

## A Curriculum Guide to

The Goddess Girls Series

By Joan Holub and Suzanne Williams

### **Theme 1: Attributes**

The discussion questions and activities below correlate to the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.3-5.3, 7) (W.3-5.2) (SL.3-5.1).

#### **Discussion One: Attributes Make Me Recognizable to Others**

The goddessgirls and godboys each have attributes that make them unique and recognizable. This discussion examines three kinds of attributes—portable, physical, and mental. Explore these types of attributes with students using the following sets of questions.

- **QUESTION SET 1: Portable**—Sometimes these attributes are things that the goddessgirls and godboys carry. Can you name one of these? What characteristics do these portable attributes symbolize?

Possible Answer: Bow and quiver symbolize Artemis as a huntress. The trident, a fish spear, references Poseidon as a god of water.

Some goddessgirls and godboys have pets, which are always at their sides. These animals also help us recognize them. Which of the goddessgirls and godboys have animals?

Possibly answer: Artemis has her dogs and deer with her. Hades and Cerberus are often together.

- **QUESTION SET 2: Physical**—Attributes may also take the form of physical appearance. Can you name a goddessgirl with a particular physical attribute?

Possible Answer: Medusa's snake hair, Aphrodite's beauty.

How do other goddessgirls, godboys and mortals respond to these physical attributes? What do you think your physical attributes are? How do other students respond to them?

- **QUESTION SET 3: Mental**—Sometimes the attribute is not physical or portable, but, instead, is mental. Can you think of an attribute that is mental? These attributes are usually revealed in action. For example, Athena is smart and this attribute is revealed by how well she does in school. Medusa is mean. Your attribute might be kindness. This attribute is revealed by how you treat others.

Related Activity: A Symbol of Me [Writing, Art Making]

**Writing:** After students have discussed their attributes, have each student write one autobiographical paragraph using attributes as descriptors (portable, physical, and mental).

**Introduction:** Besides written language, what is another way to represent something about yourself? For example, Zeus signs his letters with a thunderbolt. What symbols represent other characters in the Goddess Girls books? What would you pick as your symbol?

**Art Making:** Have each student design a symbol that represents his or her attribute. For example, Aphrodite might create a heart as a symbol that represents her. Using scissors, cut out a small version of the symbol in thin foam and in cardboard. Tape or glue the foam to the cardboard. Attach the cardboard side of the symbol to a cork with glue, making a handheld stamp. Press the stamp into a pad of nontoxic ink, and then press the inked stamp onto a piece of paper as a test. Write a sentence and sign it with a symbol using the stamp.

**Discussion Two: Attributes in Art**

Images of goddessgirls and godboys have been created by artists for centuries. The illustrator of the Goddess Girls series of books, Glen Hanson, created the images of the characters from the descriptions in the books. Artists from Ancient Greece and Rome to the present have depicted gods and goddesses in their art. Below are ways to discuss attributes through art.

- **QUESTION SET 1: Goddess Girls Covers**—Show students the covers of the Goddess Girls books. Have groups of students (5 or 6) pick one of the covers and discuss how they know which characters are featured in the book by the illustration. Ask them to point out any physical or portable attributes. If there is time, have them read a passage in the book that describes the character and discuss with the class his or her attributes.
  - What does the description tell about the appearance of the character?
  - How does this passage describe the likes and dislikes of the character?
  - Does the action indicate something about the character?

Related Activity: Book Cover Theater [Drama]

Have each group pick a passage in the book that describes an action. (Passages can be assigned.) Each group will create a tableau of the action. In a short ten-minute rehearsal time, the members of the group will determine how to represent the characters and a very short action sequence. Their performance will begin with a tableau (all characters frozen). Then they can move for fifteen seconds to demonstrate the action. Next, they freeze again. The other groups guess what is happening in the passage. This activity allows students to “become” the cover of a Goddess Girls book.

- QUESTION SET 2: Goddesses and Gods in Art—Artists have created many famous works of art depicting the goddessgirls and godboys as adults. Present several images of goddesses and gods in art.

Suggestions: Sculpted heads of Aphrodite, Museum of Fine Arts; *Hades with Cerberus* from the Heraklion Museum of Archaeological on the island of Crete; *Diana of Versailles*—a Roman copy of a Greek sculpture of Artemis—in the Louvre, Paris; *Neptune’s Fountain*, Rome; *Pallas Athene*, Gustav Klimt, 1898, Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, Vienna; and *Persephone*, 2013, mural by Edward Rawson, Lucas Stock, Bonnie Schindler, Chris Rubisch, Sarah Altwerger, and Shelley Steffey in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Discuss the images and their relationship to passages in the books. Sample questions are below.

- Aphrodite is the goddessgirl of beauty. Do you think these sculptures represent someone who is beautiful?
- These sculptures were created in Ancient Greece. This was one artist’s opinion about beauty. Do different cultures have different ideas about beauty? Do different generations?
- How do you know that this sculpture is Artemis? [*Diana of Versailles*]. This is another example of Ancient Art. What do you think a modern version of Artemis would look like? How would you describe a Disney animated character of Artemis?
- Find a passage in one of the Goddess Girls books that describes Poseidon. What would this sculpture say if it came to life? What would it sound like?
- What did you learn about Athena from this painting that you did not know?

Related Activity: Goddess Girl Mural [Community Awareness, Art Making]

The Persephone mural in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was created with the help of students to beautify their neighborhood. Looking at photographs of the mural, discuss with students the ways in which the mural helps make the neighborhood look better. Ask students why the artists chose Persephone. Choose a building in your school’s neighborhood. Make an outline of the side of the building on a long piece of craft paper or newsprint. Cut the paper into long sections and place on the floor. Assign sections to predetermined groups of students. Have students choose a goddessgirl to feature on their section. They must justify why the goddessgirl would be appropriate for the mural in the neighborhood. Have students make a very loose sketch of the goddessgirl and her attributes on the paper. Tape the sections back together. Discuss each section and how they work together or not. Determine how color and line could link the sections to each other and to the neighborhood. [Many communities have mural projects and local muralists. If possible, extend this activity into a community project with the help of local artists.]

**Theme 2: Communication**

The discussion questions and activities below correlate to the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.3, 5.1, 2) (RL.4.1, 4) (W.3-5.3) (SL.3-5.1).

### **Discussion One: Let's Communicate**

The characters in the Goddess Girls books communicate in ways different than mortals do. Explore communication through the following sets of questions.

- **QUESTION SET 1: Immortal communication**—In what ways do the Goddess Girls characters communicate with one another?

Possible Answers: Silent finger count is used by the goddessgirls during Beast-ology class hunts. Metis talks to Zeus in his head. The twins, Apollo and Artemis, communicate through images shared through thoughts. Pandora asks questions. When PHEME speaks, a “talk bubble” appears.

- **QUESTION SET 2: Communication and emotions**—How do the characters communicate when they are angry? How do they communicate when they are happy? Give an example from the Goddess Girls books. How do you communicate when you are angry? How about when you are happy?

#### Related Activity: Communication Imagination—[Writing]

If you were a goddessgirl or godboy, how would you communicate? Pick one character and create a way that the character would communicate. Write a paragraph describing the way the character communicates. For example, how would Poseidon communicate underwater? How does Medusa communicate with her snakes?

- **QUESTION SET 3: Silent Communication**—How does Artemis describe a beast to the other goddessgirls during a hunt in Beast-ology class?

Answer: She uses a silent finger count in a particular sequence.

If a Geryon is described as one finger, two fingers, three, four, six, the beast is a one-headed, two-armed, three-bodied, four-winged, and six-legged beast. How would you describe Cerberus, the beast that guards the Underworld, using the silent finger count?

Possible Answer: 3, 0, 1, 0, 4 = three heads, no arms, one body, no wings, and four legs.

What is a way that humans communicate through hand symbols?

Possible Answer: Sign language.

#### Related Activity: Sign Language [Communication]

Choose a simple sentence from the Goddess Girls books. [For example, “Welcome to Mt. Olympus Academy,” or “Let’s go to the Immortal Market.”] Teach students how to sign

the sentence. Determine an easy-to-sign saying for your reading group, such as “Goddessgirls forever!” Or create your own way of communicating through hand symbols.

Related Activity: Silent Finger Count [Problem Solving, Writing, Communication]

Part 1: Have students form two lines facing each other. Give a piece of paper with the same 5-number sequence to each student in one of the lines. These students will communicate the 5 numbers through the silent finger count. The students in the second line will try to figure out what kind of beast is described by the finger count. Have students raise their hands when they think they know the answer. When almost everyone has raised their hand, call on one student to describe the beast. Repeat the activity by providing a sequence of 5 numbers for the second line of students to communicate with the first line of students through the silent finger count.

Part 2: Students are divided in pairs for this activity. Each student will think of a beast and write a 5-number sequence to describe it. The students will take turns describing the beast to their partner through the silent finger count. Call on a few students to give their descriptions. Have the pair of students choose one of their beasts and write a paragraph with a vivid description of their beast. Together, they discuss the number of body parts and describe them in more detail in writing. Do the heads have horns? Do the wings look like a certain bird? Does the beast have a tail? Have one student in the pair read the written description while the other silently acts out the description.

**Discussion Two: Questioning**

Pandora is always ready with a question. These questions sometimes annoy her friends, but goddessgirls know that questions are a very important form of communication. Ask students what Pandora is trying to find out when she asks these questions. Discuss different types of questions. The following questions will help lead the discussion.

- QUESTION SET 1: What are some reasons to ask questions? Discuss the following three reasons to ask questions: a) to find out about something or someone, b) to show friendship or concern, or c) to think differently or more deeply about something.
  - a. How can you quickly find out about something or someone? Ask questions! On Athena’s first day at Mount Olympus Academy in *Athena the Brain*, everyone was asking her questions. Pandora asked her, “What is your name? What classes are you taking?” Aphrodite asked, “Are you new?” Why did they ask Athena these questions? Can you think of questions from the Goddess Girls books when someone is trying to find out information about one of the characters? What questions will help you find out about something? In *Artemis the Brave*, Orion wants to learn how to compete in archery. He asks Artemis lots of questions about how to use a bow and how to make arrows magic. Can you think of other examples of these types of questions?

b. What questions would convey friendship or concern? *Persephone the Phony* has many examples of questions as Persephone and Hades become friends. Hades asks, “What do you do best?” showing that he is very interested in getting to know her. Later Persephone offers Hades a section of her pomegranate by asking, “Want some?” When Persephone ran away to the Underworld, Hades told her she couldn’t stay. “Why not?” asked Persephone. “Because it’s gloomy. You’re bright and sunny.”

c. How do questions help us think about something differently or more deeply? In *Aphrodite the Beauty*, Mr. Cyclops asked the students to consider the question, “Need mortal maidens always marry?” When Aphrodite answered that everyone should have a chance to fall in love, Athena countered with “What if a maiden would rather be alone? What if she has other interests, like traveling the world?” Athena was showing Aphrodite another perspective. When the godboys suggested that war trumps marriage, Aphrodite asked, “Which do you think contributes more to the human race?” These examples are ways that questions prompt us to think differently or more deeply about a subject. Can you think of other examples? What are other reasons to ask questions?

Related Activity: Pandora’s Box of Questions [Problem Solving, Writing, Inquiry]

Provide the following problems to groups of students. Have the students write the questions that would provide the information they need to solve the problem. Exchange questions with another group and answer their questions. Once answered, return the questions with answers to the original group. Provide time to add to or revise questions. Discuss why some questions helped solve the problem better than others. Were specific questions better than vague ones? Were there enough questions to solve the problem? Continue the activity by asking students to think of more scenes in which questions are needed to solve the problem.

- Apollo’s band, Heavens Above, is playing at the Hero’s Week Party next week. Dionysus is sick. Ares is grounded. Apollo needs musicians for his band. What questions should he ask?
- Aphrodite has started a Lonely Hearts Club for mortals. What questions should she ask the members to help make good matches?
- Artemis is judging an archery contest on Earth—no dogs allowed. What questions should she ask potential dog sitters?
- Athena needs to identify the ingredients in a potion for Beauty-ology class. What questions should she ask herself?

**Theme 3: Equality**

The discussion questions and activities below correlate to the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.3, 5.1, 2, 3) (RL.4.1, 3, 4) (W.3-5.3) (SL.3-5.1) (L.3-5.6).

**Discussion One: Gender Equality**

Many of the books in the Goddess Girls series examine fairness through equality. For example, in the book *Artemis the Loyal*, Artemis proclaims that it is unfair that the Olympic Games are just for godboys. She wants to find a way to make participation in sports equal for godboys and goddessgirls. Ask students to write a definition of equality and inequality and provide examples. Spark a discussion about equality with the following sets of questions.

- QUESTION SET 1: Artemis and her friends convinced Zeus to hold the Heraean all-girl games. Was this a good solution to the problem of inequity in sports among girls and boys? What does the phrase “gender equality” mean? What could be an argument for girls having their own sports event? What other ways could girls and boys participate in sports equally? For example, the girls could have participated in the godboy Olympics featured in the Goddess Girls books. What is an argument that supports girls participating with boys in the Olympics?

Related Activity: A Herculean-sized Debate [Speaking and Listening, Vocabulary]

The goddessgirls and godboys supported the Heraean games by signing a petition. Create two sign-up sheets—one for the Heraean all-girl games and one for girls’ participation in the all-boy Olympic games. Have students sign the sheets.

If the Goddess Girls book *Artemis the Loyal* has been read, ask students to recall some of the pros and cons of having the Heraean games proposed by the goddessgirls and godboys. Ask each student to prepare a list of five reasons to support the games (Heraean or Olympic) on the petition they signed. Ask each student to prepare a list of five reasons not to support the games on the petition they did not sign. These can be written as bulleted lists. Collect and compile the list for each argument on a flip chart or SmartBoard. Have students discuss the pros and cons as presented in the lists.

Select students to make final arguments for each of the games and ways to equally include both boys and girls in sports events. Have students re-sign the petitions to determine if anyone changed their minds during the debate. Ask one student who changed their vote to tell the others why they changed their mind.

If appropriate, determine which game—Heraean all-girl games or girls and boys participating in one Olympics—received the most support from the students. [If age-appropriate, this activity may be prefaced with a discussion of the origins of the words Heraean, Olympian, and Herculean.]

- QUESTION SET 2: Today, the modern Olympic Games include both men and women. The Olympic Charter of the International Olympic Committee states that the role of the committee is “to encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures, with a view to implementing the principal of equality of men and women.” Only 22 women (2 percent) participated in the Olympic Games in 1900, the first year that included female athletes in the modern Olympic Games (started in 1896). In the 2012 Olympics, women participated in every sport in the Olympics. Forty-four percent of the athletes were women. Why

is gender equality in sports important? What are some of the reasons that more women are participating in the Olympics than they have in the past? The Olympics includes athletes from countries all over the world. With the inclusion of women from Brunei, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar in 2012, women from all participating countries have sent women to the Olympics. Do you think some countries have different rules about women participating in sports? Why would some countries have more female athletes than others?

Related Activity: Inspirational Olympians [Research, Writing]

Have students research one of the following female Olympic athletes or one who is not on the list. Determine questions to guide the research such as “What obstacles did these athletes have to overcome?” “Who were the influential people in their lives?” “If still alive, what are they doing now?” “How did they ‘pay forward’ their chance to be an Olympian?” [For example, Libby Ludlow started a program, ZGirls, to support young female athletes.] Have students write a short biography of the athlete, emphasizing why she is an inspiration. [Length can be determined according to grade level.]

FEMALE OLYMPIANS (Sample)

- **Hélène de Pourtalès**—1900, Sailing
- **Charlotte Cooper**—1900, Tennis
- **Babe Didrikson Zaharias**—1932, Track and Field
- **Fanny Blankers-Koen**—1948, Track and Field
- **Betty Cuthbert**—1956, 1964, Track and Field
- **Wilma Rudolph**—1960, Track and Field
- **Olga Korbut**—1972, 1976, Gymnastics
- **Nadia Comăneci**—1976, 1980, Gymnastics
- **Dara Torres**—1984, 1988, 1992, 2000, 2008, Swimming
- **Mary Lou Retton**—1984, Gymnastics
- **Florence Joyner**—1984, 1988, Track and Field
- **Jackie Joyner-Kersey**—1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, Track and Field
- **Bonnie Blair**—1988, 1992, 1994, Speedskating
- **Shannon Miller**—1992, 1996, Gymnastics
- **Picabo Street**—1994, 1998, Skiing
- **Lisa Leslie**—1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, Basketball
- **Kerri Walsh Jennings**—2004, 2008, 2012, Beach Volleyball
- **Misty May-Treanor**—2004, 2008, 2012, Beach Volleyball
- **Mia Hamm**—1996, 2000, 2004, Soccer
- **Yelena Isinbayeva**—2004, 2008, 2012, Track and Field
- **Angela Ruggiero**—1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, Ice Hockey
- **Serena Williams**—2000, 2008, 2012, Tennis
- **Venus Williams**—2000, 2008, 2012, Tennis
- **Gabby Douglas**—2012, Gymnastics
- **Alex Morgan**—2012, Soccer



## Discussion 2: Equal Opportunities

In the Goddess Girls series of books, the mortals and immortals find their strengths from within themselves. As Hera says in *Medusa the Mean*, “Whether you’re a goddess or a shopkeeper, being happy is all about finding your personal strengths and using them to do what you enjoy.” The key is making sure there is equal opportunity for all to find and demonstrate those strengths. For example, Athena invented the olive, and the mortals on Earth figured out how to harvest olives, make food products from the harvest and sell them. Each goddessgirl, godboy, and mortal girls and boys in the Goddess Girls books have unique strengths and demonstrate those strengths through opportunities to solve problems. The sets of questions below will help students think about these opportunities and the importance of equal opportunity.

- QUESTION SET 1: Collaboration in sports, theater and art activities are ways to provide equal opportunity to realize and demonstrate strengths. For example, in *Artemis the Brave*, mortals and immortals had equal opportunities to audition for a part in the play, “The Arrow.” Other students had the opportunity to demonstrate their artistic strengths by painting the sets and participating in the Greek Chorus. Participating in theater is a great way to demonstrate personal strengths by solving problems. What are some of the problems that an actor encounters in learning to perform in a play?

Possible Answer: They must pretend to be someone else. They must memorize many lines. They must react to other characters.

What strengths must the actors have?

Possible Answers: Imagination, ability to memorize, ability to respond in words and gestures.

What problems must be solved if you are building a set?

Possible Answer: The set must be believable. The set must show a time or place.

What strengths do you need to be a set designer?

Possible Answers: Imagination, artistic ability such as painting, woodworking, or construction, ability to follow directions.

In what ways does providing an equal opportunity to participate make the play better?

- QUESTION SET 2: Besides theater, can you think of something that provides equal opportunities? Mount Olympus Academy admits mortals and immortals, goddessgirls and godboys. Do you think that schools provide equal opportunity

for all to learn? If so, why? If not, why not? Sometimes, when there is inequality, individuals have to make their own opportunities. For example, in *Medusa the Mean*, Medusa fought to make her dreams come true even though her family did not believe she could succeed in school. Can you think of times when you had to make your own opportunities? Inequality not only exists in schools, but in other places. Can you think of any examples? [Workplace]. What are some ways that people can work together to end inequality?

Related Activity: Hero-ology Board Game—The Tables Have Turned [Drama, Problem Solving, Art]

In *Athena the Brain*, students in Hero-ology were given heroes, representing people on Earth. The assignment was to manipulate the heroes, create disasters, and make quick saves. Whatever the class did with their heroes resulted in something happening on Earth. For example, Aphrodite created the Trojan War with her hero, Paris. Athena made a quick save with the Trojan horse.

In this activity, the tables are turned. Provide each person with the name of a character in the Goddess Girls books. Have them bring a found object to represent the character. For example, the person who has Poseidon might bring a fork with three prongs. Aphrodite's object might be a heart. On a large piece of paper on the floor, create a map of the places on Mount Olympus and Earth including Mount Olympus Academy's buildings (dorm, cafeteria, gym, coliseum field, Zeus's office, classrooms), Immortal Marketplace, Forest of the Beasts, and the Underworld.

The assignment is to 1) manipulate characters to invent something to help the people on Earth, 2) create a disaster, and 3) save humans from the disaster with quick saves. Students will present their chosen character, the invention, the disaster, and the save. When all have presented, determine the sequence of events. Encourage students to have their characters work together. Have students "act out" with their characters the sequence of events. Discuss any conflicts and how these conflicts were resolved. Do not leave the Earth in chaos. Make sure that the end result is a world with happy, productive individuals on Earth and Mount Olympus. [The time spent on this activity is dependent on how elaborate the play is. The duration and depth of this activity will be determined by the time available and the grade expectations.]

*This guide, written to align with the Common Core State Standards ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)) has been provided by Simon & Schuster for classroom, library, and reading group use. It may be reproduced in its entirety or excerpted for these purposes.*