UDL: Before and After

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This lesson is part of a larger sixth grade unit on heroes and heroines in literature that focuses on the book *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightening Thief* by Rick Riordan (Hyperion, 2006). The lesson will introduce the idea of a hero’s journey (Campbell, 1949), where the hero leaves what appears to be a normal life to interact with supernatural beings, then overcomes a series of challenges, and finally returns home as a changed person. In a story that is a modern remix of Homer’s Odyssey, Percy Jackson is a struggling student with learning disabilities who learns that he is a demi-god and is thrust into an adventure that will require collaboration with friends in order to retrieve Zeus’ lost thunderbolt and stop a war between the gods of Olympus.

This lesson will address these standards.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/6/1/)  
Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/6/2/)  
Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/6/3/)  
Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

Before the Application of UDL Principles

The lesson will be introduced with the questions: “What is a hero or heroine?” and “What are the qualities of a hero/heroine?” and “Who were the first heroes in history?” Homer’s Odyssey will be described and the class will plot Odysseus’s “Hero Journey” and discuss what made him an enduring heroic character. In order to appreciate the supernatural forces at play in Odysseus’s story, the class will recreate the pantheon of Greek gods. The learning activity is to have students pair up to research each of the 12 gods (assuming a class size of about 24). The pairs create a Fakebook “profile” <http://www.classtools.net/FB/home-page> for each god. The profile is shared with the class and posted on a bulletin board. To conclude, the teacher directs a discussion of the relationships of the gods to Odysseus and the student’s reflections on what they have learned.

The goal of this exercise is to prepare the students for the references to Greek mythology in the book and give them a general understanding of the Odyssey as a basis for comparison with Percy’s adventure.

After the Application of UDL Principles

Applying the principles of UDL, this lesson would be modified in a number of ways.

* The book would be available as an eBook where font size, brightness, and background color can be adjusted for those with visual impairment. *Whispersync* is an additional Kindle tool that adds a voice-over narration for students who have difficulty reading.
* The story of the Odyssey can be provided in ways other than oral retelling by the teacher
  + Print summary <http://www.ducksters.com/history/ancient_greece/odyssey.php>
  + Video summary <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCXRxD85Xc0>

Once the students have researched the pantheon, twelve students can be selected to dress up in character as the gods. Each one will be asked questions by the remaining students regarding their character and their relationship with Odysseus. If individual students are uncomfortable speaking in front of the class, they may have the option to pre-record their Q &A and to present it to the class as a video. A group photo can be posted to the school’s website. Have the students vote on the best costume (reflecting research and team effort) and award a prize – a wreath of artificial leaves. To conclude, the teacher directs a discussion of the relationships of the gods to Odysseus and the student’s reflections on what they have learned. As an alternative, the students can tweet their responses to the teacher, who will have the Twitter feed posted on the SMART Board at the front of the class.

Assessment

The teacher would assess student work on the basis of

1. Choice of elements in the costume and the degree to which the costume reflects the research on the character,
2. Ability of the students to generate authentic questions about the characters and their relationship with Odysseus,
3. Ability of the students in character to correctly answer questions.

The following UDL Guidelines are addressed in this lesson:

Principle I. Provide Multiple Means of Representation

Guideline 1: Provide options for perception *(Offering options to modify text online or use narration)*

Checkpoint 1.1 – Offer ways of customizing the display of information

Checkpoint 1.3 – Offer alternatives for visual information

*(Using video as an alternative to text.)*

Guideline 3. Provide options for comprehension

Checkpoint 3.3 – Guide information processing, visualization, and manipulation

* Provide multiple entry points to a lesson (e.g. exploring big ideas through dramatics works, arts and literature, film and media)

*(Dramatizing the Pantheon and simulating a discussion with the gods)*

Principle II. Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression

Guideline 4: Provide options for physical action

Guideline 5: Use multiple media for communication

Checkpoint 5.1: Use multiple media for communication

*(Dramatizing the Pantheon and simulating a discussion with the gods)*

*(Using video as an alternative to text.)*

Principle III. Provide Multiple Means of Engagement

Guideline 9: Provide options for self-regulation

Checkpoint 9.3 – Develop self-assessment and reflection

*(Students voting on the best costume and presentation; students reflecting via Twitter)*

References

Campbell, J. (2008). *The hero with a thousand faces.* Novato, CA: New World Library.