Unit 4: Ancient Epics and the Hero's Journey

Content Area: **World Languages**
Course(s):
Time Period: **November**
Length: **10 blocks**
Status: **Published**

Enduring Understandings

Epics follow specific patterns and contain similar motifs which set them apart from other types of stories. Epics are stories meant to entertain and inform. Epics provide an insight into the workings of the human mind and have been understood to reveal divine mysteries, primitive science, and justifications for human behavior. The epic conventions found in myths (the hero, influence of deities, high adventure, the role of fate, monsters, and the fatal flaw) are used in modern lore, storytelling and fantasy films.

Essential Questions

What are the common patterns and motifs found in epics? What are the similarities and differences in epic poems from around the world? What unique cultural traits are revealed in epics? How has the formula used in epic poetry set a standard for later literary works and evolved over time? Why do authors and filmmakers use recurring themes from ancient literature and what do they offer contemporary readers?

Content

This unit will introduce students to the structure and purpose of epics in society. As students become familiar with the enduring patterns and motifs found in epics, they will gain a greater appreciation for the continuity and tradition of our literary heritage as a reflection of the collective experiences of humankind. Throughout this unit, students will read and view a variety of excerpts from classic and contemporary epic poems, novels, and film. They will discover how epic heroes illustrate traits, perform deeds, and exemplify certain morals that are valued by the society from which the epic originates, but also share commonalities with epic heroes of other times and places. They will examine similarities in content such as the hero's code of honor, his/her nearly supernatural ability to overcome great obstacles, elements of myth and folklore, vast landscapes, and frequent speeches (which are a likely throwback to the oral tradition). They will examine the conventions of the original epic in its poetic form, including epic meter, the use of an invocation, epithets, and formulaic language. They will learn how

epics have evolved from poetry to prose narratives, plays, and films. Ultimately, students will write an essay wherein they compare and contrast the features of a classical epic and a contemporary one, citing specific examples from the texts that are examined; they will note connections to their own lives as well. The big ideas embedded through this unit are:

Epic poetry and sagas follow identifiable patterns and contain common motifs. Epics are stories which provide an understanding of the past as well as the world around us. Differences between epics stem from cultural traits and traditions. The characters and conflicts in epic poetry have evolved over time. Situations presented in epics have lasting appeal and influence because they allow for symbolic as well as literal interpretations

Mythology is about the human experience, the stories are the dreams of humanity.

- fabula- story, myth
- Graecus- Greek
- Ulixes- Odysseus (Greek Hero of the Odyssey)
- Penelope- Wife of Odysseus
- Aeneas- Roman Hero of the Aeneid
- Achates- Comrade of Aeneas
- Achilles- Greek Hero of the Iliad
- Hector- Trojan Prince of the Iliad
- Paris- Trojan Prince of the Iliad
- Ilion- Troy
- Latium- Latin region of Italy
- Italia- Italy
- Roma- Rome
- lupa-wolf
- antiquus- ancient
- humanitas- culture
- ludi- games
- bellum- war
- arma- weapons
- gladius- sword
- scutum- shield
- galea- helmet
- heros- hero
- iter- journey
- populus- people
- homo- human
- somnium- dream
- somnus- sleep
- voluntas- desire
- societas- society
- mores- values
- heroicus- heroic
- epicus- epic
- poeta- poet
- carmen- poem
- cano- sing
- recito- recite
- vita- life
- metamorphosis- change
- forma- beauty
- exemplum- pattern
- norma- standard
- typus- type
- opus- work
- laboro- work

- divinus- divine
- caelestis- heavenly
- intellego- understand
- scientitas-science
- mortalis- mortal
- immortalis- immortal
- numen- divinity
- altus- high
- ius- law, order
- mysterium- mystery
- arcanum- secret
- conversatio- conduct, behavior
- malus- evil
- bonus- good
- similis- similar
- varius- different
- thema- theme
- sidera- stars
- littera- literature
- tempus- time
- auctor- author
- lego- read
- lector- reader
- liber- book

Skills

Identify the structure and purpose of selected epics. Explain the similarities among epics from varying cultures. Form theories about why epics differ from culture to culture. Analyze and present findings of several epics. Explore the enduring impact and influences of epics in modern literature, film, and art.

Resources

Reaching Olympus: The Greek Myths, Heroes, Beasts, and Monsters by Zachary Hamby

Reaching Olympus, The Greek Myths: Tales of Titans, Gods, and Mortals by Zachary Hamby

Reaching Olympus: The Roman Myths, Including the Aeneid by Zachary Hamby

Interdisciplinary Standards

Reading Standards for Literature: RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2. RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.5, RL.9

10.6, RL.9-10.10, RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.3, RL.11-12.5, RL.11-12.6, RL.1112.10

Writing Standards: WS.9-10.4, WS.9-10.9a; WS.11-12.4, WS.11-12.9a

WL.7.1.NM.A.C	Cultural
WL.7.1.NM.A.C.2	Observing and participating in culturally authentic activities contribute to familiarization with cultural products and practices. (Topics and activities that assist in the development of this understanding should include, but are not limited to: authentic celebrations, songs, and dances.)
WL.7.1.NM.A.C.6	Maps, graphs, and other graphic organizers facilitate understanding of information on a wide range of topics related to the world and global issues. They make complex concepts more accessible to second - language learners w ho have limited proficiency in the language. (Content areas that assist in the development of this understanding should include, but are not limited to: history, economics, science, and geography.)
WL.7.1.NM.A.C.7	Learning about age - and developmentally appropriate content that is of high interest to students and has a direct connection to the cultural contexts of the target language cultivates an awareness of the shared human experience. (Content that assists in the development of this understanding should include, but is not limited to: all content areas and popular culture.)