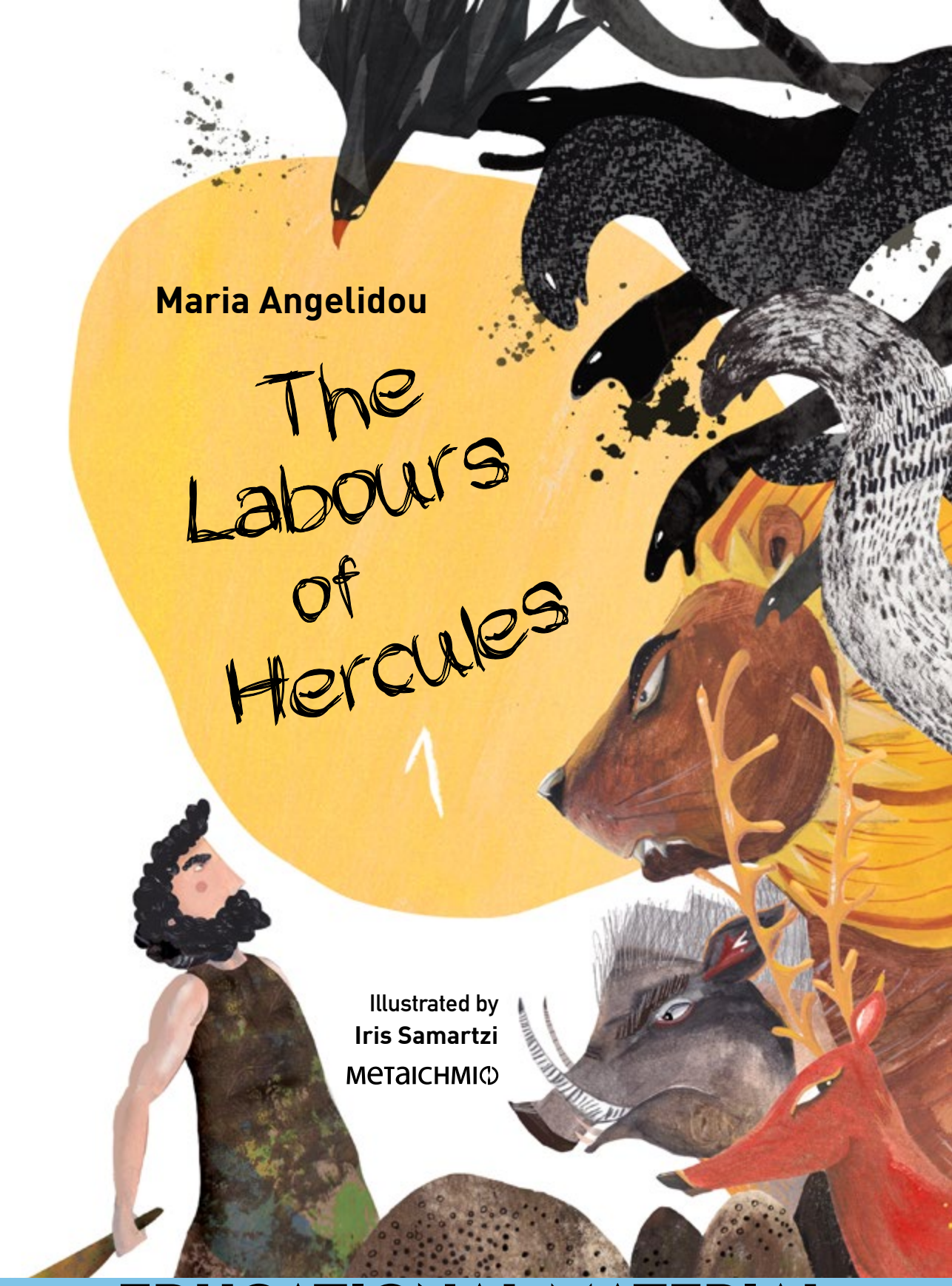


Maria Angelidou

The Labours of Hercules

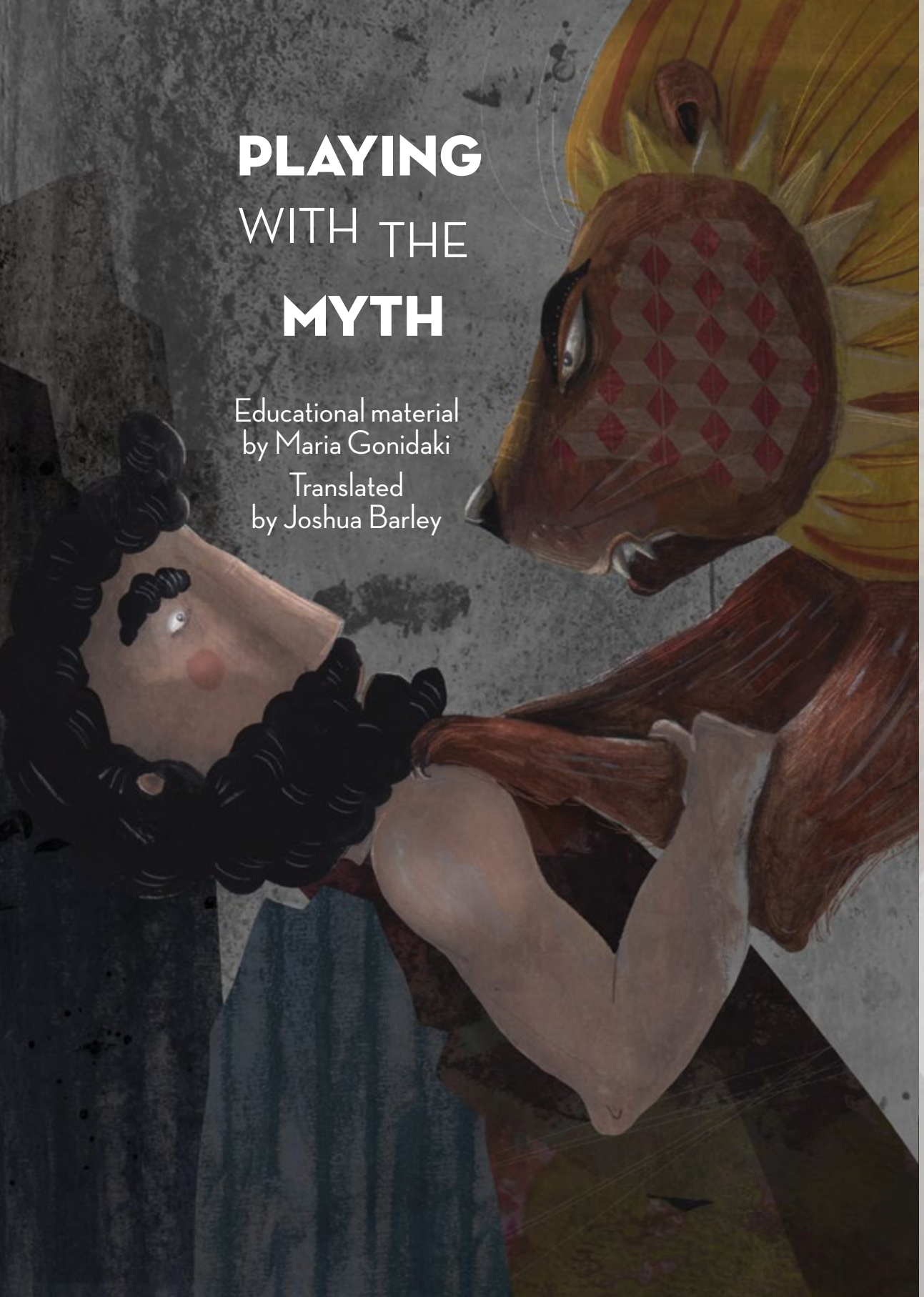
Illustrated by
Iris Samartzi

METAICHMIO

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

The Nemean Lion





PLAYING WITH THE MYTH

Educational material
by Maria Gonidaki

Translated
by Joshua Barley

LET'S LEARN ABOUT...

HERCULES

Hercules is the greatest hero of ancient Greek mythology. His father was Zeus, king of the gods, and his mother was Alcmene, daughter of the king of Mycenae.

He fought wild beasts, monsters, evil kings, and helped people by showing them the way of goodness and love.

THE FIRST LABOUR OF HERCULES: THE NEMEAN LION

Near Nemea there lived a fearsome lion. It wasn't any old lion, however. It was the offspring of monsters. According to some versions of the myth its parents was Chimera and Typhon and according to others Echidna and Orthros, brother of the Sphinx that Oedipus killed when he solved its riddle.

This lion was brought up by Hera. It was invulnerable, meaning that nothing could pierce its skin – neither arrows (even iron ones), nor sword, nor spear – nor could it be killed by other weapons. When it came out of its lair and wandered around Nemea, it destroyed everything.

Hercules, upon Eurystheus' command, took his sword and bow and set out to find the lion. On the way he also made a club from the wood of a wild olive tree. When he met the beast, he tried to kill it with his sword and his arrows, or to whack it with his club. But the lion felt nothing and went into its lair, which had two entrances. The hero blocked one of the entrances and went in through the other. He attacked the lion, fought with it and eventually strangled it. He put it on his back and took it to Mycenae. When Eurystheus saw that Hercules had accomplished the near-impossible task, he was amazed at his courage, but also began to fear the son of Zeus. In the following labours, therefore, he did not allow Hercules to come inside the walls, but sent others to give his commands.

Hercules wanted to skin the lion. To do this, he used the animal's own claws. From then on he wore the lion skin for protection.

THINK ABOUT THIS

In mythologies all over the world, a strong and brave man – the symbol of human strength – kills a fearsome lion, the king of the animals. That's how we are shown his courage and strength.

CROSSWORD

1. The mother of the Nemean Lion.

2. Hercules killed the lion with his...

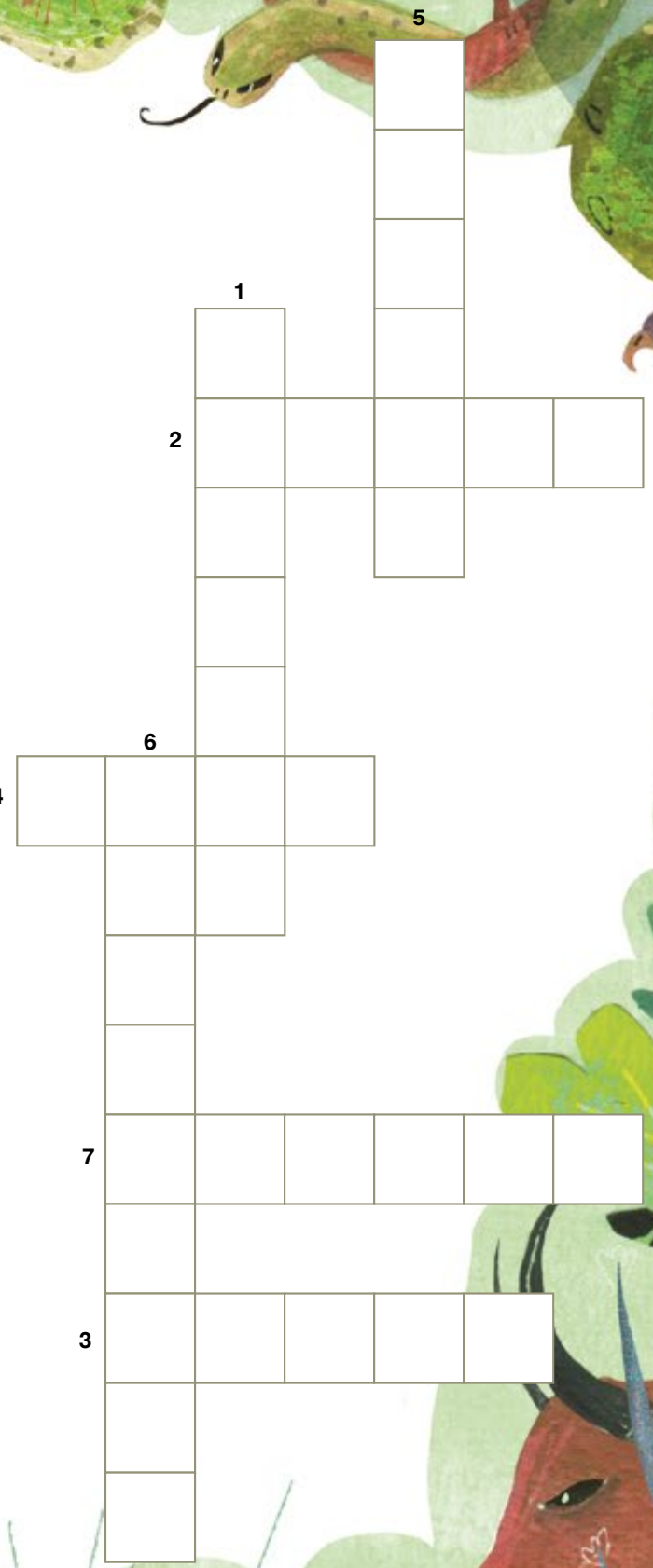
3. He used these to skin the lion.

4. The lion was brought up by this goddess.

5. The lion's sister.

6. The lion's lair had two...

7. Which goddess helped Hercules in this labour (according to most versions of the myth)?



ANSWERS:
1. Chimera, 2. Hands,
3. Claws, 4. Hera, 5. Sphinx,
6. Entrances, 7. Athena.

- Look at the two paintings from ancient Greek vases.
- How is the first labour of Hercules presented?
- Who are the two figures to the right and left of Hercules? What are they holding?



State Museum, Berlin

- In the painting below, Hercules' grip and movement look like a wrestler's: the hero lifts up the lion and is about to throw it onto its back.
- Look up in an encyclopaedia or on the internet about wrestling in ancient times: the kinds of wrestling, the *palaestra* (the 'gym'), the *pankration* (a combination of wrestling and boxing), wrestling as a single contest and as part of the 'pentathlon' in the ancient Greek games.



British Museum, London

- After his victory, Hercules decreed that there should be athletic games at Nemea (like at Olympia, Delphi and Isthmia). During the games, all fighting stopped (a truce). The Nemean games were brought back in 1996 and happen every four years.

  - Visit the website of the Society for the Revival of the Nemean Games http://nemeangames.org/el/ and ask your parents to help you watch the next games as a spectator or to compete in them yourself!



The ancient stadium of Nemea, as it is today

- In the coins below, as well as on the so-called Sarcophagus of Alexander the Great, you will see the kings of Macedon.
  - What are they wearing on their heads?
  - Which hero are they trying to connect to their ancestry, and why?
  - Why do these pictures prove the Greekness of Macedonia?

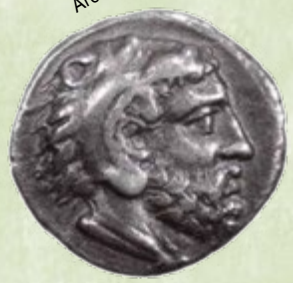


Archaeological Museum, Istanbul

Alexander III *(the Great)*

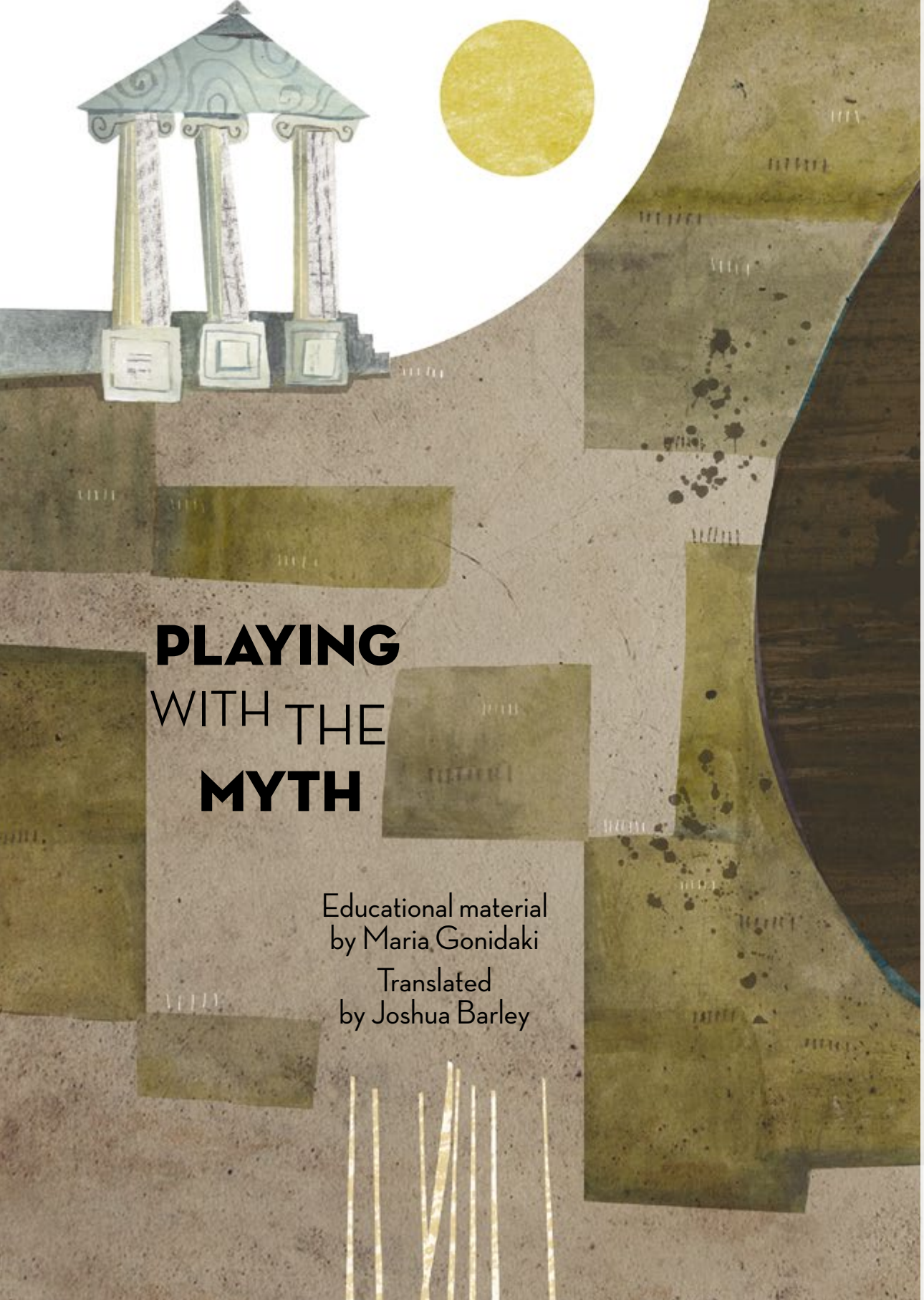


Archelaos I



The Lernaean Hydra





PLAYING WITH THE MYTH

Educational material
by Maria Gonidaki

Translated
by Joshua Barley

LET'S LEARN ABOUT...

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THE SECOND LABOUR OF HERCULES: THE LERNAEAN HYDRA

After the Nemean lion, Hercules took on the challenge of killing its terrible sister, the Lernaean Hydra, which was wreaking havoc among the people of Argos.

This beast lived in a spring near the lake of Lerna. A child of Typhon and Echidna, it had a huge body with nine snake-covered heads, all of which spouted fire and poison. The middle head was immortal, while if you cut off one of the other ones, two more would sprout in its place.

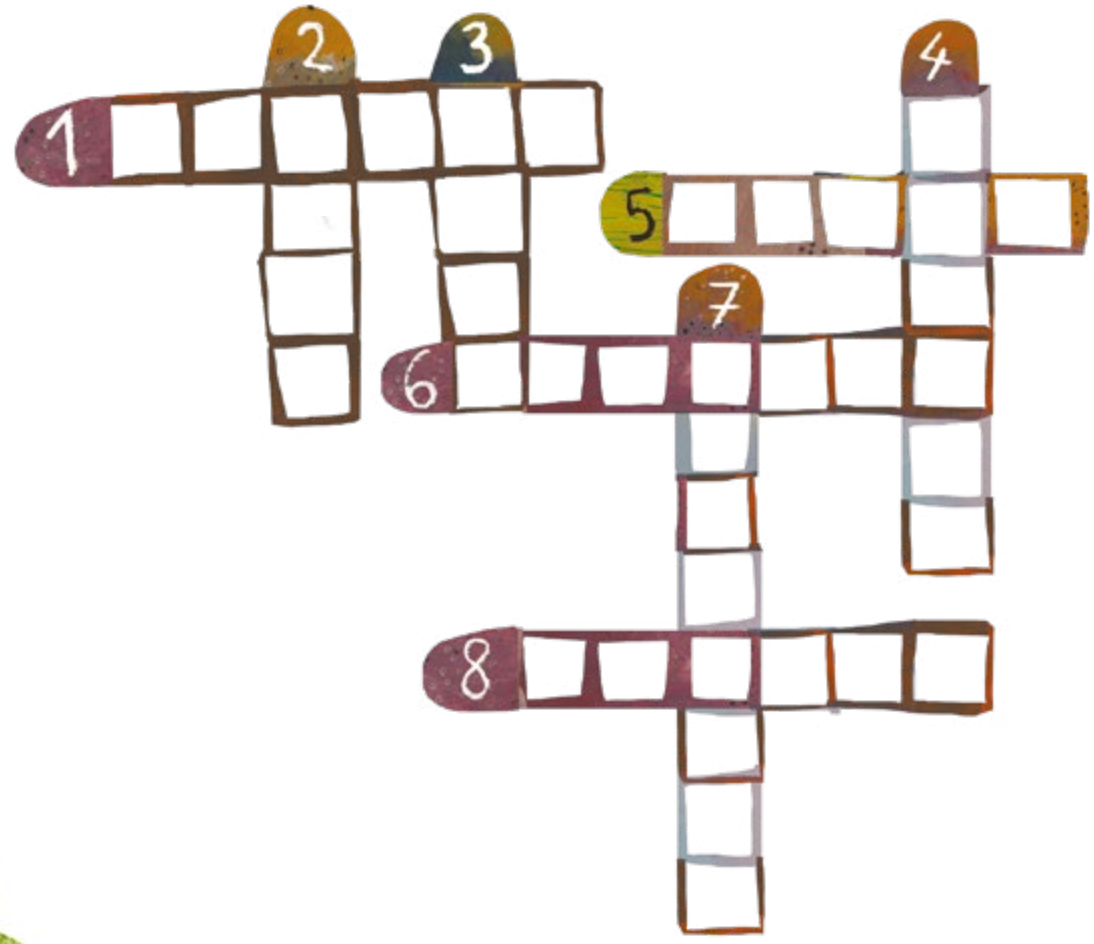
It really was a difficult test, even for the bravest hero of all, Hercules. For that reason, he took his nephew Iolaos as his assistant. Athena also helped him out, giving him the advice he needed. When they reached the Hydra's nest, they began firing flaming arrows to make it come out. Hercules then attacked it with his club and a scythe. It tried to kill him, but the hero began to cut off its heads. But more and more heads grew, and then a huge crab came along and bit Hercules. So the hero called on Iolaos. Hercules stamped on the crab, squashed it and began cutting off heads again. Iolaos put fire on the wounds, which stopped the blood and prevented any more heads growing. That is how Hercules cut all the heads off. As for the last, the immortal one, he buried it in the ground and put a very heavy stone on it. He then cut the body in half, took out the poison and dipped his arrows in it: they became deadly and he used them in his next labours.

THINK ABOUT THIS...

The lake of Lerna (just like other lakes) was considered in ancient times to be one of the entrances to the Underworld. In Hercules' second labour, he was victorious against death and so started preparing himself for his deification. The myth is also related to the attempt of humans to free themselves from marshes (by draining), which used to exist around lakes and caused many diseases.

CROSSWORD

1. The goddess who helped Hercules.
2. The goddess who made Hercules' life difficult.
3. The beast had this many heads.
4. Hercules' assistant in this myth.
5. The main city near the lake of Lerna.
6. The mother of the Lernaean Hydra.
7. The middle head of the Lernaean Hydra was...
8. Hercules' assistant burned the heads by firing flaming...





ANSWERS: **1.** Athena, **2.** Hera, **3.** Nine, **4.** Iolaos, **5.** Argos, **6.** Echidna, **7.** Immortal, **8.** Arrows

- Look at Hercules' fight with the Lernaean Hydra on the two paintings from ancient Greek vases.
- Write the names of the figures below.



Paris, Louvre Museum

READ MORE

Black-figure style: a technique of decorating ancient vases in which the figures are in black and the background is the colour of clay.

- What similarities and differences do you notice between the two vases in the way they depict the myth?
- How does Hercules appear in each vase? What weapons does he have?
- What are the other figures doing?



Palermo, National Museum

READ MORE

Red-figure style: a technique of decorating ancient vases in which the figures are the colour of clay and the background is black.

- Look at these two words:

  LERNAEAN HYDRA

  The word **LERNAEAN** comes from the name of the lake **(Lerna),** where the beast who Hercules killed lived.
  The word **HYDRA** comes from the ancient Greek word **hydor**, which meant '**water**': it means the beast that lives in water.

  Many English words come from the ancient Greek word *hydor*.

- Using a dictionary, write down as many words as you can which have the word **hydra** in them.

  .....

  .....

  .....

  .....

  .....

- Draw the Lernaean Hydra as you imagine it.



If Eurystheus asked you to do this labour...

- What weapons would you use to kill the beast?
- Who would you take with you as assistant?

The Erymanthian Boar



PLAYING WITH THE MYTH

Educational material
by Maria Gonidaki

Translated
by Joshua Barley



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THE THIRD LABOUR OF HERCULES: THE ERYMANTHIAN BOAR

When Hercules had got the Lernean Hydra out of the way, he left for Arcadia, for Mount Erymanthos. Eurystheus had sent him to deal with another beast. He commanded him to bring back (alive) a wild boar, which had done catastrophic damage in the region.

Before he set off on his quest, Hercules went to see his friend, the centaur Pholus, to get some information. The centaurs, who were half man and half horse, lived in this part of the Peloponnese and were wild, bad creatures. Only two were different: peace-abiding Pholus, and wise Chiron (teacher of many mythical heroes). Both were Hercules' friends. When he was staying with Pholus, he persuaded him to open a jar of wine that he kept in his cave, given by the god Dionysus to the centaurs. When he opened it, the centaurs smelled the wine and rushed to the cave to drink it. But since there wasn't enough wine for everyone, a violent fight broke out between Hercules and the centaurs. Hercules chased them over a wide area (he reached the south, where Chiron lived) and killed many. But one of his poisoned arrows accidentally hit Chiron. Even though he was immortal, he could not bear the pain and he asked Zeus to let him die. Pholus also died when he was examining a poisoned arrow. Hercules buried his two friends with great sadness and set out to find the boar.

He was not supposed to kill the animal, so he hunted it until it was completely exhausted. Then he tied up its legs, put it on his back and took it to Mycenae. When Eurystheus saw Hercules with the boar, he was terrified and hid in a bronze jar!

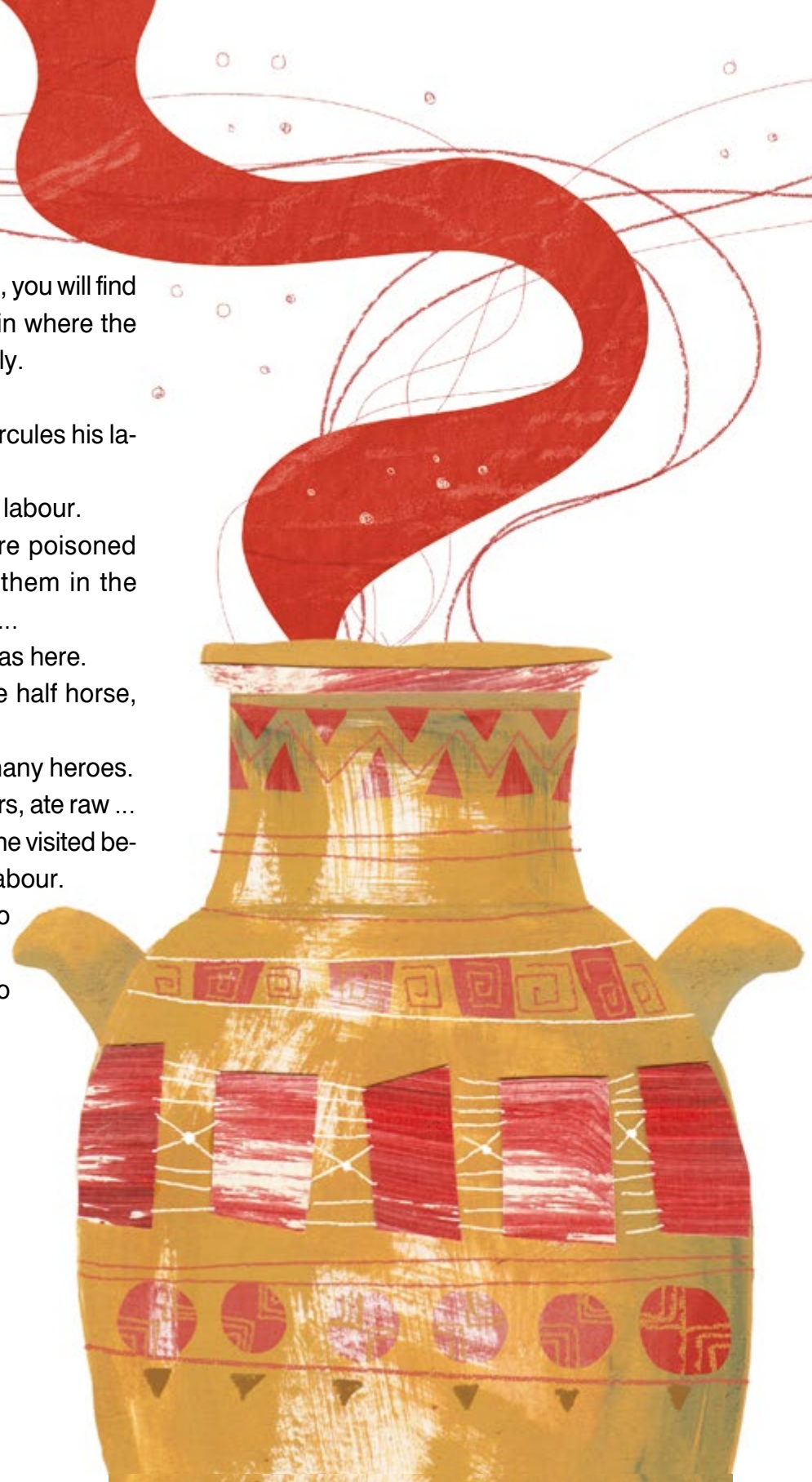
REMEMBER THIS

In this labour, Hercules did not kill the boar. In which other myths did he bring back the animal alive to Eurystheus? Do you think that it was easier for the hero to kill the beasts or to bring them back alive?

WORD GAME

When you fill in the blanks, you will find the name of the mountain where the boar lived written vertically.

1. The king who sets Hercules his labours.
2. This was Hercules' ... labour.
3. Hercules' arrows were poisoned because he dipped them in the blood of the Lernean ...
4. Eurystheus' palace was here.
5. These creatures were half horse, half man.
6. This centaur taught many heroes.
7. Pholus, like all centaurs, ate raw ...
8. Hercules' friend, who he visited before carrying out the labour.
9. Hercules wanted to board the ship to ...
10. The wine was given to the Centaurs by ...



1. — — — — — — — — — —

2. — — — — —

3. — — — — —

4. — — — — — — —

5. — — — — — — — —

6. — — — — — —

7. — — — —

8. — — — — — —

9. — — — — — — —

10. — — — — — — — —

ANSWERS
1. Eurystheus, **2.** Third, **3.** Hydra, **4.** Mycenae
5. Centaurs, **6.** Chiron, **7.** Meat, **8.** Pholus, **9.** Colchis, **10.** Dionysus

- Which stage of the third labour of Hercules do you see in the painting below, from an ancient Greek vase? Can you describe it?
- Which goddess stands at Hercules' side, according to the ancient artist?



British Museum, London

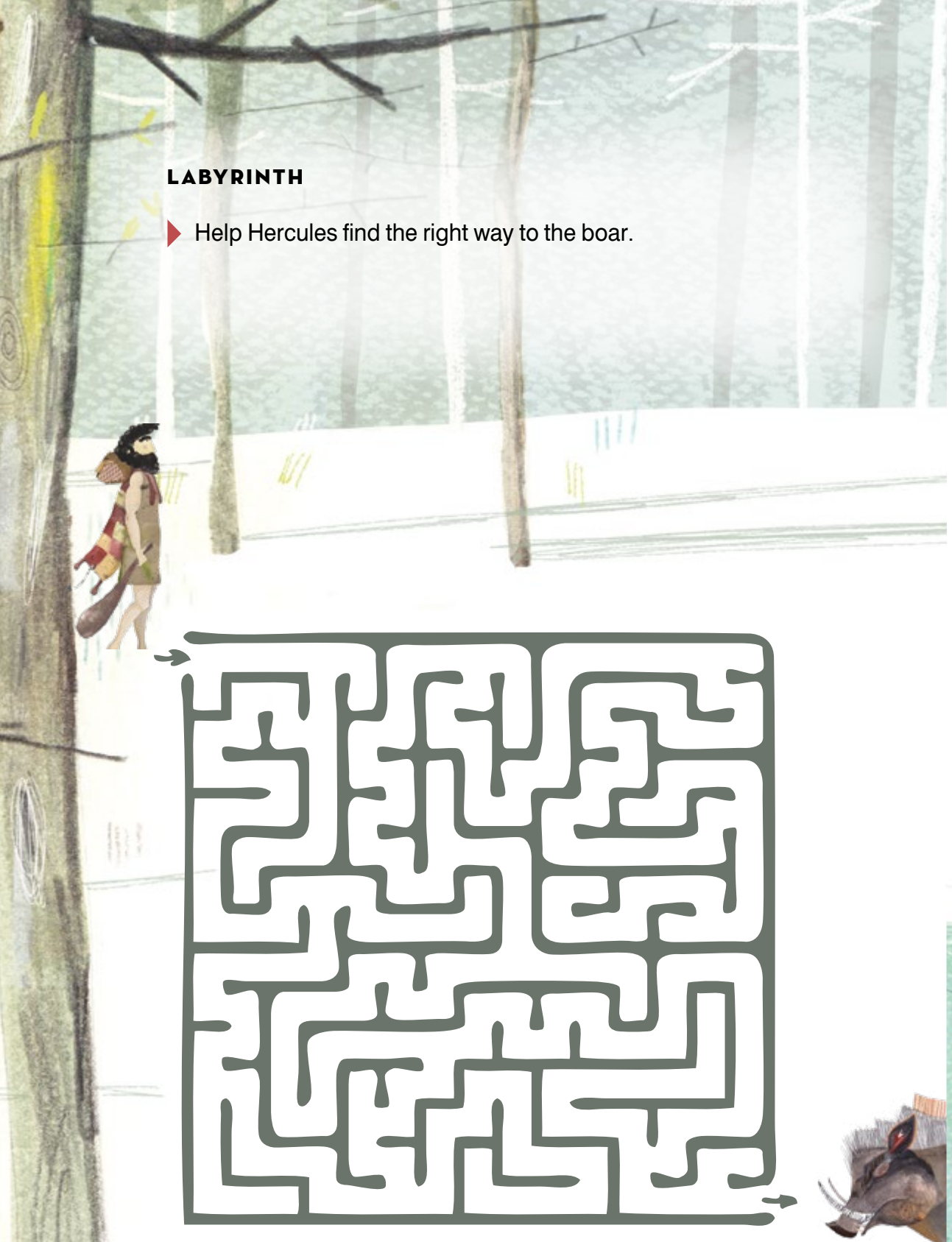
- In the painting below, from another vase, we see a different moment in the labour. What is happening here?
- Who do you think are the people in the painting other than Hercules?



Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg

LABYRINTH

- Help Hercules find the right way to the boar.



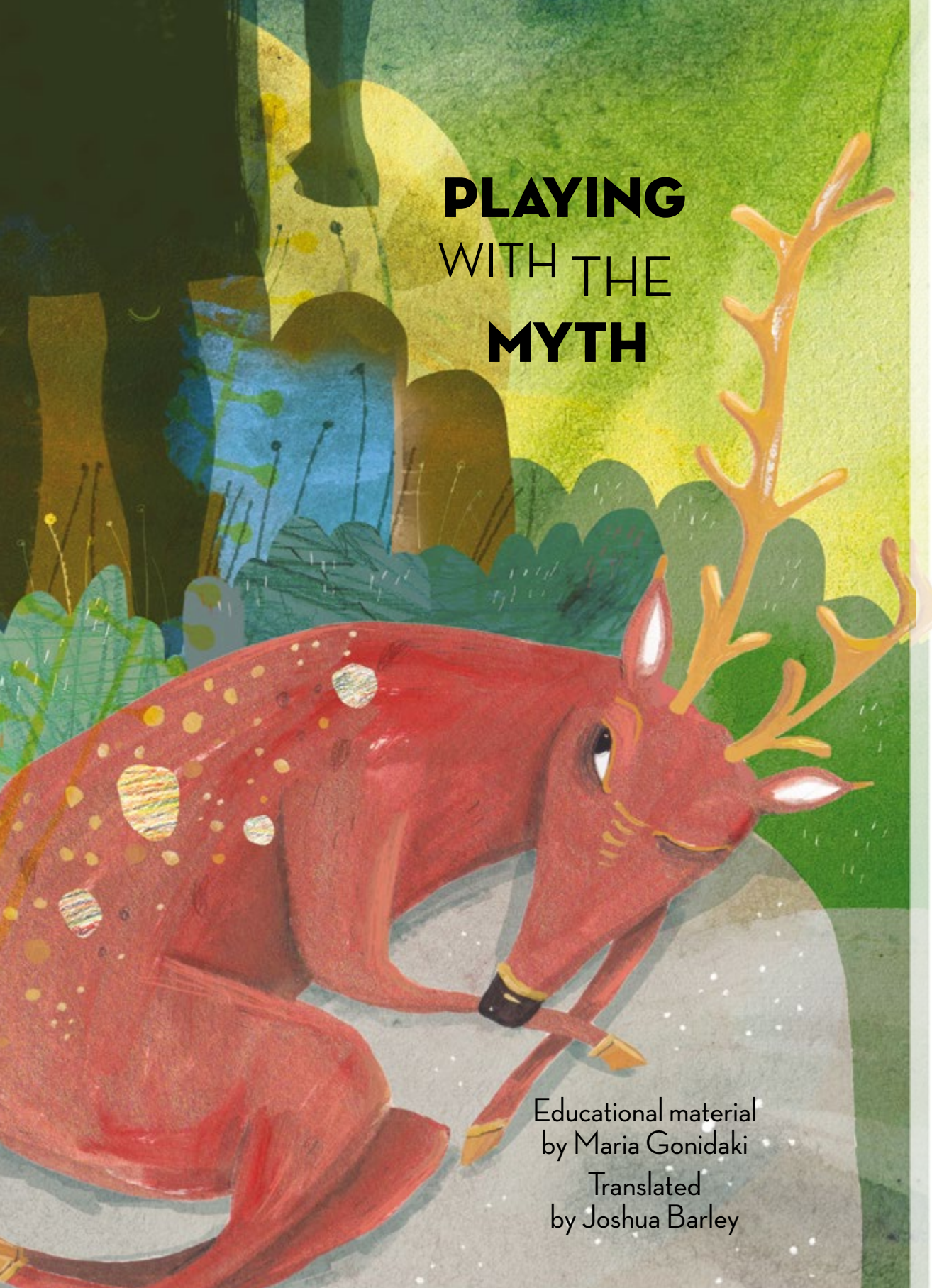
- Imagine that Hercules is travelling in our own times and that you meet him. What labours would you ask him to do?

- Are there ‘wild beasts’ today that you would like the hero to save us from?
- You can either write about these labours or draw them.



The Ceryneian Hind





PLAYING WITH THE MYTH

Educational material
by Maria Gonidaki

Translated
by Joshua Barley

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THE FOURTH LABOUR OF HERCULES: THE CERYNEIAN HIND

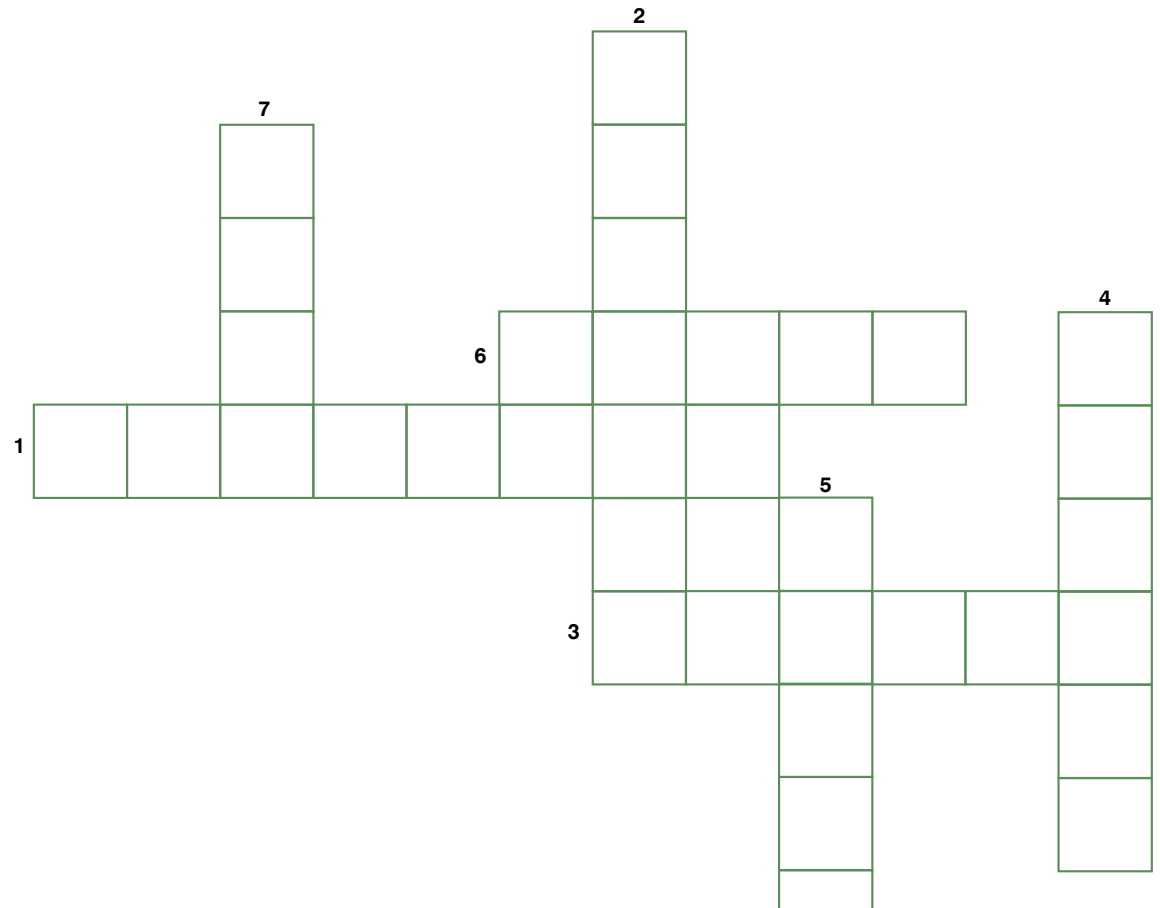
When Artemis, goddess of hunting, was once wandering in the forest, she encountered five very beautiful hinds (female deer) with golden antlers and bronze hooves. She chased them but only caught four, which she used to pull her chariot. The fifth roamed free on Mount Ceryneia, on the border of Arcadia and Achaea in the Peloponnese. According to one version of the myth, this deer, which was sacred to Artemis, was given to her by Taygeti, daughter of Atlas (the Titan who was condemned by Zeus to hold the sky on his shoulders forever), since Artemis had helped Taygeti to escape Zeus when he was pursuing her.

Eurystheus asked Hercules to bring him back this hind alive (he was sure that Hercules would not manage this, as the hind ran so fast that no mortal could keep up). Hercules, however, was undaunted. He set out for the mountain and began the hunt. He hunted the hind for a whole year, until the animal became tired and stopped for a drink of water. He caught it there and took it to Eurystheus.

According to another version of the myth, when the hind went to cross the river Ladon, Hercules hit and wounded it on the leg with an arrow. On the way to Mycenae, an enraged Artemis met them, with her brother Apollo. Hercules explained that he would just show the hind to Eurystheus and then let it go free – so the god and goddess let him finish his labour.

CROSSWORD

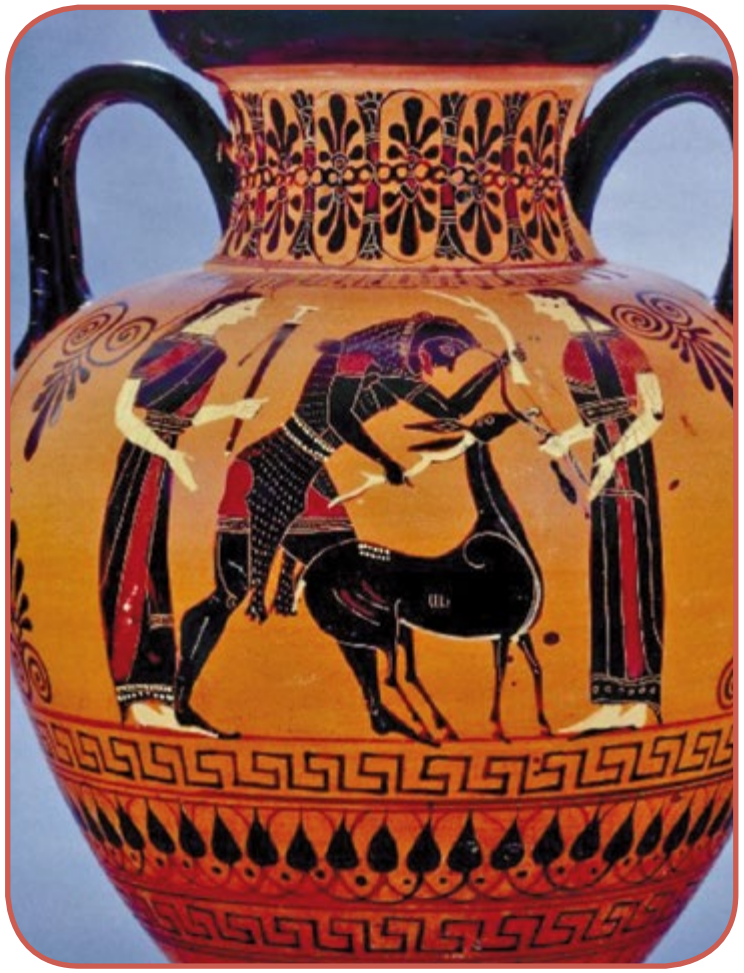
1. The mountain on which Artemis' sacred hind lived.
2. Artemis was the goddess of...
3. The sacred hind had... antlers.
4. Its hooves were made of...
5. Eurystheus asked Hercules to bring the hind back...
6. Taygeti, the daughter of..., gave the animal to Artemis.
7. Hercules hunted the animal for a whole...





ANSWERS
1.Ceryneia, 2. Hunting, 3. Golden,
4. Bronze, 5. Alive, 6. Atlas, 7. Year.

- Look at the paintings on the two vases. How is Hercules portrayed?



British Museum, London



- How did Hercules catch the hind according to the ancient artists?



Louvre Museum, Paris

Diodoros of Sicily, an ancient Greek historian, wrote about this labour:

'Then Hercules was commanded to bring back the golden-antlered deer [...]. He performed this labour, however, without using force or taking risks, only with his intelligence.'

- Explain the phrase 'without using force or taking risks, only with his intelligence.'

- Look at the map of the Peloponnese and circle the area where Artemis' favourite hind lived. Then, using a map or the internet, find where Mycenae is and mark it on the map as well.

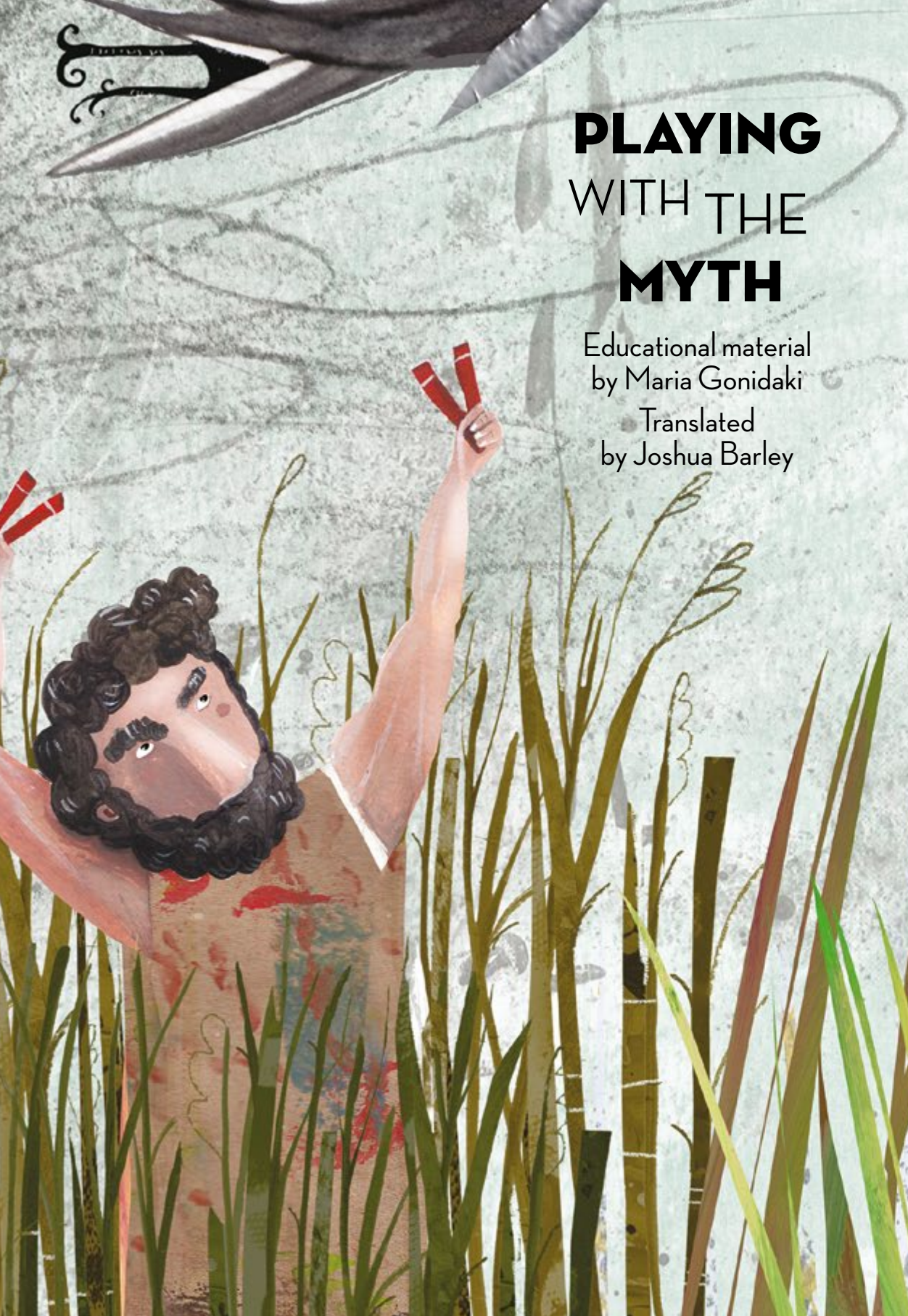


- Look at how the book's illustrator drew the hind. Then draw it from your imagination, running over the mountains of the Peloponnese, using your favourite colours.



The Stymphalian Birds





PLAYING WITH THE MYTH

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Translated
by Joshua Barley

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THE FIFTH LABOUR OF HERCULES: THE STYMPHALIAN BIRDS

In the region where Eurystheus was king, there was a lake called Stymphalia. The area around the lake was fertile, with many trees and bushes. In them hid the terrifying Stymphalian Birds.

Why were they terrifying? Well, they ate meat – and not only animals, but also humans. They found their food using their long legs and iron beaks and claws. Their wings were also iron (or bronze, according to one version of the myth). They shot feathers from their wings like arrows and killed easily. There were so many birds that when they flew they blocked out the sun! Wherever they went they destroyed everything.

To stop this destruction, Eurystheus set Hercules the task of killing these birds, or at least chasing them away. So Hercules took his bow and arrows and went to the lake. The birds, however, were hidden in the surrounding bushes and trees. Athena came to her favourite hero's side once again and gave him the solution: two bronze *krotala* (castanets) made by Hephaestus. When the birds heard the loud noise they came out of their hiding places and Hercules began to kill them with arrows dipped in the poisonous blood of the Lernean Hydra. He killed many birds, but most escaped and went to the island of Ares.

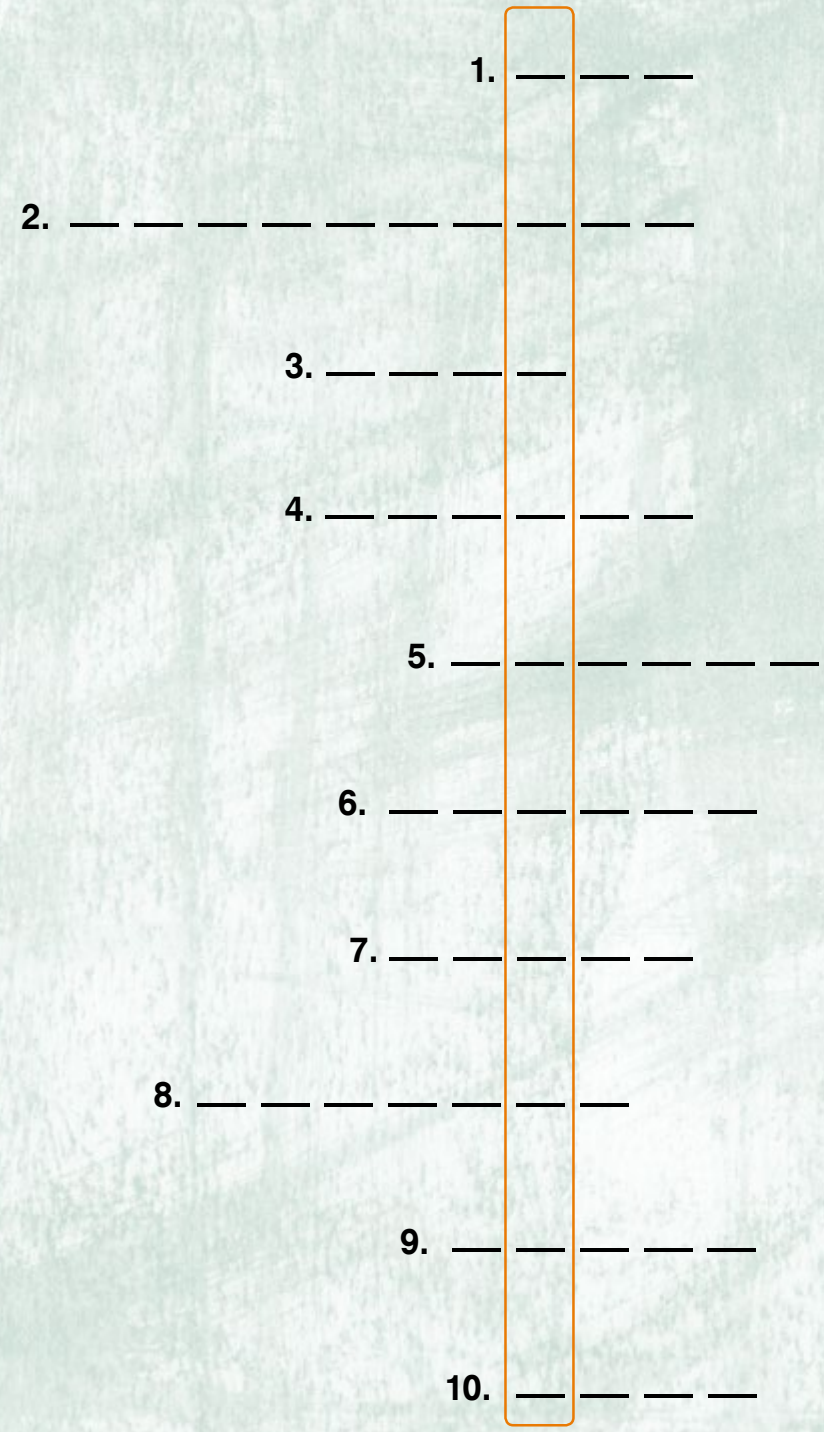
THINK ABOUT THIS

This labour, like the killing of the Lernaean Hydra, is probably linked to man's attempt to be free from the swamps and marshes that existed around lakes and caused serious illnesses.

WORD GAME

When you fill in the blanks, you will find the name of the lake where Hercules went for this labour written vertically.

1. There were so many Stymphalian Birds that when they flew they blocked out the...
2. Hercules' *krotala* were made by...
3. The Stymphalian birds were all fire and...
4. One of the winged gods was...
5. Their feathers were as deadly as...
6. This goddess helped Hercules.
7. The birds'... were made of iron.
8. The land around the lake was...
9. This is the ... labour of Hercules.
10. The birds that Hercules did not kill went to the island of...



ANSWERS
1. Sun, **2.** Hephaestus, **3.** Fury, **4.** Hermes, **5.** Spears, **6.** Athena, **7.** Claws, **8.** Fertile, **9.** Fifth, **10.** Ares.

- Look at the painting from an ancient Greek vase.
  - Who is the hero in the painting? Which parts of the picture help you recognise him?



British Museum, London

- The ancient artist and the modern illustrator paint – each in their own style – the same scene from the labour of the Stymphalian Birds.
  - What similarities and differences do you see in the two paintings?



REMEMBER

Black-figure style: a technique of decorating ancient vases in which the figures are in black and the background is the colour of clay.

LEARN ABOUT THE WORLD OF BIRDS AND PROTECT IT!

- The Stymphalian Birds might have caused great evil in the Peloponnese, but in general birds are a very valuable part of every country's fauna, and we should protect them.

- Visit the website of the **Hellenic Ornithological society: www.ornithologiki.gr**
There you will find:
– A lot of information about the birds of Greece, as well as a list of the rare birds that live in the country.
– Information about the habitats and important areas for birds in Greece.
– The action taken by the Society to protect endangered species and their habitats.

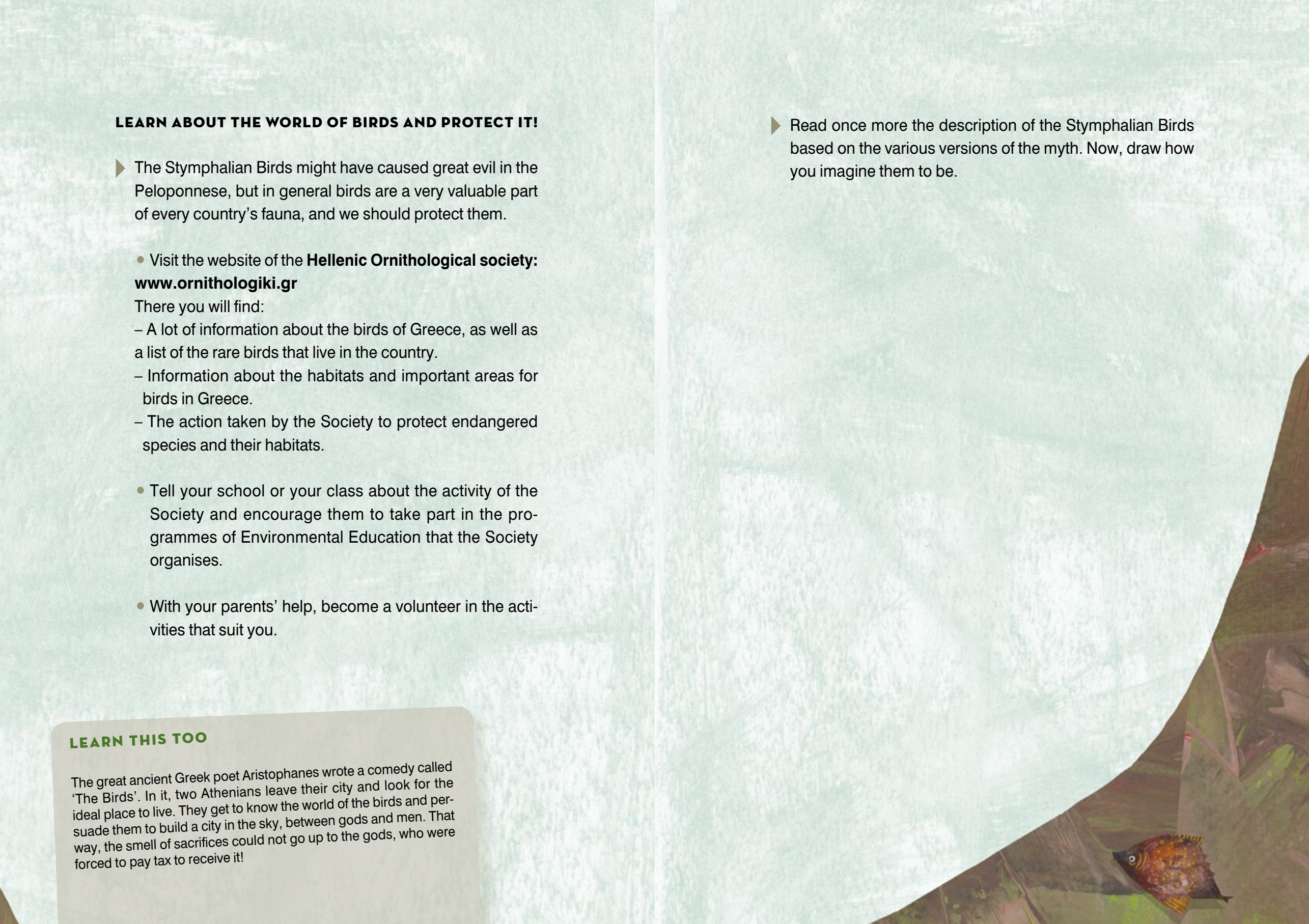
- Tell your school or your class about the activity of the Society and encourage them to take part in the programmes of Environmental Education that the Society organises.

- With your parents' help, become a volunteer in the activities that suit you.

LEARN THIS TOO

The great ancient Greek poet Aristophanes wrote a comedy called 'The Birds'. In it, two Athenians leave their city and look for the ideal place to live. They get to know the world of the birds and persuade them to build a city in the sky, between gods and men. That way, the smell of sacrifices could not go up to the gods, who were forced to pay tax to receive it!

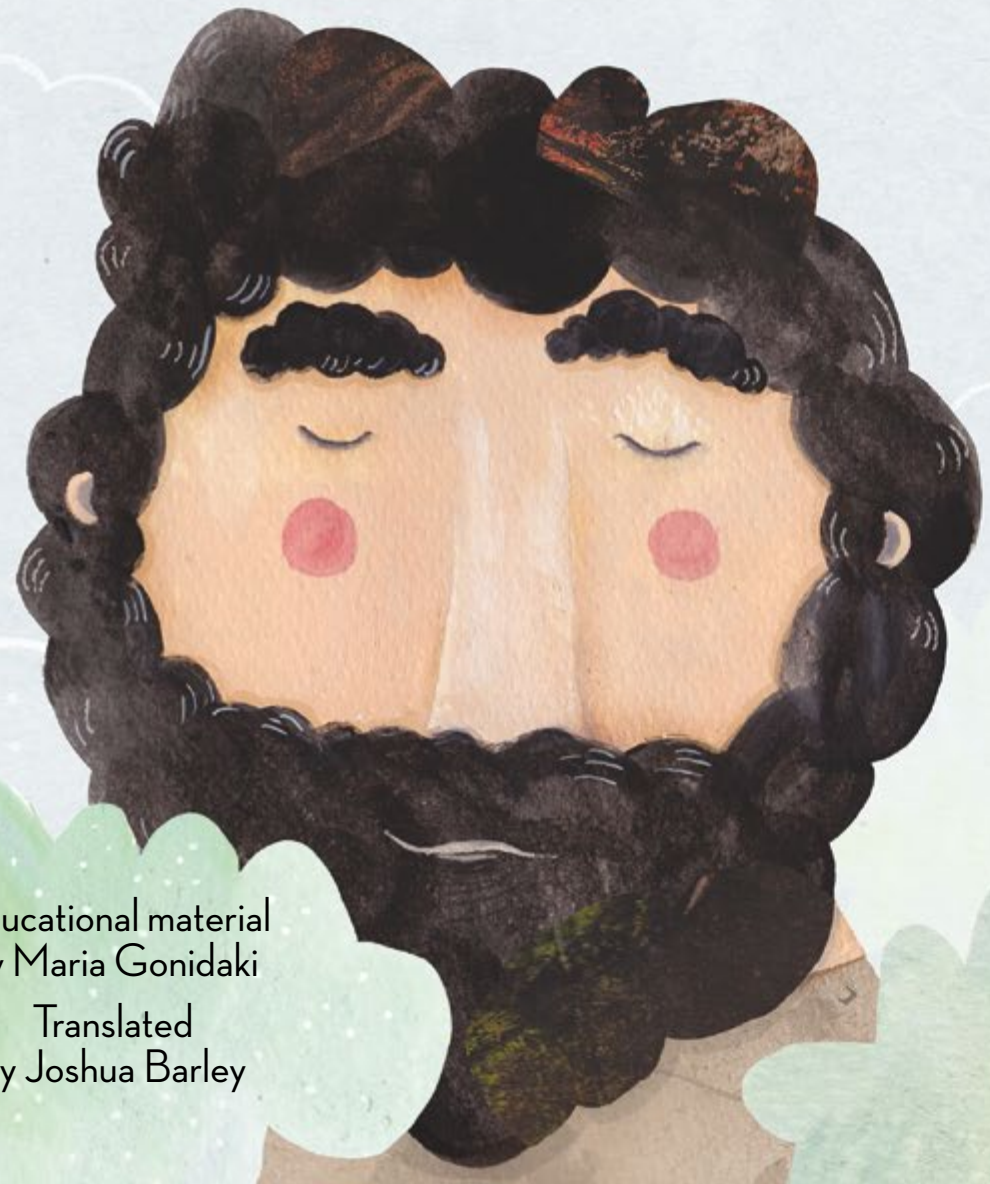
- Read once more the description of the Stymphalian Birds based on the various versions of the myth. Now, draw how you imagine them to be.



The Stables of Augeas



PLAYING WITH THE MYTH



Educational material
by Maria Gonidaki

Translated
by Joshua Barley

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THE SIXTH LABOUR OF HERCULES: THE STABLES OF AUGEAS

For this labour, Hercules did not go very far. He popped off to Elis, in the north-western Peloponnese. Augeas was the king of Elis. He was the son of the sun-god Helios (others say that he was the son of Eleius). He was very rich (he had even built a treasure-house to guard his wealth!) and he had many animals, particularly cows and sheep. There were so many that they stretched out over a great area between two rivers: the Alfeios and the Pineios. It was impossible for the servants of Augeas to clean all their manure, so they had become whole hills. The crops were being destroyed by the muck and the people were getting ill.

Eurystheus did not simply ask Hercules to clean the stables. He had to do it in a single day. And our hero managed to do the impossible not with the strength of his hands this time, but with the power of his mind. He used the power of water, one of the most important elements of nature: he dug two deep ditches (or, according to another version, just one) which went through the stables and ended at the two rivers. He diverted the water of the rivers into the ditches and in a few hours the manure was in the sea. When Hercules first went to Augeas and told him that he could clean his stables, Augeas agreed to give him part of his kingdom or some of his animals. But when the labour was completed, Augeas made various excuses and didn't give him his fee. Hercules, therefore, after going to Mycenae to tell Eurystheus that he had carried out the labour, put an army together and attacked the Elians. He defeated them, killed Augeas and, to remember the expedition, established an athletic competition at Olympia in honour of Zeus: the Olympic Games!

CROSSWORD

1. Augeas' father.
2. Hercules used the water of which river?
3. The manure ended up in the...
4. Because of the muck in the stables, there was a very bad... in Elis.
5. The Olympic Games were held in honour of...



ANSWERS: **1.** Helios, **2.** Alfeios, **3.** Sea, **4.** Smell, **5.** Zeus

TRUE OR FALSE?

	T	F
1. Augeas' servants managed to clean the stables.	☐	☐
2. Hercules showed his bodily strength in this labour.	☐	☐
3. Augeas promised to give him a tenth of his flock.	☐	☐
4. Hercules did this labour in one hour.	☐	☐
5. This was the last labour of Hercules.	☐	☐



ANSWERS: **1.** F. **2.** F. **3.** T. **4.** F. **5.** F.

- Look at the relief below, from the temple of Zeus at Olympia (the only one that shows this labour of Hercules).
  Try to answer the following questions:
- What is Hercules holding, and why?
- Who is the female figure next to him?
- What contrast do you notice in the expressions of the two people?
- Does the ancient artist's presentation of the myth match the version from the written sources?



Olympia, Archaeological Museum

- Look at how the modern illustrator draws the stables of Augeas as they are being cleaned, then draw your own version.

The myth of Hercules cleaning the stables is believed to be connected with a change in the flow of the river Pineios, either from a natural cause or by the efforts of people to make channels to bring water to their fields, to help their crops grow (irrigation).

Look up in an encyclopaedia or on the internet:

- About the **history of irrigation** on earth: when do we find the first irrigation works and in which civilisations [Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece (Knossos)]?
- About the **importance of irrigation**:
  positive features (increase in farming production), **negative** features (overuse of water drains rivers and lakes).
- How do we water crops today? Do we manage water correctly?
- How else do we exploit the power of water? What do you know about **hydroelectric** power plants?

One of the myths related to the founding of the Olympic Games is Hercules' labour in the stables of Augeas.

Look up about the Olympic Games in ancient times.

- How often did they happen? Where were they, and what athletic contests were held?
- What was the Olympic Truce?



