



Influence of Greek Mythology on English Language and Literature

RESEARCH SCHOLAR

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Abstract: Greek mythology, which is regarded as one of the foundations of Western culture, has become the most widely read classic literature in the entire globe due to its special ability to captivate a huge audience. Greek mythology and the evolution of English in language and literature are closely connected. Greek mythology is frequently applied to English vocabulary and idioms, and it significantly influences British literature in various development schools and the careers of notable authors. Greek mythology is everything about the gods, heroes, and natural and historical universe legend of the ancient Greeks. It highlights the intellectual insight of the ancient Greeks, whose influence on the entirety of European culture and even the history of civilization as a whole was significant. The analysis demonstrates that it is impossible to examine English culture without considering the influences of Greek mythology. The following will be from the English vocabulary, idioms and the history of the development of English literature, analysis of Greek mythology for English language and literature. This essay primarily examines how Greek mythology has influenced English culture, including an analysis of how it has affected English language and literature.

Keywords: Greek mythology, influence, legends, supernatural, literature and culture

1. Introduction:

Greek-derived mythology typically refers to legends passed down through the ages about gods or other supernatural beings. A collection of myths, tales, and folklore that a specific culture holds to be genuine is frequently included. Due to the lack of knowledge and technology in the past, humans frequently used superstitious explanations to explain nature, the world, and social life. The mythology of the country is based on those notions and justifications. There are many different types of myths and legends that have existed throughout human history, with Greek mythology being the most significant. Ancient Greek myths make up the collection known as Greek mythology. These myths, which feature several gods, heroes, and enigmatic creatures, describe the universe's creation and nature. Additionally, they discuss how numerous mysteries and religious practices that the Greeks themselves practiced came to be. Greek mythology thus plays a significant

role in the history, culture, and religion of ancient Greece. Greek mythology is more frequently studied today since it accurately captures the religion, politics, and culture of ancient Greece as well as the entire ancient Greek civilization. Additionally, it is crucial and significant to comprehend the true meaning of these stories in order to comprehend the essence of both Greek culture and the entirety of western society. Greek mythology is praised for its greatness and significance, in part because of the profound and enduring impact it has had on the entire western world, particularly the English culture. Nearly every facet of western society is affected by it, including language, literature, music, art, technology, and even how people think. This research paper will provide a brief analysis of the impact of Greek mythology on English culture, focusing mostly on linguistic and literary factors.

Characteristics of the Greek Mythology

Greek mythology is the foundation of literary growth and contains the fundamental elements of literature. Greek mythology prohibits the expression of the arranging and creation tale. Greek mythology is not only a treasure of Greek art but also a key component in the growth of literature. Greek mythology contributed to the growth of Greek art in the same way that human fantasy and subconscious aesthetic effects were used to generate the art's theme. The literary traits of Greek mythology are discussed as below.

The story is philosophically strong: Greek mythology is described in the plot as being full of philosophical ideas. The Greek myth combines the life of God and his family, from his conception through the spread of human emotion throughout the world. Each of these stories has a great literary merit and contains acronyms, twists, and turns that reflect the reality of tolerance and compromises, honesty and kindness, hatred, and violence.

Aesthetic Characteristics of the story: Greeks believed that beauty was a particularly noble quality, and the quest of human beauty increasingly gained favour from the general public. The Greek mythology of life love and the desire of beauty have also been most effectively depicted. The main components of Greek mythology's depiction of the creative process include the holy and secular, physical and spiritual, real and fantastical, and courageous pursuit of the truth of harmony's beauty. Greek mythology can depict the splendour of nature as well as the brutality and cruelty of the gods, as well as terror and confusion.

Uniqueness of Artistic Expression: They are not only full of struggle and hatred for mankind, but also full of goodness and friendliness, even though they are more longing for peace, even though there are some rights struggles. These personality characteristics and the image of God is the Greek god of the myth of Olympus. Romantic and exaggerated creative techniques are most frequently used to describe the appearance of God.

Influence of Greek Mythology on English Language

We should first explain the meaning of culture before moving on to our issue. In general, culture refers to a people's entire way of life. The beliefs, practices, artefacts, institutions, skills, and languages that define a human community's way of life are typically included. It practically permeates every part of daily life and mostly affects how individuals behave, including how they speak. As a result, it is closely related to language.

On the one hand, language penetrates human thought and the way that people see the world since it is an integral element of who we are as people. It articulates and represents cultural reality. However, since language is a byproduct of culture, it contributes to the maintenance of culture. The English language has been greatly influenced by Greek mythology. It significantly boosts English language growth. Greek mythology is the source of many terms and allusive phrases. Since language is an essential component of culture, the impact of Greek mythology on English culture is obvious.

Idioms Originated from the Greek Mythology

The dictionary defines an idiom as a phrase or statement whose meaning cannot be inferred from the individual word meanings and which must be mastered as a whole. In other terms, an idiom is a unique manner of speech that conveys a meaning distinct from the meaning of the words individually. A type of phrase that alludes to gods, heroes, or events, tales, etc. from certain literary traditions is called an allusive idiom. Many allusive phrases in the English language have roots in Greek mythology.

These allusive idioms can be used to demonstrate the direct impact of Greek mythology on the English language, as shown by the following examples:

1. *The Midas Touch*: King Midas was an extremely greedy ruler in Greek mythology, and the god Dionysus granted him one desire. Dionysus approved with Midas' request that everything he touched turn to gold. Midas, however, ended up turning everything he touched into gold, even his loved ones and food, so this didn't work out well for him.

The negative aspect of the narrative has been forgotten, and today we use this phrase to describe extremely successful people.

For example, my sister has the Midas touch. She excels in whatever she attempts!

2. *Sour grapes*: This proverb from Greek mythology can be found in the Aesop's Fable, "Fox and the Grapes." In this story, a fox makes every effort to reach some delicious-looking grapes that are hanging high in a tree. He tries, but fails. He gives up and leaves, comforting himself by claiming that the grapes would have been sour in any case.

For instance: He has some real sour grapes because he didn't get the promotion he wanted

3. *Between a rock and a hard place*: If someone is stuck between a rock and a hard place, they have a very difficult decision to make.

The phrase is derived from the narrative of Odysseus, who had to travel between Scylla and Charybdis as he returned from the Trojan War. An enormous tornado close to Scylla's cliff was known as Charybdis, and it had the power to destroy any ship that came too close to it. Scylla was a sea monster who lived on a cliff and consumed sailors who went by. Odysseus was in a difficult situation since he had to figure out how to pass Scylla without having Charybdis destroy his ship.

For instance: I'm really stuck between a rock and a hard place. I have no idea what to do!

4. *Pandora's box*: The first woman in Greek mythology was named Pandora. As part of the punishment meted out to humanity for Prometheus' theft of the fire-secret, Zeus commanded Hephaestus to fashion her from

Earth. She was therefore given appropriately harmful traits when she was formed by numerous gods and goddesses. All of human evils were kept in a magic box that belonged to Pandora. He unlocked Pandora's enchanted box after she wed Epimetheus out of curiosity. Then, after the box was opened, all the ills and evils flew out, including sickness, hopelessness, malice, greed, jealousy, old age, death, anger, violence, and cruelty, while there was only hope inside. As a result, the phrase “Pandora's box” can apply to any source of significant and unanticipated problems or a gift that appears desirable but is actually a curse. For instance, the phrase “The project, which seemed so promising, turned out to be a Pandora's box” denotes that a project that first appears to have the potential for success or brilliance is ultimately a calamity.

5. *Achilles' heel*: In Homer's Iliad, Achilles was a legendary hero. He is the child of Thetis and Peleus. His mother Thetis immersed him in the Styx River when he was a little child in an effort to render him invulnerable. Achilles' mother was holding onto him by his heel, so all of his bodily parts except his heel became invulnerable. He later suffered a heel injury during the siege of Troy and ultimately passed away as a result.

The phrase “Achilles' heel” is frequently used in English speech and is still widely used in everyday conversation. In contemporary English, the phrase “Achilles' heel” usually refers to a flaw or weakness that, though it may not be immediately obvious, might ultimately bring about a person's demise. Here's an illustration: He performs exceptionally well in our class. His Achilles' heel is that he is not very strong in English. He is practically good in all science courses. According to this statement, the student's single area of weakness—English—could prove to be his undoing.

6. *Touchwood*: This saying and custom have a very long history and were first used by the Ancient Greeks as a lucky charm. The Greeks touched trees to bring luck because they thought nymphs and spirits resided there. *For instance*: A friend of mine always wore wooden earrings so she could always touch wood.

7. *A Herculean task*: Greek mythology features Hercules, also referred to as Heracles, as a celestial hero. He possesses enormous power and is powerful, fearless, and inventive. He is claimed to have “made the world safe for mankind” and to be its benefactor by defeating evil archaic forces. The phrase “a Herculean task” is frequently used to describe a task that requires enormous strength because Hercules is a very strong hero. This idiom, whose meaning derives from Greek mythology, is still widely used in everyday speech.

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English. He is practically good in all science courses. According to this statement, the student's single area of weakness—English—could prove to be his undoing.

9. *Apple of discord*: The Golden Apple of Discord is referred to as a “apple of discord.” According to Greek mythology, all the gods and goddesses, with the exception of Eris, the goddess of discord, were invited to Peleus and Thetis’ wedding supper. Eris determined to exact revenge as a result. She created an apple that led to a furious argument between Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite. The conflict ultimately resulted in the War of Troy. Since the Greek mythology's tale of the apple of discord is so well-known, people frequently use the idiom in a figurative sense to describe someone or something that causes an argument or a disagreement. The aforementioned idioms are frequently employed in English, even in everyday speech. We can see from the aforementioned instances how heavily Greek mythology has influenced the English language.

Words derived from the Greek Mythology

Other than the various allusive idioms that come from Greek mythology, another way that Greek mythology has influenced the English language is through nourishing English words. Greek mythology has influenced many words in the English language, including those in the domains of psychology, astronomy, scientific technology, etc. Numerous words, including several popular nouns, are borrowed from Greek mythology frequently even in spoken English. There are many words that may be found while discussing words that have roots in Greek mythology. Here, we’ll examine a few of them to demonstrate the significant impact Greek mythology has had on the English language.

1. *Europe*: Although the word ‘Europe’ in English refers to a continent, its origins are in a Greek tale. The gods’ king, Zeus, fell in love with Europa because she was a stunning princess.

2. *Music*: The word ‘music’ in English refers to a grouping of sounds that have been purposefully made to be pleasing and harmonic. The Greek goddesses of the arts and sciences known as the Muses inspired this directly.

3. *Atlas*: The Greek mythological character Atlas is the source of the word “atlas,” which refers to a book of maps. The deity Atlas is very powerful. Zeus punished him by making him carry the weight of the universe on his back. Gerardus Mercator, a Belgian cartographer, gave his collection of maps the name Atlas in 1595. Then, the word "atlas" acquired its meaning.

3. *Chronology*: The English word ‘chronology’ describes the chronological order of events. It also has something to do with ‘chronic,’ which normally refers to anything that lasts a person their entire life. Both words have Greek roots that can be traced back to Chronos, the god of time.

4. *Cloth*: The word ‘cloth’ in English refers to a fabric or substance that is frequently used for clothing. This term derives from the Greek word Clotho, who was the youngest of the Three Fates who wove the thread of life.

5. *Siren*: The Greek mythology is also where the word siren originates. Siren is one of several winged women that lured sailors to their deaths by their singing in Greek mythology. The term “siren” later came to imply a

device that emits a prolonged, loud sound as a signal or warning. It can also be used to describe a woman who is both intriguing and threatening.

6. *Titan and Titanic*: The word titan (or Titan) in English refers to a person who possesses immense stature, strength, intelligence, importance, etc. but “titanic” refers to something enormous and huge. Both of them are descended from Titan, a term used in Greek mythology to describe any of the ancient huge gods that controlled the Earth before Zeus overthrew them.

7. *Psychology*: The study of the human mind and behaviour is referred to as ‘psychology.’ The Greek goddess of the soul, Psyche, is the source of this phrase.

8. *Nemesis*: Nemesis, as used in everyday speech, refers to the justifiable and inevitable penalty for transgression. Nemesis is the goddess of vengeance in Greek mythology.

Some other words like ocean, nectar, panic, typhoon, lethargy, phobia, tantalize, mentor, hypnosis, hermaphrodite, morphine are derived from Greek language.

Numerous scientific terminology, aside from the ones mentioned above, have their roots in Greek mythology. Take astronomy as an example. The eight planets of the solar system—Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto—are all named after Greek mythology deities. In addition, the names of the planets, satellites are taken from people or deities who are related to the deities who share the same name as the planets.

The influence of Greek mythology can also be found in psychology. Greek mythology is where the two well-known psychiatric phrases, ‘Oedipus complex’ and ‘narcissism,’ originated. We all know about the well-known Greek mythological character Oedipus, who murders his father before wedding his mother. The implicit sexual yearning of a child for the parent of the opposite sex and envy of the other parent are now referred to as the “Oedipus complex” in psychology. Greek mythology’s Narcissus is a beautiful character. He adored his shadow in the water, but eventually he drowned and turned into a type of flower called a narcissus. The word narcissism now refers to an unhealthy and excessive love or admiration for oneself in psychology.

Influence of Greek Mythology English Literature from Ancient to Modern Time:

Literature and culture are closely related to one another. One way to think about literature is as a kind of cultural mirror. It plays a significant role in culture as well. When discussing the impact of Greek mythology on English culture, the impact on English literature cannot be disregarded. Additionally, a brief analysis of its impact on ancient literature is important because those notable literary works afterwards had a significant influence on English authors and poets. Mythology was one of the most significant sources of literature and culture for the ancient people. The actual reflection of ancient people can be observed in many of the literary works of that era. There are a few notable poets and playwrights from ancient Greece whose works have had a lasting impact on English literature today. Greek mythology has had a huge influence on culture for centuries. Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes—the four most renowned dramatists in ancient Greece—had already drawn inspiration from Greek mythology for their works. Additionally, The Iliad and The

Odyssey, two of the greatest works of literature ever written, are also based on Greek mythology. Thus, English literature has been greatly influenced by such works.

England first experienced the Renaissance literary movement in the 16th century. The rediscovery and study of books from classical antiquity inspired the revival of letters and the arts, and new aesthetic standards based on classical models were developed. From that point forward, English authors, poets, and playwrights started incorporating allusions to mythology into their writings and drawing inspiration from Greek mythology while creating new works. Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, John Milton, John Keats, Shelley, Byron, and others are among the most well-known authors and poets.

A noteworthy example is *Troilus and Cressida*, one of Shakespeare's most well-known tragedies. This tragedy is an old story. It is truly derived from Greek mythology even if it is not entirely a part of it. Milton's poem *Comus* serves as another illustration. It is not very long, but it does feature more than thirty characters and stories from Greek mythology. Greek mythology is also referenced in *Prometheus Unbound* by Shelley. Prometheus is a character from Greek mythology that Shelley adapts into a new picture in order to convey his own thoughts and emotions. Shelley's passionate conviction to stand out against injustice and tyranny is evident throughout this poem. Additionally, Keats uses various characters and tales from Greek mythology. He employs references to Bacchus, the deity of drunkenness, Lethe, the river in Hades whose waters promote forgetfulness, Hippocrene, the fountain of the Muses, and other deities to sing the praises of the eternal beauty in his well-known song *Ode to a Nightingale*. These pictures are all taken from Greek mythology. Also closely related to Greek mythology are Keats' *Hymn to Apollo*, *Endymion*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

In short Blake used Greek figures Muses, Ida, Phoebus, Venus. Wordsworth used Vulcan, Proteus, Triton in his poetry. Coleridge used Aeolian harp and Aeolian lute. Keats used Apollo, Jove, Neptune, Pan, Dian, Morpheus, Porphyry, Andromeda, Lamia, Nymph, Satyr, Dryads, Fauns, Hermes, Olympus, Crete, Triton, Muse, Proserpine, Sicilian, Lethe, Silenus, Cupid, Elysium, Naiad, Thetis, Bacchus, Pluto, Orpheus, Pleiad, Venus, Adonian, Pyrrha, Aeolian, Ceres, thyrsus, Psyche, Phoebe, Zephyr, Melancholy, Lethe, Elysium, Hippocrene, Flora, Proserpine, Silenus, Thetis, Eurydice, Arcady. Byron used Abydos, Hellespont, Venus, Cupid. Shelley used Chorus Hymeneal, Adonais, Urania, Echo, Narcissus, Hyacinth, Phoebus, the Pythian, a pardlike Spirit, Actaeon and Argo. This is enough to show the huge impact of Greek mythology on English literature.

Greek mythology continues to be a source of inspiration for English writers and playwrights today. Every era of English literature has been greatly influenced by Greek mythology and there is no doubt that Greek will have everlasting effect on English literature.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis above reveals the significant impact of Greek mythology on English language and culture. Greek mythology has actually had a significant impact on many other facets of English society. For instance, there are many tales that demonstrate the strong connection between Greek mythology and art in the context of the arts. Even the word music itself derives from the Greek mythological god Muses. To sum up, given that Greek mythology has such a significant impact on English culture, it is crucial for English language learners to have some background knowledge in order to better understand the connections between Greek mythology and art. Language and literature are interconnected, so having some background knowledge is necessary.

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