

Focus Question:

Why was Hercules a hero? Which of his actions were heroic, and which were not?

Book Summary

Text Type: Fiction/Myth

Greek and Roman mythology is exciting and fascinating for students. *The Labors of Hercules* tells the story of the hero Hercules and how he overcame many difficult challenges in his life. Students will be engaged with this riveting story and the accompanying detailed illustrations. This book can also be used to teach students how to identify problems and solutions as well as to retell the events of a story in sequence.

The book and lesson are also available for levels X and Z1.



Lesson Essentials

Instructional Focus

- ☐ Retell story events to understand text
- ☐ Analyze problem and solution
- ☐ Describe information provided by a glossary
- ☐ Identify and use inflectional ending *-ing*
- ☐ Place words in alphabetical order

Materials

- ☐ Book: *The Labors of Hercules* (copy for each student)
- ☐ Problem and solution, inflectional ending *-ing*, alphabetical order worksheets
- ☐ Discussion cards
- ☐ Book quiz
- ☐ Retelling rubric

Vocabulary

Boldface vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on VocabularyA-Z.com.

• Words to Know

Story critical: *absolution* (n.), *demigod* (n.), *feats* (n.), *immortalized* (v.), *ingenuity* (n.), *penance* (n.)

Enrichment: *adversaries* (n.), *allure* (n.), *boon* (n.), *cunning* (n.), *fortitude* (n.), *guile* (n.), *nymphs* (n.), *pantheon* (n.), *precocious* (adj.), *prudence* (n.), *pyre* (n.), *tenacity* (n.)

- **Academic vocabulary:** *allow* (v.), *cause* (v.), *final* (adj.), *goal* (n.), *return* (v.), *solution* (n.)

Guiding the Reading

Before Reading

Build Background

- Write on the board the following sentence: *Leading an army is a herculean task*. Underline the word *herculean* and ask students if they know what it means. Explain that *herculean* means difficult or hard to do, or requiring strength or courage.
- Explain to students that word *herculean* comes from the Greek and Roman hero Hercules, who had to perform twelve very difficult tasks that required strength and courage. Have students use the word *herculean* in oral sentences with a partner. Invite partners to share their sentences with the class.

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of *The Labors of Hercules*. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name, illustrator's name).

Introduce the Reading Strategy: Retell

Explain to students that engaged readers stop now and then while they are reading to retell in their mind what has happened so far in the story. Stopping to retell the events of the story helps readers understand and remember what they are reading. Explain that when retelling a story or event, it is important that the details are explained in order, or sequence. Using a book that the class has previously read, demonstrate how to retell a story in order. Invite volunteers to help with the retelling. Encourage students to use transitional words such as *first*, *next*, *then*, and *finally* when retelling a story.

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

Introduce the Comprehension Skill:

Problem and solution

- Write the words *problem* and *solution* on the board. Review or explain that a *problem* is something that is difficult to deal with or hard to understand and must be worked out or solved. A *solution* is an act or a process of solving a problem. Ask students to share examples of a problem they faced and how they found a solution for, or solved, the problem.
- Review with students a book the class has previously read. Have students work with a partner to determine the problem and solution in the story. Have students preview the table of contents and illustrations in *The Labors of Hercules*. Have them predict a problem and solution that Hercules might face based on the title, table of contents, and illustrations.

Vocabulary

Have students turn to the “Words to Know” box on the copyright page. Discuss each word with students. Then, have students turn to the glossary on page 19. Explain that the glossary provides definitions for the vocabulary words in the book. Point out the use of each content word and academic vocabulary word in the book, and then use each word in a different model sentence. Have students work in groups to create posters for these words. Have them include on each poster the word and its part of speech, the definition, the word in an example sentence, and a picture illustrating the meaning of the word.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out more about Hercules. Write the Focus Question on the board. Invite students to look for evidence in the book to support their answer to the question.
- Have students make a small question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. These can be addressed in a future discussion.

During Reading

Text-Dependent Questions

As students read the book, monitor their understanding with the following questions. Encourage students to support their answers by citing evidence from the book.

- *Why was Hercules’s life difficult from the time he was an infant?* (level 1) page 5
- *Why does Hercules need to perform labors for King Eurystheus of Mycenae?* (level 1) page 6
- *Which skills were most important for Hercules to demonstrate when capturing the Ceryneian Hind?* (level 3) pages 9–10

- *What would have happened if Hercules had not recognized that Atlas was trying to trick him?* (level 3) pages 14–16
- *How would Hercules’s life been different if Hera hadn’t interfered with it?* (level 3) multiple pages
- *Why is Hercules called an immortal hero?* (level 3) multiple pages
- *Which of Hercules’s labors were heroic, and which were not? Why?* (level 3) multiple pages

Text Features: Glossary

Explain that a glossary helps readers learn the definitions of the words in the book. Have students work with a partner to review the glossary on page 19. Ask students: *How are the vocabulary words arranged in a glossary? Can you define the word boon? On which page can you find the word guile?* Have students review other vocabulary words in the book and discuss in groups where they would be found and how they know. Invite volunteers to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.

Skill Review

- Have students retell the story from the beginning to a partner. Listen to see whether they include the events in detail and in the correct order. Encourage students to use transition words such as first, next, then, and finally when retelling the story.
- Have students work in groups to periodically review the problems Hercules faced throughout the story. Have groups discuss Hercules’s solutions to these problems and evaluate whether or not those solutions were heroic.
- Model identifying problem and solution.
Think-aloud: *The story of Hercules’s labors has many examples of problems and solutions. In the introduction, we read that when Hercules was a baby, Hera, the wife of his father, Zeus, sent snakes to murder him in his crib. This was the first problem Hercules faced in his life. Hercules strangled the snakes and survived, which was the solution to his problem. I will continue reading in order to identify all of the problems Hercules faced and the solutions to those problems.*
- Model how to complete the **problem-and-solution worksheet**. Have students identify the problems and solutions of Hercules’s labors. Then, have students evaluate those problems and solutions in order to determine if his actions were heroic.

After Reading

Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

Skill Review

Graphic Organizer: Problem and solution

Review the problem-and-solution worksheet that students completed. Have students share their work in groups. Invite volunteers to share with the rest of the class the problems and solutions they chose, and whether they thought Hercules's actions were heroic. Have students defend their answers to the class.

Comprehension Extension

Discussion cards covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided for extension activities.

Response to Focus Question

Have students cite specific evidence from the book to answer the Focus Question. (Answers will vary. Students should explain why Hercules is a hero [he overcame many challenges in his life], evaluate Hercules's actions, and determine whether or not they find them heroic.)

Comprehension Checks

- Book quiz
- Retelling rubric

Book Extension Activities

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics:

Inflectional ending -ing

- Write the following sentence on the board: *I am learning about Hercules today.* Have students identify the two verbs in the sentence. Underline the verb *learning* and have students discuss its meaning. Point out that *learning* is a form of the verb *learn*.
- Review or explain that *inflectional endings* are word parts added to the end of a base word that modify the meaning of the original word. Explain that the letters *ing* are added to the verb to indicate that the action described is in the process of happening.
- Write the following sentence on the board: *I am using many comprehension skills to better understand this book.* Discuss the meaning of the verb *using*, and ask students to identify the root word (*use*). Point out to students that when a verb ends with the letter *e*, such as *use*, the letter *e* must be dropped before adding the inflectional ending *-ing*.

- **Check for understanding:** Write several verbs on the board (*take, sing, yell, ride, scream*, and so on) and have students work with a partner to add the inflectional ending *-ing* to each word. Have partners share their answers with the class. Discuss with students the correct spelling and meaning of each verb.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [inflectional-ending -ing worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers.

Word Work: Alphabetical order

- Write the words *nymph* and *nymphs* on the board. Point out that the words begin with the same letter (*Nn*). Review the process of putting a list of words in alphabetical order. Remind students that if the first letter of each word is the same, they must compare the second letters instead. If the second letter of each word is the same, they continue to compare the third letters, and so on, until they find two letters that are different. Model how to list *nymph* and *nymphs* in alphabetical order.
- Write the words *adversary* and *adversaries* on the board. Have a volunteer explain which word would appear first in alphabetical order (*adversaries*) and why. Point out that all of the letters in *adversary* and *adversaries* are the same before the ninth letter. Point out that alphabetically the (*i*) in *adversaries* comes before the (*y*) in *adversary*.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the words *ingenuity* and *ingenious* on the board. Have the students write the words in alphabetical order and explain their thinking on a separate piece of paper. Discuss their answers with the class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [alphabetical order worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers.

Connections

- See the back of the book for cross-curricular extension ideas.