

新经典  
ENGLISH MAJOR

高等学校英语专业系列教材

*A Course Book on  
Greco-Roman Mythology*

希腊罗马神话教程

◎主编 马建军



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中国神话学百年论衡

*A Thousand Years of Chinese Mythology: A Critical Survey*

# 希腊罗马神话教程

（第二版）



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◎编者 王 琼 刘胡敏

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# 前言

希腊罗马神话，又称西方古典神话，是西方乃至整个人类文化传统的基本渊源之一。它不仅对于英语语言文化学习不可或缺，也是现代大学人文素质教育的重要内容。经过长达十几年颇为成功的课堂教学实践，我们编撰了这本以经典文本为主要载体，语言文学鉴赏与文化批评相结合的《希腊罗马神话教程》。

本书选材经典，大量参考、借鉴国内外希腊罗马神话的相关经典著作，并对其进行梳理、整合，内容系统完整，融故事欣赏与文化解读为一体，旨在提高学生的英语阅读能力和文学文化鉴赏水平，增进学生对西方文化精神的理解，帮助学生逐渐形成批判性思维习惯，并使之对宇宙自然世界和人类本我达到新的认知。本书既可作为大学本科英语专业和非英语专业二、三年级教材，也可供有一定英语知识、对西方文化及其神话传说感兴趣的广大读者阅读和欣赏。

本书主要包括引章（Introduction），正文（Unit 1—Unit 12）和附录（Appendixes）三部分。

引章介绍了神话定义、神话的主要阅读方法以及希腊罗马神话简史，旨在帮助学生建立正确的神话观，激发他们学习研究希腊罗马神话的兴趣和积极性。

正文部分共十二单元。前五单元含创世神话，人类五世纪说，诸神谱系等基本神话知识与经典主题，更通过六位奥林匹斯男女天神代表的原型阅读揭示恋母/父情结、新旧之争、男女之争等人性本然状态及文化冲突。第六、七单元的四大英雄事迹详尽地展示了古希腊的英雄观及其演变发展，而八、九单元中荷马的《伊利亚特》与《奥德赛》则以著名的特洛伊之战和奥德修斯十年归途的故事深化了希腊神话的英雄主题，并赋予其历史文化内涵。第十、十一单元介绍了罗马诸神的出处及其职责，新的罗

马文化精神也由维吉尔笔下的英雄埃涅阿斯的坎坷际遇可见一斑。教材最后单元为爱情专题，意在以独立思考、广泛参与的论坛或论文形式结束本课程的教学。

最后，考虑到古希腊罗马语言与现代英语的差异，书尾附录提供了希腊罗马神话中常见人名、地名等的读音及拼写规则。

严格地说，本书的语言难度不算大，所选文本故事经典传奇，叙事生动活泼，可读性较强，学生大多能在课前独立熟悉课文，把握内容，完成基本的阅读任务。但是文本所蕴含的一些人文理念和精神必须经由深刻透彻的文化解读方可获得，而这种认识飞跃和思维开拓需要专业教师的引导。

本书的拟定授课时数为2小时/周。因为教材内容含量饱满，涉及的相关资料丰富，教师可以根据不同学生的需求进行调整，如文学专业学生可适当侧重对叙事结构、人物原型、文学母题或主题等的关注，英语基础较薄弱的学生可适当增加影视作品的欣赏，还可以组织学生就某些著名人物或专题（如俄狄浦斯和冥界/死亡专题）展开研讨。

本书终于得以顺利出版，非常感谢外语教学与研究出版社的鼎力支持以及编辑们的认真严谨和辛勤劳作。

由于编者自身知识面与能力有限，书中难免存在疏漏和错误，恳请使用本书的教师和学生批评指正。

马建军 王琼 刘胡敏

2017年5月于广东外语外贸大学

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# Introduction

## Definition of Mythology

The establishment of a single, comprehensive definition of mythology has proved almost impossible to attain. No one definition can satisfactorily embrace all the various kinds of stories that can legitimately be classed as mythology on the basis of one criterion or another. According to *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, the word "mythology" refers to 1) the science or study of myths or legends, 2) a book of or about myths, and 3) myth collectively; especially all the myth about a specific being, or those myths, fables or traditions interwoven with the history, origin, deities, etc. of a specific people. In this textbook, the term is mostly used in the last sense, and often used interchangeably with "myth" or "myths."

The meaning of the word "myth" is derived from the Greek word "*mythos*," which means "tale" or "story," and that is essentially what a myth is: a story. But such a definition seems too general to be accurate. Myths, in the traditional sense, should include the following aspects: a tale, first told orally; of anonymous origin; set in the remote past, often a vague time outside human chronology; dealing with cosmological phenomena; focusing on the lives and ways of the gods and divine heroes whose adventures represent significant aspects of human experience and reveal the origin and nature of early rituals or customs, and so on. In other words, a myth is a tale that gives a religious explanation for the world as it is. It is a story that has become traditional, explanatory in nature, and expressive of the universal beauties and truths of human nature. Such a story is timeless in that the events are symbolic rather than just the way it happened. It need not be told only orally, but may use no words at all as in religious rituals, or be conveyed by various media, individually or in combination, through mime, dance, painting, literature, drama, film, etc. It is not uniform, logical and internally consistent, but multiform, imaginative, loose and often confusing or contradictory in detail. Moreover, its significance and emphasis varies from one generation to the next, from one nation to another.

It would also be helpful to recognize legend or saga as a category of myth which reflects some historical basis and to realize that some myths share characteristics that we associate with folktales, fairy tales, and fables. As stories of origins, they orient people to the metaphysical dimension, explain the origins and nature of the cosmos, validate social issues, and on the psychological

plane address themselves to the innermost depths of the human psyche. They are more than mere fancy of a world of mythical creatures and super human deeds, but bespeak timeless elements inherent in the nature of the cosmos and human beings, as various schools of philosophical and literary theories have demonstrated. They are, in a sense, of the highest reality and truth, which stay on a quite different plane from that of prosaic and transitory factual knowledge.

Some of the myths are pre- or non-scientific attempts to interpret the natural world. To make sense, they explain the world, making it manageable and revealing the workings of the world in simple words and vivid pictures. For example, consider the primordial pair of gods, Gaia (Gaea) and her husband/son Uranus, the earth and the sky. Uranus, the sky, lay upon Gaia, the earth, and made love to her. The myth may be interpreted as a symbolic representation of the interplay between rain and soil that sustains the life and growth of plants. Aeschylus wrote in his lost *Danaids*: "...the holy sky passionately desires to penetrate the earth...rain falls and impregnates earth, and she brings forth pasturage for flocks and Demeter's life-giving corn." For another example, the myths worldwide in which human beings are fashioned from clay satisfy our need to know how and why we came into being. Despite the fact that the wonderful creation of human life and the constitution of human body is still sort of mystery to us, scientific discoveries about the components of human body have brought us closer to the mythical account of human creation.

Thus, as responses of people to the material and spiritual life in the prehistoric time, myths are designed to explain the causes or origins of natural phenomena and give meanings to traditional practices, such as birth, initiation or maturity and sacrificial rituals. Many myths are of nature myths. Stories of gods or heroes descending into the Underworld in the west and emerging in the east actually reflect the setting and the rising of the sun. Myths in which Goddess Persephone lived for three months with her husband Hades in the Underworld and returned to live with her mother Demeter, Goddess of Corn, for the rest of the year reflect the return of spring after winter. And the unfathomable and overwhelming forces in nature are revealed not only in the disastrous flooding and explosion of volcanoes which threaten people's lives, but also in man's mythical relation with Mother Earth, from which we come, and to which we return after death.

## Common Approaches to Mythology

Today, mythology has become an independent subject of study and an

important part of cultural studies. It has been studied from the approaches of history, etiology, allegory, psychology, ritual, structuralism, gender, religion, literature or art, etc. and has produced rich findings. The major approaches in the study of mythology include the following:

### 1. Historical Approach

Many anthropologists and historians have made important discoveries, especially with the help of archaeology. Some lost traces of primitive life, in the form of buried towns and cities, ritual sites and artistic products, have been unearthed and rediscovered. They are both aided by the ancient mythical accounts and supportive proofs to the historical soundness of the myth.

### 2. Etiological Approach

An etiological interpretation of myth demands that a true myth must give the cause or reason for a fact, for a ritual practice, or for an institution. Narrowly defined, etiology imposes too limiting and rigid a criterion for definition. And yet, if one broadens the concept of the cause of a myth to encompass any story that explains or reveals something or anything, the etiological approach offers one of the most fertile ways of interpreting myth, although it cannot really define it. Mythical stories of gods and goddesses function as the beginning or cause of many a human happening. Take the myths of Eros for instance. As one of the oldest deities at creation, it corresponds to Sigmund Freud's theory about love or sex as the most fundamental drive for humans.<sup>1</sup> And as the god of love, with his sharp and blunt arrows, he has brought about so many tragedies of human love. However difficult it is to prove his existence, a knowledge of him and his stories helps people better deal with their emotional problems.

And though seemingly opposed to scientific discoveries whose truths continuously change, mythology, being eternal, has a truth of its own that transcends mere fact. Conveying realities that may not be verified empirically, these ancient tales typically express a culture's worldview, its beliefs, customs and attitudes, or its explanation of natural phenomena—geological, meteorological, psychological, etc.—and help interpret the whole of human experience.

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1 The Freudian term is "*libido*," which Freud regards as the most fundamental drive of any human activity.

### 3. Allegorical Approach

A most commonly raised problem of mythical study is with what is incredible and fantastic. Often people equate myth with falsehood or superstition, such as in the expression, "It's a myth," uttered in derogatory contrast with such laudable concepts as reality and facts. This is a mistaken notion of myth. How do you interpret the birth myth of Athena that she was literally born out of the head of her father Zeus? If you insist on reading the story in a factual way, you give fantastic dimensions to the gods. Yet, the story of her extraordinary birth is also the story of female wisdom and intellectual power—in the form of the mother, Metis—usurped by the devouring father. Metis, the old Goddess of Wisdom, was swallowed by Zeus, the new king of the Olympian patriarchy, who, instead of destroying the ancient wisdom and wiping out any element of threat to his kingdom, absorbed and incorporated it into his own system. This is already remarkable progress upon Cronus' practice.<sup>2</sup> So when we say myth is truthful, it is only figuratively so. It is not simply historical truth mixed with lies. The stories should sometimes be regarded as allegories, particularly at the level of culture, that give structure to humanity and civility, and help us imagine something spiritual beyond the basics of human survival. Through the stories of gods and goddesses, we learn the politics of human interaction, the reaches of *homo sapiens*<sup>3</sup> behavior; we also learn how we live our life and how we treat each other. The gods, goddesses and heroes, with their individual traits and feats, are incarnations of natural phenomena and abstract human qualities. Heracles' twelve labors are not only the difficult challenges he must take to complete his ordained fate or to obtain his final divinity, but also an embodiment of the necessity of human struggle with wild nature and with himself.

### 4. Psychological Approach

In mythological study, the theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung are fundamental and far-reaching in their influence, and though continually challenged, they provide the most searching tools for profound, introspective interpretation of mythology.

Freud's most influential ideas for the interpretation of myth focus on psychosexual development, the theory of sexuality, the unconscious, the interpretation of

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2 Cronus was the Titan god of the heavens, and the youngest son of Uranus and Gaia. He swallowed his first five children as soon as they were born because he had learned that he would be overthrown by his own child.

3 *Homo sapiens* is the Latin equivalent of "human beings."

dreams, and the Oedipus complex. Developed in a work that attempts to explain the particularly uneasy and timeless dramatic import of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannos*<sup>4</sup>, the Oedipus complex is a theory that concerns a universal phenomenon in early human growth: a male child's first sexual feelings are directed toward the mother with the concomitant arousal of jealousy and hatred toward the rival of those affections, the father. The female version has been identified by Jung as the Electra complex, in which the daughter's love is toward the father, with jealousy and hatred directed toward the mother. Freud also points out that Oedipus' patricide explains a theory of our archaic heritage, as the killing and the eating of the fathers led to important tribal and social development until later a sacred animal was chosen as a substitute for the slain father.

Freud sees dreams as the expression of repressed or concealed desires. According to him, the "dream-work" of sleep has three basic functions: to condense elements, to displace elements by changing them, and to represent elements through symbols. In this regard, symbols of dreams work in much the same way as the symbols of myths. They are both manifestations of people's inner desires which have found no outlet otherwise. Myths help express what lies repressed or dormant in us because it is a taboo or because it is mere wishful-thinking. For instance, myths of incest and murder purge us of an unhealthy preoccupation with these things, whereas ritual bloodshed directs our sadistic desires into a socially acceptable, or even a useful, form.

Carl Jung, Freud's important contemporary and successor, goes beyond the connection of myths and dreams with the individual being. He interprets myths as the projection of what he calls the "collective unconscious," that is, the revelation of the continuing psychic tendencies of a society. He makes an important distinction between the personal unconscious, concerning matters of an individual's own life, and the collective unconscious, embracing political and social questions of the group. Myths contain something universal to mankind, though their emphases vary from race to race, nation to nation, and time to time. And his "collective unconscious" notion has found ample proof in the shocking similarities among such mythical accounts as the creation of the universe and mankind.

According to Jung, myths are often a highly symbolic genre. Rather than the novel's traditional realism, myths tend to favor the "archetypal." They contain mythical images or "archetypes"—traditional expressions of collective dreams, or a pattern or original model for all its subsequent and particular

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4 *Oedipus Tyrannos* is also called *Oedipus Rex*, or *Oedipus the King*.

manifestations—which have developed over thousands of years into symbols upon which the society as a whole has come to depend. These archetypes, revealed in people's tales, establish a well-known category or type, such as a story pattern: a genre such as fairy tale, action movie, or romance novel; a familiar kind of character: the hero who goes on an adventure, facing challenges, rescuing a princess, and finally rewarded with a kingdom and royal marriage; or a meaningful image: the dove, the color red, a snake, or an apple. They are also patterns of behavior that serve as exemplars, e.g. the lives of many heroes and heroines share a remarkable number of similar features that can be identified as worthy of imitation and emulation. Similarly, other kinds of concepts are to be classified among the many and varied types of Jungian archetypes embedded in our mythic heritage, such as the great Earth Mother, the supreme sky god, the wise old man, the jealous or self-sacrificial wife, and the idealistic young lover.

## 5. Ritualistic Approach

Sir J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* remains a pioneering monument in its attempts to link myths with ritual. Its critical study of the relations between myths of primitive tribes and their rituals has provided a wealth of meaningful data. His discoveries, reconfirming the Freudian and Jungian theories, demonstrate the function of mythical ritual not only as wish-fulfillment, expressing human desire for divinity, heroism, or their appeal for aid from some unknown power, but also as spontaneous, unrestrained expressions of the human mind, expressing typically unconscious fears, anxiety or desires in a disguised or bizarre shape.

## 6. Structuralist Approach

Claude Lévi-Strauss, a structuralist anthropologist, sees myths as stemming from a human need to make sense of the world and to resolve cultural dilemmas. These dilemmas are embodied in the structure of myths, which is made up of binary opposites, such as heaven/earth, father/mother, male/female, good/bad, and day/night. And the mythic number three, *triad*, is a number present throughout time as a cognitive formula of human endeavor: the three-part heroic quest/journey (departure, fulfillment, return), the tripartite of Freudian human mind, the Holy Trinity in Christianity, the three branches of American government, etc.

For Lévi-Strauss, myth is a kind of universal language. In his opinion, while the events of myths vary, the basic structures, such as grammar, are similar in myths worldwide because people are similar. Moreover, the mythical world



is a world structured the same as modern society, with its typical hierarchical organization, be it divine or human, patriarchal or matriarchal. The relations among the gods and goddesses themselves, between the divine and the mortal, and among the human beings are all based upon the notion of the structure. Wherever there is society, there is law and order. This is confirmed by myths.

In the field of literary study, Vladimir Propp, a Russian folklorist, developed a structuralist approach to myth by analyzing a select group of tales with similar features, and isolating the recurrent, linear structure manifest in them. In this pattern, Propp identified 31 functions or units of action, which have been termed *motifemes*. All these *motifemes* need not be present in one tale, but those that are will always appear in the same sequential order.

## Propp's Structure of the Magic Tale

### I. Introductory Sequence

1. Family member leaves family; the hero is introduced.
2. Interdiction: don't do X.
3. Interdiction is violated; hero does X anyway.
4. Villain's reconnaissance of hero.
5. Villain gets information about hero.
6. Villain attempts to deceive hero with trickery.
7. Hero submits to trickery—complicity.

### II. Body of the Story

8. Villain causes harm or injury through villainy; villain carries off a victim, the hero or the desired magical object, which must be retrieved. Or, a member of the hero's family lacks something, or wants something. Either of these constitutes the lack.
9. Lack is made known to hero by dispatcher.
10. Hero agrees to counteraction.
11. Hero leaves home.

### III. Donor Sequence (magical agent obtained)

12. Hero is tested or questioned.
13. Hero reacts.

*(to be continued)*