THE CHALLENGING
OF TEACHING THE VALUE OF CLASSICS TODAY:
THE «CHILDREN AT THE UNIVERSITY» PROJECT.
PATHS TOWARD THE FUTURE AND PEDAGOGICAL
MATTERS[*]

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Abstract

Undoubtedly ours is a high tech- and pragmatically-oriented society where little space is reserved for learning and appropriating subject matters that privilege the spirit and prompt a deep understanding of human beings as individual and as a part of the whole we call «human community». Literature and art, humanities, more in general, struggle to claim their space: there is not a profitable outcome in devoting one's own time to them. For college students and adults it is enough to have a little grasp of humanities. The beauty and joy of learning for one's own enrichment and for the profit of the community are almost lost. Imagination —one of the most precious faculties that human beings have— is almost passively stimulated in the younger by letting them just play on pre-built and pre-determined paths of computer games, or watch popular fiction series, such as «Hercules» (TV animated Series), «Harry Potter» and «Percy Jackson» series, embellished and, sometimes, trivialized by 'special effects'.

The present paper analyzes some pedagogical strategies, and related results, of an experimental, transformative project which has been conducted with children of Elementary School with the purpose both of re-directing them to the roots of our modern 'games' and 'imagination', and, of demonstrating the potentialities that a classics-based education can offer in terms of teaching good values, wisdom, beauty, and so forth. Classical mythology, adapted to the children's age, has been the ground of the entire project. Self-cultural awareness and creativity, lexicon improvement, reflective and comparative skills acquisition, joy of learning and of actively playing with the learned subjects have been the most transformative effects of this project on the children.

Palabras clave

Classical mythology, Teaching Classics to children, Creativity, Theory of Multiple Intelligence, Spontaneous imagination vs. modern fiction, lesson-plans.

Never regard your study as a duty, but as the enviable opportunity to learn to know the liberating influence of beauty in the realm of the spirit for your own personal job and to the profit of the community to which your later work belongs.

Einstein, quoted in Don Oberdorfer, *Princeton: The First 250 Years*, Princeton University Press, 1955, p. 127

1. Introduction. The «Children at the University» Project: Why this project; why Classics

To assess and establish the objectives that education should guarantee to our youth is as difficult as to fully realize subsequently those objectives. Too many things are at issue, such as: the need to cover subject matters that a good education cannot neglect, the need to give an appropriate

amount of objective information that would enable students to acquire expertise in a certain field, the need to provide opportunities for practical experience, where possible, that would reinforce the theoretical expertise, the need to give tools that would enable students to develop the universally acclaimed 'critical-thinking skills,' …On the other hand, students often go to college with the fixed and somewhat narrow idea of fulfilling specific societal expectations: to get a degree as a key to jobs that may ensure good pay, some degree of security, and, why not, the ability to raise a family.

There is nothing wrong in the above-listed 'needs' which are at issue in assessing educational objectives. Nor is there anything absurd in the societal expectations that may affect college students' choices and life. They are perfectly consistent with the nature of our society which undoubtedly, and, I would add, unfortunately, is a high tech- and pragmatically-oriented society where little space is reserved for learning and appropriating subject matters that privilege the spirit and prompt a deep understanding of human beings as a part of the whole we call «human community». Literature and art, Humanities in general, in fact, struggle to claim their space[1]: there is not a profitable outcome in devoting one's own time to literature and art; it is enough to have a little grasp of them, just to fulfill some requirements. And for entertainment, well, there is something more fun than reading books or going to an exhibit…, there are computer games, movies, TV shows.

While there is nothing wrong —as I said— in the basic goals educators should pursue, and nothing unexpected in the students' expectations, there is certainly something missing: the beauty and joy of learning for one's own enrichment and for the profit of the community to which young people's work will come to belong, the sense of the 'human side', so to speak, of education, i.e., the sense of the reciprocal nature of engaging in educational activities and in studies that may enrich our —meaning faculty's and students'— academic mission and the community to which we belong, and which we are called to serve. Literature, art, music… can help «to learn to know the liberating influence of beauty in the realm of the

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[1] The relevance of Humanities in general, and Classics in particular, as a part of general higher education is a well-known and ongoing debate: see, e.g., A. Kernan, (ed.), *What's happened to the humanities?*, University Press Princeton, 1997; W. D. Mignolo, «The role of the humanities in the corporate university», *PMLA*, 115. 5 (2000) 1238-1245; S. Steele, «Curricula wars», *Journal of General Education*, 55. 3-4 (2006) 161-185; J. Henscheid, M. O'Rourke & G. Williams, «Embedding the Humanities in Cross-Disciplinary General Education Courses», *Journal of General Education*, 58. 4 (2009) 279-295; L. A. Bortins, *The Core: Teaching Your Child the Foundations of Classical Education*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke - UK, 2010; M. C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2010.

spirit»; they can help to recuperate the «human side» of education, and can help to value what may be regarded as one of the most precious faculties that human beings have, and that may elevate their spirit: creativity and imagination.

Literature, i.e., the large body of stories, poetry, novels and varied prose that have survived through centuries and across cultures, is certainly one of the best collections of evidence of the creativity and imagination that human beings have so far produced since ancient time, that is, since more than two thousand years ago, at the dawn of our Western Civilization which is marked by the birth of the civilization that we call «Classical», and about which people usually think as being something strange to them, to be confined to some (and few) classrooms. This is the ordinary thought exactly of those, including a good portion of the student population, who regularly spend their time enjoying computer games, movies, TV, without having any idea of how much these seemingly modern «creatures» are in debt to *that* ancient, classical civilization[2]. Despite the distance in space and time, and difference in language, the products of classical antiquity prove, in fact, to have an enduring value and meaning for the whole range of human life and circumstances. There must be a reason, for instance, why a very-recently-found computer virus that disguises itself as a valuable and useful application, free to download on the internet, is called «Trojan horse». It is clearly named after the ancient Greek mythic Trojan horse through which Trojan people were fooled by the Greeks, and tricked into believing that the woody horse was a harmless gift to Athena, while it was a *machina belli* (a *machine of war*: Virgil, *Aeneid* 2. 151) —disguised as a valuable token of peace—. Likewise, to make another simple example, some cinematic devices that may intrigue the modern people, and may be used by the director for specific intentions, can be traced back to narratological techniques of our classical ancestors: the seemingly modern revolutionary «breaking of the fourth wall» in cinema, often used by Woody Allen, is nothing but a reenactment of the very first form of the so-called metatheatre which is the *parabasis* of the comedies that Aristophanes, the most-known ancient Greek playwright, produced in the 5th century B.C.[3] And the examples can continue *ad libitum*.

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[2] I verified, indeed, that sometimes it is not known for what 'Classics' stands. Most tend to relate it to music. «Do you mean classical music such as Mozart?», I was sometimes asked after I had stated, «I teach Classics». As to the debt to classical antiquity of products defined modern, and about whose relation with classical culture most people are completely unaware, see the interesting survey by J. J. D. Carretero, «El Latín y el Griego Clásico en las marcas comerciales: algunos ejemplos», *Thamyris, N.S.* 2 (2011) 15-21.

[3] The breaking of the fourth wall is a technique which B. Brecht started using very frequently in modern theatre, and he used it in a way that closely recalls Aristophanes' pa-

The daily verbal and visual presence of classical antiquity heritage in our present time is undeniable. There is, indeed, a specific discipline in the field of Classics, i.e., Classical Reception Studies, that occupies itself in studying the way in which individuals and groups have appropriated ancient thoughts, aspects and symbols, and have re-elaborated them contributing to the building of the essence of our modern time[4]. Yet, this is mostly unknown to people. As to the students themselves, in their race to achieve standardized goals, they often risk losing the chance to grasp the powerful impact of the ancient world on the consciousness of subsequent ages, and thus to acquire a real appreciation for learning about antiquity, which in the end means learning about themselves and the world where they live.

To enhance this appreciation for learning, specifically about antiquity, in order to prompt a deeper awareness both of one's own identity as a person that belongs to an historical *continuum*, and of one's own society, to restore the 'human side' of education, in its broad sense, thus integrating the students' population and the outside community's population on the common basis of their cultural heritage, to rediscover «the liberating influence of beauty in the realm of the spirit» that learning promotes, all of this have been the motivations for a project I carried on in spring 2011 at

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rabasis. On the notion of metatheatre —which is behind the dramatic technique of breaking the fourth wall and the ancient parabasis, see, e.g., L. Abel, *Metatheatre. A New View of Dramatic Form*, Hill Wang, New York, 1963; F. Troisi, «Metateatro: dalle origini a William Shakespeare», *La Nuova Ricerca*, 2. 2 (1993) 115-141—.

[4] 'Classical Reception' deals with the survival of images, memories, products of ancient Greece and Rome as they have been transmitted, adapted, shaped, exploited and reinterpreted in later cultures. Differently from 'Classical Tradition', Reception Studies are based on the 'reader-response' approach to ancient texts, such a response that may produce many and different interpretations based both on the individual and on collective cultural background and life experience (see Ch. Martindale, «Introduction: Thinking Through Reception in Classics and the Uses of Reception», in C. Martindale and R. F. Thomas (eds.), *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, Blackwell Publishing, Ma-USA/Oxford-UK, 2006, pp. 1-12, p. 3). This would explain the existence of different rendition of ancient texts, not only in terms of different media (writing, art, music, cinema, etc.), but also in terms of different meanings for which an ancient text, story or figure stand. It is something that surprisingly will become clear throughout this paper, although it is beyond the goals of this work. We will see that some expressions or folkloric beliefs originated after a classical myth or mythic character are peculiar to the U.S. language and culture, but not to other languages and cultures of the so-called Western civilization, although their roots belong to a culture, the classical culture, which is the common ancestor of the Western civilization itself. This result might be a vivid example of how classical reception works.

the University of Idaho in Moscow, by involving the youngest both of the students' and the community's population: children of the public Elementary school of Moscow.

Imagination and creativity, which are so naturally innate in children, have been the key to opening the classical world to them and to making it accessible, through the children, to the rest of the community. Delving into the ancient tales —the myths— that constitute the fundamental repository of the imagination, thoughts and beliefs of *that* world, has been the privileged tool. Allowing children —and through them, the entire community— both to discover the beauty of art, literature and language that the Ancients offer, and to contribute to their survival in our present days, has been the final objective. The children, with their acquisition of Classical culture, came finally to be an example for everybody, including students on campus.

2. The specifics of the project

Among the varied subjects and fields that Classical Studies cover, I thought that Greek mythology is certainly one that would be appropriate, appealing, and educational to children. The fascinating stories through which ancient Greek people explained life and the world to themselves have held an enduring interest across centuries, and have been revitalized in several forms of art and literature. The intriguing beauty of classical myth would promise to ignite the curiosity and creativity that children naturally possess, and, at the same time, might arouse interest and passion in them for classical antiquity.

With these considerations in mind, I planned to carefully select a certain number of myths whose content could be appropriately adapted to the children's age, still preserving for them the chance both to glimpse on the culture of the ancient people, and to become aware of its persistent presence in our culture, which would ultimately result in having the children be the «bringers of knowledge» into the adults' community. After taking care of any bureaucratic protocol required both to reach out to the town's Elementary Schools and to obtain the University's permission for having children on campus, I could arrange, on a volunteer base, a class of Classical Mythology for about 12 children roughly ranging from 8 to10 years old[5]. We met every Monday, from 6:00 to 7:50 PM, for about 14 weeks, starting in February through the second week of May, 2011.

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[5] Before contacting the schools, in accordance with the University of Idaho procedures, I had to submit my project to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviews and approves projects involving human subject. As required, I had also to complete the National

2.1. Methods

2.1.1. The selection of myths: a difficult process

One of the main difficulties I had to face when I started structuring the whole course in its content and format, was to figure out an adequate criterion for selecting the myths to be presented in class. The incredibly high number of stories that constitute the *corpus* of classical mythology was unexpectedly not the only, or principle quandary to overcome: the easiest criteria to use, e.g., selection of myths either by 'canonic mythic strands' (such as the Trojan cycle, Theban saga, The Atreides, etc.), or by best-known heroes (Herakles, Odysseus, etc.) were unsatisfactory. Due to the limited time at my disposal, such criteria seemed to me to be somewhat 'exclusive': the children might have had a complete knowledge either of one single event or of the exploits of one specific character, but they might have missed other important undercurrents. Yet, this was not the only concern. I found myself in an awkward predicament realizing, more than ever, that most of myths, if not all of them, do contain some elements of violence. Hence the need to choose 'inclusive' stories with the presence of violence reduced, or reducible to almost zero, originated.

To match this need, after some brainstorms, I finally came out with four basic criteria, which I thought adequate to follow in my selection-process:

Institute of Health (NIH) training course «Protecting Human Research Participants», and be subsequently certified. After that, I looked for a contact with the public Elementary schools in Moscow. Russell Elementary School has been the one that promptly welcomed the project thanks to the passionate commitment of Ms. Gretchen Wissner (Gifted Education Facilitator). In accordance with her principal, Ms. Wissner has advertized the project through the teachers in all classes (i.e, it was not limited to nor addressed to 'gifted' students). The class was offered as an optional extra-curriculum activity. The numeric limit was my choice simply determined by the fact that for me it was the first time to teach children, I thus thought of a possibly manageable number, which could have been also appropriate for a pilot-project, as mine intended to be. Parents were fully informed about the project through two letters, one prepared by myself and one 'of support' prepared by Ms. Wissner as school representative. The parents had to sign an «Acknowledgement of Risk and Waiver of Liability Form» which I had to ask from the Risk Management Office, according to my University's procedures. Through this waiver I also obtained the permission to use any material produced by the children (drawings, written comments, or even photo taken in class, etc.) in any form of media I would relate to this project.

1. The possible lessons embedded in myths, lessons on nature and on morals, likely able to give children both insights in the ancient world and suggestions, i.e., something to reflect on, for the present days[6];

2. The chance to identify concepts not simply persisting nowadays but, and foremost, not accidentally named after, or through words and phrases either having a Greek root or originated by specific myths and mythic characters;

3. The coherence among the stories, which would facilitate the learning process through the implied input to establish connections, allowing to create a compact picture of a subject matter;

4. The lower notoriety, yet higher importance, of some stories – considering the influence of mass media in spreading, for instance, the 'usual' Trojan myth or Herakles' adventures.

Combining these criteria and allowing to myself to be flexible when needed, I selected, and presented in the below order, the following myths:

1. Daedalus and Icarus

2. Athena and Arachne

3. Hera, Alcmene and Galanthis: The Birth of Herakles

4. Echo

5. (Echo and) Narcissus

6. Demeter and Persephone

7. Prometheus, the fire-bringer

8. Herakles, monsters and princesses: Hesione and Deianira

9. Odysseus and the Cyclops Polyphemus

10. Odysseus and the Trojan Horse

11. Eros and Psyche

12. Orpheus and Eurydike

A preface is here indispensable to make explicit the link among these selected myths, which at first glance seem to have nothing, or little, in common, and to show how the four criteria actually worked.

The very first two classes were devoted to an introduction to the world of ancient Greek and Roman gods and to the notion of ancient Greek religion. As to the gods, I provide the children with their double name, Greek

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[6] On this value of classical myth, see, e.g., C. Real, «El valor didáctico del mito: Posibilidades de análisis», *Fortunatae*, 13 (2002) 255-268.

and the Roman; and so did I for the heroes' names. I made it clear that we would use the Greek name, as being the original one. Additionally, I taught them the Greek alphabet to let them know how those names were written in the original language and how to read them[7]. As to the religious beliefs of ancient Greeks, not only were the children introduced to the canonic twelve Olympians, they came also to know the basic concepts of polytheism and anthropomorphism, learning, at the same time, these new words through their etymology[8]. The contrastive comparison with modern mostly-monotheistic religions, which were more familiar to children, helped them to better grasp the idea of polytheism. As to the notion of anthropomorphism, I chose, instead, to tell them a specific myth that could hopefully give easily *vivid* idea of the concept: «The Apple of Discord». The reasons of my choice were:

a. The possibility to show, through a story that could be easily perceived as hilarious (an altercation over an apple to be judged as the most beautiful), how Greek gods were imaged as looking like men not only physically: here there is a Zeus that plans a wedding reception; a not invited guest that gets upset and acts as a troublemaker; three females (divinities) that pretend, each of them, to be, and act as a *prima donna*, simpering bribe a judge, Paris…[9];

b. The possibility to focus, and give some 'previews', on gods that would be mainly present in the selected myths, such as, in particular, Zeus, Hera, Athena and Aphrodite;

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[7] Both in the chart I gave the children as handout in each class, and in the Power-points that I prepared for the presentations (see below, pp. 49-63) I subsequently always used the Greek font to write the title of the myth and the names of the characters, so that I might have them exercise reading Greek. And 'to play with Greek', I always asked them to sign their 'homework' writing in Greek their name. I however avoided teaching them the rules of the accent and the breathings, which would have been beyond the goals of this class. This is the reason why in the samples of the class material I'll give below the Greek is without accent and breathings.

[8] I did so for any new Greek-rooted word they came gradually to know. And, in case of compound, they almost instinctively appropriated the method. When it came to explain them 'philanthropist /philanthropy' while speaking of Herakles and his being a helper-hero , asking whether they recognize something familiar in the word, most of them well identified the 'anthropos' part.

[9] As I shall explain later, needing to make those stories accessible to children, I sometimes related them in a funny way to motifs of present days with which they would be more familiar, still preserving the integrity of the ancient meaning and, at the same time when possible, showing a certain continuity (in good and bad) from the past to the present —which was also one of the objectives of the class—.

c. The possibility to demonstrate an essential concept of ancient Greek belief, i.e., that everything has its origin in the gods' will and actions, by introducing one of the myths more likely children knew, the *Trojan War*. Telling about the 'incident' that occurred during Thetis' and Peleus' wedding was meant to make the *real* origin of the war known (the goddess Discord's action can be ascribed, in the end, to Zeus' will and plan)[10], and subsequently to demystify the common knowledge which is confined to the proximate cause: Paris' abduction of Helen.

Still in terms of introduction to some fundamental notions characterizing ancient Greek beliefs, I then focused on the concept of *hybris*, which allowed me to:

i. Simplify the description of the relationship between gods and men along the more likely familiar axis 'respect vs. disrespect', with the 'respect' being the leading principle;

ii. Establish a kind of *fil rouge* among most of the selected myths, such a leitmotif that would be able to show how ancient Greeks explained the surrounding world through deeds and behaviors of some gods prompted by an act of *hybris*;

iii. Emphasize the 'respect' issue, more in general, in order to prompt both reflections on avoiding arrogance, misbehavior, disobedience, and recognition of limits, rules and principle within which to act (according to the circumstances).

To help children retain this concept, I could but think of possibly striking examples of the working out of *hybris* and subsequent punishment by gods, examples that would be able to be easily remembered for a related practical outcome: the learning of new words —as *hybris* itself was for the children— together with understanding, through the myth, the reason why actions described by those 'new words' were named exactly in that way. The new words were *to tantalize* and *Sisyphean task*, Tantalus and Sisyphus being the example *par excellence* of *hybris*. As I shall later describe, children were asked to then use in context the new words they were coming to know so far.

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[10] See Homer, *Iliad* I. 5; Hes. *Catalogue of Women*, fr. 204 M-W (57-65, on which see L. Koenen, «Greece, the Near East, and Egypt: Cyclic Destruction in Hesiod and in the *Catalogue of Women*», *TAPhA*, 124 (1994) 1-34, in pp. 28-30; G. Arrighetti, *Esiodo. Opere*, Einaudi-Gallimard, Torino, 1998, pp. 447-450).

2.1.2. How it worked

Once the children were familiarized with the main gods/goddesses and main notions of ancient Greek beliefs, I started with the presentation of the myths listed above, in the following way:

• First, combining the two basic concepts that the introductory classes had singled out: (1) ancient people explained the world around tracing everything back to the actions, initiative and will of gods; (2) avoiding *hybris*, respect for gods —and by extension respect for those who have authority (elder, fathers, king etc.)— was a driving force of action of ancient people.

• Second, where this combination was not enough to connect one myth to another, I proceed by linking the stories along an almost-naturally-implied chain of similar ideas and lessons identifiable in the stories themselves.

As I have mentioned above, I applied all these criteria with some reasonable, and at times needed, flexibility; I also paid attention to eliminating, or at least to softening, any component of violence that the chosen myth could contain.

Here is the description of the mechanisms at work, using, as paradigm, the first two myths. A synoptic table synthesizing the same mechanisms across all myths will follow.

«Daedalus and Icarus»: I decided to start with a myth that focuses less on gods and goddesses, yet contains 'fantastic components' —such as a hybrid creature (the Minotaur), an intriguing building (the labyrinth), a dreamed experience (that of flying free in the sky)— which could ignite the interest of the children on a more familiar base: a story of a father and a son, where the father is the authority, the elder that warns and gives advice to the younger, and that deserves respect, and the son is the one who should obey and trust the other who has experience and knowledge, should be moderate and use his skills wisely, as is suggested. Although considering the proper differences, I thought of this myth as a possible mirror of the rules governing the relations between gods and humans. As disobedience to gods, lack of respect for their words/warnings, lack of moderation in exploiting one's own skills/talents are foolishness and *hybris*, so are —by extension— disobedience, lack of respect, etc. to a father. In both cases there is a price to pay, a punishment to face. In the introductory classes, Tantalus and Sisyphus had served for a preliminary explanation of the concept of *hybris*, where the purpose was mostly to show the force of that notion through the punishment it would call down, such a punishment that justifies —as hinted at above— the meaning of related expressions. This means to say that, in that first occasion, I intentionally

passed over the specificity of their act of *hybris*, by generically mentioning that they had showed lack of respect for the gods' superiority, since they wanted to outwit gods. With the very first myth I was then going to cover, i.e., «Daedalus and Icarus», gave me the chance to gradually and smoothly approach that important notion of *hybris* and its working out in a story, by using the concept in a broader, yet more reachable, sense for children, considering the involvement of a 'quite likely family situation'. *Don't' act like Icarus* is an expression that children could easily appropriate[11], and could use as a paradigm for all situations involving the notion of *hybris* even *stricto sensu*. Additionally, this myth put into focus the capabilities of human beings, such as complex engineering ability as shown by Daedalus through the building of the labyrinth and the device of the wings, to a point to give birth to the qualification *daedalian*. Considering, also, that almost no one was familiar with this myth[12], it seemed to me it well matched the criteria 1, 2 and 4 listed above in # 2.1.1.

«Athena and Arachne»: the motifs of *hybris*, lack of moderation, wise/foolish use of one's own skills, elder's advice and so forth, offered an easy transition to the second myth, which I chose taking into account the other criterion, the n. 3 among those listed above (# 2.1.1), still in combination with information given during the introductory classes. The myth of «Athena and Arachne» is in fact:

A. Able to give lessons on nature and on morals / insight into the ancient world and suggestion for present days (*criterion 1*: see above, # 2.1.1, pp. 9-10). Indeed:

   i.   As to the nature, it tells how ancient people explained to themselves the coming into being of the spider and why eternally weaving webs is its peculiar trait;

   ii.   As to the morals, it confirms the importance of obedience to, and respect for gods; it shows how it would be better to reflect on one's own action, instead of stubbornly persisting, above all when assisted by advice of those who might have much experience and wisdom (the figure of Athena disguised as old woman); it indirectly teaches how to value one's own talents, and use them well instead of just being foolishly proud, and

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[11] This is, for instance, one of those expressions that testifies to the different facets that Classical Reception can take according to the different 'recipient-culture' (see above n. 2). Though originated from the classical culture which constitute the common denominator of Western Civilization, this expression is peculiar to American idiom, but cannot be found —to my knowledge— in other cultures in debt with Classical Antiquity. For instance, it does not exist, or at least, it is not certainly common in Italian.

[12] Indeed a few had a distorted knowledge of Icarus, 'thanks' to the *Hercules*, the TV animated Series, on which I shall return later (see below, pp. 39-40).

how to be humble would be a good and valuable behavior when occasion calls it;

B. Able to identify and explain concepts persisting nowadays, named after mythic characters, through words and phrases either having a Greek root or originated by specific myths (*criterion 2*: see above, # 2.1.1, p. 10). Indeed:

i. It explains why the scientific term naming the class to which spiders belong is *arachnid*;

ii. It explains why the fear of spiders is called *arachnophobia*;

C. Connected to the previous story for the themes and meanings (*criterion 3*: see above, # 2.1.1, p. 10),

D. Less notorious (*criterion 4*: see above, # 2.1.1, p. 10), which I could verify through a quick survey among the children: no one knew this myth, no one knew the terms *arachnid* and *arachnophobia*;

E. Able to show how Greek gods were imagined as 'resembling human beings' not only physically —as I had explained in the preliminary stage through the myth of «The Apple of Discord» (see above, *letter a* in # 2.1.1, p. 10)—. Indeed:

i. this myth introduces a typical anthropomorphic trait, that of gods' jealousy/envy for humans' success[13], with Athena who punished the girl for showing to be really talented in weaving by creating a tapestry objectively better than that of herself, rather than for having boasted[14];

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[13] The *phthonos theon* (the envy of the gods) is, indeed, a well-known motif occurring in Pindar, Herodotus and in tragedy (see, e.g., Pindar, *Pythian* 10. 20-22; Herodotus, *History* 3. 39-43; 7. 10, 46). Being a delicate subject matter, I tried however to mild the negative impression of a divinity envying human beings, considering the possible different religious background of the children. I insisted on the different way Ancients looked at their gods and, if the jealousy resembles a human feeling —and thus might give a vivid idea of anthropomorphism, the respect— and thus the fear that success would make men too proud —is still something that 'superior entities', like a God, can demand. And children grasped this, although they tended then to put some emphasis on the punishment that Greek gods dispensed. Regarding this, Maya wittingly noted: «Greek gods like to turn people in animals».

[14] Not by chance Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 6.129) uses the term 'livor' (= envy) when telling the end of the story of Athena and Arachne: «Neither Minerva nor even Envy could find a fleck or flaw in that perfect art —enraged because Arachne had such skill, she ripped the web …» (6. 129-131: the translation is mine).

ii. jealousy/envy and competitiveness are human traits that children may less expect in 'gods', which *a maiore* —I thought— would fully imprint the idea of anthropomorphism in their mind.

F. Able to demonstrate that essential concept of ancient Greek belief, according to which everything has its origin in the gods' action —as I had explained in the preliminary stage through the myth of «The Apple of Discord» (see above, *letter c* in # 2.1.1, pp. 11-12; see also letter B in the above list);

G. Thus able to better show in which sense ancient Greeks often explained the surrounding world through deeds and behaviors of some gods prompted by an act of *hybris* (see above, *n. ii* in # 2.1.1, pp. 11-12).

All of the above considerations apply to the other myths, with a certain degree of flexibility which mostly results in gradually and inevitably adding new common themes, features and meanings, all able to do justice to the complex *corpus* of classical mythology through the small representative group that has constituted the core for this project.

Here the synoptic table:

Myth	Common Theme	Common Lesson / Meaning	Common linguistic / conceptual potentiality
Daedalus and Icarus	Respect for elder's advice, Recognition of human limits (avoiding *hybris*) Avoiding foolishness;	Respect for, and listening to others who have more experience /knowledge Making a good use of one's own talents/skills	The word: *Daedalian* The expression: *Don't act like Icarus*
Athena and Arachne	Respect for elder's advice, Avoiding *hybris* (Recognition of human limits) Avoiding foolishness; ***A typical anthropomorphic trait into focus: jealousy-envy***	Respect for gods Listening to others who have more experience, /knowledge Making a good use of one's own talents/skills ***Explanation of nature: the existence of the spider and its peculiar habit***	The words: *Arachnid* *Arachnophobia*

<u>Hera, Alcmene and Galanthis: The Birth of Herakles</u>	Avoiding *hybris* ***A typical anthropomorphic trait into focus: jealousy-envy***	Respect for gods ***Explanation of nature: the existence of the weasel and its way to deliver off-spring (according to ancient beliefs[15])***	The connotation of someone who is treacherous, liar, sneaky, manipulative, rumor-spreading as a *weasel*[16]
<u>Echo</u>	(Partially) Avoiding *hybris*[17] ***A typical anthropomorphic trait into focus: jealousy*** ***The unquestionable authority of Zeus***	(Partially) Respect for gods ***Explanation of nature: the existence of the «echo»***	The word and concept: *Echo*
<u>(Echo and) Narcissus</u>	Avoiding *hybris* (meant in a broader sense of being arro-	***Explanation of nature: the existence of the flower Narcis-***	The words and concepts: *Narcissus, narcissism, narcissis-*

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[15] On this belief based on Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9.320-321, see, e.g., M. Bettini, *Nascere. Storie di donne, donnole, madri ed eroi*, Einaudi Editore, Torino, 1998, pp. 52-58, 162-168, 198-201, 212-215, 264-271; J. M. Musacchio, «Weasels and pregnancy in Renaissance Italy», *Renaissance Studies*, 15.2 (2001) 172-187.

[16] I could verify that in modern American culture the weasel stands for the all negative qualities I described above. There is indeed, to make a just an example, a book of a well known character in American comics (Dilbert) by Scott Adams, entitled *Dilbert and the Way of the Weasel: A Guide to Outwitting Your Boss, Your Coworkers, and the Other Pants-Wearing Ferrets in Your Life* (2003). In other languages and cultures, however, namely in the 'romance' ones, the animal and its name stand for an insidious, sly person. Such is, for instance, the figurative meaning of the Spanish 'comadreja' and 'rata' (= weasel). The Italian 'donnola', the non-scientific name of the animal, traces back to Latin 'dominula' (diminutive of 'domina') meaning 'little/young lady', i.e., 'maiden'. Galanthis, we may remember, the servant of Alcmene in the myth, was indeed a maiden, and her name has some connections with the Greek *gale* (= weasel: see M. Bettini, above n. 15). The Italian name, too, if referred to a person, and namely a woman, implies a comptemptous meaning. It might also be useful to remember the role of the weasel in several of Aesopus' fables.

[17] I used the word 'partially' since that of Echo was an act of *hybris* / disrespect toward Hera prompted —however— by the fact that the nymph, exactly in that way, was meant to help Zeus 'cover' his romantic affairs with other nymphs (see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3. 362-365). In other words, it was an act of *hybris* functional to the unquestionable authority of Zeus, so to say.

	gantly disrespectful toward the others)	*sus*	*tic*
Demeter and Persephone	*The unquestionable authority of Zeus*	*Explanation of nature: the Seasons* *Not only cruel: gods as promoter of civilization. The agriculture*	The words: *cereal,* and *iridescent* (for the presence in the story of the rainbow-goddess Iris)
Prometheus the fire-bringer	Avoiding *hybris* *The unquestionable authority of Zeus* *Herakles as liberator from evils*	*Not only cruel: Gods as promoter of civilization. The fire, metallurgy and 'liberal arts'* *Not only cruel: Gods and heroes as 'philanthropist', benefactor of humanity*	The words and concepts: *philanthropist, philanthropy*
Herakles, monsters and princesses: Hesione and Deianeira[18]	*Herakles as liberator from evils* *Cunning and deception*	*Gods and Heroes as 'philanthropist'*	The expression: *Shirt of Nessus*[19]
Odysseus and the Cyclops Polyphemus[20]	Avoiding *hybris* *Cunning and deception*	Respect for gods *Endure in your «quest»*	The word: *Cyclopic* (and, as synonym, *Titanic*)

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[18] Despite my careful selection, I had often to deal with the problem that myths involve a certain degree of violence. As said, I tempered and, when possible, I eliminated that component by focusing on all the other themes/motifs present in a myth. In the case of Herakles, Hesione, Nessus and Deianeira, the focus was on the hero helping and saving a princess, rather than on Nessus' abduction of Deianeira and on the fight between Herakles and the centaur.

[19] To my knowledge this is another expression peculiar to the American modern idiom, which can but trace back to this myth. Its meaning is very similar to that pertaining to the Trojan Horse, as a gift something seemingly harmless and even helpful, but devil, in reality.

[20] The two myths concerning Odysseus do not really match one of the criteria I claimed above, i.e., that of presenting less known myths. As said, I used however some flexibility in dealing with my criteria. In this specific case I thought it would be better to deepen and, maybe, adjust what they might have known about those two myths. It turns out that all class knew the names (Odysseus, Polyphemus, the Trojan Horse), but most of the class did not know the related story. Those who knew it did not know all details. For instance, as to the story of Polyphemus they did not know how then the hero and his companions came out from the cave (i.e., the trick of the sheep). As to the story of the Trojan Horse,

Odysseus and the Trojan Horse	*Cunning and deception*	Respect and listening to others who have more experience /knowledge[21]	The «tech»-expression: *Trojan horse*
Eros and Psyche	*A typical anthropomorphic trait into focus: jealousy* *The power of love*	Respect for gods *Endure in your «quest»*	The word: *psychology*
Orpheus and Eurydike	*The power of love* *The beauty of music and art*	*Endure in your «quest»*	

Legenda:

- Automatic black color: recurrently common themes and features throughout the whole table.

- Bold Italics, in different color: themes or meanings which are new, compared to the previous myth, but that can link the myth under consideration to the following one(s).

2.2. *The Format of the Presentation: Tools and Sources*[22]

The other, not less difficult issue to face, after structuring the content of the course, was that pertaining to the modality of presentation. How to present this content, with the all meanings and purposes I hinted at in the above description, in a way both to be sure that children would grasp them, and to engage them for an almost two hours-class?

The acclaimed high-tech tools, whose appropriate use may serve to the benefit of Humanities-related matters, too; the likewise 'acclaimed' call for visual aids, which may work hand-in-hand with good speaking skills to

they did not know about Sinon' and Laocoon's part, and a few of them knew about Cassandra's role.

[21] I extended the myth of Odysseus and the Trojan horse in a way to include the Fall of Troy, using the second book of Virgil's *Aeneid* as source. Therefore, by referring to personages with experience and knowledge to listen to and to respect, I meant Laocoon and Cassandra. For both I also insisted on the fact that they were priest and priestess, thus 'sacred' persons whose words *a maiore* should have been heard (and I also took the chance to introduce the character Cassandra and the story of her curse).

[22] In *Appendix* 1 I report a sample of what was our typical class-structure: there you find a concrete example of the various components characterizing the format of the presentation I shall discuss above.

create effective presentations; and, maybe above all, the consideration of the chances that myths could offer to visualize, to create vivid mental pictures stimulating in turn creativity and imagination, all of these considerations gave to me the answer: to tell the children each story not reading it from a book, nor as lecturing; instead, visualizing the story with animations organized in form of PowerPoint, and dramatizing it by creating *ex novo* dialogues among the characters where each part would be played by a child. Visualization and dramatization have thus become the basic tools through which, by refining my role as 'storyteller', I could keep the attention of the children for all that time, and, foremost, I could engage them actively by making them a *living* part of the story itself. In other words, I tried to make alive, so to speak, the myth by transforming it into a class performance with a narrator (myself), actors and audience (the children).

2.2.1. The «tools»

As to the visualization, I did not exclusively use ready-made images of gods and goddesses which one might find on the Internet, whether they are adapted for children or not[23].

I used available ready-made images only for the introductory classes, that is, for the preliminary presentation of the main gods, goddesses and heroes to give a possibly right idea of the way in which ancient people represented them. Indeed, I tended to couple images drawn on ancient sculptures with those intentionally designed for children. Here is an example of the figure I used in the introductory class, during the presentation of the Olympian gods:

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[23] I have to confess that I had hard time in always finding images adaptable for children, despite the presence of some websites devoted to them. I did not analyze in details the websites that I found so far on my way. However, many of them, seem to me not really valuable in that they too 'trivialize' myths and characters. It has been even worse sometimes to try through Google-Image: for the female goddesses most of the results consist of Anime-shaped women or semi-naked female figures. In this regard, I found it significant the observation of Maya, reported to me by her mother, that she could not find a good model/image —others than the ones I had shown in the previous class— to reproduce Artemis, since all she found were «in bikini» (quoting *verbatim*), and the girl suspected that it was not the way the Ancients pictured her.
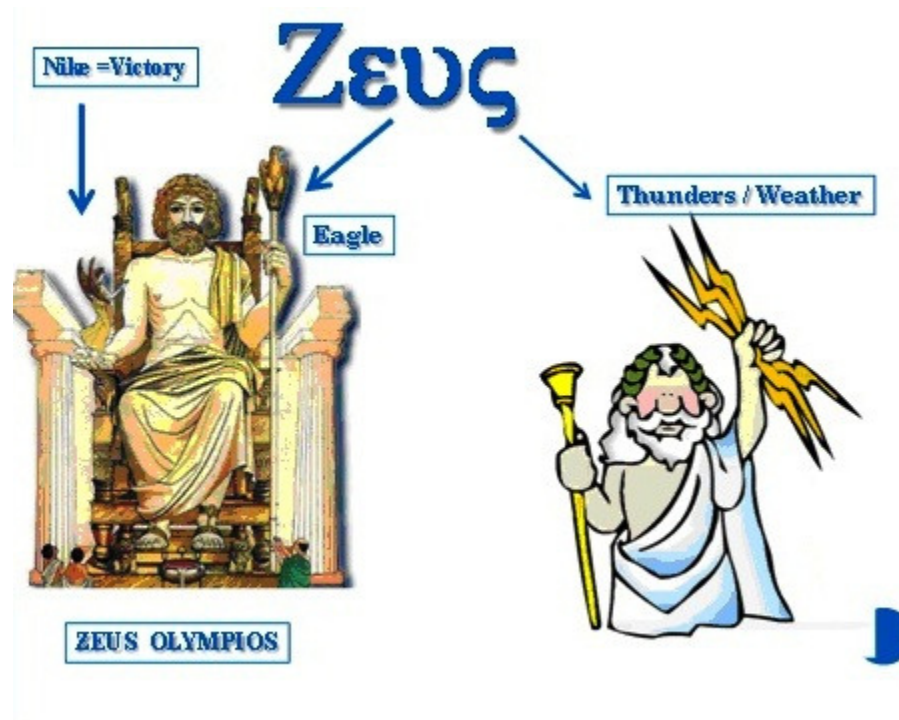
Note to the figure: To simplify the learning of Greek writing and reading, I avoided teaching the Greek accents. As it becomes here clear, for all characters I tended to use images of mythic characters able to concisely convey their basic traits.

Most of time I preferred to use pictures of ordinary people (male, female, infants, youth, adults, elder) chosen *ad hoc* to represent not simply this or that god / goddess / hero / mortal. To «make alive» the myth, and to represent it, on a visual base, in all of its implications, I chose images that, according to the specific, single segment of the story, could be able to reflect the feelings of the moment: anger, sorrow, joy, wonder, surprise, concern, exultation, tears, despair, fear, etc. Accordingly I created monologues and dialogues, 'visualizing' the words simply using the 'vignette' format, which would appear at the right moment, while telling the story.

The vivid representation of the feelings and emotions at play in the myth, through the pictures accordingly chosen, and the 'visualized' words, has proved *per se* to be an effective vehicle of communication and an efficient tool of learning: children easily remembered the content of the myth and its meanings by recalling the emotions of this and that personage, and —by extension— their own emotion, on which I'll focus later. But, what has definitely determined a successful learning outcome of the visualization modality, what has given a further input to the emotional response of the children to the myths, has been the dramatization, which

has made them protagonists of the myths themselves. It was something they were looking for each time we met; each of them was always waiting to be called for playing a part other than that of the audience[24].

By establishing turns, each of them had more than one chance to be a god/goddess or a hero/heroine etc. They were called not simply to read their parts, when they appeared in vignettes on the screen[25]. They were encouraged to interpret the part, after gradually familiarizing with the situation and the related emotions along with the ongoing story. And they did interpret their part by simulating feelings, changing the voice's tone and volume according to the narrative moment. The playful atmosphere that naturally came to be created did not vitiate at all the quality and seriousness of the whole process; it indeed reinforced it. All children were not distracted —as one may suspect— by that playful atmosphere; they took it seriously. So did they when it came to the collective 'testing'-activity that, by established rule, concluded each myth. At the end, all of them, actors and audience, were indeed interrogated about the essential meanings of the story they had just 'lively experienced'. Once I explained the basics and gave the preliminary notions through the introductory classes I mentioned above, once I made just one example through the first myth, it was then one of the children's task to say and discuss the meanings, and to describe what they would learn. Each of them was always able to give an appropriate answer, and to appropriately express related reflections.

2.2.2. The «sources»

Having a long-time experience in teaching Classical Mythology, although at a College level, and thus having familiarity with the content and the diversified interpretations of the myths themselves, helped me in not getting lost in the *mare magnum* of the scholarly references pertaining to this field of Classics. For the stories themselves, I simply and mainly used the main sources, i.e., the primary literature. Basically: Hesiod, *The Theogony*; Apollodorus, *The Library*; *The Homeric Hymns*; partially Homer, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*; Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*; Hyginus, *The Fabulae*; Virgil, *The Aeneid* (namely, the second Book); Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* (name-

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[24] Their part as audience was, however, only seemingly passive: they emotionally supported their peers during the story by taking side, laughing, showing reproach, etc. In some way they were a part of the ongoing fiction, as well.

[25] By establishing turns I made it sure that all children could be a god/goddess, a hero/heroine, or a minor character. Throughout the course, each of them had the chance to play all those roles. To engage them more personally I also cared to add their proper name to that of the mythic character any time it appeared on the screen (see the sample of the class, below, in *Appendix* 1).

ly, the myth of Eros and Psyche). At times, I combined some of primary texts related to the same myth to obtain as a much complete version of the myth as possible. This has been, for instance, the case of myth on the Birth of Herakles, for which I combined Homer, *Iliad* 19. 90-125 and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9. 281-323[26]. As to the meaning and the interpretations, I relied on the 'baggage' of knowledge which I acquired through years, combining studies I conducted for my degrees with those I further carried on as a base for the preparation of my courses as teacher.

I however looked for and consulted related bibliographies with two main purposes in mind:

1. to have some suggestions on how to render, to adapt and above all to simplify what I knew how to teach to College's Students for a far different audience, i.e. Elementary School Students;

2. to find a text that children could easily use.

I found it useful to consult A. Brazouski & Mary J. Klatt, *Children's Books on Ancient Greek and Roman Mythology*. An Annotated Bibliography (1994). As the subtitle clearly states, it mainly consists of a detailed annotated bibliography of books on classical myths for children. I found it helpful for a preliminary scan. Two chapters introduce the «Annotated Bibliography», which is core section of the book. One of the two introductory chapters is devoted to a brief history of books on classical mythology for children specifically in the United States (pp. 1-15); the other, only two pages long, is devoted to the discussion of different methodologies used in writing a book on classical mythology for children (pp.17-18). Although I was not writing a book for children, I read the chapter with some interest hoping to find suggestions adaptable to retelling the myths to children. The chapter describes five basic methods:

1. Simplified translation of a particular work of literature.

2. Paraphrase or summary of a myth as it is told in ancient sources.

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[26] For those who are not of the field, I would suggest a few textbooks of Classical Mythology that may help build one's own background-knowledge and the socio-cultural frame within which to locate the myths: M. P. O. Morford and R. J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford, 2007[9]; P. Mayerson, *Classical Mythology in Literature, Art, and Music*, Focus Classical Library, 2001. For the primary sources, a good selection is in S. M. Trzaskoma, R. S. Smith & S. Brunet, *Anthology of Classical Myth. Primary Sources in Translation*, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis, 2004, although poor in the sections concerning Apollodorus and Ovid. For further comments and indications, see below, pp. 25-26 and n. 29; also nn. 33-34; finally, pp. 36-37 with notes.

3. Simulate a historical romance which reflects the attitudes, values and manner of a particular non-classical age —often the age in which the author is living— by creating conversations, new characters (usually minor ones).

4. Create a biography of a hero by blending into one coherent story information from several sources.

5. Use mythological characters and situation to create entirely new myth or to add to an existing saga[27].

As partly may result from the explanation I have given about the format of presentation, in my retelling the myths to the children I combined some of the above-listed methods:

- I used paraphrase of myth as told in ancient text, with the strong determination to preserve the integrity of ancient sources (Brazouski & Klatt, method n. 2);

- I created conversations and revitalized some minor characters through which to mirror attitudes and manners of the classical age (Brazouski & Klatt, 'partially' method n. 3)[28];

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[27] This is indeed, more or less, the method behind the *Percy Jackson series* by Rick Riordan, which is very trendy and was pretty known by the children of my class (for details and pedagogical concerns about this series, see below p. 39).

[28] I said 'partially' since, as stated, I always wanted to preserve the ancient spirit and manners. For instance, when retelling the myth of Echo, using Ovid as main source (*Metamorphoses* 3. 356-369), I enlarged the part where the nymph appears as the one who used her inclination to gossip / to speak a lot, in order for her to hold Hera busy «with her endless tales», and to 'cover' Zeus's love affairs. I therefore created a situation in which Echo gave an appointment to Hera and had a conversation with her. The conversation was about Aphrodite being portrayed as she was perceived in ancient time, that is, as a 'capricious' goddess. In this adaptation, her tantrum was refusing to eat ambrosia since she found it not any more delicious!. As to revitalizing minor characters, an example may be my re-elaboration of some details of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydike. In particular, I enlarged the part related to the expression of Orpheus' sadness, after the death of Eurydike, making the nature participate in his pains —that same nature that Orpheus' voice and music used to be able to move and to allure into following him. In doing so I made some of the animals, who before were enchanted by Orpheus' music, play a role and speak, asking about the sadness of their singer—. These are just a few examples. While I tried, as I said, to preserve the attitude, manners, and the spirit of the ancient time in the newly created conversations and situations, the children, on the contrary, instinctively, and, I would add, understandably, applied the above-listed third method, here under discussion. This is indeed what anybody can see in the comments that often accompanied their drawings show exactly this (see below, *Appendix* 2).

- I created a concise biography blending into one coherent story information from several sources for the presentation of the main gods and goddesses (Brazouski & Klatt, method n. 4).

The scan of the titles and the brief description of the books included in the «Annotated Bibliography» have been somewhat inspirational. Although I decided not to follow *verbatim* this or that method, nor, honestly, to use a specific textbook[29], I could figure out what to do and how to proceed. For instance, through the titles listed in the Annotated Bibliography and the related short description, I could note some insistence on the preference of visual perception as a key to capturing children's attention and reaching their deep understanding. This has had an influence on my decision concerning the format of the presentation which I described above, although I freely developed the potentiality of using visual aids. More importantly, if I may say so, I took some inspiration for organizing the course in terms also of requirements and assessment: what children were expected to do, how to verify and assess their learning. To give them one of those 'facilitator' books I read about in Brazouski-Klatt's Bibliography and elsewhere, that is to say, to expect them to read at home the myths they would be going to explore in class, and to create a set of 'drills' on the readings and class-explanation sounded to me too «standardized» and reductive, in that it would not do justice both to the beauty and extraordinary richness of thoughts and ideas implied in the myths made accessible to children, and to the likewise extraordinary, rich imagination and creativity of the children themselves as they could be empowered by those ancient stories. Without denying the importance of contributing to an improvement of children's reading-comprehension skills —through a book to read and understand, and drills to subsequently make— other consid-

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[29] This is consistent with my usual, and maybe idiosyncratic, feelings about textbooks which will never be comprehensive, exhaustive, clear, at least at the same degree as one may wish. I however consulted a few books, mostly selected through the Annotated Bibliography of the above mentioned book by Brazouski & Klatt. In particular, as basic guide I used *Classic Myths to Read Aloud* by William F. Russell (1989). Although it is planned for age 5 and up, and age 8 and up, I then found it actually apt for older than that. I first was appealed to it for the large rage of ages it contemplated, given that I had a class mix of children from the third to the fifth grade. I however found useful the tetradic structure Russell gave to each myth: a short introduction, entitled «About the story»; a section of «Vocabulary and pronunciation»; the story itself; a concluding paragraph «A few words more». I adapted this structure to a triadic one, which I followed: 1. «Table of name of characters and places» —which was distribute in form of handout—; 2. Myth itself —presented as I have above described—; 3. «A few new words and ideas» —included in the same handout of the day and, in addition, displayed on the screen—. For a sample of this format, see *Appendix* 1.

erations, prompted exactly by the circumstance to address that specific subject matter to that specific audience, came to my mind. The consideration of the variety of intellectual skills that each of us may possess, and of the intellectually *diverse* composition of a *corpus* of students; the importance to enhance intellectual attitudes usually dismissed as 'less important', or as not even 'intellectual', such as the artistic ones; the very initial goal of the project, to save, nourish and stimulate imagination, as the essential element of any creative endeavor, by preserving the imagination and creativity embedded in our classical heritage, all of these considerations led me to plan some specific requirements and way of assessing, without giving texts to read and 'canonic' practices to do.

2.3. Requirements and assessment: learning through creativity

Poema pictura loquens, pictura poema silens («poetry is a speaking picture, painting a silent poetry») —attributed to Simonides in Plutarch, *De Gloria Atheniensium*, 3. 346—.

The dual cognitive composition of our brain is a fact of common knowledge to educators. The 'left brain' —linguistic, rational, analytic and sequential— promotes language-based, logical-mathematical way of thinking and knowing; whereas the 'right brain' —intuitive, spatial, holistic, subjective— tends to be visual, creative, relational. It has been noted that Western educational institutions traditionally privilege, in their teaching and learning outcomes, two domains of knowledge, both associated with the faculties of the left brain: language (i.e., aptitude for verbal expression/communication and analysis), logic and mathematics (i.e., aptitude for logical, abstract thinking, reasoning dealing also, but not confined to numbers). Despite the fact that, so far, those two domains retain the scepter in matter of education, in the last decades teachers have shown a higher degree of sensitivity toward the diversity of the student body, recognizing that people may think and learn in different ways, and that accordingly there are diversified ways to approach areas of knowledge[30], which would help promote an effective learning based on varied abilities and aptitudes, including those linked to the 'right brain'[31]. With these considerations in mind, looking for not 'standardized' assignments and assessment process, I simply thought of the other main form —if not the first form— of expression and communication that human beings have used

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[30] See, for instance, M. Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity*, Basic Books, New York, 1996; also M. L. Kornhaber, «Howard Gardner», in J. A. Palmer (ed.), *Fifty Modern Thinkers on Education: From Piaget to the Present*, Routledge, London, 2001, 272-279, pp. 276-277.

[31] This is consistent with the 'Theory of Multiple Intelligence' promoted by the psychologist and educator specialist H. Gardner, on which see below, pp. 39-43 with notes.

since the dawn of our civilization, a way that may be either substitute for the linguistic one or complementary. In either case it is eloquent as well as a well formulated speech, or a deeply felt poetry: drawing. Drawing, and its highest expression, i.e., painting, are a transposition of words in figures; they are what technically is called «intersemiotic transposition»[32], a 'translation' of concepts, feelings, stories etc. from one medium to another, such a process that seems peculiarly congenial to the aptitudes of children, to their almost spontaneous way to approach knowledge and to appropriate it, that is, putting their imagination and curiosity at work and becoming creative by re-creating and making visible what they have appropriated[33]. What a better way to engage children, to have them «study» the myths with their lessons/meanings and the words/phrases originated from

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[32] See C. Cluver, «On Intersemiotic Transposition», *Poetics Today*, 19 (1989) 55-90.

[33] Brazouski-Klatt's book mentions some books based on an artistic approach to myths. Yet, at least for the purpose I had in my mind, I found them not suitable for three basic reasons: 1. Some of them are interested in teaching narrative drawing and related techniques through teaching classical myth, which means that in this kind of books the main goal was teaching art/drawing-ability *per se* rather than classical mythology (this is the case, for instance, of S. L. Burwell, «Greek Myth: A Lesson in Narrative Drawing», *School Arts*, 85. 1 (1985) 22-26); 2. Some others aim at displaying and discussing famous work of art based on Greek-Roman myths, which I found (a) not fully appropriate for a children' audience (more appropriate for junior/high school students); (b) still focused on art rather than on the myths themselves; (c) 'dangerous' for the imagination of the children, in that they could influence and affect the way in which then children would recreate the myth in their own art works (as representative of this kind of books, see, e.g, L. M. Bryant, *The Children's Book of Celebrated Legends*, The Century Company, New York, 1929); 3. Finally some of this kind of books confined themselves either to give directions for drawing specific characters and for using specific material necessary to produce the drawing (this is the case of A. Zaidenberg, *How to Draw Prehistoric and Mythical Animals. London*, Abelard-Schuman Ltd., 1967), or to just ask for coloring pre-made mythological scenes (this is the case, for instance, of P. McArthur Cole, *A coloring Book of Ancient Greece: With Illustrations of the Artists of Those Times*, Bellerophon Press, Santa Barbara, 1970; S. Zorn, *Bulfinch's Mythology Coloring Book*, Running Press, Philadelphia, 1989): in both cases, still artistic/drawing skills seem to be the focus. Moreover, the very last group of books would require an oxymoronic 'passive activity', with the children being said to follow certain directions and to color. In all of these approaches there is nothing wrong *per se*. It just depends on the objectives. One of my objectives was to have children 'active inventors and re-creators', not just consumers. My intention was thus to enhance creativity and imagination through personal and free re-elaboration in the form that seems more congenial to children: drawing (see also below, n. 34). As to coloring books, see the latest bibliographical collection by J. F. Siegel, «Audio-Visual Material in Classics», *Classical World*, 105. 3 (2012) 354-432, pp. 366-367; 381; 386.

them, than challenging them to re-elaborate those stories, re-creating them by giving them visible forms? And what a better way to achieve the fine goal of teaching the community through the children by having children show —and comment on— their artworks, by offering to the community itself something that could provoke a stronger and a lasting vivid effect, i.e., an exhibit of drawings eloquently speaking to them?

Hence the idea of visual assignments came, such an idea corroborated by the persuasion that this kind of assignment would by no means be less rigorous and 'serious' than the traditional ones based on reading and writing. In rendering in figures the stories and their reception of the stories, the children would inevitably pay attention to form as well as content, to abstract meaning as well as to concrete expression[34]. This kind of activity would thus still enhance logical intelligence. It additionally would promote both (1) an artistic and emotional intelligence[35], i.e., the ability to form a clear mental image, visualize it, draw and choose accurately the colors, and (2) the ability to find out, so to speak, one's own emotions and feelings in front of the story, and to express them in some way. The children were, in fact, asked to draw the stories in the way they would remember them, or in the way the stories impressed them. Moreover, the children were asked to be prepared to comment on their drawings and share with the class what they saw in their pictures. My purpose for this activity was mainly twofold:

1. To reinforce each other's knowledge of the story, since each child usually reproduced, and personalized, different moments or details of the

[34] On the other end, it is quite known that drawing is studied and regarded as an educational tool able to help develop children's mental ability to discover and create meanings. The bibliography is almost uncountable. To mention a few, of some interest are M. Wilson & B. Wilson, *Teaching children to draw: a guide for teachers and parents*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1982; S. Fein, *First drawings: Genesis of visual thinking*, Exelrod Press, Pleasant Hill, CA, 1993; M. Brooks, «Drawing, Visualisation and Young Children's Exploration of 'Big Ideas'», *International Journal of Science Education*, 31. 3 (2009) 319-341, who also devotes a chapter to drawing with reference to 'Theory of Multiple Intelligence' (see above, n. 31); N. R. Smith, *Observation Drawing With Children: A Framework for Teachers*, Teachers College Press, New York, 1997; M. Brooks, «Drawing to Learn», *Young Children: Beyond the Journal* (http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200309/), 2003; «Drawing, Visualisation and Young Children's Exploration of 'Big Ideas'», *International Journal of Science Education*, 31. 3 (2009) 319-341.

[35] What I call 'emotional intelligence' would correspond to what H. Gardner (see above, n. 31) called 'intrapersonal intelligence' within his 'Theory of Multiple Intelligence', as then I discovered (see below, pp. 39-43 with notes). I prefer the more usual denomination to distance myself from Gardner, given that, as I shall explain, some possible similarities are not intentional.

story itself. Moreover, this sharing activity took place at the beginning of the class, working —at the same time— as a 'check of the homework', which means that the myth covered in the previous class was recalled and re-covered, several times, being presented, through drawings, by all children; a further way to 'imprint' the story in their mind;

2. To create a friendly, collaborative atmosphere where each would respect the other's work, look at another way to image the story. By sharing all drawings, they would be prompted to become sensitive to the others' emotions[36], too.

In this same spirit of cooperation, reciprocal respect and mutual help in the process of learning, children were at times exposed to what I called 'collective' tests, whose questions were still proposed in form of picture, i.e., as visualization of the concepts, lessons, characters about which they were asked.

3. A sample of the class-structure[37]

Retelling, recreation, appropriation of concepts and lessons, interpretations of feelings and emotions of the fictional characters of the stories, and emotional reactions of the recipients, all of these basic processes characterizing the learning activity of my children's class took place through visualization, through creating mental images and concretizing them in form of pictures / drawings, with the auxiliary use of verbal comment. Personal, active participation and interaction have shaped each stage of the learning activity itself. A few ancillary, yet indispensable, tools have compensated for possible gaps due to the absence of a textbook where children could find the story, refresh their memory of the story, and take inspiration for their drawing. Children were indeed given a 'chart' with the characters and key words/phrases of the myth that was to be covered. This chart, which I prepared for each story, would work as a 'map' to orient the children when reviewing and recalling the myth at home. Having only a chart and not a textbook on which to rely has favoured raising responsibility and keeping the attention in class at a high level, together with the role-playing activity in which they were called to participate, as said above in the description of the format of the presentation.

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[36] This is technically called «Interpersonal intelligence» within the 'Theory of Multiple Intelligence' (on which above, n. 31; below, pp. 39-43 with notes). It is a specific category of intelligence that inadvertently, i.e., without being really aware of its theorization as a 'category' *per* se, I came up to use. As to the objective to create a quiet and friendly, respectful environment, see below some children's comments (*Appendix* 2).

[37] For a full sample, see below *Appendix* 1.

Here is a sample of a typical class:

1. *Reviewing the homework together*: After the regular greetings, each child was called to show and describe to the class her/his drawing, focusing on the specific segment of the story the child had chosen to draw, on the 'why' of that choice, and on the 'why' (s)he has represented it in that way.

2. *Telling the new myth*: after having distributing the above-mentioned chart, as storyteller I started telling the new myth calling the attention to the title and to the main characters they would read about in the chart and hear during the following presentation[38]. This brief introductory stage was also meant to establish the roles (who should play whom) that some children would play on that occasion, while, at the same time, they all would start familiarizing themselves with at least the name of the characters. They all knew they had to attentively follow the story-telling and the parallel animations on the screen to be ready to intervene in their parts and interpret them. As said above, a dramatization, framed by the storyteller's narration, with the help of the visual animation, has been the ultimate format through which —at the end of the class— the children knew the new myth, with all of its meanings, linguistic implications etc. Being a long process and being the core of the class, it took about forty or fifty minutes. Of course, I had to articulate it in two sections, stopping at a 'strategic' phase of the story. A pause of about ten minutes was given to them, it was what we called 'Snack time'.

3. *Guessing the lesson*: After resuming and concluding the 'second act' of the story, children were always challenged with the question: «What do you think? What is the lesson of this story?». Each child was given the chance to intervene (and they all wanted to intervene!), and we then summarized the lesson considering all answers which were always consistent with the one I finally 'unveiled' on the screen.

4. *New Words in the context:* Still at the end, any time there were new words (Greek-rooted words) originated through the myth, each child was invited to use them in context.

5. *Putting forward again the good intentions*: Before leaving, there was a 'ritual' reminder to think about the myth, draw it for the next time, and be ready to show and discuss each own drawing to the class.

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[38] Both in the chart and the Power-point I wrote the title of the myth and the name of the characters in Greek and in English, asking the children to read the Greek ones.

4. Results

The overall components of the class, from the format of the presentation to the assignments have been planned to enhance active and creative participation in class, and engagement when at home. As hopefully it more clearly results from the description of a typically structured class, the children did, indeed, actively and creatively participate. They always proved that they had been engaged in spending time outside to rethink and draw the myth. This also means that they indirectly re-appropriated 'things' from the past, looking at them as a part of themselves, of their present life more than they would imagine at the beginning of the course itself. In experiencing our classical heritage actively and creatively, they could more enjoy it, having the chance to also re-elaborate it by exercising more than one ability:

- To re-propose a story in the form of figures was not certainly an immediate process; it implied rethinking the story, in order to discern what would be most important to represent —which in turn implies understanding and visualizing the logical sequence of the story from which to extract one's own more significant component—. It implied some emotional engagement, an understanding of one's own feeling about that story, hence the choice of shapes, colours may also originate

- To show the others one's own drawing implied understanding and management of the environment, and an understanding of one's own capacities to relate to it. Not less important, to explain/describe one's own work, implicitly answering to the question 'what' and 'why', implied to exercise both analytic skills and oral proficiency. Last but not least, being a mutual activity, each of them had to practice, so to speak, respect for the others' version, to listen to and be confronted with the others' version of the myth. In some way, they were challenged to let each other scrutinize their work, and again to rethink of the myth looking at it through the others' eyes[39].

- To extemporaneously interpret the roles, beside exercising the ability to follow the story attentively, involved an emotional understanding of the story itself by reflecting on the action and reaction, choosing the adequate tone of voice, as required by the moment, and so forth.

- To guess the 'lesson' inevitably required critical thinking, some reflections, and —as we progressed with the classes— the ability to connect concepts previously learned as supporting the lesson of the moment.

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[39] For a sample of different views expressed through their drawing, see, e.g., the two different renditions of the myth 'Athena and Arachne', in *Appendix* 2 (below, pp. 64-67).

- To use the new words in context implied conceptualizing (they had to really understand the idea/concept 'named' through those new words) and concretizing (they had to think of how to make the concept —thus the word— work for a concrete context), with enlarging one's own vocabulary being the last outcome.

Above all the last two activities (lesson-guessing and word-learning) were the ones through which children more easily could relate those ancient stories to their life discovering, in this way too, their relevance to the present days.

Here are a few examples:

- Caleb: «My brother is a Narcissus: he looks at himself in the mirror all day».

- Emma: «To tantalize is as when you see a box of cookies, of your favorite cookies, on the top of a high cabinet, and you look at it, you try and try to reach it, the cookies are on your sight but you cannot reach them, so you are teased, you are tantalized».

- Maya: «A sisyphean task is when you have to clean your very, very messy room: it never ends».

- Luke Junior: «A sisyphean task is when your father tells you to sweep up the leaves in the backyard: it lasts forever».

- Kimana: «The whale is a titanic creature of the animal world».

- Emma: «Rainbows and flowers are amazingly iridescent!».

- Leah: «In the future, I want to be a philanthropist that will help the environment and children».

And sometimes children show genuine wit in using the new words, creating real *puns*, as when Emma said: «A Cyclops is a cyclopean being!»; or when Sam said: «Narcissus was very narcissistic because he always looked at himself in the mirror»[40].

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[40] Of course, saying 'mirror' Sam meant the lake. And speaking of wit, still Emma, in her drawing of Narcissus, portrayed him saying, while looking at himself in the lake: «[I am] So much better looking than Echo». Speaking of 'mocking' comments, another child, Maya, in her drawing of the myth of Athena and Arachne, portrayed Arachne changed into a spider saying: «What in the world!». For a quick overview of some children's drawings with their comment, see *Appendix* 2.

5. Concluding Remarks: Classics and human community today

Einstein's quotation, which I mentioned at the very beginning, calls attention to the benefit that Education, meant as an opportunity to discover the beauty and the cathartic power of learning, may give not only to the individual involved in the process of learning but also to the community, that is, to the human habitat to which we belong. This human side of Education, as well as the beauty of learning, the deep understanding that learning means to try to really know ourselves, our world, to try to understand it and thus to understand how to better relate to it, all of this —as I have 'complained' at the beginning— risk to be lost, if it is not already lost. The techno-business-mania and the God-money ruling almost undisturbed today lead the majority of people to think of Classics and Humanities-based Education as «… marginal contributors to the sum of knowledge and the well-being of society»[41]. Classics in particular is the one more at risk of being cut away. Who would care of what somebody has written or produced more than two thousand years ago? Does it help to stay competitive in the global market? In a time in which higher education journals, symposia, forum emphasize the importance of community service learning, learning communities, outreach to the community, the community should be first educated on the value of an omni-comprehensive education where our classical roots and heritage have, and must preserve their deserved space. In a time in which imagination and creativity are losing ground, yet in which surviving forms are mostly built on the ancient imagination and creativity, the community should be made aware of this. In a time in which, by way of a cultural oxymoron, critical thinking is put into focus, the community must be enabled to realize that a Classics-based education —and more broadly a Humanities-based education— is what contributes to cultivating critical thoughts that are also open and creative.

Children are part of the community and the 'spring' of the future community. Education must start with them, reach them, and act through them. The project, as I have anticipated above, was built also on this idea: to educate children about our classical roots and heritage and, through and thanks to them, to educate the community. A public exhibit of selected drawings with a performance, by each child, consisting of telling the myth and describing the drawing has been the formal conclusion of this project. Each child had the chance to show what (s)he had learned and to instruct the audience. The event was well attended. Here are a few comments of the spectators:

> I was astounded and very, very impressed by the knowledge, enthusiasm, and self-assurance that the children displayed during the program they presented at

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[41] A. Kernan (ed.), *What's happened to the humanities?*, University Press Princeton, 1997, p. 7.

the end of this project. As the parent of a participant, I loved how excited the whole class was about the myths they learned; as an educator myself, I was inspired to see how this project brought together so many objectives in a truly exciting way (Sarah Nelson, Associate Professor of French at the University of Idaho, Luke 'Senior''s mother).

I really appreciated that Rosanna provided a program for children to learn about the «classics». I feel they really enjoyed learning how to spell words using the Greek alphabet and to act out some of the myths by portraying the gods and goddesses. It is especially important that Ms. Wissner was reaching out to other students besides the children in her Gifted and Talented program. The students did a wonderful job of presenting Greek myths during the final presentation. A corresponding picture they drew about the myth was projected on a screen while they were retelling the story. The students seemed to really enjoy themselves because it was a «low stress» environment with family and friends present (Suzie Davis, Leah's mother).

Sunil and I loved the presentations the children made at the program Rosanna put on for the community. It was clear from the drawings Rosanna displayed for us how well they knew and clearly they understood the myths that she had them studying. We also valued the experience Rosanna gave the children to present what they had learned to an audience. It is never too early to learn how to stand up and speak! (Anne-Marie and Sunil Fulfer, Emma's parents).

I was impressed with how well Rosanna was able to engage and involve each of the kids, and draw out their individual strengths. I sensed great pride and ownership from the kids in the presentation they gave. Gaining exposure to not just another culture, but one with a complex ancient civilization, was an amazing opportunity for these children, and mine were very honored to be a part of the class. They still talk about their experience, they still recount the stories they learned, and they continue to be fascinated with ancient mythology. I've noticed that they often incorporate characters from the myths into their daily play, and have also recently —purposefully and with great intention— rented out contemporary movies that use mythology as the basis for their stories (e.g. *Percy Jackson & the Olympians*, *Clash of the Titans*, and *The Chronicles of Narnia*). Luke likes to play online video games for children, too, and his two absolute favorites are *Hero of Sparta* and *Age of Mythology*. I'm sure the class they took with Rosanna was a huge influence in that respect (Lysa Salbury, Luke 'Junior' and Maya's mother).

In front of the audience, the children, receiving as a reward a pin with an owl depicted on it, performed a ritual: they solemnly swore «in the name of Zeus, kings of gods and goddesses, his daughter Athena and all the Olympians, to follow always justice and wisdom, to love always knowledge and cultivate a taste for the beauty». I thought of this ritual

both as a play for the children, which would hopefully leave in them the essence of what they learned in this class beyond the myths, and as example and stimulus for the community.

The study of myths can help inculcate the virtues of justice, wisdom, knowledge, and beauty in a young person. On the basis of the reaction of the children, as a pilot experiment this project has shown the potential long-term influence that classical training in depth can have in developing those virtues[42].

As to the community in general, some people of Moscow now know that the owl is the symbol of Athena, and symbol of wisdom; that 'to tantalize' is a synonym of 'to tease' because of Tantalus; that the fear of spider is technically called 'arachnophobia' because of 'Athena and Arachne' story; that —to put it with the extreme claims of Shelley— «we are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their roots in Greece. But for Greece — Rome the conqueror, or the metropolis of our ancestors, would have spread no illumination with her arms and we might still have been savages and idolatres».

6. Paths toward the future and pedagogical matters: a few suggestions

My project was meant to be a pilot one, almost an experimental activity. The purpose has mostly been to test the potential of Classics as a tool to promote love for knowledge, critical learning of ourselves and of the time in which we live, re-appropriation of our cultural roots —that have been long forgotten, or worse, *buried* under the seemingly modern products— while reaching out to the community outside campus, through the youngest of the community itself: the children. Nobody would deny that children are the ones more apt to be the 'bringers of knowledge', a knowledge that belongs to all of us, the ones more exposed to the dangerously overwhelming fascination of modern times' products, and thus more at risk to forget 'from where we come', the ones whose imagination and creativity deserve to be kept pure and to be allowed to draw on the original source of creativity and imagination, i.e. the products of classical antiquity of which myths are among the best expressions.

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[42] Indeed, among the others, one concrete result was the creation of a calendar with selected drawings of the children that we sold for charity purpose. The title of the calendar was «From children to children through Classical Mythology». The children had the chance to come to know some of the non-profit organizations that benefit the less fortunate children, namely UNICEF and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (an American medical Institution for the cure of children with cancer). With the help of some parents and my own help, the children set up a table in one of the most 'attended' local store to sell the calendar and thus help other children.

The positive results of the class and my own realization, during the work in progress, of how many potentialities a class on myths for children may have in terms both of teaching-learning strategies and of outreaching, leads me to propose a few suggestions to encourage undertaking similar projects by ameliorating my 'rough draft'. My few suggestions will concern 'tools' (primary and secondary sources) and 'methods' (how to organize the class).

A. Some tools and their use

A.1. For instructors

As I have stated above, for the content of the myth itself, I used the ancient texts, paraphrasing and simplifying them, yet preserving their essence (and the way in which I visually paraphrased Ovid's recount of the myth of Athena and Arachne may serve as example). I cannot deny that both my training in Classics and my experience of teaching Mythology at College have played a huge role in this choice of mine: it is not difficult to me to manage and combine the sources, to add and detract, so to speak, still being careful of not distorting the original.

With the understanding that teaching classical myth to children must not be exclusive or confined to Classicists, I recognize how helpful books recounting myths in a paraphrase / summary format may be for teachers. Out of the several books of this sort that exist I may suggest the 'classic' ones, such as the Thomas Bulfinch, *The Age of Fables* (1855); Edith Hamilton, *Mythology* (1942); H. Rose, *Handbook of Greek Mythology* (1959); Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire, *Book of Greek Myths* (1962); Robert Graves, *Myth of Ancient Greece* (1962)[43]. Broader dictionaries and encyclopedia are also valuable, such as, to mention a few: *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (1996), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome* (2010), or *Brill's New Pauly* (1996) available in German and in English[44]. Teachers may en-

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[43] As to Graves, I dislike, however, the mix of mythology and history (with the introduction, for instance, of the Emperor Julian, or the Christians) to which sometimes he indulged. For a high degree of variations of the original, I do not like very much the series of Bernard Evslin (1922-1993), an American author very well-known for his adaptation of Greek Mythology (one of the best known book is *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of the Greek Mythis*, Random House Children's Books, 1984). Evslin almost always wrote his own version of the ancient story, which, while is surely pleasant to read, it is however not the ideal to use if we want to instruct children on classical myths as they were.

[44] True enough that, except for Brill's New Pauly, the others I mentioned are in English. I would feel safe saying that most of the other nationalities have their own Encyclopedia or dictionaries of Classical Civilization. It may be enough to mention a few examples, such

rich their preparation using at the same time some of the Textbooks I mentioned above (see n. 26). In particular, Mayerson discusses myths paraphrasing them to offer a frame for the description of the reception of those myths in literature, art and music. Morford-Lenardon, too, based their explanation of ancient myths on summary and paraphrase. Differently from Mayerson, they often add long portions of the original texts in translation and sporadic description of the ancient artwork reproducing a specific myth or character. As stated in that note, an Anthology of Classical Myth in translation, such as the one by Trzaskoma-Smith-Brunet, might be very useful despite the limits I mentioned, which that book presents. It is, indeed, a manageable handbook for those who are not trained in Classics in that, although divided *per* authors, the preface addressed to the instructor and the table of contents do help direct the reader through the sources in a way to be able to build the 'biography' of a character, or the 'complete picture' of an event by drawing on among the most reliable texts available for that character or that event. It also helps building on themes or recurrent motifs in myth. All then depends on the goal of the instructor him/herself. One may decide to start from the *Theogony* by Hesiod (which is given in full text), and can decide to focus on the myth of creation, the succession myth and, subsequently the gods and all related material which is available in the other main sources (such as, Apollodorus, Homeric Hymn, Hyginus, Ovid, etc.)[45]. It would be a simple way to have a complete 'picture' and a solid base to teach, and to teach those topics while preserving, in some way, the ancient source. My strong suggestion is always to try to preserve the original, in terms of content and meaning[46]. It will depend on the way of presentation to facilitate it, yet conveying the original meanings to give children real glimpses on the antiquity, and thus the key to a real understanding of the modernity.

A.2. *For the children*

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as *Dictionnaire de la mythologie Grecque et Romaine* by P. Grimal (Paris, 1979) —of which there is an Italian translation (*Enciclopedia dei miti*, Milano, 1990)—; or, *Manual de Mitología Clásica* by M. D. Gallardo (Madrid, 1995).

[45] I would also suggest, although dated, *Classics in Translation* (in two volumes: *Greek Literature* and *Latin Literature*) edited by P. Mackendrick and H. M. Howe (Madison, 1952)

[46] As shown and repeatedly stated throughout the paper, it is exactly what I did and what I believe it is the best. On the other hand, it is almost proved that the best adaptations are those that children can easily understand retaining the tone and the plot of the original (see, e.g., C. S., Huck, *Children's Literature in the Elementary School*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1979[3], p. 219; B. Cullinan, M. K. Karrer & A. M. Pillar, *Literature and the Child*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., New York, 1981, pp. 189-190).

As to tools and books for children, I would suggest a careful screen of the thousands of materials made them available from the 'cheapest' ones, so to speak, that anybody can find in anonymous website, to the 'most sophisticated' ones, as the highly acclaimed 'Percy Jackson series' by Rick Riodan. The influence, in bad and in good, we may say, that this series has been having demands a description with some words of comment. It is a series of adventures and fantasy, set in the modern United Stated, based on Greek Mythology and gravitating around Percy Jackson, a boy who discovers to be the son of the god Poseidon. The series consists of five books and a movie. All achieved a huge success in the U.S.

Between the 'cheapest' and the 'more sophisticated' materials, there are hundreds of more or less average books. Only Brazouski-Klatt, published in 1994, counts 381 books, and, obviously, it is not exhaustive. It is, however, a good starting point. Determining a specific content and approach might be the key to a manageable use of Brazouski-Klatt' s Annotated Bibliography.

As ancillary tools, one may think to use cartoons that in the form of video clips are often available online. A few of them are valuable[47], but a thumb-index of these tools would be of great help.

The degree of proximity to the original is the issue that makes me skeptical toward both the 'cheapest' and the 'most sophisticated' tools. As to the latter, i.e., the 'Percy Jackson series', the comment of Ms. Wissner on my program and class enlightens at best my feeling and subsequent pedagogical concerns:

> With the popularity of the Harry Potter and Percy Jackson series (both books and movies), this was excellent timing for a class which explored the classic myths upon which these contemporary stories are based. The students were enthusiastic about the opportunity to discuss the myths and respond through art (Gretchen Wissner, coordinator of the 'Gifted and Talented Program' at Russell Elementary School).

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[47] I myself used a few to firm the memory of a story and / or a meaning. When I had to show a video-clip, I always did so only after retelling the myth. For me invaluable is the short cartoons «Orpheus and the Underworld» available at <http://www.abc.net.au/arts/wingedsandals/storytime/orpheus.htm> [accessed on 17-01-2013]. In this site there are other three stories to watch —Perseus and Medusa, Persephone and Demeter, and Apollo and his oracle— but they are not as accurate as Orpheus cartoons. Indeed in the other three stories some details are added or changed compared to the original. The site «WingedSandals» seems to me, however, worthy being visited.

The problem with the Percy Jackson series and similar products is that they are built on classical myth preserving little, in the end, of the original, or certainly not as much (in terms of quantity and quality) as it would be needed to give children, and modern audience in general, the right insight on the ancient world. The series consists of five books, the first of which is the basis of a movie recently released: «Percy Jackson & the Olympians: the Lightning Thief». As I hinted above, the protagonist, Percy Jackson, half-boy half-god, is the son of Poseidon. The adventures and quests he undertakes bring him to meet with other characters of Classical Mythology[48]. But these are still 'modern stories', they are not 'classical myths'; they are able to show —as said since the beginning— the enduring value of classical myths, yet they are not, in my opinion, the best tool to use to introduce youth to classical civilization in that they are already distorted by modern imagination. Some children of my class, who had approached classical myth through Percy Jackson, had indeed, at times, inappropriate information and mental pictures of some mythic personages[49]. As I shall discuss in the following paragraph, this kind of material may serve as an educational tool if used to enhance critical skills by prompting comparison between what may be called 'modern myths' and 'their fathers', so to speak, that is, the original classical myths. Similarly, I could see how some children had some distorted pictures of heroes and events when their source had been the less recent TV Series, *Hercules: The Animated Series* —where, just to give an idea of the 'degree of proximity', the well-known Trojan hero Philoctetes is transformed in a Satyr that trains and assists Herakles in his undertakings—; his best friend is not any more Iolaus but Icarus (who survived from the escape from the Labyrinth!)… Not to mention the excessively eroticized version of the female figures. Still, this is not classical myth, but, among other things, a gendered reception which adds nothing, however, to children', and people's in general, education, and appreciation of our past. Those modern versions of female figures are

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[48] Some information about the author and the series are available at <http://www.percy jackson.co.uk/site/pj_author.php> [accessed on 17-01-2013].

[49] I honestly dislike this kind of method, and the entire series itself, since it alters too much the essence and meaning of the 'real' ancient myth, although I cannot deny it is an appealing tool through which children may become however familiar with some basic characters of Greek Mythology. Yet, a question raises: «Do we want to teach the values of Classical Antiquity just giving the children a 'taste' of it, being content that they familiarize with some names and story, or do we want them to truly learn about their past, yet using —without altering the original— funny tools? As to the 'Percy Jackson series', my criticism is fortunately not isolated. Considerations and perplexities similar to those of mine can be found in J. J. O'Hara & M. A. O'Hara, «Book Review: Percy Jackson & The Olympians», *Amphora*, 9. 1 (2010) 1-6.

surely 'trendy' and appealing, which are among the features a modern product must have to success on the market!

Caution is my suggestion in using, if used, this kind of material.

B. *Methods: a few ideas on presentation and assignments*[50]

As stated above, judging on the reaction of the class, the combination of visualization and dramatization has been the key to a successful presentation-format transforming the children into 'actors' entering the realm of the story they were not just listening to, but 'watching' unraveled before their eyes. They were great in interpreting extemporaneously the parts, expressing the feelings that the narrative-segment required. This caused me to think of another possible way to creatively involve the children in their learning myths. Why not have them invent the dialogues to perform, instead of having them perform —though creatively— dialogues I invented? It was close to the end of the course when I had this idea, and without changing the structure of the class —given that it proved to be effective— I wanted to try at least once what would happen and what the reaction of the children would be. It was the time in which we were covering the myth of Odysseus and Polyphemus, the only one for which I intentionally avoid the dramatization part; I just and simply told them the story. Then I asked not only for the usual homework, i.e., the re-elaboration in form of drawings, but also for an additional, optional one: to re-write in group the story with dialogues among the characters. Three children volunteered for this additional work: Emma, Luke Senior[51] and Sam, and the results were wonderful:

-   The children took time to gather at home and plan the story and the dialogue.

-   They wrote the story and tried the performance at home.

-   They then presented their story and performed it in class, involving at least one of the audience for reciting the part of what they called 'Random Cyclops'.

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[50] With the appropriate adaptation to the age, all suggestions might apply to the teaching of Classical Mythology at other levels, such as Middle and High School.

[51] Since I had in class two children with the same name (Luke) but of different age, I let myself use, in playful way, the epithets 'senior' and 'junior', although they obviously are not related as father and son. Of course, I explained this use (in its original meaning and in my 'adaptation') to the children, and thus took the chance to have them discover that 'senior' is a Latin and not an English word, and 'junior' is a Latin-rooted word.

- They had, and caused the others to have, fun, with a deeper appreciation of the myth itself.

I shall report their text at the end of this paragraph: it speaks for itself!

- *Creative re-writing and dramatized reading*: On the basis of this experience, I would think that another way for children to learn and appreciate myth is to have them re-write the myth in a way to then dramatize it, making sure they would preserve, through dialogue, the way the things were in the original, although —as you can realize reading the text below— using modern colloquialisms, or a lexicon that might be typical of their age. The teacher may use part of the class to tell the story, with or without visual aids, making sure to give all possible details on characters and situations, in order to give the children enough information and emotions on which to build the conversations. After dividing the children in groups, the teacher may give them the remaining time of the class to start working on their rewriting. They would also gather outside the class to finalize the work and try the performance, and then perform in the next class. I would not see as a problem the fact that five groups of children, for instance, would re-write and perform the same myth. Despite the obviously common elements in all products, the results can be different —just like for the drawings— in terms of focus on a specific segment of the story, or on a specific character (one may prefer to give more space to a minor personage!), in terms of lexicon and style, in terms of mimics during the performance, etc. The children themselves will realize that they should be 'original' if they want them to be noted, and this *good Eris* —to put it with Hesiod (*Works and Days*, 17-25)— will be an input for them to produce varied works, and all of valuable quality.

- *Creative re-writing and its multiple ways*: Creative writing, of course, may take a different form than a dialogic one, and may have a different result than a dramatized reading:

o one might prefer to more internalize the story and thus to rewrite it in the form of a poem/soliloquium;

o others may have a more inquisitive attitudes and the teacher may direct them to re-writing the story in form of a process or debate (with a victim, a 'criminal'/guilty part, a defender and a prosecutor, a judge and a jury —which would be the rest of the audience—. This would also have the advantage to introduce the children to the very basics of the legal system);

o others may have some kind of 'showman/woman' inclination, thus they may be prompted to rewrite the story in the form of an interview, as in a show, with an audience that may intervene, etc.;

o   others may have a more reflective tendency: there might be a group of 'little philosophers' who may discuss among themselves and re-propose the story with another end, arguing the original end and the motivation for the alternative they would propose.

The teacher may thus decide to use all (if not more than) the methodologies listed above for the same myth, from the dramatization to the 'philosophical' reflection activity, dividing the children in groups in a way to try to empower the individual, different skills that each child has. Furthermore, this might give the teacher the chance to introduce the children not only to different style of communication but also to different literary genres, of course adapting the related technical information to the students' age.

It is also evident that in this way teaching and learning myth become a more multidisciplinary activity which may requires the involvement of other educators. Moreover, it would involve the practice of different and varied skills: linguistic, logic, artistic, emotional/intrapersonal, relational/interpersonal. This is consistent with the 'Theory of the Multiple Intelligence' (see above, n. 31). By this expression educators refers to a quite-revolutionary educational strategy that privileges a learning process based on the varied natural talents and competencies of the children. Its pioneer is H. Gardner a psychologist and professor of Education at Harvard University. In his *Frame of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligence* (1983), challenging the standard definition of intelligence as a single, general ability to use language and to reason mathematically or logically, Gardner identified seven mental abilities, springing from other areas of the brain, i.e., the traditional linguistic and logical-mathematical, the visual-spatial, the musical, the bodily-kinesthetic, the interpersonal, and the intrapersonal abilities. The application of this theory to education results in promoting different learning styles each of which may better reflect, be suitable to, and help cultivate the natural and individual talent each child has[52]. It would be a way to not preclude, so to speak, the understanding and appropriation of a subject matter from those who might find easier to approach it through ways other than language and mathematical/logical reasoning. Gardner's theory, its *tout court* applicability, and the potential for being used even in higher education, remain controversial[53]. I came to

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[52] See also H. Gardner, *Multiple Intelligence: The Theory in Practice*, Basic Books, New York, 1993; *Intelligence Reframed. Multiples Intelligence for the 21st. century*, Basic Books, New York, 1999.

[53] See, e.g., H. Gardner, «Multiple Intelligence as a Catalyst», *The English Journal*, 84. 8 (1995) 16-18; P. Smagorinsky, «Multiple Intelligence in the English Class: An overview», *The English Journal*, 84. 8 (1995) 19-26; A. Kezar, «Theory of Multiple Intelligence: Implica-

know about this theory far later, when the children class was over. Yet, some of my objectives, as I have above described, seem to be aligned with some of the concepts that are behind Gardner's theory. Although I share some reservations about the applicability *tout court* of this theory in Education, in that I would think inaccurate to assume that all topics, all subject matters can be approached in all the seven ways the theory supports[54], I however agree with the basic assumption behind the theory: people learn in different ways, and —at least in the early stages— it is important that an educator encourages students to learn and to face the difficulties that a learning process may cause, by going along with all specific skills a person may have. Moreover, above all when it comes to an early stage education, it is important to encourage students and to help them develop as many abilities as possible. I would think that teaching and learning myth may be also approached through the Multiple Intelligence Theory, with some flexibility. In this light, dividing children in groups a teacher may decide, in terms of learning strategies, the following:

1. to use for the same myth:

▪ creative writing (all kinds of methods I listed above, and even more);

▪ art (not only drawing, but also collage);

▪ music (children can be asked either to associate some music/songs to the story or to a specific character —explaining the 'why', or to themselves invent some music that would retell, in form of songs/musical notes, the myth, considering that often children play some instrument)—;

▪ dance (as strange it might sound, dance is one of the fields of Classical Reception, although it is the less common and the less studied[55]);

2. to use for each myth a different strategy (once, the class will be asked to draw; another time, for another myth, to rewrite, etc.).

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tions for Higher Education», *Innovative Higher Education*, 26. 2 (2001) 141-154; J. L. Kincheloe (ed.), *Multiple Intelligence reconsidered*, Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., New York, 2004.
[54] Indeed, Gardner then recognized certain limits and the need of caution in applying the theory: see, e.g., H. Gardner, «Multiple Intelligence as a Catalyst».
[55] Martha Graham (1894-1991) is the best known modern dancer who, understanding the importance of classical myth in our time, transmitted it through her choreographies. *Clytemnestra* (1958), *Alcestis* (1960), and *Phaedra* (1962) are among Graham's choreographies inspired by Classical Antiquity: see M. Graham, *The Notebooks of Martha Graham*, New York, 1973; A. De Mille, *Martha: The Life and Work of Martha Graham*, New York, 1992. A survey on the major choreographers inspired by Greek and Roman themes is in M. P. O. Morford & R. J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford, 2007[8], pp. 775-787.

C. By way of conclusion

The format of the presentation in class by the teacher may vary in accordance with the learning approach the teacher decides to use. It is undoubtedly up to the teacher to find his/her way to structure the class. Mine are simple and still experimental, I would say, tips, with the wish that, together with the pedagogical material I had the chance to mention and discuss here[56], they might be an encouraging starting point. And to encourage others to pursue similar projects, realizing it is worthy to try, I report here *verbatim* what I would call *The Myth of Odysseus and Polyphemus according to Emma, Luke Senior and Sam*[57]. Led by Emma, these three children wonderfully condensed the story, changed some details (namely, how the rock from the cave was removed), and in a very smart way played with the name 'Nobody' and related words-game[58].

Emma-Narrator: Odysseus and his men were on their way home after a 10-year war a long way from far away. They had forgotten who they were and been turned into pigs, and they were not looking for repeats of that. So when they saw an island full of sheep and goats, you could not blame them for stopping on the lush island. Unfortunately, they didn't know that this was Cyclopes territory, and it was a bad idea to stay there.

Luke Senior-Odysseus: Hark! A pleasant place to eat and sleep, yo!

Emma-Narrator: So they grabbed some wine from the ship, and walked to the island and grabbed as much food as they could, and ran into a cave.

Luke Senior-Odysseus: This is great, yo!

Emma-Narrator: They had been too busy stuffing their pie-holes with food to notice the Cyclops Polyphemus walk into the cave and roll a heavy rock in the doorway, sealing the only exit.

Sam-Polyphemus: (grunting sounds) Oooh! Yummy, yummy Homo sapiens.

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[56] For those who are interested in a 'multiple approach' strategy to myth (or in general to any subject matter), I would suggest to deeply read all works by Gardner quoted in the above notes and in bibliography. The book of 1999 offers a series of Appendices, two of which (*Appendix* B and C) might be very helpful to educators since they contain bibliographical indication of other works concerned with the theory; many of them refer to the application of the theory in classroom (*Appendix* B), and contain a list of related videos and other instructional material (*Appendix* C).

[57] I did not change any word and any grammatical construction, although it is quite well written, considering their age. Of course, on a second stage a teacher might ask to refine the draft, and/or might build on it some drills, to help develop writing skills.

[58] For instance, I found very smart and effective the sentence «If Nobody is killing you, why are you dying?».

Emma-Narrator: Polyphemus looked at all the «Homo sapiens» and selected two, which he quickly devoured. Quickly thinking, Odysseus said . . .

Luke Senior-Odysseus: Oh, uh, um, er, Mr. Cyclops, sir, uh, um, here's some classic Dionysus-made wine. You can, er, have it if you, er, eat me last. My name is Nobody.

Sam-Polyphemus: Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaa. Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaa. Wiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiine!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Thank you, Nobody!

Emma-Narrator: So Odysseus handed over the wine. The Cyclops soon passed out, and the men and Odysseus carried out the Grand Plan.

Luke Senior-Odysseus: Okay, men. This is the Grand Plan. Sharpen a stick. Poke Poly-One-Eye in his, well, one eye. Got It? Good.

Emma-Narrator: So while poor, defenseless Polyphemus slept, Odysseus and his men poked the monster in the eye. Polyphemus started screaming, and soon a Cyclops buddy came running to the door and pushed the rock away. This gave Odysseus and his men a chance to escape on the bellies of the sheep.

(One chosen from the audience) Random Cyclops: Polyphemus! What has happened?

Sam-Polyphemus: Nobody is killing me!!!

Random Cyclops: Why do you mock us, Polyphemus? If Nobody is killing you, why are you dying?

Sam-Polyphemus: But there he is! There is Nobody!

Emma-Narrator: The Cyclops pointed to where Odysseus and his men had started running to their ship.

Sam-Polyphemus: You come back here, Nobody!

Luke Senior-Odysseus: My name is not Nobody! I am Odysseus, brave hero of the Trojan War! Mwah ha-ha.

Sam-Polyphemus: Oh, father Poseidon, curse mean Odysseus. Please father!

Emma-Narrator: And that is why Odysseus had so much trouble on his way home.

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APPENDIX I

Sample of a typical class

Here is a sample of the chart I gave at the beginning of each class, and of the Power-point presentation. It is about the class that we devoted to the myth of «Athena and Arachne». Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6. 1-145 has been the source for the story itself and for the conversations I built on it. As to the Power-point, the printed copy I report here cannot, obviously, reproduce some specific visual effects I could create through the 'Custom Animation' Menu. Suffice it to know that I often enter in sequence the images filling one slide —instead of presenting them at once, contemporaneously—. When it came to the dramatization, still using the 'sequence' criterion, first the picture of the character with both its name and the proper name of the child-actor (so that the children were 'alerted') appeared on the screen; second the vignette-shape in blank, and third the script filling the vignette (it all took, altogether, a couple of minutes). After that the selected child-actor, each at time, stood up and started reading, thus dramatizing the story. When there were long parts to say, I had to have them pause, as one normally would do while speaking. I could do this simply breaking the long part in subsequent segments. As one may realize from the first slides of the Power-point, I also cared always to first recall some concepts previously learned, concepts that would matter for the myth that was to follow.

Sample of a chart

The myth of Athena and Arachne

Αθηνη and Αραχνη

Table of Main Characters

Αθηνη = **Athena:** the owl-eyed goddess, the smartest goddess, the warrior goddess, daughter of Zeus, protector of female, domestic activities, like spinning and weaving, goddess of art (in this story she appears also disguised as an old lady).

Αραχνη = **Arachne**: a young girl very skillful in spinning and weaving, who was then transformed into a spider.

Νυμφες = **Nymphs:** beautiful, gentle girls, lesser divinities who inhabited the streams, lakes, forests and mountains (in the story they appear as companions of Arachne).

***

A few new words and ideas

Arachnids: scientific terms describing the spiders (from Greek αραχνη = spider).

Arachnophobia: fear of spiders (from Greek: αραχνη = spider + φοβια = fear).

Sample of a Power-Point[59]
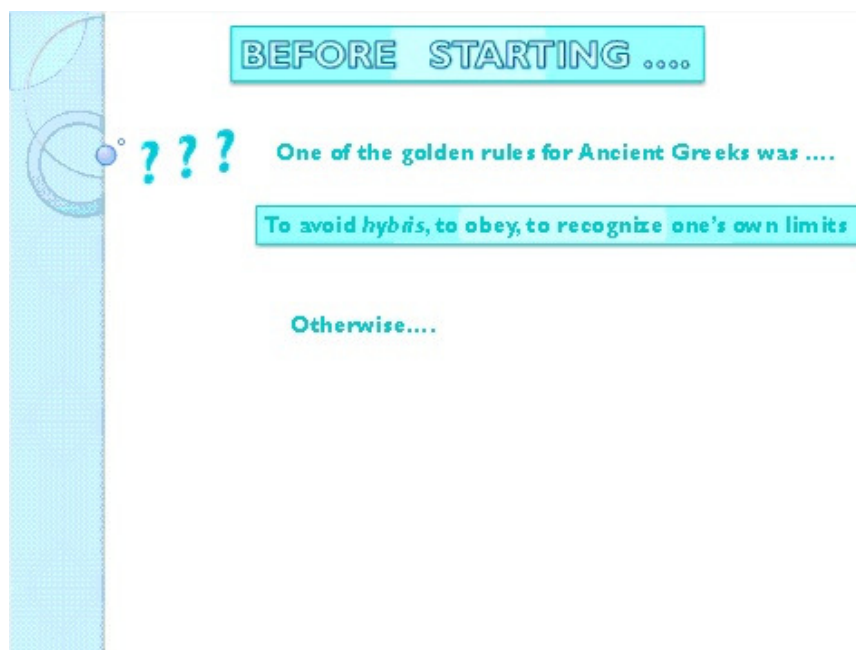
Note: Here, and elsewhere, for instance, I presented the lines slowly subsequently, waiting also for their answer. Then I showed the image of a thunderstorm (sign of an upset Zeus, standing for any god upset because of human hybris) which you see in the second slide below. And finally we started (slide 3).

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[59] Most of notes under the slides are meant to show how I used and adapted (still keeping the original meaning) the ancient text that serves as a fundamental source for this myth, i.e., Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6. 1 ff.

Note: See Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6. 7-13 about Arachne's family origin *de plebe* and her *domus parva*.

Note: See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6. 14-15.
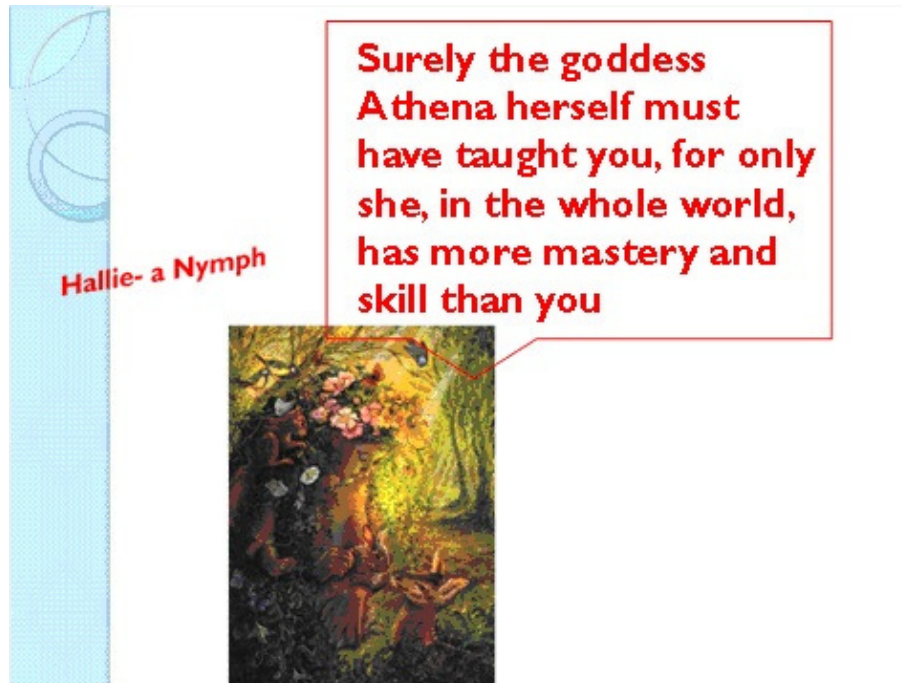
Note: 'Adaptation' of Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6. 23. Hallie was the child playing this role. As I said above, I always added the child-actor's name to that of the character when appearing on the screen.
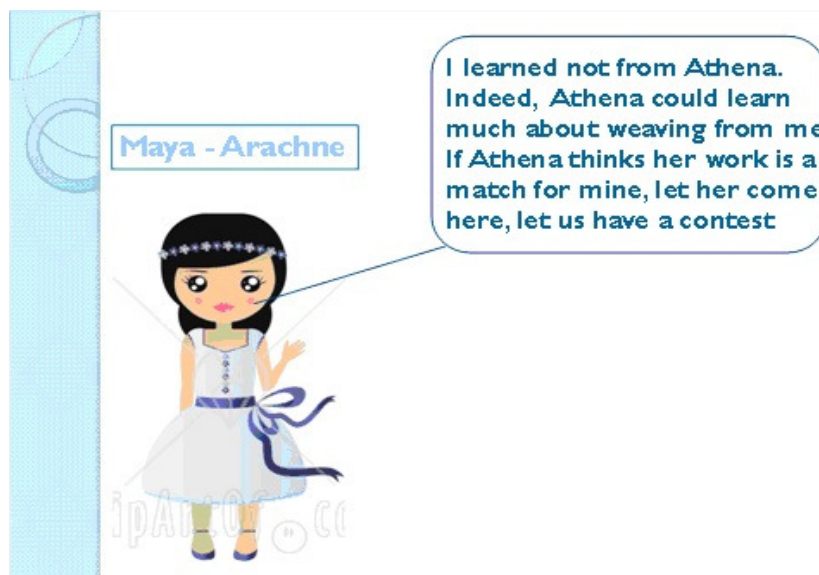
Note: See Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6. 24-25 (with some 'adaptations').
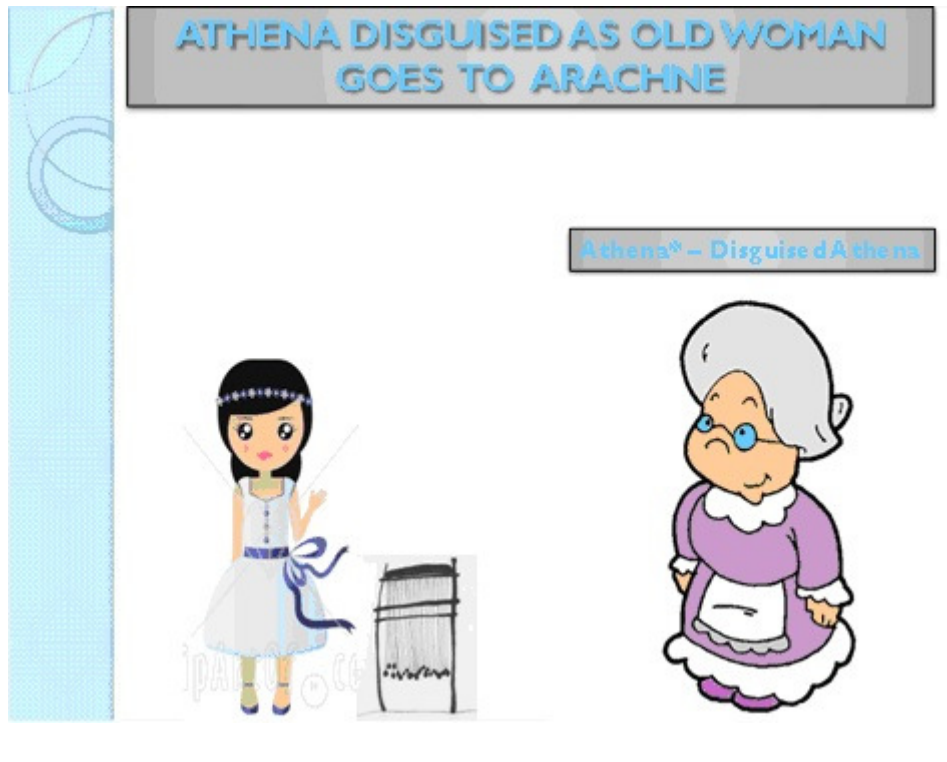
Note: See Ovid, *metamorphoses* **6. 28-30 (with also the mention of the experience).**

Note: See Ovid, *metamorphoses* 6. 33.

Note: See Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6. 34-44a (with some 'adaptations').
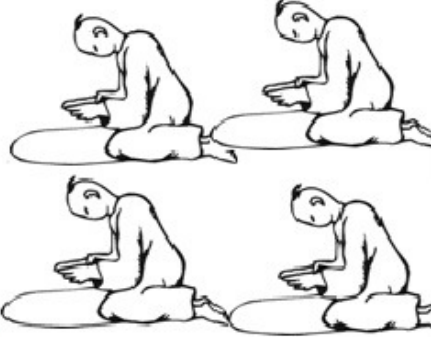
Note: For instance, here, using the 'Animation Custom' Menu, I actually showed the image of Athena Parthenos while the Athena disguised as the old lady was pronouncing the words written in the above vignette. For the 'veneration' dem-

onstration, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6. 44b-45 (although I used other figures than the nymphs).
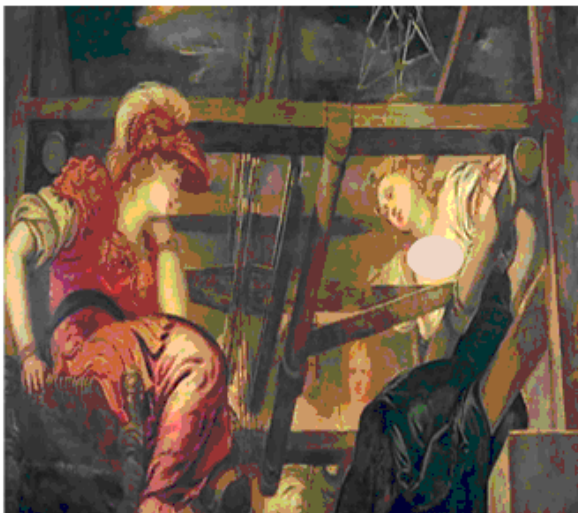
Note: This is an 'adaptation, with emphasis' of the boldness of Arachne. The Bold and Underlined was a known clue for the children about where to emphasize their voice, try to assume other tones, etc.
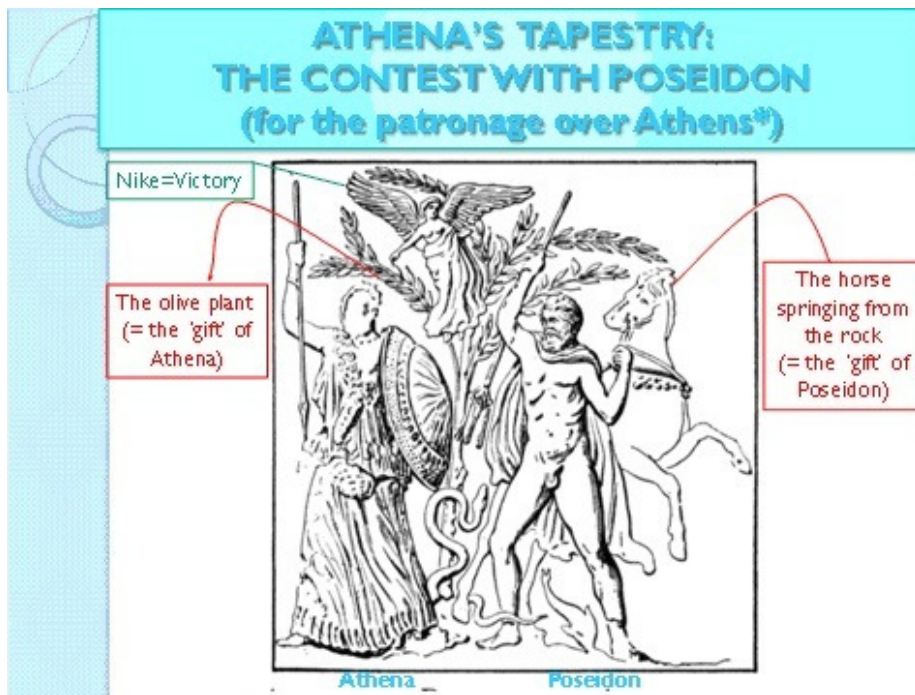
Note: While telling this segment of the story, I took the opportunity to remind the myth of the contest with Poseidon and I called the attention of the children to the basic components of that myth, which appear in the slide.
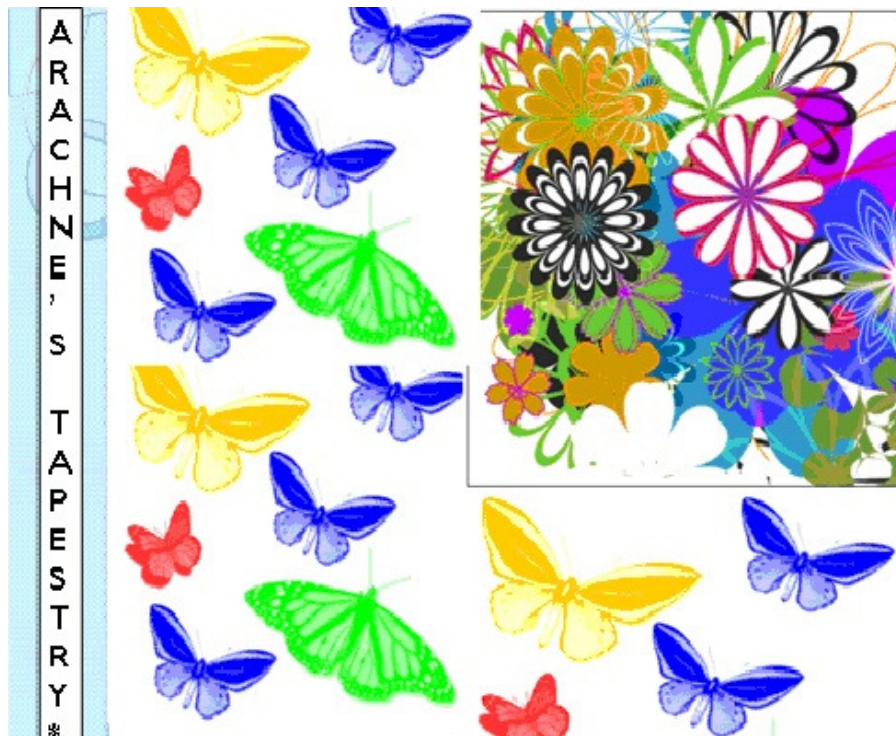
Note: Here I freely varied from Ovid not simply for the difficulty to find the exact images of Arachne's tapestry as described in Ovid, but, and foremost, for the not complete appropriateness for children of most of the mythic contents of Arachne's web. I preserved the general tone of the original, i.e. the marvelous quality of Arachne's work, which I thought to represent through colorful images.

Note: See Ovid, *Metamorphoses* **3. 129-131.**

Note: See Ovid, *Metamorphoses* **6. 131-145.**

Note: As I said above, with this slide I really asked them to think about the meaning, and I waited for their answers. Each of them had the chance to express her/his thought which was usually right. After that, just to confirm their thoughts I showed the slide with the answer(s).

CORRECT !!!

1. Avoid Hybris, respect the Gods.

2. Make a good use of your talent

3. Do not boast

NEW WORDS FROM MYTHS.....

Arachnids = scientific term for spider

Arachnophobia

Fear   of   spiders

APPENDIX 2

Sample of the children's drawings

and a few final remarks from the children

Overall I collected about eighty drawings. All of them are valuable and each of them would deserve an analysis to do justice to their rethinking, and their re-elaboration of the myth. Of course I cannot report here all of them and as many as I would like. I'll report a few of them among which some related to the same myth showing how different the reactions of the children could be. I shall comment each of them and add a *Legenda* where I report the words the children wrote in their drawings, in case they are not completely intelligible in the printed format. A few remarks from some children about the class will conclude this Appendix.

- *On the same myth*

- Emma and Hallie on «Athena and Arachne»:

Both of them caught the final segment of the story, when Athena punished the girl. While Emma, however, seems to emphasize, in a funny way, the boldness / *hybris* of Arachne until the very end (she dares tell Athena to wait to transform her into a spider!), Hallie emphasizes the anger of Athena and the severity of her punishment to a point to change the end and make Athena even kill the spider!

Emma's drawing: (Legenda): «Go away, Athena. I'm weaving! I'll turn into a spider later!»

Hallie' s drawing: (Legenda) «Yahoo. I killed that dumb spider!»

• Maya and Leah on «Demeter and Persephone»:

Maya represents several phases of the story expressing different emotional 'tones': a desperate, yet almost humoristic (see the word 'dude') Persephone asking help; an insensitive Hades who behaves as if she should be happy (in the end she is the queen, now); a sad mother, Demeter, whose 'depression' affects the nature and is rendered through the tree that loses its leaves, a dry flower and sad sun, as all dying and crying together with Demeter, who is solicited to stop her 'strike' (= the madness) by the messenger Iris. This is a hint to the 'happy end'.

(Legenda) Iris: «Stop this madness». Persephone: «Help! Help! Some dude took me, Help!». Hades (Dead): «Welcome! You are queen now».

Persephone and Demeter / Περσεφoνη and Δημητηρ

Maya/Nora

Leah seems to be more introspective with reference to the main victim: Persephone. She focuses on her sadness and loneliness, Hades is not insensitive, for Leah, just he does not understand.

(Legenda) Hades: «Why do you cry?»

Persephone
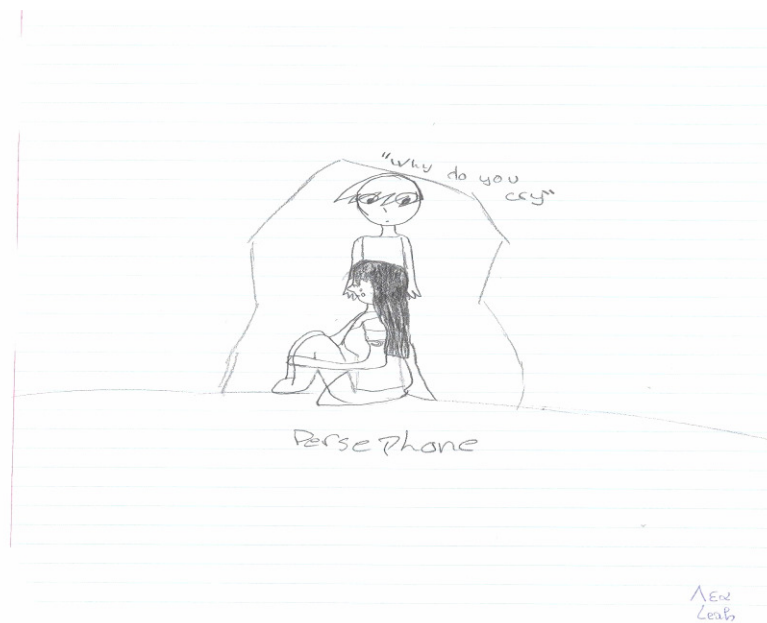
A Few other drawings on different myths

Luke Junior: the very first drawing I asked was that of a god or goddess each child would like to be. Luke would like to be Poseidon. Note how he represented the power of Poseidon to provoke storms and thus shipwrecks (but Luke seems also optimistic, making some people survive!)

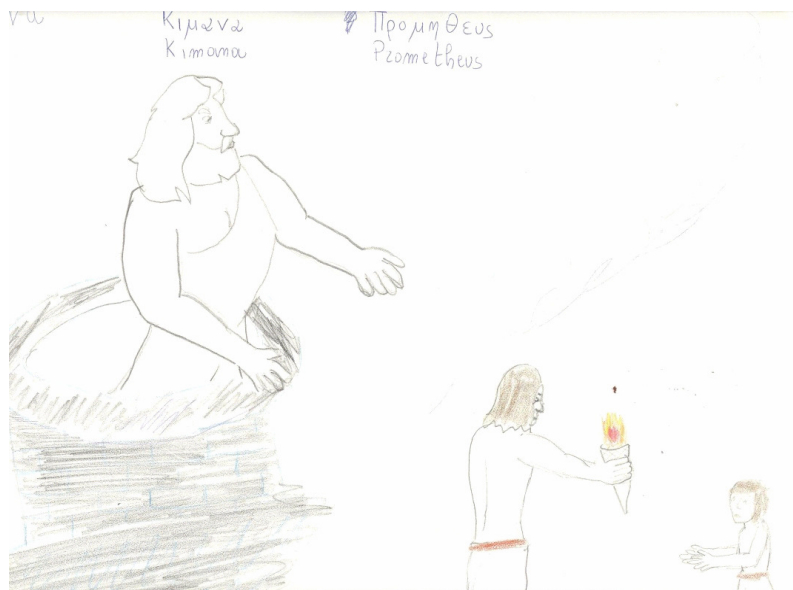(Legenda) «I would like to be Poseidon because I could swim and I love to swim».

Luke Senior on Polyphemus: he definitely likes Odysseus's device of blinding the Cyclops. Note also the difference in size between the Cyclops and Odysseus and his men.

Athena on the myth of Eros and Psyche: she portrayed the 'fatal' moment of the violation by Psyche of the promise made to the 'unknown' lover. The child caught this as the most important part of the story. Note how 'eloquently' she represents Eros / Cupid sleeping (zzzzz)

Kimana on the myth of Prometheus: it is interesting the way she emphasized the hierarchy among the characters involved: Zeus is the 'biggest' one (and pretty upset), then Prometheus and final a human being. It is interesting how 'more human' she made Prometheus to express his closeness to men.

A few remarks from some children

Adison: «I like the whole thing and learned a lot of new myths. The lessons that most I liked was that of Athena and Arachne».

Emma: «I would like to say how learning myths helps relate to figures of speech people use; and it also showed how cool the ways people thought, before we studied science».

Kimana: «The class was fun and I learned many things I didn't know before. I made some new friends, and had an experience that I really enjoyed a lot. I learned a lot about Greek mythology and the words that come from it and how the Greeks explained the world. I was glad I went to the class».

Luke Senior: «The Trojan Horse is the myth I most liked. It's cool to attack from the inside. Athena and Arachne is the least I liked. It's too girly».

Luke Junior: «What was most funny was the screen showing us 'snack time'. What was most interesting was drawing the pictures. Among new things I learned is that Hercules in Greek was Herakles and that was the son of Zeus, and how to write my name in Greek. I liked most Odysseus and Polyphemus because it has a Cyclops in it. The least I liked was Demeter and Persephone, because it was too long. And I also really enjoyed being able to draw pictures of minotaurs and centaurs and all those other mythical creatures. I really hope Rosanna does the class again because I'd like to be in it».

Maya: «I liked both the myths and snack. I think it's funny that the gods like to turn people into animals. Demeter and Persephone is the myth I most liked because it explains the seasons. I also loved drawing pictures of the myths and learning how to write my name in Greek, that was really fun for me. I'm really glad I got to be in the class».

Sam: «What I liked about the Greek Mythology class was learning about Greek myths that I hadn't learned about, for example, Odysseus and Polyphemus. Everyone in class was so nice - this created an enjoyable atmosphere».