

Activity Plan. Iris – Rainbow Goddess.

Objectives

Iris – Rainbow Goddess is designed to help learners:

- Read and interpret ancient material culture (ancient pottery)
- Recognise the goddess Iris through her key iconography
- Understand how pottery can be used as evidence for myth, ritual and religious belief

Activities: After you've watched the Iris animation together, try an activity:

Think and Create: What message do you think Iris might be carrying for the gods? Write a message. Which god is it from? Who is it for? Where must she carry it to?

Design: Ancient Greek messengers (like Iris) carried special sticks. Why do you think they carried them? Design a new one for Iris. What should it look like? What could you add that might be useful?

Storyboard: Plan an adventure for Iris. She must carry a message for a god. Where does she go? What happens along the way? Incorporate what you know about Iris and her mythology.

Be Enterprising: The coloured part of our eye is called the 'iris', after Iris, Rainbow Goddess. Lots of other things are named after her too. Imagine you are setting up a business that uses her name. What is your business? How could you use Iris imagery to promote it?

Who was Iris?

Iris is the ancient Greek goddess of the rainbow. She is a messenger. She carries messages from one god to another, especially messages from Zeus and Hera. She has wings so that she can fly fast and far. When she flies, she leaves rainbows in her wake, streaking across the sky. This was what the ancient Greeks said caused rainbows. Rainbows come when there is both sun and rain, so Iris was called “storm-footed” or “wind-footed”, because the rain storms came with her. In an age when we can send messages near and far so easily it is good to be reminded how magical fast moving messages would seem in a world before email, telephones, or even the postal service.

About the Vase

This vase was made in Athens in around 450BCE. The vase has two handles on the side and a third behind; that tells us that it is a hydria, for carrying water. The vase is housed in the National Museum in Warsaw, in Poland (number 142289). Iris is shown as if she has just landed, or is just about to take off – her knees are slightly bent, her wings up. Her dress has been done so delicately that we seem to see her legs beneath it. In her hand she carries her herald's staff – the sign that she is a messenger. Her wings have been positioned very cleverly so that they fit onto the shoulder of the vase. Her head is turned to one side – the artist is really showing off their skill!

More information is available at:

<http://www.omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/iris> and

<https://panoplyclassicsandanimation.blogspot.com/2020/05/new-animation-iris-rainbow-goddess.html>

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