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MYTHS OF ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME IN DIDACTICS

MYTHEN DES ANTIKEN GRIECHENLANDS UND ROMS IN DIDAKTIK

Der Artikel wirft die Frage auf, wie es möglich ist, eine breite Palette von Informationen über die Mythen und Legenden der Griechen und Römer während der Lateinunterricht zu präsentieren. Als ein Beispiel dafür wird die Unterricht über die olympischen Göttern genommen. Diese Lektion wird als ein Ausgangspunkt zur Präsentation der faszinierenden Welt der klassischen Antike dienen. Der Artikel beginnt mit der Präsentation der wichtigsten Informationen über die polnische Schule ‚gimnazjum‘ und den Lehrplan. Dann werden einige formale Aspekte der Lektionsdurchführung hervorgehoben. Anschließend wird der Unterrichtsplan erörtert. Während der Lektion werden die ausgewählten Mythen in Form einer multimedialen Präsentation gezeigt. Dazu werden die zusätzlichen Übungen gegeben. Heutzutage ist es sehr wichtig, dass die Lehrmethoden und Formen der Arbeit interessant sein. Gleichzeitig soll die Unterricht den Lehrstoff auf eine klare und verständliche Art und Weise vermitteln. Darüber hinaus möchte die Autorin den Schülern den zeitlosen Wert der beschprochenen Mythen und Legenden zeigen. Sie möchte auch, dass die Schüler die klassischen Mythen, Symbole und Konzepte in Kunst und Literatur des 21 Jahrhunderts entdecken.

Schlüsselwörter: Mythen der Griechen und Römer, Didaktik, Lateinunterricht, griechische und römische Kultur.

This article represents an attempt to share and discuss the possibility of conducting a lesson of Latin language combined with an overview of ancient culture with its influences of Mediterranean antiquity, using as examples myths and legends¹ (Morford and Lenardon 2009: 3) of ancient Greece and Rome. As

¹ This brief study is not meant to discuss widely the theoretical issues of this thematic field. Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon explain the difference between those two terms (i. e. ‘myth’ and ‘legend’) and discuss the ‘impossibility of establishing a satisfactory definition of myth’. Please take a look at: Morford and Lenardon 2009: 3 and, in general, chapter 1, ‘Interpretation and definition of classical mythology’ 3–39. For further distinction see: Sharwood-Smith 1977: 15–17.

an exemplification of this idea a plan of a lesson dedicated to the Olympian gods (Grant 1993, Graves 1992, Grimal 1987, Kubiak 1997, Parandowski 1987, and Stankiewicz 2008) will be presented. This topic has been chosen partly because ‘myths and legends have something to offer low-achieving [...] pupils as well as motivated, high-achieving pupils.’ (Lister 2007: 40). It is also very important that pupils during their entire education are being familiarized with as many different myth stories as possible, because ‘[w]riters and artists are constantly finding messages for the modern world in the stories of an ancient world’ (*ibid.*: 35). This sample lesson will provide a starting point for showing pupils the fascinating world of Greco-Roman culture. This lesson is supposed to be carried out in a junior high school, which in Poland is called ‘gimnazjum’², and it is aimed at pupils who are just beginning to learn Latin.

The author would like to emphasize the fact that this is an exceptional situation, because Polish curriculum for ‘gimnazjum’ at present does not include teaching a Latin language³. Moreover this project represents a local ‘stand-up’ against the spreading idea of Latin language and classical culture as ‘something to be kept for the few and not to be shared with the many’ (Kitchell, Jr. 2015: 167). It is a part of a wider problem, as the teaching of Latin often drops off national curricula at various levels across the Europe itself and worldwide⁴ (Griffiths 2008: 72). This is mostly seen as a ‘reflection of changing attitudes towards Latin and the growing emphasis placed on the sciences: no longer [it is – K.G.] necessary to have a classical education to be considered well educated’ (*ibid.*: 71). That is why, it is so encouraging that a new subject called ‘The Latin language with elements of knowledge of ancient culture’ has been finally been introduced at school where the author works⁵ as an educational innovation in schools’ curriculum and has since been approved by the local authorities. Latin language is being taught in a dimension of two 45-minute lessons per week for the period of three years, what subsequently gives a grand total of 180 lessons in one full learning cycle. Pupils attend classes having obtained a declaration of consent from their parents. In the current school year there are pupils from five first classes in a ‘Latin class’.

The general objective of teaching Latin language with elements of knowledge of ancient culture in this school is both to familiarize pupils with the basics of Latin grammar, as well as to arouse their interest in ancient culture, with particular emphasis on Greco-Roman antiquity. A variety of issues related to Greco-Roman history, literature and art which are presented during the classes are set out to prepare pupils for the humanistic part of compulsory secondary school exam. The ‘Latin curriculum’ has been extended with

² Gimnazjum is a type of a Polish secondary school between primary school and high school.

³ Cf. http://men.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/publikacja_ramoweplanynauczania.pdf.

⁴ For further reading see: Paul 2013: 143–156.

⁵ Gimnazjum no 18 in Łódź, Poland.

selected knowledge of disciplines such as medicine, law, astrology, chemistry and biology. One of the main goals of this project is to see it as a ‘widening access to Latin, not Latin as narrowly defined by traditionalists, but Latin as a language and culture.’ (Lister 2015: 196). At this point, what is clearly obvious to every classicist, may feel obscure to some of the authorities and – so called – general public, but ‘[t]he fact remains that literature, music, and higher art all presuppose a certain amount of mythological knowledge.’ (Kitchell, Jr. 2005: 190). If a pupil does not get familiarized with this aspect of classical heritage during his education, in the future he will then be ‘unable to appreciate (or in some cases even to understand) Western art, music, drama, and many other artistic forms of expression’ (*ibid.*) That is why, it is so important to start to ‘implement’ into pupils minds various pieces of mythological information starting from early learning stage onwards.

All learning materials used during the classes are prepared by the teacher and given to every pupil as a photocopy. As there is no Latin in national curriculum, there is also no textbook to this subject. It should be stressed that in this situation the entire burden of development and implementation of the program rests on the shoulders of the teacher who has to prepare all the materials. The teacher acts in triple role, as he is not only a teacher, who is responsible for teaching, but also he is a curriculum author and a textbook publisher. Moreover, in regards to classical mythology as a specific lesson topic, ‘[t]here is not much secondary literature devoted to the matter, despite the importance of classical mythology. (...) Likewise, like bibliography abounds on this or that mythological theory or cycle, there is surprisingly little written on what we should be teaching in such courses, how they should be taught, and how all this is relates to our role as classicists in the twenty-first century.’ (Kitchell, Jr. 2005: 187)

This situation represents a very difficult task for a teacher, because all the didactic materials should not only equip the pupil with knowledge of the subject, but at the same time, they should do so in a very attractive form⁶ to arouse the interest of the younger generation. As far as the Latin language is concerned, it is twice as difficult to gain an interest of pupils, who especially nowadays, are so accustomed to the wide use of the Internet as their main learning and information tool.

At this point some formalities associated with conducting these lessons will be presented. The topic was scheduled for two hours of classes. The general learning outcomes were as follows:

- to make students aware of the influence of antiquity on the Mediterranean culture;

⁶ For further discussion of using visual arts while teaching classical mythology, see: Wilkins 2005: 198–201.

- to familiarize pupils with the contents of selected myths;
- to familiarize pupils with the contents of selected works of Horace.

Moreover the Specific Learning Outcomes were selected. Successful pupils will be able to:

- show on the map the Mount Olympus;
- describe the contents of presented myths;
- give the names of Olympic gods;
- give the names of Roman counterparts of the Greek gods;
- assign each god with associated symbols and indicate his place of worship and the ‘competences’ of each deity;
- demonstrate the knowledge of selected poems of Horace;
- prepare a verbal presentation concerning an Olympic god of their choice.

In order to carry out the activities most effectively, the following methods and forms of work were used:

- presentation and exposure;
- problematic approach;
- practical use.

Used teaching aids included:

- multimedia presentation;
- audiobook ‘Mythology’ of Jan Parandowski;
- CV-sheet completion;
- print outs with exercises;
- didactic game;
- selected poems of Horace;
- Olympic quiz.

It is crucial to provide diverse methods and teaching aids, and it is why the chosen ones were selected carefully, as ‘[a]bove all the success of a myth lesson depends on the actual method of transmission.’ (Lister 2007: 45) As people living in the twenty-first century, are influenced on the daily basis by modern day inventions such as internet, social media and various electronic devices, the usage of visual arts during the classes certainly ‘provides enrichment’ (Wilkins 2005: 201)⁷ to this topic. It also creates a situation where both, teachers and pupils can ‘derive enjoyment from hearing music and poetry, and seeing pictures’ (Grove and Park 1996: 2). In this case the use of miscellaneous methods and teaching aids should enable the myth to speak to the adolescents in the language, which would be easily accessible for them.

Below a shortened overview of both class hours and materials used during the lesson will be presented.

⁷ Besides quoted observation, the autor points out, that: [i]ssues of style, technique, and archeological history need not to be discussed (*ibid.*).

Lesson one

In the introductory phase of the class which consists of organizational activities, the teacher briefly discusses the topic of the lesson. He also gives out the objectives to be carried out by pupils during the lesson. This part of the lesson takes about three minutes.

The next part of the lesson is the realization phase, during which the teacher displays and discusses previously prepared multimedia presentation. This task is thought to be about 25 minutes long. The multimedia presentation used during the lesson would consist of circa 45 slides. It begins with a title slide which is followed by the satellite map of Greece, where major cities have been marked as well as the location of Mount Olympus. The next slide pictures the Mount Olympus undersigned in Greek language. The pictures are accompanied by a piece of an audiobook of Jan Parandowski, whose beautiful story brings viewers to the top of the Greek world. The picturesque mountain landscape complements the view of the palace of the greatest god among all Olympians – thundering Zeus. This slide summarizes the brief part of the presentation devoted to the place, where the Olympian gods live.

Another slide presents the family tree of Olympian gods and inducts viewers to the part of the presentation which is dedicated to each of the gods. The forthcoming slides introduce the Olympians: Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Hephaestus, Ares, Athena, Aphrodite, Artemis, Apollo, Hermes and Dionysus. The presentation of each deity has been arranged according to a common pattern.

While watching the presentation, pupils learn basic personal details of each deity: their name in Greek and in Latin, and both names translated into Polish. The pictures which were used in presentation, were found on Greek vases. They create a kind of a family photo album of each god. Because of digitalization of museum collections, everyone can get free unlimited access to these ‘photographs’ using internet page theoi.com. The next slide shows the figure of each deity – the scope of its activities, its symbols, as well as places of worship. Each issue is supported by the images taken from ancient mosaics, sculptures, coins or paintings. They are also indicated through the remains of buildings or other exhibits. The diversity of means of artistic expression strengthens the message and makes it even more interesting and easily accessible not only for the young adepts of Latin language and ancient culture, but for anyone who would like to expand their knowledge of Greek and Roman mythology. The last slide tells a mythical story of one deity and presents this mythological figure in a center point. In total, twelve myth stories are presented – one for each character described. The stories included: abduction of Europe by Zeus, persecution of Heracles by Hera, division of the world-parts and allocation of the ocean to Poseidon, abduction of Persephone, beloved daughter of Demeter, punishment of Aphrodite and Ares for treason by Hephaestus, jealousy fuelled murder of Adonis by Ares, rivalry of Athena and Poseidon over a leadership

in Athens, Aphrodite presented with apple of discord, murder of nymph Callisto by Artemis, Apollo's love for nymph Daphne, theft of Apollo's herd by Hermes and Pentheus, the king of Thebes prohibiting people from joining Bacchanalia.

Each of mythical stories presented was also shown through various means of artistic expression. After presenting all of twelve Olympian gods, there comes a final slide, which summarizes the presentation. During the presentation, pupils make notes in given task sheets and fill in the card dedicated to each of the gods⁸. Apart from performing filling-the-blanks type exercise, they also create a CV of each of the twelve Olympians. By doing so they discover that this commonly used phrase actually comes from an abbreviation of a Latin term *curriculum vitae*, that means the path of life. Pupils also receive three cards to fill in, each of which contains four forms dedicated to the gods. CV of each of the gods has been enriched by a 'photograph' taken from ancient vase and adapted to the requirements of a form of CV picture. Each mythological figure is presented in a form of their CV, what is a type of document, which pupils have already been filling in when learning other modern languages⁹, and which they will no doubt be composing using their own data while looking for work.

Once the presentation has finished, pupils are given a while to look up their notes what allows them to easily come to the next, summarizing, phase of the lesson. At this point, the teacher hands out materials with exercises that pupils are asked to complete without being able to use their notebooks. Then the teacher gives out the question and exercise cards to his pupils which they have to fill in¹⁰. As a bonus, pupils who solve all tasks quickly and correctly will receive a 'plus' for their activity during the lesson. The proposed timescale for this exercise is approximately five minutes.

Another task which pupils would have to perform is to describe a selected Olympic god. The description should give an answer to the topic: 'Olympians in today's life'. Pupils are asked to create a colorful and creative description of the deity of their choice. They can freely choose the kind of a language, narrative style and form of expression, but they have to describe the nature of the god and what they could have been doing, if they were alive in the twenty-first century. To perform this task approximately ten minutes are given. Shortly before the end of the lesson, the teacher collects all cards. After the end of the lesson, the teacher will choose the most interesting descriptions and reward the authors with 'pluses' for activity. This is followed by a summary of a lesson, the teacher devotes the rest of the time to this task (approximately three-four minutes).

⁸ Please take a look at the attachment no 1.

⁹ Cf. Council of Europe. 2004. *Common European Framework of Reference For Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assesment*, Strasbourg: Language Policy Unit. Work available online: https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf, (accessed 10 October 2015).

¹⁰ Please take a look at the attachment no 2.

Lesson two

The second lesson unit about the Olympian gods begins with organizational activities, what takes about three minutes. Afterwards the most interesting descriptions of deities, which were written during the previous lesson, are presented. The teacher hands out all works and gives some chosen students to read aloud their work. For this presentation approximately seven minutes is given.

As a reminder of the most important facts the teacher hands out prepared earlier domino blocks¹¹. The game includes a variety of elements that must be adjusted to each other, making it possible to complete a domino arrangement. For example, a card contains the name of a God derived from the Greek mythology and the name derived from the Latin, the image of a god and his symbol, the name of god and place of worship or the scope of his activities. Successful pupils who quickly and correctly allocate all domino blocks receive 'pluses' for the activity. First student who correctly completes all domino blocks reads all matched pairs so that the other colleagues are able to check whether they managed to arrange properly all the domino blocks. This exercise is due to run for approximately five minutes.

Horace's poems translated into Polish are the new material intended for the second hour. Each pupil receives A4 sheet with the few poems dedicated to selected gods. Pupils are asked to read the poems of Horace, further to this they have to match the poem with Latin title and give the name of god in presented verse of poem. The students know selected poems of Horace such as I.X *Ad Mercurium*, I.XXX *Ad Venerem*, I.XXXI *Ad Apollinem* and III.XXII *Ad Dianam* (Horatius, trans. by Kubiak 1986). The same as with previous exercises pupils, who quickly and correctly solve task given receive 'pluses' for their activity during the lesson. Pupils, who wish to do so, can read aloud correctly completed poems. Completion and reading of the poems requires approximately ten minutes.

The next part of a lesson is a group work. Pupils are divided into small groups – depending on the number of pupils in the classroom. Each group has to present without words the figure of any of the Olympic gods. This exercise involves the use of a body language skills and puts emphasis on non-verbal communication. By appropriate gesture, gaze, facial expression, body movements students try to convey some vital information. They present a god of their choice, while the members of the other groups have to guess which character is being portraits by their colleagues. The preparation and presentation would last approximately ten minutes.

The next part of a lesson is a mythological quiz. This kind of work is quite popular among the young people. At the end of the quiz, each student will know which of the Olympian gods is his guardian. Completion of the test also allows in quite accessible form to capture some of the mechanisms covering the timeless reality that surrounds and helps us to realize the impact of antiquity on shaping

¹¹ Please take a look at the attachment no 3.

not only the Mediterranean culture, which helped to create Polish culture, but also today's pop culture.

This lesson plan has been developed as a tool to encourage pupils to independently explore the mysteries of the Greco-Roman antiquity, as well as to strengthen their motivation to learn the Latin language with elements of knowledge of ancient culture. In addition, the author would like to show pupils the timeless value of myth and focus their attention to the important and timeless content of myths, symbols and concepts.

The author would like to kindly invite you to take a look at some of the bespoken exercises.

Attachment no 1.

CVRRICVLVM VITAE¹²

PERSONAL DETAILS:		
God's name in ancient Greek:		
God's name in Latin:		
God's name in Polish:		

FAMILY:	
Mother and father:	
Siblings:	
Wife:	
Children:	

¹² I would like to kindly thank **Mariya Zipunnikova** for providing all the pictures. **Mariya Zipunnikova** – Artist and Graphics Designer, studied Computer Graphics and Multimedia at Lodz Technical University and Art Pedagogy at Poznan Art University. Mariya is currently living and working in London.

OCCUPATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES:


VARIA:	
Symbols:	
Place of worship:	
Myth story:	

Attachment no 2.

I. Give the god's name and the attribute:



.....

.....

II. Give the God's name in Latin or in ancient Greek:

- Zeus —
- Minerva —
- Mercury —
- Demeter —

III. Match the parents with their children:

- | | | | |
|------|--------------------|----|------------|
| I. | Apollo and Coronis | B. | Hestia |
| II. | Zeus and Hera | C. | Eros |
| III. | Kronos and Rea | D. | Hephaestus |
| IV. | Aphrodite and Ares | E. | Asclepius |

- | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| I. | II. | III. | IV. |
| | | | |

IV. Answer the questions:

Whose wife Afrodite was?
.....

What was the name of Dionysos' wife?
.....

Which goddess didn't have a husband?
.....

V. Which god might you ask for help if:

you would like to get married –

were a farmer –

Attachment no 3. (part of domino game)

	APHRODITE	CYPRVS	MINERVA
ATHENA	BACCHVS		CAMPVS MARTIVS
MARS		MERCVRVY	APOLLO

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