

The Sirens

Is It a Bird or Is It a Fish?

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Grade Level	9th Grade	**Time Frame**	3- class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	150 minutes
Course	World Literature		

Essential Question

How does perspective affect meaning?

Summary

In this lesson, students will be asked to determine what a siren is. Students will read an excerpt from "The Odyssey" and other texts and watch selected videos. They will examine the various texts and videos from different perspectives to draw conclusions about the mythical siren.

Snapshot

Engage

Students listen to video entitled the "Song of the Sirens" and reflect as they listen.

Explore

Students examine both texts and videos in order to predict what a siren is.

Explain

Students read and annotate "Excerpt from the Odyssey: The Sirens."

Extend

Students participate in a Socratic Seminar.

Evaluate

Students complete an "I Used To Think. . .But Now I Know" Chart about the physical description of a siren.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

SYN401: Draw logical conclusions using information from two literary narratives

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 9)

9.3.R.7: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics, using textual evidence to support their claims and inferences.
9.3.W.3: Compose argumentative essays, reviews, or op-eds that:
- introduce precise, informed claims
- include a defensible thesis
- acknowledge counterclaims or alternate perspectives
- organize claims, counterclaims, and evidence in a logical sequence
- provide the most relevant evidence to develop balanced arguments, using credible sources
- use sentence variety and word choice to create clarity and concision
- use style and tone that suits the audience and purpose

9.7.R: Analyze and evaluate the techniques used in a variety of multimodal content and how they contribute to meaning.

Attachments

- Excerpt from The Odyssey—The Sirens.pdf
- I Used To Think But Now I Know—The Sirens - Spanish.docx
- I Used To Think But Now I Know—The Sirens - Spanish.pdf
- I Used To Think But Now I Know—The Sirens.docx
- I Used To Think But Now I Know—The Sirens.pdf
- Lesson Slides—The Sirens.pptx
- T-Chart What Is a Siren—The Sirens - Spanish.docx
- T-Chart What Is a Siren—The Sirens - Spanish.pdf
- T-Chart What Is a Siren—The Sirens.docx
- T-Chart What Is a Siren—The Sirens.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Definition of "siren" from the Ancient History Encyclopedia (linked in attachments; one per student)
- Excerpt From the Odyssey (attached; linked; one per student)
- I Used To Think. . .But Now I Know (attached; one per student)
- T-Chart What Is a Siren? handout (attached; one per student)
- Drawing materials (colored pencils, pens)
- Highlighters

Engage

Show **slides 3–4** of the attached **Lesson Slides**, which identify the essential question and the lesson objectives.

Teacher's Note

After reviewing the essential question and lesson objectives, explain to students that as they listen to a video clip, they will draw/sketch what they imagine when they hear the word "siren." Assure students that they will be able to answer the essential question by the end of the lesson.

Distribute the attached **I Used To Think. . .But Now I Know** handout.

Review the I Used To Think...But Now I Know strategy with students. Instruct them to use the left-hand side of the page, the "I Used to Think" side, to sketch what they think a "siren" looks like as they watch the video. Once they have finished their diagrams, show **slide 6** and share the video, *Song of the Sirens*.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=dtPDLZyRL3o

Once students have watched the video, give them a few minutes to finish their sketches. When they complete their drawings, ask volunteers to share out what they have drawn.

Teacher's Note

Consider having students share out their sketches or describe what they think a siren might look like. Does the class have mostly half-human, half-fish sketches or half-human, half-bird sketches? Ask students to explain their perceptions.

Explore

Teacher's Note: Lesson Preparation

Prepare for class by copying the article "Siren" from the Ancient History Encyclopedia. Each student will need a copy. Note that some scholars propose that a siren is half-human, half-fish; others propose that she is half-human, half-bird. Sirens are typically depicted as female.

Transition to **slide 7**. Distribute the attached **T-Chart What is a Siren?** handout and a copy of the article "Siren" from the Ancient History Encyclopedia. Ask students to read the article either independently or with a partner.

Display **slide 8**. Instruct students to take notes in their T-Charts as they and their partners read the article collaboratively. These notes should include textual support of what a siren is. Once students have completed the reading and added notes to their T-Charts, have them share out their perceptions with the class.

Display **slide 9**. Show the first of two short videos that depict different meanings/definitions of "siren." Remind students to take notes in their T-Charts as they watch these clips.

Have students watch the following scene, "Pirates Meet Mermaids at Whitecap Bay," excerpted from the 2011 film *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides* directed by Rob Marshall.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=0KQcsWPoazc

When the clip is over, invite students to share with their partners what they have written.

Show **slide 10.** Share the second short clip, *The Truth Behind the Mermaid Myth*, with students. When the second video is over, invite students to volunteer what they have written in both columns of their T-Charts. Ask them to share how the information they have read and watched helped to inform them of what a "siren" is.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=Htq45X4qypU

Explain

Show **slide 11**. Assign the attached **Excerpt from The Odyssey: The Sirens**. Ask them to annotate the text as they read, using a modified version of Why-Lighting to identify support as to whether a siren is part bird or part fish.

Transition to **slide 12**. Have students prepare to answer the question, "What is a siren?" Instruct them to have textual and video support ready to share. Have them write 1–2 questions to share with classmates to aid them in understanding what a siren is.

Extend

Begin the class with **slide 13**. Have students discuss collaboratively their understanding of the concept of the "siren." Is the siren a half-human, half-fish? Or is it a half-human, half-bird? Advise the class that the discussion will be structured as a Socratic Seminar.

Teacher's Note: Preparing for a Socratic Seminar

If this is the first time you or your students are participating in Socratic Seminar, review the steps below. The purpose of a Socratic Seminar is to initiate an ongoing discussion of a topic using support from a text (close textual analysis).

1. Ensure that the texts provide ample avenues for interpretation and discussion. As the students read the texts, encourage them to make annotations.
2. Schedule activities so that students have at least 24 hours to prepare for the Socratic Seminar. Remind them that the more textual support they have, the more in-depth and rich their discussions will be. Encourage them to generate a few open-ended questions of their own.
3. Provide students with 4–6 questions (2–3 that are closely aligned with the texts and 2–3 that are more philosophical) in a handout. Students address the questions during the Socratic Seminar. To facilitate this step, attach the questions to the texts so students make annotations specific to the questions as they are reading.
4. Before starting the seminar, cover the rules. The seminar is not a debate. Students should work together to gain a deeper understanding of what the author expresses in the text. The point of the exercise is collaboration, not argumentation.
5. Make sure that you have already distributed the classroom established norms for collaboration. Review them together before starting this exercise.

Teacher's Note: Directing the Socratic Seminar

Divide the class into two groups: the inner and outer circles. Participants in the ***inner circle*** answer and discuss the questions provided. Having several smaller groups enables more students to participate. Small groups are more likely to engage in discussion than large groups.

Participants in the ***outer circle*** listen quietly to the discussion and record their observations of the speakers. Having an ***outer circle*** encourages the speakers to be more conscious of their participation. Although the role of the ***outer circle*** is not directly participatory, the presence of other students' observing the dialogue increases meaningful participation in the inner circle.

When the first group of students is ready to begin, ask one of the questions that closely aligns to the text to get the conversation started. Beginning with an open-ended question helps build confidence for later discussion when the tougher questions are introduced. Provide 15–30 minutes for the discussion of ***each question*** per group.

Review **slides 14–16** with the class. Once the first group in the ***inner circle*** completes their discussion, have the students switch spots with those in the ***outer circle***.

Teacher Notes

If you observe the conversations lagging, you may want to prompt students with a few of the following questions. "Where in the text does it say ___?" "Is this what you meant when you said ___?" and "What do you think the author was trying to say with ___?"

Once both groups have had a chance to participate in the Socratic Seminar, ask students to reflect and evaluate as a class. Have students self-reflect on their participation throughout the activity and complete a general evaluation of the activity as a concluding activity.

Consider the following guiding questions as a concluding exercise:

1. At any point, did the seminar revert to something other than a dialogue? If so, how did your group handle this?
2. How did group members demonstrate they were actively listening and building on others' ideas?
3. How has your understanding of the texts been affected by the ideas explored in this seminar?
4. What parts of the discussion did you find most interesting? In what parts were you least engaged?
5. What would you like to do differently as a participant the next time you are in a seminar?

Evaluate

Show **slide 17.** Have students retrieve the handout, "I Used To Think . . . But Now I Know." Ask them to reflect on their earlier work from the "I Used to Think" portion where they sketched what they believed a siren looked like. Have them complete the "But Now I Know" portion, comparing their "before" and "after" perceptions. Remind them to include any pertinent information they gleaned when they Why-Lighted the **Excerpt from The Odyssey: The Sirens**.

Resources

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