

Mythology Review

Try to think of as many myths as you can that deal with the following recurring topics:

- I. Political/Geographical Origins
(naming or founding of cities and natural formations)
- II. Early Science: offering explanation of natural phenomena (seasons, sunrise, sunset, constellations, flowers, etc.)
- III. Societal expectations
 - A. Sacred obligations
 1. Protecting family
 - a. wickedness of killing family
 - b. obligation to avenge family's murder
 2. Burying the dead
 3. Showing hospitality
 - B. Consequences
 1. of tampering with fate
(i.e. attempting to change it actually fulfills it)
 2. of hubris
 3. of foolish promises
(e.g. the gods swearing by the river Styx)
- IV. Relationship with the gods
 - A. gods disguised as or testing mortals
 - B. warnings, rewards, or assistance from the gods
 - C. peril of the gods' "love"
 - those seduced by gods:
 1. died tragically
 2. were changed in form
 3. were exiled
 - D. wickedness of human sacrifice
(i.e. the ceremonial killing of a human to appease a god)
 - stories of human sacrifice were changed:
 1. into stories of a youth's tragic death
 2. into a murderous crime
 3. into a story of rescue
 - to identify this, look for the death or near-death of a youth, especially at the hands of a god or an adult
 - E. punishment due to the gods' jealousy or vengeance (often very cruel and unjust)
- V. Heroic ability
 - The hero of a culture always reveals what that culture values in its people.
 - Always analyze a hero's abilities and ask yourself, "What does this reveal about the Greeks that they would consider these abilities heroic?"

Many of these topics were at the heart of the stories that were intended to teach the ancient Greeks how to behave in society or how to respond to life and the universe. They reveal much about what the ancient Greeks believed and valued.