

# GREEKING OUT

INSTANT  
NEW YORK  
TIMES  
BEST SELLER

KENNY  
CURTIS  
&  
JILLIAN  
HUGHES

ILLUSTRATED  
BY J. ESPILA

Epic Retellings of  
Classic Greek Myths  
AN OFFICIAL PODCAST TIE-IN



# GREEKING OUT

## EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

### About the Books

From the creators of the National Geographic Kids' wildly successful *Greeking Out* podcast, this lively tie-in book delivers a clever tongue-in-cheek retelling of twenty classic Greek myths.

#### **GREEKING OUT**

This kid-friendly collection of Greek myths showcases familiar favorites from the well-loved *Greeking Out* podcast, as well as brand-new, never-before-aired stories. Join Persephone on her journey through the mystifying depths of the Underworld. Venture onward with Heracles as he tackles his twelve death-defying labors. And join mythological figures you may not have heard of before, including scheming gods and goddesses, honorable—and not so honorable—heroes, and magnificent monsters.



Dynamic, playful illustrations coupled with laugh-out-loud storytelling and real information about ancient Greece—delivered by the all-knowing Oracle of Wi-Fi—make this collection of fabulous fables a fresh addition to any mythology-lover's library.

#### **GREEKING OUT HEROES AND OLYMPIANS**

Want to know the greatest feats and the funniest secrets of the gods and heroes of Greek mythology? You're in the right place. Told in the hilarious, kid-friendly voice that's sent the *Greeking Out* podcast to the top of the charts, these stories of heroic victories, perilous adventures, and plain-old mischief are sure to delight kids and adults alike. Plus, fans of the Percy Jackson series will love discovering the real myths behind their favorite (and least favorite) characters.

In this book, you'll encounter a god kidnapped by pirates, sheep used as camouflage, a super-shiny fleece, some dangerous metalworking, the world's most perfect animal, a really heavy boulder, and much more.



Dynamic, playful illustrations coupled with laugh-out-loud storytelling and real information about ancient Greece—delivered by the all-knowing Oracle of Wi-Fi—make this collection of fabulous fables an essential addition to any mythology-lover's library.



## About the Authors/Illustrator

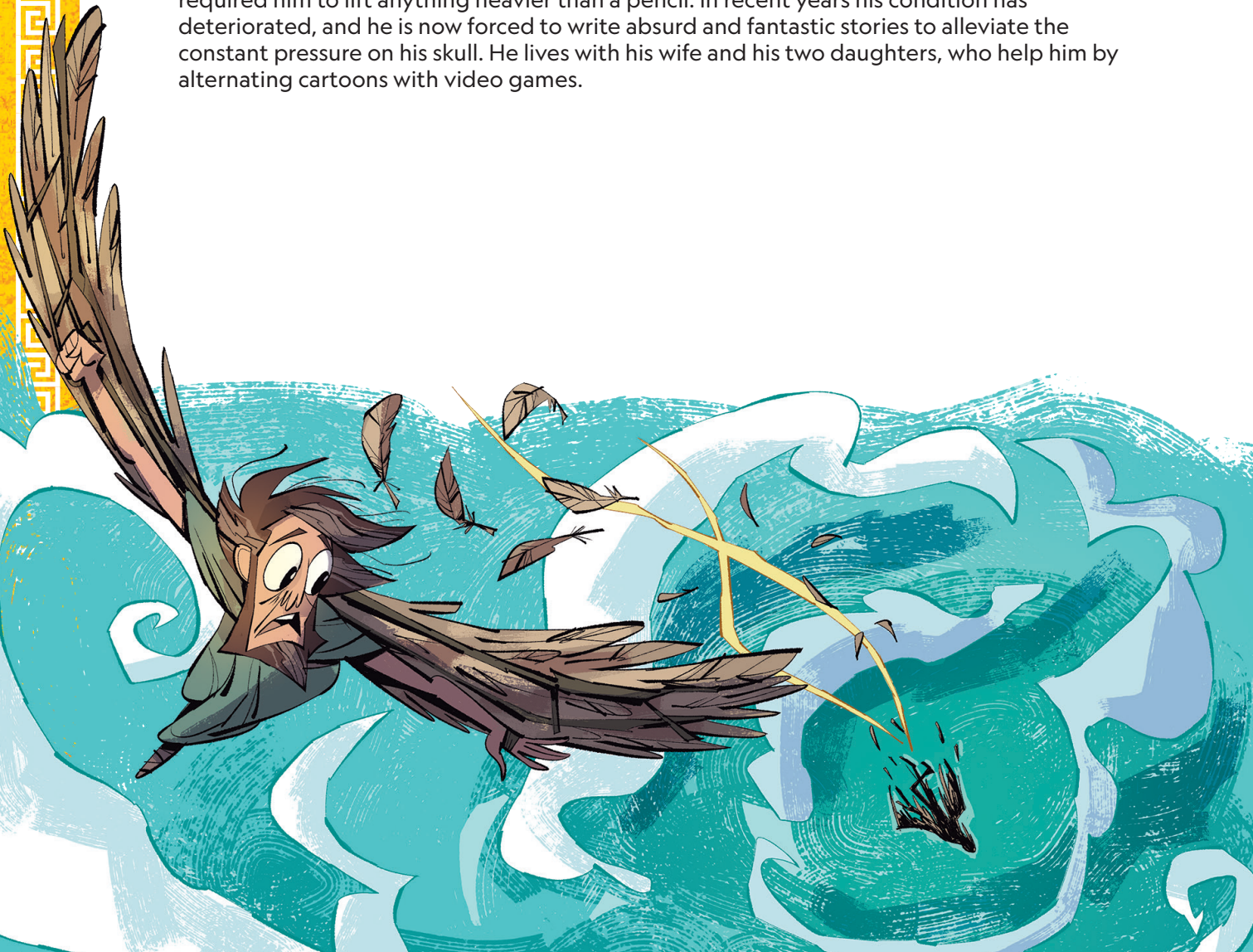


**KENNY CURTIS** has spent more than thirty years in children's programming as a performer, writer, and producer. He is one of the creators of National Geographic Kids' *Greeking Out* podcast series, which he hosts and cowrites alongside his daughter, Jillian Hughes. Together, Kenny and Jillian have helped develop a number of well-known kids' content offerings for partners and platforms like Pinna, Tinkercast, Kidz Bop, and 8 Pound Gorilla Records. But Kenny may be best known as the human behind the long-running radio program *The Animal Farm Show* on SiriusXM's original family music channel Kids Place Live.



**JILLIAN HUGHES** is a professional writer with a heart for the kids and family industry. She's a writer for National Geographic Kids' *Greeking Out* podcast series and has contributed to other platforms, including Pinna, Tinkercast, and iHeart. She also works as a copywriter, crafting marketing collateral for numerous industries. While she enjoys working with all her clients, she is especially partial toward collaborating with Kenny—who just happens to be her dad.

**JAVIER ESPILA** is a Spanish illustrator who has been devouring cartoons ever since he was old enough to sit upright in front of the TV. This had the unfortunate consequence of causing serious inflammation of the brain, rendering him unsuitable for any job that required him to lift anything heavier than a pencil. In recent years his condition has deteriorated, and he is now forced to write absurd and fantastic stories to alleviate the constant pressure on his skull. He lives with his wife and his two daughters, who help him by alternating cartoons with video games.



## Explore *Greeking Out* Books (*Greeking Out* & *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians*) Through Class Discussions

The following questions may be utilized as a framework for discussing the myths offered in *Greeking Out* and *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians* and may be adapted for specific story analysis.

- From your reading of the *Greeking Out* books, which myths are your favorites? What was it about these stories that you like best, and why?
- *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians* shares that “Unlike some classic fables and fairy tales, Greek myths don’t always have a clear ‘moral’ or a happy ending.” Why is that important, and what can be learned from these complex stories?
- What are your takeaways about the relationships between the characters featured in the specific myths you read?
- Given what you’ve observed in your reading of *Greeking Out* and *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians*, what roles do objects play for these characters? Why are things like Zeus’s thunderbolt or Poseidon’s trident important to these gods and symbolically important to other characters and readers?
- What role does the setting have in the myths you chose to read? Do you believe the story would change in any profound ways if it took place anywhere else? Are there ways in which the setting impacts the characters or the tone of the story?
- Are there ways you can see yourself being like any characters in the myths you read? If so, in what ways? If you can’t, in what ways are you different?
- Choose a specific myth. How would you describe your chosen myth’s conflict? What actions or events lead to a resolution of the conflict?
- Does the myth’s resolution help you better understand something about the human condition or our natural world? If so, in what ways?
- What are the personality traits of each of the characters in this myth? How do those traits affect them? What is it these characters desire? Do they struggle in any way, and are there any consequences for their desires?
- How do each of the characters in your chosen myth view themselves? Is this similar or different from how others see them? If so, in what ways?
- As a reader, what do you think of the choices made by the Greek myth’s cast of characters as portrayed in *Greeking Out* or *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians*?
- What do you believe motivates these individual characters? Specifically, from your perspective, what is important to them, and why?
- What are the biggest takeaways or lessons you learned from the classic Greek myths in *Greeking Out* and *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians*?



## Extend the Learning: Extension Activities

If there's anything we can learn from Greek mythology, it's this: No matter who the story is about, these epic immortals and heroes sometimes behave in a remarkably human way. And not always in a good human way, either! Sure, these are stories of greatness and adventure, but they also feature tons of mistakes, poor choices, and inappropriate behavior. In *Greeking Out* and *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians*, the Greek deities, their complicated relationships, and the situations in which they find themselves provide students opportunities to dig more deeply into Greek mythology. Use a selection of the following extension activities to support and foster further learning to expand the reading experience of *Greeking Out* and *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians*.

### **Student Exercise:** Job Opening: Apply to Be a God Today!

In *Greeking Out* and *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians*, readers witness the ways that gods, demigods, and heroes struggle against each other, sometimes to the point of exhaustion. Tell students their favorite mythological character has just retired. Zeus, the father of the gods, is now accepting applications for a replacement. Ask them to write letters of application and a brief résumé or biographical sketch. After all "applications" have been submitted, ask readers to volunteer to review them and select favorites to be presented to the group.

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### **Student Exercise:** Letter of Support

In *Greeking Out* and *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians*, readers see that many Greek characters struggle and even suffer, no matter who they are. Ask students to assume the role of the "best friend" of a mythological character of their choice featured in the books and write a letter offering support, encouragement, or guidance for a task or quest the character hopes to accomplish. Be sure the student explains what they think the character can do and, if they want in on the adventure, include themselves in their "friend's" plans. As an added teachable option, develop a brief lesson or have students personally research the differences between formal and informal letters or emails.

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### **Student Exercise:** Gift Giving

Have students select five or more gifts that would be perfect to give to one of the gods or goddesses in *Greeking Out* and *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians*; while these gifts can be tangible or intangible, they should be things that the character would really want or need. Be sure that for each gift, an explanation for why the gift is appropriate is attached.



### **Student Exercise: Design a *Greeking Out* Board Game**

The *Greeking Out* books provide students with an ideal opportunity to put their imaginations to work. Allow them to use their expertise and enthusiasm to create a board game based on the famous adventures of the Greek heroes and heroines featured in the two volumes. Allow students to choose a favorite story from *Greeking Out* and *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians* and note the details they wish to include in the game. While there are many stories, recommend those that are rich in detail and adventure, including Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece, the Labors of Heracles, or Odysseus and the Cyclops. Students should write a rule book, then design and produce the necessary accessories: a board, cards, dice, spinners, etc. Invite your students to exchange their games and provide feedback to each other on the ease of use and playability of their creations.

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### **Student Exercise: Family Tree**

Have your students pick a favorite character from the *Greeking Out* books and create a "family tree" based on the information they learn in the stories and from other resources they can find about the various gods, goddesses, and heroes who have passed through their character's life. Family trees can be illustrated with pictures and accompanied by short summaries of each family member's importance in the character's life.

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### **Student Exercise: Where's the Fun in Dysfunction? Greek God Family Dynamics**

One hallmark of Greek mythology showcased throughout the *Greeking Out* series is the impact of complicated families, and often how their dysfunction even affects those outside of the immediate units. Have readers select one of the stories that spotlights a family dynamic and analyze the relationships within that family. Ask them the following: Based on interactions between family members and their outcomes, would you consider the relationships to be positive or troubled? Do you see any evidence of positive family dynamics? After an opportunity for further examination of what you've discovered, draft a brief summary of your findings.

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### **Teacher-Led Exercise: Character "To Do" List**

Remind students that, like us, literary characters have tasks they need to complete. Have students select a deity of their choice from *Greeking Out* and *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians*, then create a list of the most important tasks at hand for that character with explanations as to why those tasks are so necessary.



## Student Exercise: Say What? Connect Yourself with Famous Greek Expressions

Ever wonder where some of our everyday sayings come from? Many of them actually originated in stories from Greek mythology. Ancient Greece may have been a long time ago, but these expressions are still going strong.

Instruct students to select one of the following sayings featured in *Greeking Out* (examples and explanations provided on pages 24–25):

- “Achilles’ Heel”
- “Open a Pandora’s box”
- “Caught between a rock and a hard place”
- “A Herculean task”

After making their selections, students should share a reflection on a time when one of these Greek-inspired modern sayings could be applied to something that’s happened in their own life or to someone they know (being sure to change the name to safeguard their identity).

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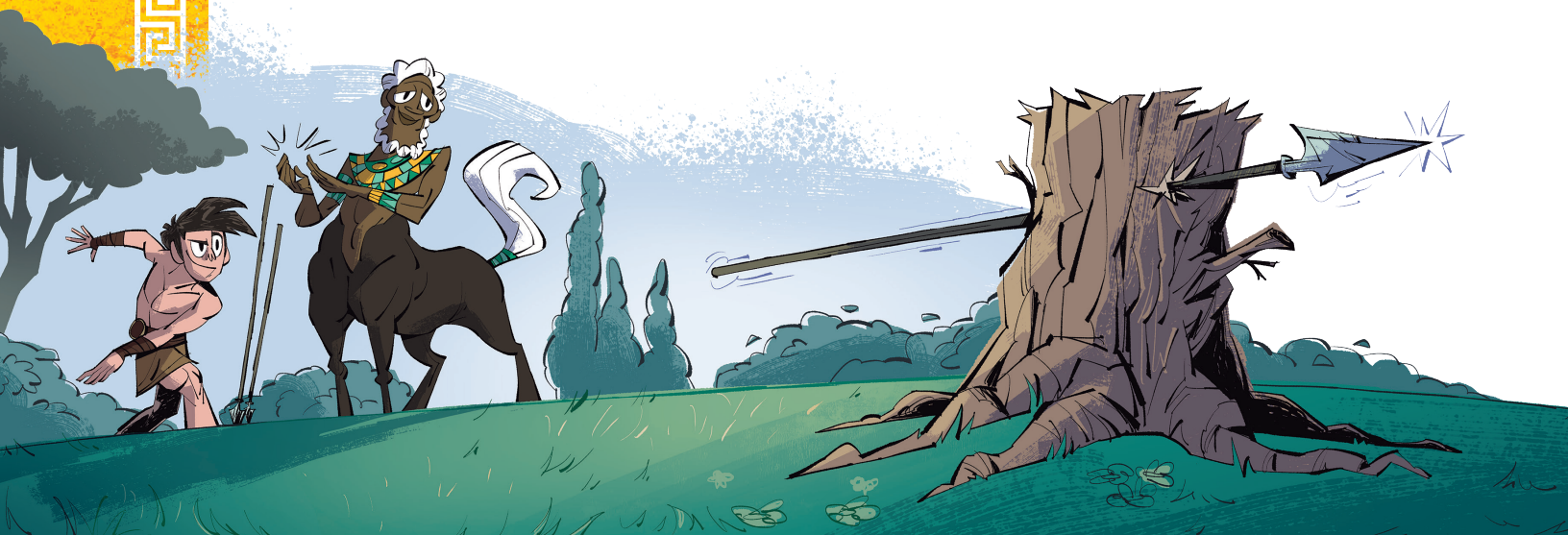
## Language Scavenger Hunt: Greek Is EVERYWHERE!

Remind readers that Greek mythology’s influence is evident in our daily language. Working as a team, ask your readers to research modern phrases that come from Greek myths or ancient Greece. For instance, remind them what it means to have an “Achilles’ heel.” The team that finds and collects the most modern words or phrases directly influenced by Greek mythology wins!

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## Student Exercise: What’s in the Moon?

Almost every culture in the world has a myth explaining the origin and purpose of the moon. In “The Moon Falls in Love,” readers discover the story of Selene as the Greeks’ interpretation of the magic and mystery of this shining orb in their sky. Using library and internet resources, guide students to select another world mythology and culture and research their explanations of the origin and purpose of the moon. After their research is complete, instruct them to use a presentation tool of choice to showcase the version they discovered.





### Student Exercise: Guide to the Greeks!

These books are filled with lots of names—and whether they're gods, goddesses, monsters, magical creatures, or a bunch of giants, it's common to forget who somebody is (or have a tough time pronouncing those pesky giants' names). Pages 174 and 175 of the *Greeking Out* and *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians* books offer a handy-dandy (approved by the Oracle of Wi-Fi) guide to places, characters, and terms in these tales.

Using the guide, instruct students to select a god, goddess, monster, magical creature, or giant and do a research deep dive to discover more about their selected character, being sure to use additional library and internet resources to discover the following:

- a physical description
- their relationship to other important Greek characters
- explanations of any significant connections to other mythological figures
- any other important information (such as special abilities or powers)

Have students prepare a digital exhibit with a poster or slide show designed to inform others about their mythological figure as a means of creating more background knowledge to support readers of *Greeking Out*.

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### Teacher-Led Exercise: Some Gods are Underdogs!

Though *Greeking Out* and *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians* highlight a number of important figures of Greek mythology, the history of the Greek gods extends beyond Zeus and his family.

Divide your students into pairs and have them research and develop a biographical presentation of a lesser-known deity from Greek mythology.

Have them fill out the following facts about their chosen deity, then take turns presenting their findings on the following information for their selected god:

- Name of god
  - Origin of god
  - What they're known for
  - Little-known fact
  - Who they're related to
- 

### Teacher-Led Exercise: Greek Gods Wanna Connect 2!

Though the stories of the major players in *Greeking Out* and *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians* have been passed down to us from ancient Greece, if these characters lived in our time, they would likely use the same social media platforms that are popular today. After putting your students in small groups, ask them to select a Greek god or goddess and create a faux social media page for that character, being sure to include all the pertinent information, like education, relationships, groups they follow, pages they like, as well as 2-3 status updates with #hashtags.



### Teacher-Led Exercise: Connecting with Comics

Putting your students in small groups, have them select a favorite scene from a myth featured in *Greeking Out* or *Greeking Out Heroes and Olympians* and illustrate a comic for that myth. Be sure to provide art supplies like strip paper, markers, and colored pencils. Alternatively, let them use tablets or computers to access a digital comic strip creator (<https://www.storyboardthat.com/comic-maker> and <https://www.canva.com/create/comic-strips/> are good options). After they finish, let them share their stories and display them to the class.

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### Teacher-Led Exercise: Craft a Creation Myth

One of the hallmarks of Greek myths is how they were often used to explain natural phenomena. Challenge students to create an original myth to explain some natural phenomenon or land formation, such as the origin of hurricanes or how a mountain range was created. Put students in small groups and use the following points to guide their creation of an original myth.

- The story must involve at least two Olympian gods or goddesses but should not be limited to just these two.
- The original myth must explain a natural phenomenon or a geological feature (a sea, polar ice cap, mountain range, etc.).
- The story should include details about the Greek gods and goddesses and should show the student's understanding of their powers, symbols, and personalities.





This guide was created by Dr. Rose Brock, an associate professor in the Department of Library Science and Technology in the College of Education at Sam Houston State University. Dr. Brock holds a PhD in Library Science, specializing in children's and young adult literature.



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