge mulberry tree, for the core of each sun was a bird. Nine suns would perch among the lower branches of the tree, while one—a different sun each night—settled on the topmost branch.

When the time came for dawn to usher in the morning light, the sun that sat at the top of the tree would venture across the heavens in its chariot. Sometimes the chariot would be drawn by horses, sometimes by dragons. Each week had ten days, and a new sun crossed the sky each day of the week.

Since the ten suns looked alike and only one rode across the sky at a time, the people who walked the earth did not know that more than one sun existed. At this time, humans and animals lived together as neighbors and friends. Animals could leave their young in their nests without fearing that humans would harm them. Farmers could leave their

harvest stacked in piles in their fields without fearing that animals would rob them. A person could accidentally step on a serpent without being bitten. A child could pull the tail of a leopard in play without being mauled to death. The time was one of plenty, with more than enough food for all. Humans and animals found it easy to think well of one another and to respect each other's property.

One day, however, the ten suns decided that it would be fun to travel across the heavens together instead of one at a time. So when dawn arrived, all ten suns climbed aboard the chariot and set forth across the sky. Their blasting heat scorched the earth. Forests caught fire and burned to ash, killing many animals. Those who had not perished in the flames roamed among humans, vicious now in their desperate search for food.

Rivers and even seas dried up; all the fish died and water monsters scrounged for food upon the land. Many humans and animals died of thirst. Crops and orchards withered, putting an immediate end to the

food supply of humans and domesticated animals. Some people burned to death because they left the shelter of their homes and caught fire from the heat of the sun. Others became the prey of wild animals, now that no other source of food existed.

The people pleaded with their emperor, Yao, to help them. Yao quickly sought the aid of the only person he knew who could save the universe, a great archer named Yi. The archer begged the queen mother of the west for the elixir of immortality and had drunk some of it before his wife had stolen the rest. The emperor commanded Yi to rescue civilization from the devastation by shooting his arrows at nine of the suns.

Yi's aim was true. One by one he shot his arrows at the sun, and one by one they hit their marks. The nine suns could not survive the thrust of an arrow, and one by one they died. One by one their feathers fell to the earth, and one by one their light burned out. The earth became darker and darker until finally it was illuminated by the light of only one sun. Everywhere, the people gazed into the sky and rejoiced. Now they would begin again. (*World Mythology*, 393–394)

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Who's Who

Aphrodite goddess of love
Roman Venus
attributes: swans, doves, pearls, quince, Eros

Apollo god of reason, light, music, archery
Roman Apollo
attributes: lyre, laurel wreath, bow and arrows, the Muses

Ares god of war
Roman Mars
attributes: weapons, armor

Artemis goddess of the hunt
Roman Diana
attributes: quiver, bow and arrow, hounds, deer, moon

Athena goddess of wisdom and craft
Roman Minerva
attributes: armor, aegis (a snake-edged cloak), olive trees, owls

Demeter goddess of earth's abundance
Roman Ceres
attributes: grain, fruits, cornucopia

Dionysos god of wine
Roman Bacchus
attributes: wine, vines, grapes, ivy, panthers

Hephaistos god of the forge, lame
Roman Vulcan
attributes: anvil, hammers, tongs

Hera goddess of marriage and family, wife of Zeus
Roman Juno
attribute: peacock

Hermes messenger god
Roman Mercury
attributes: winged hat and shoes, caduceus

Poseidon god of the sea
Roman Neptune
attributes: trident, dolphins, seahorses

Zeus god of justice, king of the gods
Roman Jupiter
attributes: eagle, scepter, thunderbolt



Apollo and Artemis (pl. 24)



Ares and Apollo (pl. 32)



Hephaistos (pl. 30)



Hera (pl. 28)



Hermes (pl. 8)



Poseidon (pl. 22)



Hermes, Zeus, and Athena (pl. 1)



Hermes, Aphrodite, Athena, and Hera (pl. 37)

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Gift of William B. O'Neal

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