Name: _____ Date: _____

📜 History & literature file: The myths of Olympus

Reading material for lesson 2 — sources are adapted retellings for Years 5–6.

🏺 1. Where do the myths come from?

Myths were not written by one person. For hundreds of years bards sang them from memory at feasts and in palaces. Later poets such as Homer and Hesiod wrote them down. Archaeologists also find the gods on temples, vases, coins and statues.

c. 1400–1200 BC	Mycenaean age: clay tablets in Linear B already name gods such as Zeus, Hera, Poseidon and Hermes.
c. 1200 BC	The time in which the ancient Greeks placed the Trojan War.
776 BC	By tradition, the first Olympic Games at Olympia, in honour of Zeus.
c. 750–700 BC	Homer: the Iliad and the Odyssey. Hesiod: the Theogony and Works and Days. Myths that bards had told aloud are now written down.
5th c. BC	The Parthenon is built for Athena. Tragic poets (e.g. Aeschylus) bring myths to the theatre.
Today	Aphrodite's sanctuary at Palaipaphos (Kouklia) is part of the Paphos UNESCO World Heritage Site.

📚 2. The most important books

Work	What is it about?
Homer — Iliad	Epic poem about a few days of the Trojan War and the anger of Achilles. The gods take sides: Athena and Hera help the Greeks, Apollo helps the Trojans.
Homer — Odyssey	Odysseus's ten-year journey home to Ithaca: the Cyclops, the Sirens, Circe. Athena protects him, Poseidon pursues him.
Hesiod — Theogony	The 'birth of the gods': from Chaos to the Titans and the rule of Zeus.
Hesiod — Works and Days	Poem about farm work and justice; it contains the myths of Prometheus and Pandora.

🔎 3. Reading the sources

A. Hesiod, Theogony — How the gods were born (adapted retelling)

In the beginning there was Chaos. Then came Gaia, the broad Earth. Gaia gave birth to Ouranos, the Sky. Their children were the Titans. The Titan Kronos feared his children would take his throne, so he swallowed them. But Rhea hid baby Zeus in a cave on Crete. When he grew up, Zeus freed his brothers and sisters and together they defeated the Titans. So Zeus became king of the gods of Olympus.

1. What came first: Chaos or Gaia?

2. Why did Kronos swallow his children?

3. Draw the 'family tree': Gaia → Kronos → Zeus.

B. Hesiod — Prometheus and fire (adapted retelling)

Zeus grew angry with humans and took fire away from them. The Titan Prometheus, who loved humans, hid a spark inside a hollow fennel stalk and carried it down to earth. From then on people could cook, keep warm and make tools. But Zeus punished Prometheus harshly: he chained him to a rock in the Caucasus. Years later the hero Heracles set him free.

1. Where did Prometheus hide the fire?

2. How did fire change people's lives? Give two examples.

3. Was Prometheus a hero or a rule-breaker? Give your opinion with 'because'.

C. Homer, Odyssey (Book 9) — Odysseus and the Cyclops (adapted retelling)

On the way home from Troy, Odysseus and his companions entered the cave of the Cyclops Polyphemus, a one-eyed giant. Polyphemus trapped them. When he asked Odysseus his name, Odysseus answered: 'My name is Nobody.' At night Odysseus blinded the giant. Polyphemus shouted: 'Nobody is hurting me!' and the other Cyclopes thought nothing was wrong. In the morning the men tied themselves under the sheep and escaped.

1. What trick did Odysseus play with his name?

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2. Which quality does Odysseus show here: strength or cleverness? Explain.

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3. How did they escape from the cave?

D. Hesiod and Homer — Aphrodite and Cyprus

Hesiod writes that Aphrodite was born from the sea foam, passed by Kythera and came ashore on Cyprus. That is why poets call her 'Kypris' and 'Cyprus-born'. Tradition points to Petra tou Romiou near Paphos. At Palaipaphos there was a great sanctuary to her for centuries. The Iliad also mentions Kinyras, king of Cyprus, who sent Agamemnon a breastplate as a gift.

1. Which two names did poets give Aphrodite because of Cyprus?

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2. Find Paphos on a map of Cyprus and mark it.

🌍 4. Myths are still alive

- Language: 'Achilles' heel', 'Pandora's box', 'an odyssey' (a long adventure), 'a Herculean task'.
- Sport: the Olympic Games and the flame still lit at Olympia.
- Science: planets and space missions named after gods (Mercury/Hermes, Mars/Ares, Apollo).

Myth ≠ lie. Myths were how the ancient Greeks explained nature and talked about values: courage (Heracles), cleverness (Odysseus), love for people (Prometheus). Today science explains nature, but the stories still teach us.