The Three-Headed Beast

Only a hero can defeat the Chimera monster. Is Bellerophon up for it?

About the Play

Levels:
Guided Reading Level: S
DRA Level: 40

Learning Objectives:
Students will determine the series of events that lead to Bellerophon becoming a hero in the Greek myth of Bellerophon and the Chimera.

Key Skills: sequence of events, key idea, character, character's motivation, text evidence, key details, plot, theme

Content-Area Connections:
Social Studies: Ancient Greece
Social and Life Skills: growth mindset, identifying solutions for personal and social problems

Standards Correlations:
This article and lesson support the following Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.5, R.7, W.3, SL.1, SL.2, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Storyworks Digital.

Your Teaching Resources

Use these powerful teaching tools for in-class or remote instruction.
Find them in this story’s Resources tab.

Audio
- Editor Read-Aloud
- Text-to-Speech

Video
- All about Greek mythology

Slideshow
- Vocabulary
- Text Features

Differentiation
- Lower-Level Activities and Quiz

Skill-Building Activities to share digitally, print, or project
- Vocabulary
- Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking Questions*
- Choice Board
- Core Skills Workout:
  - Sequence of Events
  - Text Features
  - Comprehension Quiz*

*Available on two levels
Step-by-Step Lesson
Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

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1. Preparing to Read

Build Knowledge, Introduce Vocabulary, and Set a Purpose for Reading

- Before reading, poll the class to see if students are familiar with Greek mythology. Then show our dazzling video All about Greek mythology to build knowledge about Greek myths and why they’re relevant today.
- Introduce vocabulary by showing or digitally sharing our Vocabulary Slideshow. Follow up before or after reading with the Vocabulary Skill Builder. Highlighted words: hysterical, harness, gleam, evades, lure, glinting, dissolves, lunges
- Call on a volunteer to read the Up Close box on page 23.
- Finally, before reading, listen to our Pronunciation Guide as a class to learn how to pronounce the names of certain characters and places in the play.

2. Reading the Play

- Assign parts and read the play aloud as a class or in groups. You can also listen to an Editor Read-Aloud of the play!
- After reading, put students in small groups to discuss the close-reading questions. Then talk about the critical-thinking questions as a class.
Close-Reading Questions

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form from the Resources tab.

1. **Read the Prologue. Who was Bellerophon, who were his parents, and why did people have high expectations of him?** (key idea) Bellerophon was a young man who lived long ago in ancient Greece in a kingdom called Lycia. His mother, Eurynome, was a wise woman who loved her son. His father was Poseidon, god of the sea. People had high expectations of Bellerophon because his father was a god, and the children of other gods had done great things, like defeating horrible monsters.

2. **Based on Scene 1, what are three words you would use to describe King Iobates? Explain the words you selected.** (character) Students may choose words like evil, jealous, scared. Iobates is evil because he takes joy from other people's sorrow; he appears happy that a horrible monster is destroying the nearby kingdom of Caria. He is jealous and scared because he thinks that Bellerophon wants to take his throne, though he has no reason to believe this.

3. **How does Bellerophon feel about fighting the Chimera in Scenes 2 and 3? How do you know? How do his feelings change from Scene 2 to Scene 3?** (character/text evidence) Bellerophon is clearly frightened about fighting the Chimera. When in Scene 2, King Iobates selects Bellerophon to defeat the monster, Bellerophon's reaction is “Ummm . . . Mom?” He likely hopes his mom will step in and talk the king out of it. In Scene 3, Bellerophon is “hysterical.” He exclaims, “I can't defeat a three-headed, fire-breathing, flying beast!” He feels that killing the Chimera is impossible. Finally, at the end of Scene 3, his mom reminds him that his father is Poseidon, which gives Bellerophon a little bit of hope.

4. **Reread Scenes 4 and 5. What steps does Bellerophon take to prepare to fight the Chimera? Be sure to list the steps in order.** (sequence of events) In Scene 4, Bellerophon visits the seer Polyidus, who tells Bellerophon that he needs the magical flying horse, Pegasus. Then Polyidus advises Bellerophon that to tame Pegasus he will need to visit the Temple of Athena. In Scene 5, Bellerophon visits the Temple of Athena, and Athena gives him a golden harness.

5. **In Scene 5, why does Athena decide to help Bellerophon?** (character’s motivation) Bellerophon’s father, Poseidon, asks Athena to help his son. Athena feels bad for Bellerophon because he’s being forced to fight the Chimera by the horrible King Iobates, and she sees him “tossing and turning in his sleep.” Though Athena doesn’t like Poseidon, she decides to help Bellerophon because “It’s not his fault his father is annoying.”

6. **Reread Scene 7. How does Bellerophon defeat the Chimera? Be sure to explain what happens in the same order as in the scene.** (sequence of events) At first, Bellerophon is having a hard time defeating the monster. His arrows bounce off the Chimera’s thick skin. As a result, the Chimera gets angry and shoots more fire onto the city of Caria. So Bellerophon decides to lure the monster away from the city to the ocean, where the beast’s flames are ineffective. Bellerophon asks Pegasus to circle the monster as fast as he can. The Chimera gets dizzy, stumbles, and falls into the sea, where it dissolves.

7. **How do Pegasus and Bellerophon work together as a team in Scene 7?** (key details) Bellerophon has a moment of self-doubt when he realizes that his arrows are only making the
Chimera angrier, which causes the monster to spit more fire on Caria. Pegasus neighs to encourage Bellerophon to not give up. Bellerophon then comes up with the idea to fly to the ocean. He instructs Pegasus to fly there, and together they defeat the Chimera.

8. In Scene 8, how does Pegasus help Bellerophon one more time? (plot) When Bellerophon and Pegasus triumphantly go back to Lycia, King Iobates tries to kill Bellerophon with his sword. Bellerophon and his mother leap onto Pegasus, who flies away.

9. In Scene 8, Bellerophon says, “I couldn't have done it without you, Mom. Or you, Pegasus.” Eurynome adds, “Or the gods!” Explain why Bellerophon could not have defeated the Chimera without help. (key idea) At the beginning of his adventure, Bellerophon has no idea where to start. His mom gives him the idea to see Polyidus, who advises him to go to the Temple of Athena. Athena gives him the golden harness so that he can tame Pegasus. Pegasus helps him to defeat the Chimera. Without assistance, Bellerophon could not have defeated the Chimera.

Critical-Thinking Questions
The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form from the Resources tab.

10. What is the big idea of this myth? (theme) Answers will vary. Students will likely write about how working with others can help one face life’s challenges. Bellerophon could not have defeated the Chimera without help from his mom, Polyidus, Athena, and Pegasus. Alternatively, students may write about the importance of persisting when faced with a challenge. Throughout the play, there were several points when Bellerophon was afraid or unsure of what to do next. At one point, Bellerophon thought about giving up. However, he decided to continue his quest and was able to defeat the Chimera.

11. How does Bellerophon change throughout the play? (character) Bellerophon grows from a boy into a hero. At the beginning of the play, Bellerophon is content “just riding horses, shooting his bow and arrow, fishing.” When King Iobates asks him to kill the Chimera, his initial reaction is fear and anxiety. However, Bellerophon rises to the challenge. Though he faces a moment of self-doubt when his arrows are unable to stop the Chimera, he persists with his quest. Showing cleverness and bravery, he is able to defeat the monster.

3. Skill Building and Writing

Featured Skill: Sequence of Events

- Assign the Sequence of Events Skill Builder or assign the Slide Deck. Have students complete it independently or together with a partner. This skill builder will help prepare students to respond to the writing prompt on page 27.
4. Differentiate and Customize

For Striving Readers
The fast-paced nature of this play may make it difficult for students to keep track of key events. Ask students to make a storyboard. Give them a piece of paper divided into four sections on one side and four sections on the back. Explain that each section is for a different scene in the play (minus the Prologue). Students should label the top of each section with the scene number. Ask students to draw a picture for each scene, illustrating what they feel is the most important part. Students should provide a caption at the bottom of each picture.

For Advanced Readers
Have students write about what Bellerophon and Pegasus’s next adventure might be! Will they have any more run-ins with the evil King Iobates? Will they be called upon to defeat another monster? Will the gods continue to help them?

For Multilingual Learners
This story uses some idiomatic words and phrases that might be unfamiliar to multilingual learners: trouble was brewing (something bad was about to happen), flicker of hope (a little bit of hope), drifts off to sleep (gradually falls asleep), I owe you one (I will do something for you in the future to repay you for your help), I come in peace (I have friendly intentions). As you read the story with students, pause to make sure they understand these expressions.

5. Can’t-Miss Teaching Extras

Explore the Storyworks Archive Are your students loving stories from the ancient world? Find other read-aloud play adaptations of Greek myths such as “King Midas,” “The Curse of Winter” (Persephone and Demeter), and “The Snake-Haired Monster” (Perseus and Medusa).

Get to Know the Gods This article from Kids News Australia provides information on each of the major Greek gods and goddesses. Scroll down to hear the article read aloud (in a fabulous Australian accent).

Meet More Monsters The chimera is just one of 20 mythological creatures featured in the wonderful illustrated book Greece! Rome! Monsters! Click here for a video read-aloud of the book. (Note that this video starts with a short ad.)

Conquer Your Fears It’s not likely your students will have to battle a mythological beast anytime soon, but other scary situations may arise. This video from Rocket Kids has some great advice about having courage and conquering fears. (Note that this video starts with a short ad.)