

The Olympians

A WALDORF-INSPIRED ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS BLOCK FOR LATE GRADE 5 FROM KIMBERLY PARSONS OF HEARTH & GNOME

When we began our Waldorf homeschooling adventure, I found a wealth of beautiful materials. However, as we have moved through the grades, the number of stand-alone blocks available for purchase has dwindled. When it came time for a Greek mythology block and I could not find what I was looking for, I set out to create my own. What you hold in your hands is exactly what I shared with my son.

This block is for families following a Waldorf-*inspired* path. *We are not Waldorf purists*. Families who enjoy unit-style studies will also enjoy this block. Target age is 10-12, though older children may also find it captivating. Grade 5 is the year when students learn about ancient life and culture. Whereas the focus is on *actual events*, I also wanted to teach the mythology of Ancient Greece as it has so deeply influenced contemporary Western culture.

This block focuses primarily on the mechanics of writing - vocabulary study, punctuation, parts of speech, and using adjectives and adverbs to paint living pictures. I have also included many other elements to make these stories and the people who told them come alive, including online videos. Like many families, we limit our children's media diet. However, when I want them to see and experience a volcano, the shores of Greece, or authentic Greek music? Our only option is a carefully-chosen online resource. At the time of publication, all of the included links were working and appropriate, but please, *preview them* before showing to your kids! Things change quickly in the digital landscape.

Finally, I would love to see your pictures! Email them to me at kimberly@hearthandgnome.com or tag me on social media @HearthandGnome. (I will never share your photos without permission!) - *Kimberly*

Block Features

- 15 daily lesson plans to learn about the primary gods and goddesses with lots of extras including connections to art, music, STEM, form drawing, the development of the alphabet, the birth of Western theatre, recipes, and more.
- A list of suggested main lesson book pages.
- Full-color photographs. All photos are either my own photos or open-source files that do not require attribution except as noted.
- Engagement Boosters to help you pique interest in lessons and future studies.

Concepts & Skills

- Understand and give examples of ways that Ancient Greece continues to influence contemporary culture.
- Identify and describe the primary gods and goddesses of the Greek pantheon.
- Create a map and describe the geography of Greece. Understand that the location and terrain of Greece influenced their sacred stories and that the deities were closely tied to geography and natural rhythms. They were also somewhat *territorial* which helped give rise to and support the *city-states*. (to be studied in-depth in Grade 6).
- Learn and use new vocabulary, with special emphasis on multi-meaning words. Use the dictionary and thesaurus and study Greek root words.
- Review the basic elements of grammar and composition including nouns, verbs; subject and predicate; capitalization of first word in a sentence and of proper nouns; end punctuation; complete sentences, sentence fragments, run-on sentences; four types of sentences; prepositions.
- Practice finding "the part that tells" when learning new words or discussing information in a text.
- Use Venn diagrams to compare and contrast characters and elements to deepen reading comprehension and prepare for more complex writing.
- Write vibrant paragraphs and summaries incorporating adjectives and adverbs.



Materials

- Map, atlas, or globe
- *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths*
- Internet access
- Dictionary
- Thesaurus
- Art supplies - art paper, watercolor paints and pencils, beeswax blocks and sticks; black art or construction paper, oil pastels
- Recipe ingredients



Week 1

DAY 1

Set the stage. Listen to some Greek music. We like to listen to instrumental music while we work each day. Free resource here:

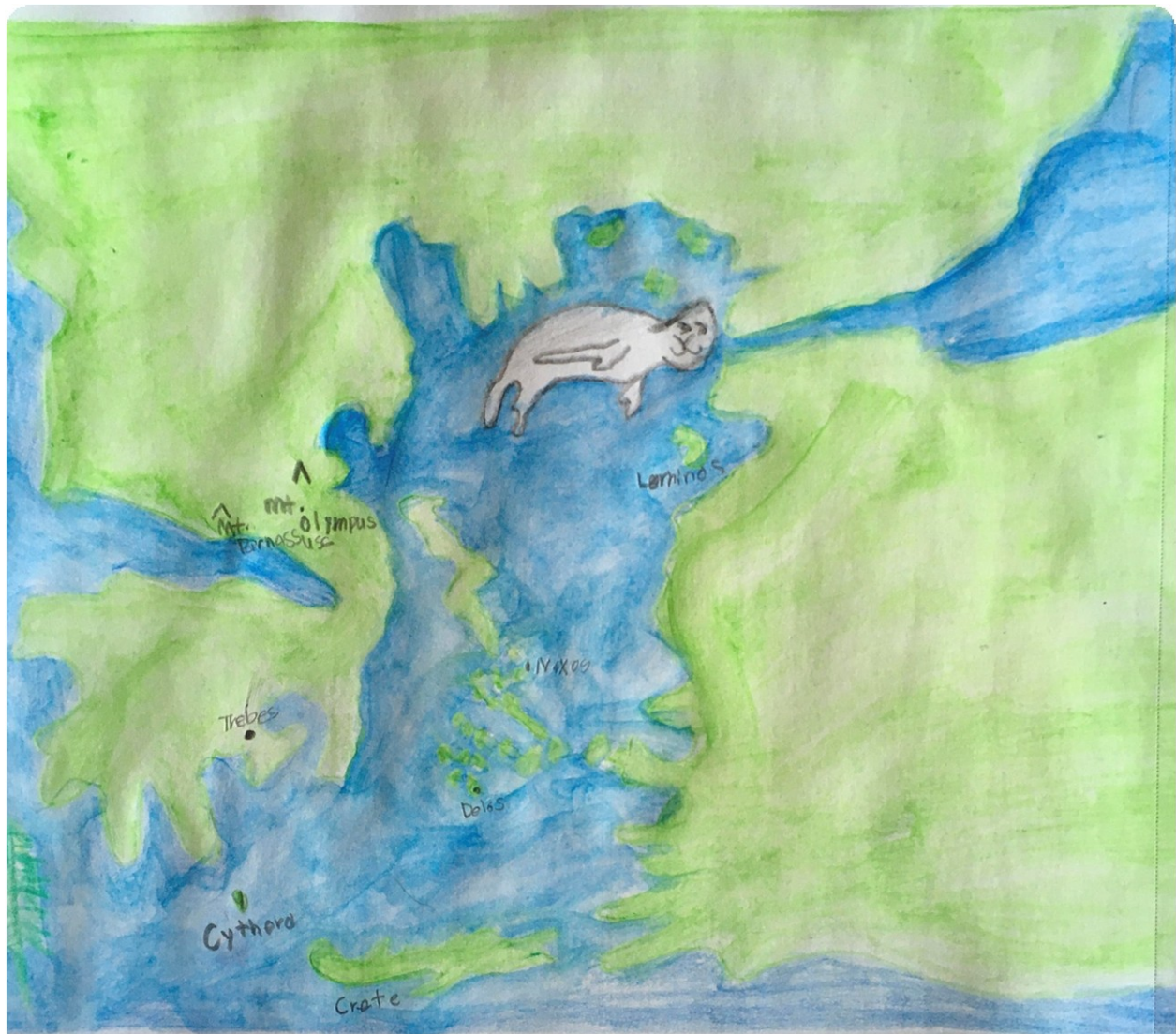
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uridle19iOQ>

Engagement Booster: Can you imagine a story you wrote or a phrase you invented being retold or repeated for thousands of years? Today we begin a study of Ancient Greece. As we learn their stories, we will learn the origins of many words, phrases, and ideas that influence us today. The tales they told, the truths they understood, form the bedrock of much of Western society. Phrases people use like, "Keep your ears to the ground," or "It bored me to death!" came from these stories. Though the ancient Greeks lived and died long, long ago, their influence is alive and well today. In Grade 6, we will learn how these stories influenced history and government, but for now, we will focus only on the wild tales of the Greek gods, goddesses, and some of the human beings they encountered.

Find modern-day Greece on the map/in your atlas. Share your model drawing/painting of Ancient Greece, and then look at the photos below. Ask your child, *What might life be like in such a place? What kinds of gods, goddesses, creatures, monsters, and magical beings live there?*







Greece is best known for its islands, but it also has forests, mountains, and lakes. Much of the country is covered in low shrubs, called "maquis". Many mints grow there including rosemary, oregano, and thyme. Monk seals and loggerhead turtles find refuge there.

Discuss. Greece is best known for the thousands of islands dotting the surrounding oceans - the Aegean Sea in the east, the Mediterranean Sea in the south, and the Ionian Sea in the west. But the mainland also has mountains, forests, and lakes. The three regions of Greece are the mainland, the islands, and the large peninsula in the south which is called the Peloponnese.

On the mainland, the Vikos Gorge, one of the world's deepest gorges (a deep cleft between cliffs caused by erosion), is part of the Pindus mountain range. It is 1,100 meters (3,608.92 feet) deep in some places! The highest mountain in Greece is Mount Olympus. It is 2,917 meters (9,570.21 feet) above sea level - and it plays an important role in the stories we are going to explore in this block.

Long ago, before they were cut for firewood, lumber, and farming, forests covered the land. Today, much of Greece is covered by *maquis* [ma-KEY] - i.e. thorny shrubs that don't need a lot of water to survive. Common plants include bay and myrtle trees as well as oregano, rosemary, and thyme. It makes a great stop for migratory birds on their way back and forth between Africa and Europe.

The oceans are full of marine life including loggerhead turtles and monk seals, two of the most endangered species on the planet. You can also find starfish, sea anemones, sponges, and seahorses. **Engagement Booster:** Encourage your child to listen for additional animals and plants in the stories you will be sharing and to add them to the map page throughout the block.

Because of the differences in terrain - high regions in the western, central, and Peloponnesian part of the country and islands in the surrounding seas, the climate varies across the country. The mountainous areas may have snow when the lower areas are sunny and warm!



Read more about the geography of Greece in this kid-friendly article.

<https://www.natgeokids.com/za/discover/history/greece/10-facts-about-the-ancient-greeks/>

Begin work on your map of Greece. Include drawings of plants and wildlife. You might choose to include thyme, rosemary, oregano, bay, myrtle; loggerhead turtles, monk seals, or even migratory birds. I chose plants from the mint family to tie into later studies of Ancient Greek medicine and the monk seal to foreshadow the Sirens and sea

nymphs in stories for Grade 6.

Craft a paragraph together.

The map project may take several days and you will add to it over the course of the block. We used watercolor pencils.



Start your vocabulary page. We like to put these at the front of our main lesson books for easy reference throughout the block. Today, you might just create the borders and titles.

Before reading today's story, make a snack together.

Modern-day Greece is known for the quality and quantity of olives and olive oil produced.

Kalamata Olive Tapenade

*6 cloves garlic, peeled.
2 c. pitted kalamata olives
4 T capers
6 T fresh parsley
4 T lemon juice
1 t. lemon zest
4 T olive oil
Pepper to taste*

Blend all in food processor until smooth. Serve with pita chips.

Read pages 10-12 together. (Gaea and Uranus; birth of the Titans and Titanesses; overthrow of Uranus by Cronus.) Read to your child, or take turns reading paragraphs. Note: We skip page 9. It does not jive with our family values. If you choose to read this page, take the time to unpack the biases presented there.



Vocabulary. Throughout the block, you may find that your child already knows many of these words or that there are others that need explanation. Choose only those that make sense for you! You may find that simply stopping as you read and encouraging your child to decipher the meaning based on context clues is sufficient. This is also an opportunity introduce or revisit how to use a dictionary. Words we chose to include in our main lesson books are in **bold** print. I focused mainly on *multi-meaning words* - i.e. those that have different meanings depending on context.

bountiful (10) - abundant

flint (12) - a form of quartz often used in ancient times to make tools and start fires.

fashioned (12) - made

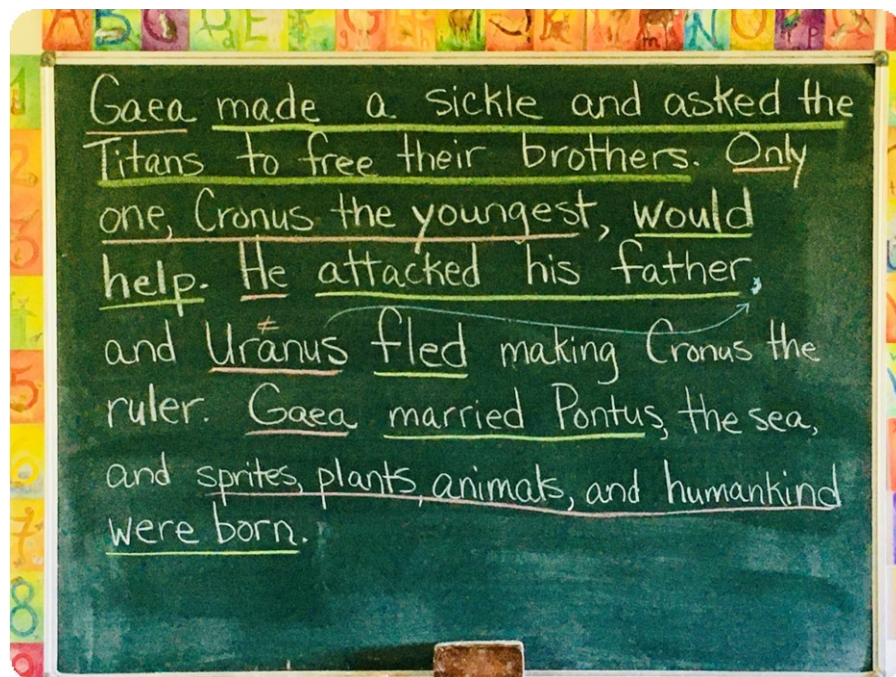
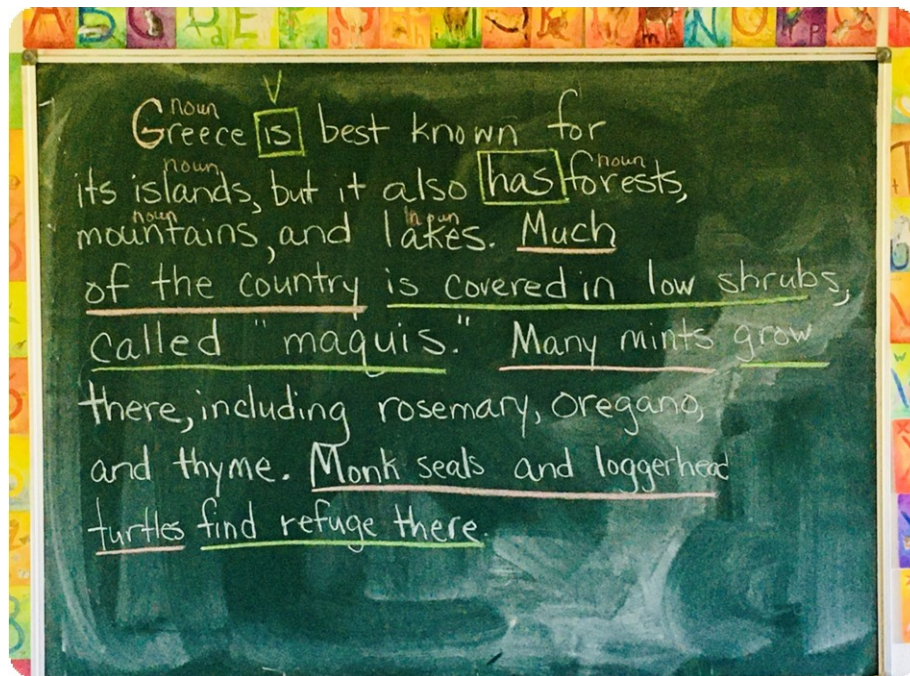
sickle (12) - a curved blade used for harvesting grain or cutting feed for livestock

crevices (12) - narrow openings in rock

DAY 2

Each day, you will begin by completing any unfinished work, reviewing the previous day's lesson, and updating the vocabulary page.

Next, **write a summary together** and review nouns and verbs, subject and predicate. Review what makes a complete sentence, fragments, run-ons. Review capitalization rules - first word of a sentence and proper nouns. Review end punctuation, using commas in a series, for clauses, and when a sentence changes subject.



Create an oil pastel drawing from the story. A general rule for oil pastels is to apply light to dark, then use the lighter color to blend. (We also use our fingers.) Here is free little tutorial to get you started. <https://www.artforkidshub.com/how-to-blend-with-oil-pastels/>



DAY 3

Complete work, review previous lesson, update vocabulary page.

Watch this brief video of Mount Etna. Ask your child to think how a person in ancient times might explain such a sight. Explain that today's story includes the ancient Greeks' explanation. **Engagement Booster:** Volcano study is part of the Grade 6 year.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2017/03/mount-etna-volcano-eruption-sicily/#close>

Read pages pages 14 - 19 (Cronus and his children; birth and childhood of Zeus; Zeus and Metis tricking Zeus; Zeus' battle for control; Typhon + Echidna and their offspring.)

Vocabulary

plotted (14) - making a secret plan to do something harmful

securely (14) - without threat or danger

spirited (15) - taken away quickly

nymphs (16) - a nature spirit depicted as a beautiful woman inhabiting rivers, woods, etc.

ambrosia (16) - the food of the gods

nectar (16) - the drink of the gods

impenetrable (16) - impossible to pass through

prudence (16) - the quality of being cautious

allies (16) - people who cooperate or help one another

cunningly (17) - in a clever and/or deceitful way

revolted (17) - rebelled

trident (17) - three-pronged spear

forged (17) - made or shaped a metal object by heating it and hammering it

vault (17) - arched roof

fated (18) - destined

cowered (18) - crouched down in fear (vs. coward - person lacking courage)

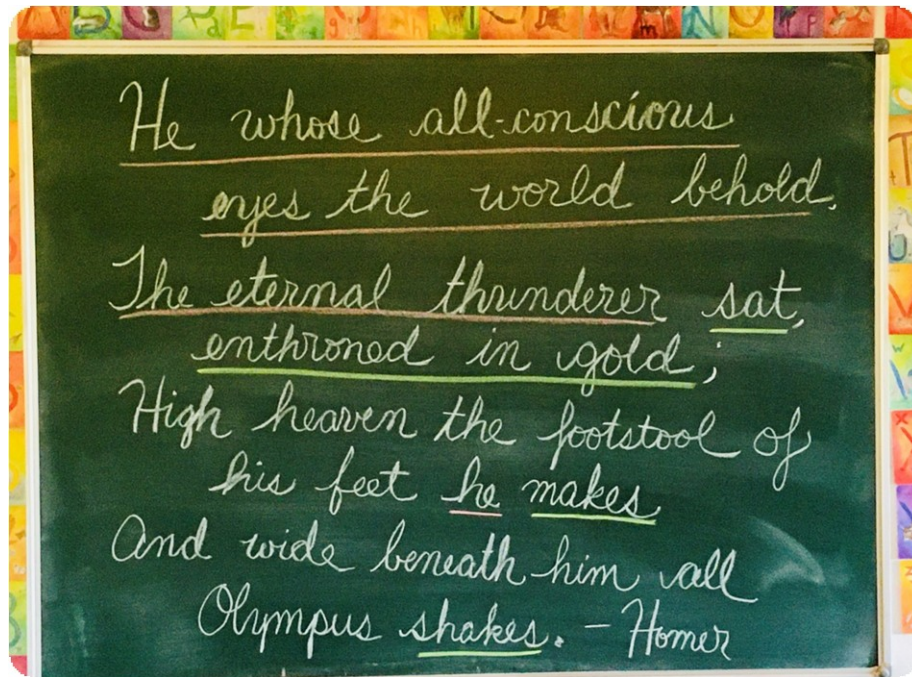
Label Crete on your map if you have not already. On a world atlas or map, locate Mt. Etna. It is no longer part of Greece, but you can talk about how the Ancient Greeks were aware of and lived over a wide swath of modern-day Europe.

Work on your Zeus page. Together, work on a translation into plain English! It need not be written, but make sure your child understands this poem. Review and find the simple subjects and simple predicates in these lines of poetry. It's real detective work!

*He whose all-conscious eyes the world behold,
The eternal thunderer sat, enthroned in gold;
High heaven the footstool of his feet he makes
And wide beneath him all Olympus shakes.- Homer*

Our plain-English version:

Zeus - the one who sees everything and makes thunder - sits on a throne of gold. He uses the sky for his footrest and makes Mount Olympus quake!



Fruit-Filled Cornucopia

*Waffle-style ice cream cones
Whipping cream
Fruit of choice*

Fill your cones with a Zeus-sized serving of whipping cream and fruit and enjoy!

Engagement Booster: I made a deal with my son. If he could retell the story for his father that evening, and tell it well, I would make more for after dinner. Many Greek stories involve bargains and daring feats, so this was *not* bribery. *It was learning, right?*

