JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS

TEACHER RESOURCE PACK

FOR TEACHERS WORKING WITH PUPILS IN YEARS 3 – 6
JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS
FROM 27 SEP – 20 OCT 2016
FOR PUPILS IN YEARS 3 – 6

JOIN JASON ON HIS QUEST FOR THE GOLDEN FLEECE.

Banished as a baby, Jason is back and ready to claim his rightful throne. In order to prove himself he is sent on an epic quest to find the golden Fleece. He assembles a crew of mighty Argonauts and they set sail aboard the Argo for the ultimate adventure.

Join us for this exhilarating retelling of the classic Greek myth, as our hero’s destiny is placed in the hands of the gods.
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We are currently developing the full sequence of classroom activities with our partner school. They will be added to this pack by July 2016.
INTRODUCTION

This pack is for teachers bringing pupils to see *Jason and the Argonauts* in autumn 2016.

The Unicorn production of *Jason and the Argonauts* will be a fresh, action-packed and dynamic new version of this favourite Greek myth. Jason, with his crew the Argonauts, sets off on a classic quest, sailing across the seas to unknown lands. Together they face a series of challenges which they overcome with bravery, ingenuity and a little bit of help from the Gods.

The classroom activities (which will be added to the pack by mid July) are designed to support and extend pupils’ visit to the theatre and offer teachers ways to pick up on and explore the themes in the play, before and after a visit. They will use drama and storytelling as ways of exploring ideas that are relevant to the play and to support National Curriculum requirements:

> ‘All pupils should be enabled to participate in and gain knowledge, skills and understanding associated with the artistic practice of drama. Pupils should be able to adopt, create and sustain a range of roles, responding appropriately to others in role. They should have opportunities to improvise, devise and script drama for one another and a range of audiences, as well as to rehearse, refine, share and respond thoughtfully to drama and theatre performances.’ National Curriculum

The resources will also provide National Curriculum links at Key Stage Two: to Literacy through the development of spoken word and writing tasks, to History by connecting to learning around the Ancient Greeks and to SMCS aspects of learning.

There will be a free teacher CPD day for *Jason and the Argonauts* on **Tue 20 Sep from 10am – 4pm** where teachers can find out more about the show and gain practical experience of the classroom activities, before leading them with a class.

To find out more about the CPD or to book your place, email schools@unicorntheatre.com.
ABOUT THE STORY

Jason, hidden away as a child to avoid being killed by King Pelias, returns to Iolcus as a young man to claim the throne. Unbeknown to him Jason is helped by the Goddess Hera, who wants King Pelias punished.

The King refuses to hand over his crown, but instead decides to set Jason an impossible task; to retrieve the Golden Fleece from Colchis and return it to its rightful place in Iolcus. If he can return the fleece, King Pelias will hand the crown on to him.

And so begins one of the most famous adventures of all time.

Firstly, Jason builds the Argo; a ship with fifty sets of oars and a prow crafted from wood taken from Zeus’ sacred groves, blessed by Hera and Athene. Jason calls for other heroes to join him on his adventure and hundreds apply. He chooses the best 49 men, including the great hero Heracles, and together they set off into the unknown.

Along the way there are many tests, obstacles and adventures; they overcome the horrific harpies who are tormenting King Phineus, they out-wit the great clashing rocks at the mouth of the Bosphorus and they survive the pond nymphs that try to lure them to a watery death.

Finally arriving at Colchis they meet King Aeetes who refuses to hand over the Golden Fleece.

However his daughter, Medea, struck by Eros’ arrow, falls in love with Jason and helps him. First she persuades her father to set Jason a task by which he can win the fleece. Then Medea uses her potions to help Jason complete her father’s challenge; to plough a field with two fire breathing bulls and overcome the terrifying soldiers which grow out of the dragon’s teeth he’s planted.

When her father goes back on his promise and refuses to hand over the Golden Fleece, Medea helps Jason steal it from the temple of Apollo, where it is guarded by a great dragon. Together they then escape on the Argo, pursued by King Aeetes’ army.

On their journey back, Jason and Medea, helped by Aphrodite, marry in order to escape King Aeete’s army and finally return to Iolcus triumphant.

This production will follow Jason and his Argonauts on their adventures and explore the way in which the Gods, from high up on Mount Olympus, both help and hinder them in their quest.

THE ROLE OF THE GODS IN ANCIENT GREEK SOCIETY

The activities that will be added to this pack will provide ways into exploring Ancient Greece, with a particular focus on the Greek Myths and the role of the Gods in Greek life; what these Gods meant to the Greek people and how they understood and worshipped them.

In contrast to monotheistic religions there were a host of Greek Gods who resembled a large ruling family or monarchy. All the Gods and Goddesses were related to each other and in many ways they behaved like an unruly family with many disagreements, alliances and petty jealousies.
Each God would have responsibility or jurisdiction in one aspect of life; Zeus, King of the Olympian Gods ruled the heavens and had the powerful thunderbolt as his weapon, Poseidon ruled the seas, Athena was the goddess of war and wisdom, Aphrodite the goddess of love, and Demeter the goddess of all the fruits and grains that were produced on Earth.

Keeping the Gods happy was an important aspect of Greek daily life and displeasing the Gods was easily done. Festivals were organised, temples built and sacrifices made to different Gods at different times of the year. Often people wouldn’t know how or why they had wronged a God but had suffered some misfortune as a result of something they had done, or something they had neglected to do.

Sometimes people would travel to the Oracle at Delphi to see if they could find out what the Gods wanted, whether they had upset them in any way and what they could do to make things better. They would also go to the Oracle to hear what the future might hold for them and then see what they could do to avoid or change their fortune if a prophesy was unwelcome.

The drama activities will provide detail about the ruling Gods on Mount Olympus; Zeus, his wife Hera, his daughter Aphrodite and his brothers Poseidon and Hades - all who have important roles to play in the fate of Jason and his Argonauts.
INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTORS
THOMAS ECCLESHARE AND VALENTINA CESCHI FROM DANCING BRICK

WHAT IS IT IN THE STORY THAT MAKES IT APPEALING TO AUDIENCES TODAY?

We are trying to find something very relatable and human in the story, in a way that makes the idea of the Golden Fleece something quite playful; it is a quest, an adventure.

We want people to go away from the show feeling like they’ve been on an amazing adventure with some really fun characters that they can relate to, and that ultimately the main character and his mates achieved what they set out to achieve and they learnt something on the way.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MAIN THEMES IN THE STORY?

Adventure, bravery and pushing yourself. Jason starts off thinking: ‘I’m going do this, I’m going to do it on my own’, but he finds out he can’t do it on his own, he needs his friends, as well as his resources and resourcefulness, to get there in the end. Otherwise it’s just ‘Jason’ and not ‘Jason and the Argonauts’. I feel like there is a theme throughout that is about friendship - it is Jason who initiates getting everyone together.

We have to find out what Jason’s goal is; why does he want the fleece and what does that say about his character at the beginning? Does he still want it at the end? And if so, is it for the same reason?

I guess this story is about destiny too, about fulfilling your destiny, and Jason’s destiny is to reclaim his father’s throne, whether he knows that or not. I think I’d like the show to question destiny and fate. Jason learns that actually he’s in charge and that we’re all in charge of our own destiny. On the journey he learns that even though the Gods are going to try all this stuff, it’s actually through his actions and choices that he succeeds and that’s an empowering thing for a young person to find out.

I like the fact that in the end, Jason and his mates have done this themselves. They haven’t done it because it’s been predicted, or the Gods made them do it, they’ve done it and achieved it because of their own efforts. I like how empowering that is.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE GODS AND THE WAYS THEY GET INVOLVED IN JASON’S JOURNEY?

The Gods are there to play with the Argonauts a little bit. There is a sense of us versus them, a bit like you might get as a child with the adult world. The interesting thing about the Greek Gods
compared to more modern gods is that they are so human, they’re so petty and childish. I think that’s something that might be reflected in the show; the humour around Zeus or Hera at times helping them and at times hindering them, but all of the time playing with them.

**HOW YOU WILL MAKE THE SHOW? WHAT IS YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS?**

We try to find the themes of the story that we really like or respond to, or find the image to put on the stage that sums up or conjures up those themes in a physical or visceral way. For this story it will be about how to conjure the spirit of adventure, play, team work and physical challenge. It’s all these things that Jason is doing, so it’s trying to find a theatrical way to work so the actors on stage are not pretending to do it, they’re actually doing it.

We want to try and create a situation where the four actors are not pretending to be ancient Greeks on an adventure, but they are people in a space having an actual, risky, fun and physical journey. Once we’ve done that it will be about using techniques like improvisation and storyboarding, then integrating music and design. This is what we describe as the devising process, so that everyone involved - the actors, designer and composer - all have an equal say in what the characters do or how the story is told.

We will be going back to the idea of play; being in the room with each other, responding to music and playing and being true to that situation. We won’t have a script before we start. We might have bullet points of what happens next in the story, but we wouldn’t script it. We’ll allow the script to come out of improvisation, letting the actors genuinely imagine themselves in that situation and play that situation. So it is a little like make-believe and the simple things that you do as a kid when you play.
The activities - which will be added to this pack by mid July 2016 - are designed to capture children’s imaginations and increase motivation to learn. They will offer a range of possible ways to link with your classroom priorities.

Our teacher resources and CPD support teachers in embedding drama in their curriculum planning. Working through drama allows children to explore things that matter to them within a fictional context, draw on their prior knowledge and apply it to new situations, develop language as they give expression to new understandings and develop emotional intelligence and critical thinking as they see things from different perspectives. It also allows the children to take responsibility, make decisions, solve problems and explore possibilities from within the drama.

**ACTIVITIES WILL INCLUDE:**

A drama sequence which will bring to life the world of the Gods on Mount Olympus and their relationship to humans on earth. These activities will enhance children’s understanding of the way in which the Gods and Goddesses play with Jason and the Argonauts’ lives; helping them at times, hindering them at others and will connect to the theme of fate and self determination in the play. The sequence will explore:

- The Palace on Mount Olympus; including the thrones of the twelve ruling Gods and Goddesses lead by Zeus and his wife Hera and the council chamber where the Gods decided the fate of humans. Through creating Mount Olympus, children will understand more about the role of the Gods for the Ancient Greeks and how they could affect the fate of ordinary humans as well as great heroes like Jason and his Argonauts.

- The story of the creation of the first humans and how Prometheus defied Zeus to give them fire.

- The three fates; Colchis, Lachesis and Athropos, who spin, measure and cut the thread of life for each human.

- The Oracle at Delphi; the place where humans go to hear the word of the Gods and prophesies of the future.

These activities are currently in development with our partner school and will be available before the end of term. Please email schools@unicorntheatre.com if you would like notification as soon as they are online.
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A Unicorn / Dancing Brick production

Resource pack written by Catherine Greenwood