

The Literature of Ancient Greece

The people of ancient Greece are still recognized today for their contributions to literature. They were responsible for creating many genres of literature. There are pieces of this work that are a part of our reading today.

As literature became a part of life in ancient Greece, the purpose was often entertainment. During this time, citizens often listened instead of read. Poetry would be recited, and plays would be performed. It is rare that they were written down, they would most often be shared orally.

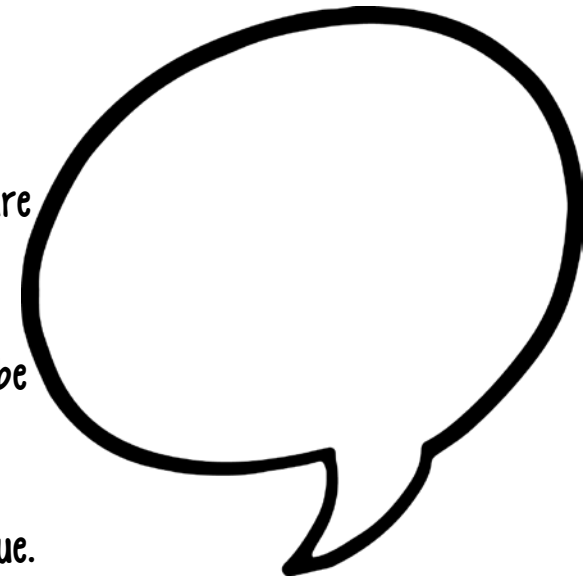
One famous storyteller of the time period was Aesop. Many children today still read Aesop's fables that have been passed down over time. The stories about Aesop's life may or may not be true. Much of what we believe to be true about him is based on legend. It is often said that he was a slave who was freed because his owner was convinced that his ability to write fables was powerful. (While most say he was from Greece, some historians claim he came from Egypt or Africa.) He is said to have told fables and these were then passed down from elders to children.

Homer was a poet who is known for the telling of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Because these were not written pieces but pieces that were recited, he is considered a composer rather than an author. Some people today question if he was the creator of both pieces. They were oral stories that were told and then transcribed decades or centuries later.

Today, their beliefs about the gods have become another source of entertainment in our society. The myths have been passed down and written as popular stories. The characters in many pieces of popular literature, such as the Percy Jackson series, have evolved from Greek mythology.

There are many ways that the literature of ancient Greece has influenced our society today.

Why is it difficult to know who wrote many of the pieces of literature mentioned in the reading?



Fables

A fable is a genre of literature that first appeared in ancient Greece. The most famous storyteller of fables was Aesop. While there is much debate over his existence, there are still features of the fables attributed to him that are consistent.

Aesop was an oral storyteller. He did not record the stories he is said to have written. Like many other stories at the time, they were told and passed down through families. Even though the truth behind Aesop is debated, the fables have survived and are still told today.

Fables have been popular over time as a way to teach moral lessons. They are usually short stories that feature animals who act like humans. You might also find plants, inanimate objects, or forces of nature with human qualities. Most often, the setting is outside and the story includes two to three characters. At the end, there is often a moral which is shared in a single sentence. While reading, children learn how following the moral will be a benefit or what the consequences of not following the moral will be.

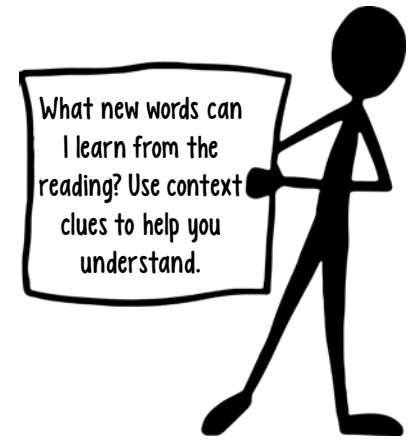
Character traits of animals in fables are often common. For example, a wolf is usually portrayed as greedy or dishonest while a fox is concerned sly or sneaky. A lion is frequently shown as have strength or a big ego.

One of the most popular fables told throughout time has been the Tortoise and the Hare. The moral of this story is "Slow and steady wins the race." This can also be identified as the theme of the story.

Features of Fables:

Use context clues to help you read and understand new words.

1. Highlight three words that are important in the reading.
2. What clues do you see around the words? What other words help you understand the meaning?
3. Write what you think each word means. Check to see if your definition is correct.



word	context clues	definition

