

"A Herculean Task"

An interdisciplinary unit that integrates technology into the English curriculum in order launch students into the 21st century!



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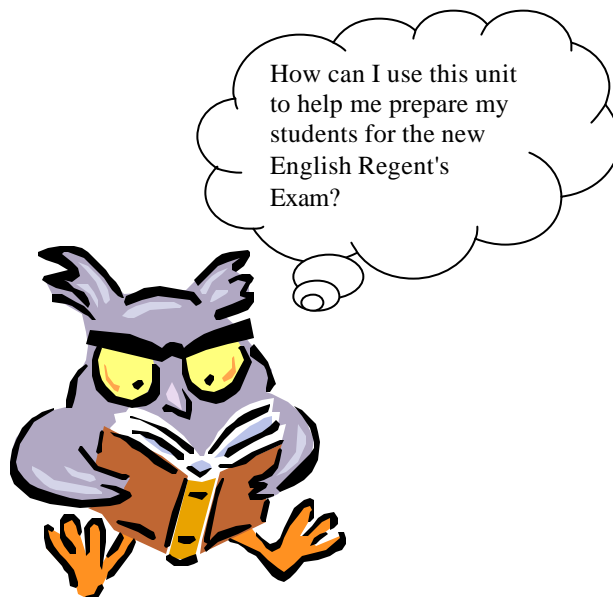
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Program Outline and Overview

Grade Level: 9th grade (This unit can be adapted for use with all levels of 9th grade students, as well as students in grades 5-8 who are studying mythology.)

Overview:

"A Herculean Task" is an interdisciplinary program involving both English and math. It focuses on integrating technology into the English curriculum so that it can be aligned with the ELA standards. In this way, students can be learning content area material, as well as honing their skills for the new English Regents. Initially, students are introduced to the myth of *Hercules* by reading the first part of the myth in class and by deciding which qualities of Hercules are similar to those of our modern-day heroes.

The next part of the program has the class break up into cooperative learning groups. They fill out the triangles in a pie-graph handout with all twelve labors of Hercules and determine which specific qualities he would need in order to accomplish his labors. Groups are then required to answer teacher-generated questions on a second handout that calls upon the students to represent their answers using fractions, decimals, and percentages. Each group is responsible for presenting their answers to an assigned question. When presenting, the group is graded on how persuasively they present their verbal argument by citing textual evidence while debating with other teams. Subsequently, the students complete a third handout that depicts their answers in a box chart handout.

Next, students learn how to create a graphic of their own choice using Microsoft PowerPoint in order to visually depict their answers. A demonstration lesson on how to use Microsoft PowerPoint is given using a computer on wheels and a projector before taking the students into the computer lab. When in the computer lab, students are asked to tell how computers can help them represent--using fractions, decimals, and percentages--their answers to the teacher-generated questions dealing with the qualities Hercules needed to accomplish certain labors. Then, they are teamed in pairs of two to work on creating these graphics. Each graphic submitted must include the names of their cooperative group members. Students must also turn in the other two handouts so that the teacher can give them feedback.

After looking over the student's work, the student-made graphs and box charts are redistributed to cooperative-learning groups that **did not** create them. At this point, the groups are asked to interpret the information and use it, as well as textual evidence from the myth, to write a persuasive essay that argues whether Hercules needed strength or intelligence to accomplish the majority of his labors.

Finally, a developmental lesson that deals with having students determine which of Hercules qualities could be considered assets or liabilities is conducted. This lesson culminates in another persuasive writing activity where students must transfer the skills they learned from prior assignments.

Major Goals/Learning Outcomes:

A major goal of this unit is to align part of the English curriculum with the Standards set forth by New York State. In particular, the unit was developed to address task two of the New English Regent's Exam, Reading and Writing for Information and Understanding. It also addresses the following New York City standards;

1. E1C: Read and Comprehend Informational Materials
2. E2E: Produce a Persuasive Essay
3. E3B: Participates in Group Meetings

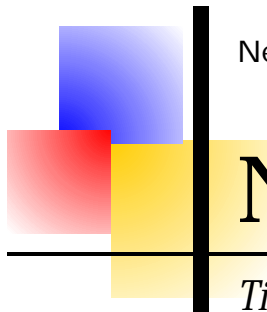
In order to attain this major goal, "A Herculean Task" focuses on increasing specific learning outcomes. The activities and questions included in each lesson were designed to enhance critical thinking skills in a variety of ways. For instance, students are asked the literal meaning of the material they are studying and are also required to interpret and evaluate it in order to foster reading comprehension skills. This is exemplified even in the last developmental lesson when students are asked to describe how Hercules reacted when he was accused of being a liar, if he acted appropriately, and what advice they would give him about his behavior.

The initial cooperative learning lesson helps broaden the student's knowledge base through the reasons they each contribute as to why certain labors required intelligence or strength. This activity will also help them anticipate the opposition's argument and make them better prepared to respond to it, verbally or in writing. In addition, the cooperative learning activity is structured in such a way that it develops social skills by providing specific guidelines concerning what groups are to accomplish in a set amount of time. Moreover, it impresses upon students the importance of listening to and respecting other individual's viewpoints.

In the following lesson, the group's findings are to be displayed in graphic form using Microsoft PowerPoint. While in the computer room, the more tech-savvy students are paired with others who have less experience working with the software package as determined by a survey given at the beginning of the semester. As a result, the computer skills of some students will be reinforced and the remainder of the class will become more technologically literate. The purpose of this activity is to also test the student's understanding of their findings by representing them in a different format.

When the graphs are given out again in the next lesson to the original cooperative learning groups, students are asked to interpret what they reveal about the qualities of Hercules. This activity is similar to Part II of the new English Regents and will familiarize students in the lower grades with the tasks they will be challenged with on the revised exam. By having the students work in groups, they will be exposed to different strategies that classmates might use to understand or organize information. Since each group is also required to present the conclusions they have come to by referring back to the charts and the text, they will have the opportunity to practice their presentation skills. Then, students are able to concentrate on the ultimate goal of the unit, which is to write a persuasive essay that argues, by citing evidence from the sources mentioned above, whether Hercules needed strength or intelligence to accomplish the majority of his labors. The students are given a teacher-made rubric that modified the criteria that is used to grade this part of the Regent's Exam. In order to remediate writing skills, the writing process approach is also employed.

After the last developmental lesson, which involves an examination of which qualities were actually liabilities or assets to Hercules, students are assigned another persuasive essay. This final follow-up activity is a way to reinforce what students have already learned about the art of persuasive writing and to continue to remediate their skills to ensure their success in meeting the new ELA standards.



New York City Board of Education

November 2000

Timeline for "A Herculean Task"

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Intro To "Hercules"	2	3 1st Lesson	4	5
6	7 Individual or group lesson	8	9 1st part of cooperative learning lesson	10	11 2nd part of cooperative learning lesson	12
13	14	15 Computer demo + activity	16	17	18 Redistribution of graphics to groups	19
20	21	22	23 Final lesson on Hercules' qualities	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

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Manhattan High Schools-Committed to
launching students into the 21st century!

Timeline

The chart constructed below estimates the number of days that are allotted for each activity with a 9th grade class. This unit generally takes between 3-4 weeks.

Estimated Time	Explanation of Activity	Follow Up
1-2 days	1. Intro-Before starting the unit, introduce vocabulary and the pronunciation of specific names. Some teachers may choose to begin by showing a movie about a hero or by analyzing the lyrics to a song that deals with heroes, e.g., Mariah Carey's "Hero." An article about a hero can also be used and students can examine what makes that person deserving of the title.	
1-2 days	2. Students begin reading "Hercules" and examine in what ways his qualities are similar or different to those of their modern-day heroes.	Write an essay comparing Hercules' qualities to those of someone you consider to be your hero.
1-2 days	3 The class continues to read the labors, either individually or in jigsaw cooperative learning groups. (This is dependent upon the skills level of the students.) Students will be expected to complete the summary sheets and to fill out the triangles on handout #1 with Hercules' labors.	Students are asked to read the newspapers, watch the news, and/or listen to the radio to come up with at least three modern-day labors that need to be accomplished in our society.
2-4 days	4. Students form cooperative learning groups to decide what specific qualities Hercules needed to accomplish certain labors. Students will write down the evidence they find in the text on handout #1. They will also share their modern-day labors and record them in the appropriate spaces on their handouts and then discuss two qualities someone would need to accomplish them. Each group will present two Herculean and modern-day labors to the class. After each presentation, members of other groups will be expected to challenge, question, and comment on their answers.	Write an imaginary 13 th labor that includes a discussion of what qualities Hercules would need in order to accomplish it.

Timeline (Cont.)

"	Cooperative learning groups will be given handout #2 and will be assigned one question to answer, which they will present to the class. When they finish their questions, they will also be required to answer the others. In addition, they will be given handout #3 complete. The speakers in each group will present the answers to the class and, once again, the members of other groups will be given the opportunity to challenge, question, or comment on their answers.	
2-3 days	5. Students will be given a demonstration on how to create graphics using Microsoft PowerPoint either in class or in the computer room. In pairs, they will create graphics based on their group's answers to handout #2 and #3.	Students will write a journal entry that includes their thoughts, feelings, and reactions to this activity.
2-3 days	6. The teacher will redistribute the graphics and charts to cooperative learning groups that did not create them and they will interpret each one. Speakers will present their interpretations to the class referring back to the chart, graphics, and the text as evidence.	Write a persuasive essay based on your group's findings that proves that Hercules used either strength or intelligence more often to accomplish the majority of his labors. Be sure to refer back to the graphic, chart and text to support your position.
1-2 days	7. The class will examine which qualities of Hercules were assets or liabilities as we complete the unit.	Write a persuasive that explains why, in your opinion, two of Hercules' qualities are assets or liabilities.

Types of Assessments Used

Students are assessed by both traditional and authentic approaches. Teacher-made tests and quizzes are administered at different times during the unit to determine their level of comprehension. Rubrics and checklists are also used to make the students cognizant of strengths and weaknesses in their writing. In addition, either teacher- or student-made rubrics will be used to assess oral presentations.

Lesson Plans

The following lesson plans are in chronological order and are the basis upon which all other activities associated with the unit were developed. Teachers may choose to modify or add onto them depending upon their particular situation.

Materials Needed for Lesson Plans

"The Labors of Hercules" by Robert Graves
Handout #1, 2, and 3
Computer lab (20 computers hooked up to a network)
Computer on wheels + Projector
Microsoft Office 2000 (software)

1.) Introduction

2.) **Lesson Plan #1**

"Do Now"

1. List 5 of your heroes and explain what qualities they possess that makes you admire them.
firemen--courage
mothers/fathers--strength
etc.

Transitional question: From what you already know about Hercules, what is one quality that he possesses? (Many students are already very familiar with Hercules because of the TV show.)

Topic: Mythology

Aim: How are the qualities of Hercules similar to those of a modern-day hero?

Procedure for Analysis:

1. The 1st paragraph will be read aloud to the students.
 - A. What qualities do you think a baby would need to possess in order to strangle two snakes? (courage, strength)

(The teacher should jot down some of Hercules' qualities on the board as students answer the questions.)

Qualities of Hercules

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1. strength | 4. persistence |
| 2. courage | 5. endurance |
| 3. caring | 6. stubbornness, etc. |

- B. Who are Hercules' parents?
3. A student will be called on to read the next paragraph.
- A. Can you think of an adjective that could be used to describe people who are good at sports?
 - B. Why do you think Hercules acted admirably or disadmirably when he hit Linus with the lyre?
 - C. Explain why you feel this is a realistic or unrealistic portrayal of the way heroes act.
4. A student will be called on to read the next paragraph.
- A. Why does Hercules volunteer to be a slave?
 - B. How would you describe a person who would enslave himself for another person?
 - C. Why would or wouldn't you do the same for someone you loved?
5. A student will be called on to read the next paragraph.
- A. Describe what Hercules finally does to entrap the lion.
 - B. What qualities does Hercules exhibit when he's trying to kill the Nemean Lion?
6. A student will be called on to read the next paragraph.
- A. Why was this labor so difficult?
 - B. In order to accomplish this labor, what qualities must Hercules have possessed?
7. A student will be called on to read the next paragraph.
- A. Describe the third labor.
 - B. By taking the arrow out of the hind's leg, what do we learn about Hercules?
8. A student will be called on to read the next paragraph.
- A. How did Eurystheus feel when he saw Hercules carrying the boar on his back?
9. A student will be called on to read the next paragraph.
- A. Why was Hercules given this labor?
 - B. How would you describe a person who refuses to become upset when someone is trying to annoy him/her?
 - C. If someone were trying to annoy you, in what ways could you handle the situation?
10. In what ways do heroes in our society need to prove themselves the way Hercules did?

11. Can you think of any heroes in contemporary society that possess both heroic and unheroic qualities?

Medial summary: What are some qualities that Hercules has that your own heroes possess?
If time permits, students will write one paragraph that compares two of Hercules' qualities to those of a modern-day hero to incorporate into an essay.

Follow-up: Write an essay that compares the qualities of Hercules to those of a modern-day hero.

- 3.) Individual or cooperative learning lesson (You may modify the following lesson plan if you choose to do the cooperative jigsaw lesson to meet your specific objectives.)
-

4.) **Lesson Plan #2**

"Do Now"

1. List five obstacles that people may face during the course of their lives and explain what qualities they would need to possess in order to overcome them.
illness--courage
unemployment--determination, etc.

Transitional question: What was one quality that Hercules needed to overcome the obstacles facing him?

Topic: Mythology

Aim: What other qualities did Hercules need in order to accomplish his labors?

Procedure for Analysis:

1. Students will be reminded that they will eventually break up into groups and must choose a speaker and a recorder.
2. All group members must be writing the answers on their papers, but each member must agree upon the same answers before writing them down.
3. Each group must be able to defend what they are saying if challenged by another group.
4. Groups must listen carefully to each other and be respectful by not interrupting speakers who are reporting.
5. Groups must stay on task to gain full classwork credit.

6. After breaking up into groups, students should begin working on the assigned task. If applicable to this particular part of the cooperative learning activity, the appropriate handouts will be distributed.

Medial summary: The groups will give their oral presentations.

Follow up: Write an imaginary 13th labor that describes how Hercules could use his qualities to accomplish a modern-day labor.

- 5.) Students are given a demonstration on how to use Microsoft PowerPoint and are assigned a graphing activity in the computer room.

Follow-up: Write a journal entry that describes your thoughts, feelings, and reactions to this activity.

- 6.) Cooperative learning activity (Once again, refer to lesson #2 and modify to meet the objectives of this activity.)

Follow-up: Write a persuasive essay, based on your group's findings, that proves Hercules used either strength or intelligence more often to accomplish the majority of his labors. Be sure to refer back to the graphic, chart, and text to support your position.



**Note! Activity #5 utilizes technology effectively, as well
as appropriately, and is preceded by an activity
that is directly aligned with task II of the New York State
English Regents Exam--
Reading and Writing for Information and Understanding!**

7.) Lesson #3

"Do Now"

1. Since reading the myth of Hercules we have inferred that the following qualities could describe him:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| 1. strong | 6. agile |
| 2. courageous | 7. stubborn |
| 3. intelligent | 8. caring |
| 4. fast | 9. athletic |
| 5. persistent | |

Decide which quality proved to be an asset to him or a liability and place in the appropriate column.

<u>Hercules' Qualities</u>	
<u>Assets</u>	<u>Liabilities</u>

Transitional question: Why do we find that heroes often have assets and liabilities?

- they are not perfect
- they are human

(Students should be told that when we read the last part of the story we will be learning about other qualities Hercules possesses and will decide whether they are assets or liabilities.)

Topic: Mythology

Aim: How did some of Hercules' qualities prove to be assets or liabilities?

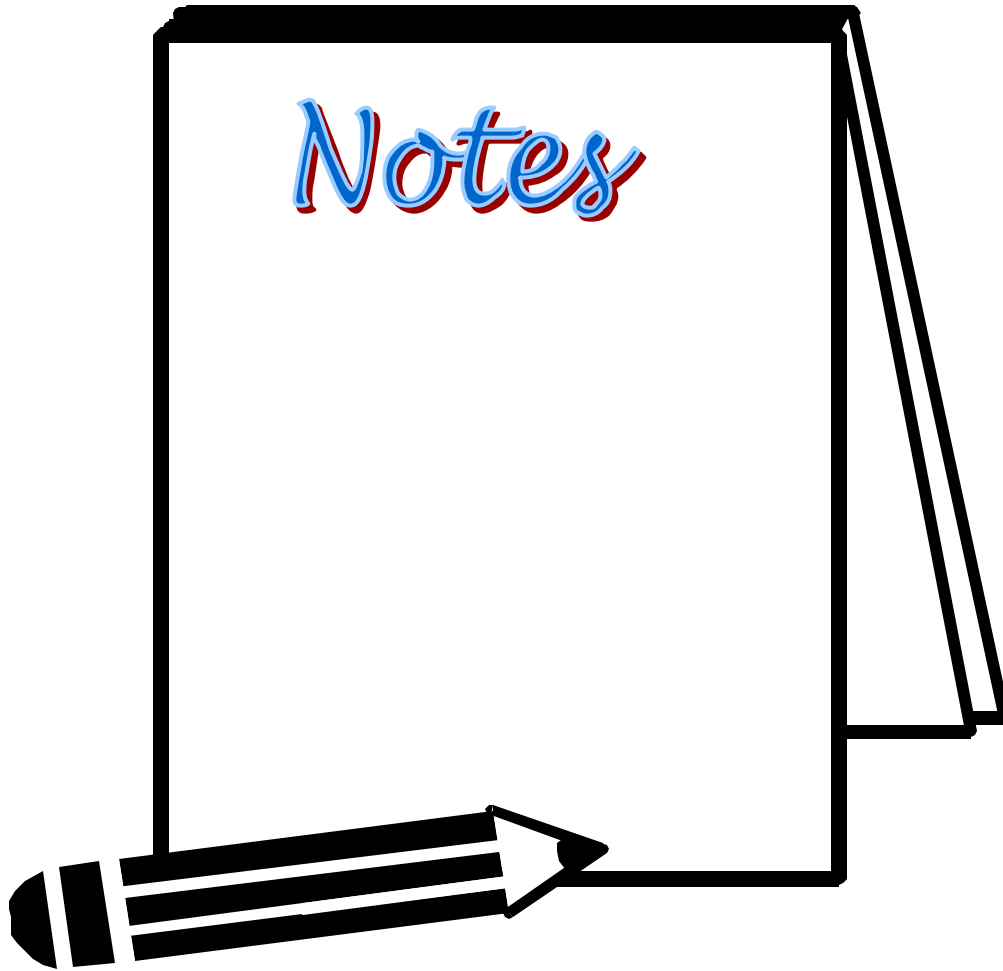
Procedure for Analysis

1. The teacher will read paragraph 3, page 288 to the class.
 - A. How did Hercules react when he was accused of being a liar?
 - B. What do you think a person would do today if he/she were accused of being a liar or a thief?
 - C. If a person has a bad temper, what do they have to keep in mind when they start to lose it? (If you have a bad temper, what can you do when someone makes you angry?)
2. A student will be called on to read "The gods...fight the dragon."
 - A. Why would or wouldn't you consider Hercules' bad temper an asset or a liability?
 - B. What did the queen ask Hercules to do for her?
3. A student will be called on to read "At your service...cheered."
 - A. Who did Hercules marry?
4. A student will be called on to read "Hercules...Olympus."
 - A. What did Hercules begin doing to the gods who had treated him scornfully?
 - B. Why do or don't you feel Hercules was justified in hurting his offenders?
 - C. How do we, in our society today, deal with serious offenders?
5. A student will be called on to read "Centaur...advised."
 - A. What did the Centaur tell Deianeira to do?
6. A student will be called on to read the next section.
 - A. What does Deianeira assume Hercules is thinking about doing?
 - B. Explain why you think being vengeful proved to be an asset or a liability for Hercules?
7. A student will be called on to read the next section.
 - A. For what purpose did Hercules really need his new shirt?
8. Students will read the last section silently.
 - A. What happened to Hercules at the end of the story? Deianeira?

Medial summary: Does Hercules have more assets or liabilities? If time permits, students will write brief summaries explaining why, in their opinion, two of Hercules' qualities are assets or liabilities.

9. What does this say about a hero in Greek society?

Follow-up: Write a persuasive essay that explains why, in your opinion, two of Hercules' qualities are assets or liabilities.



Name_____date_____

Handout #2

"The Labors of Hercules"

Group Members_____

1. How many labors did Hercules complete? Represent this number as a fraction, decimal, and percent.

2.
 - a. In which labors do you think Hercules needed to use his intelligence? Support your answer by referring back to the labor.

 - b. What fractional part of the circle does that include? Represent the fraction as a decimal and percent.

3.
 - a. In which labors do you think Hercules needed to use his physical strength? Support your answer by referring back to the labor.

 - b. What fractional part of the circle does that include? Represent the fraction as a decimal and a percent.

4. Which labor, in your opinion, was the most difficult to accomplish? Explain why you feel this way.

5. Which labor, in your opinion, was the least difficult to accomplish? Explain why you feel this way.

6.
 - a. List any labors that you feel did not require the qualities of intelligence or physical strength. Tell what qualities they did require and be sure to refer back to the labor.

 - b. What fractional part of the circle do they include? Represent the fraction as a decimal and a percent.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4rth	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
Labor Requiring Intelligence												
Most Difficult Labor												
Labor Requiring Strength												
Least Difficult Labor												
Neither												

Names of Group Members;

Rules for Group Work

1. Groups must choose a speaker and a recorder before beginning the assignment.
2. All group members must be writing the answers on their papers, but each member must agree upon the same answers before writing them down.
3. Each group must be able to defend what they are saying if challenged by another group.
4. Groups must stay on task for the entire time allotted in order to gain full classwork credit.
5. Groups must listen carefully to each other and be respectful by not interrupting speakers or fellow classmates when they are talking.
6. Each group will complete their assigned question first and, when finished, should continue working on the others.

"The Labors of Heracles"

Labor #1 _____

Labor #2 _____

Labor #3 _____

Labor #4 _____

Labor #5 _____

Labor #6 _____

Labor #7 _____

Labor #8 _____

Labor #9 _____

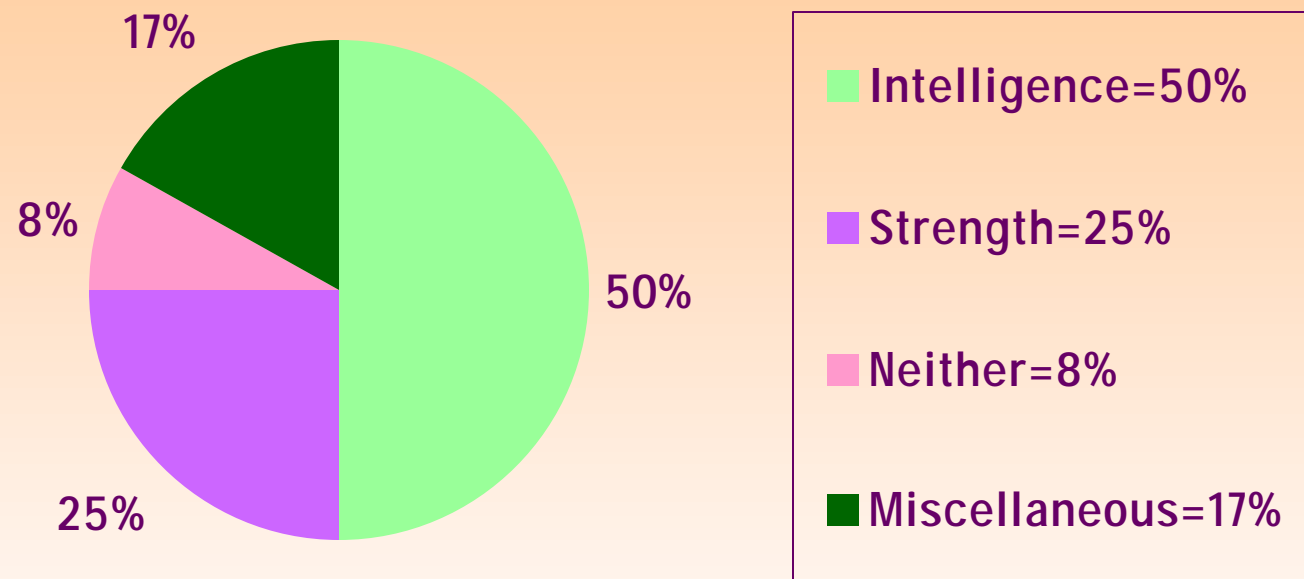
Labor #10 _____

Labor #11 _____

Labor #12 _____

Additional notes;

The Labors of Hercules



Grading Rubric

Essay Question due _____

Your mission: Write a persuasive essay, based on your group's findings, that proves that Hercules either used strength or intelligence to accomplish the majority of his labors. Be sure to refer back to the graphic, chart, and text to support your position. In addition, you should also use the Baker Style Essay Format.

<u>Content</u> (100 points)	<u>Points</u>
A. Introduction (Does the introduction go from the general to the specific?)	10
B. Thesis statement (Is the thesis statement clear and concise?)	30
C. Body (Does the body provide supporting evidence and details? Is each quote or paraphrase explained in order to show a connection between it and the point you are trying to make?) 1 st paragraph= argues the opposition's point of view by citing specific evidence 2 nd paragraph= supporting evidence plus details	50
D. Conclusion (Does the conclusion go from the specific to the general?)	+ 10
	100 points
<u>Mechanics</u> (100 points)	
A. Did you proofread for spelling, capitalization, and usage errors?	25
B. Did you include transitions?	25
C. Does the essay include simple, compound, and complex sentences? Do you avoid run-ons and sentence fragments?	25
D. Did you use the correct verb tense?	+ 25
	100 points

Resource List

Resources for teaching this unit, as well as introducing mythology.

Gilkerson, R. Patricia. *Great Greek Gods and Goddesses*. California: Scaffer Publications. 1997.

(This book contains worksheet activities that will help you introduce mythology to your classes.)

Writing to Persuade, published by Globe Fearon.

(A workbook that consists of writing exercises that help students practice their persuasive writing skills.)

Microsoft Office '97 Suite by Suzanne Weixel

(This text will help teachers become familiar with PowerPoint and other software programs in that same package.)

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Lewin, Larry and Shoemaker, Betty. *Great Performances: Creating Classroom-Based Assessment Tasks*. Virginia: ASCD. 1998.