

Analyze Myth

"The Flight of Icarus" is a **myth**, a traditional story that offers answers to questions about the origins of the world, natural events, human life, and customs. *

Myths often include exciting, action-packed plots. *

Many myths also suggest values—for example, honesty, cleverness, or moderation (acting within reasonable limits)—that are important to a culture.

As you read, look for the characteristics of myth listed in Focus on Genre.

Focus on Genre

↳ Myth

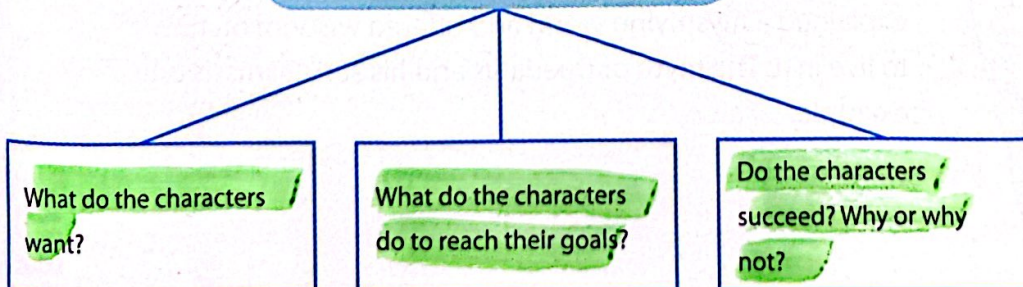
- has characters who are gods or who have special abilities
- is set in ancient times
- includes events that could not happen in real life
- often teaches a lesson relating to a cultural value

Determine Themes

A **theme** is a message about life or human nature that a writer shares with the reader. Many themes are **universal**, or applicable to anyone. An example of a universal theme might be "greed can lead to ruined lives" or "the simple things in life are the most meaningful." Writers sometimes state a theme directly. More often, you must analyze story events and characters' actions to **infer**, or make logical guesses about, the theme of a story. *

Myths often contain more than one theme. These themes reflect the cultural values of the society in which the myth originated. By analyzing the behavior of mythic characters, you can learn lessons about the traits that mattered to a culture. Think about the questions in the chart as you determine the themes in a myth.

FINDING A MYTH'S THEME



The Flight of Icarus

Myth retold by Sally Benson

A daring escape goes way too far.

1 **W**hen Theseus escaped from the labyrinth, King Minos flew into a rage with its builder, Daedalus, and ordered him shut up in a high tower that faced the lonely sea. In time, with the help of his young son, Icarus, Daedalus managed to escape from the tower, only to find himself a prisoner on the island. Several times he tried by bribery to stow away on one of the vessels sailing from Crete, but King Minos kept strict watch over them, and no ships were allowed to sail without being carefully searched.

2 Daedalus was an ingenious artist and was not discouraged by his failures. "Minos may control the land and sea," he said, "but he does not control the air. I will try that way."

NOTICE & NOTE

As you read, use the side margins to make notes about the text.

ANALYZE MYTH

Annotate: Mark the detail in paragraphs 1–2 that states the problem Daedalus and Icarus face.

Draw Conclusions: How do you think Daedalus plans to solve the problem? Why do you think so?

The Flight of Icarus 115



DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION Scaffolding for English Learners

Support Understanding Tell students they can use a graphic organizer to help them understand the events in the myth. Provide them with a sequence chart.

Moderate/Light Read paragraphs 1 and 2 aloud. Define unfamiliar vocabulary and expressions, such as *flew into a rage*, *labyrinth*, and *stow away*. Have students work in pairs to fill in the sequence chart with key events. Encourage them to draw illustrations to accompany their recording of events.

along highlighting that tracks with the audio. When the audio is playing, you can click on any portion of the text to control what is read aloud.

Preview the Text

Point out the phrase *way too far* and ask students what it means in this sentence. (*Students might mention that when people take something way too far, they are overdoing it or going past some sort of limit.*) Tell students to keep this in mind as they read.

Analyze Myth

Show How It's Done Display this page in the Student Edition and use the question to model for students how to annotate details in the text to help them analyze a myth.

- In paragraph 1, highlight "Daedalus managed to escape from the tower, only to find himself a prisoner on the island." Note in the margin that there is no land route, and the sea route has been blocked by King Minos.
- Remind students that many events in myths cannot happen in real life. Explain that some mythological characters have supernatural powers or exaggerated human characteristics, such as enormous physical strength or very high intelligence.

Possible response: *Daedalus has failed to escape by sea, so he will have to find another way to get off the island, probably by flying. Daedalus says that Minos "does not control the air. I will try that way."*



Close Read Screencast

Close Read Screencast

Modeled Discussion Have students view the Close Read Screencast online, in which readers discuss and annotate paragraph 5.

Activity Have students pair up to do a close read of paragraph 7. Students can record their answers on the **Close Read Practice PDF**.

NOTICE & NOTE

WORDS OF THE WISER

- Cue students to look at the advice that Daedalus gives to Icarus in paragraph 5.
- Ask them to consider whether this advice gives them a better idea of the problem Icarus will face in the story.
- Encourage them to ask themselves if they think this is good advice.
- Explain that recognizing **Words of the Wiser** can help readers understand **theme, internal conflict, and the relationship between character and plot**.

Possible response: *The life lesson suggested by Daedalus's warning is that extremes can be dangerous. This lesson might prompt Icarus to be cautious as he flies.*

For more about **Words of the Wiser**, see page R11 and the **Peer Coach Video: Words of the Wiser**.



Close Read Screencast

Listen to a modeled close read of this text.



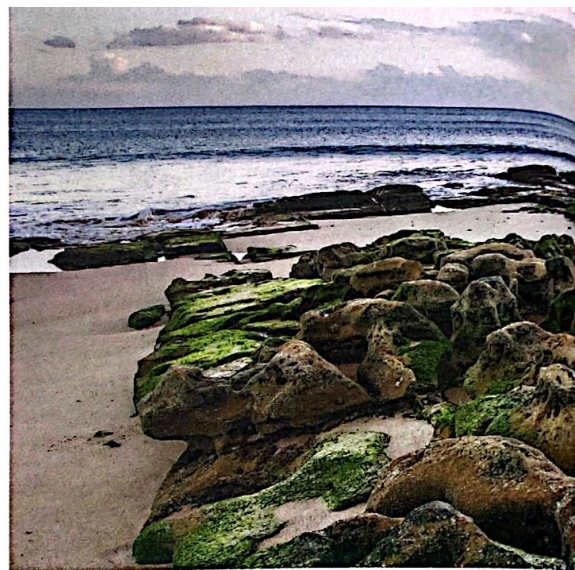
NOTICE & NOTE

WORDS OF THE WISER

When you notice a wiser character giving advice about life to the main character, you've found a **Words of the Wiser** signpost.

Notice & Note: In paragraph 5, mark the warning that Daedalus gives Icarus.

Infer: What life lesson does Daedalus give, and how might it affect Icarus?



3 He called his son, Icarus, to him and told the boy to gather up all the feathers he could find on the rocky shore. As thousands of gulls soared over the island, Icarus soon collected a huge pile of feathers. Daedalus then melted some wax and made a skeleton in the shape of a bird's wing. The smallest feathers he pressed into the soft wax and the large ones he tied on with thread. Icarus played about on the beach happily while his father worked, chasing the feathers that blew away in the strong wind that swept the island and sometimes taking bits of the wax and working it into strange shapes with his fingers.

4 It was fun making the wings. The sun shone on the bright feathers; the breezes ruffled them. When they were finished, Daedalus fastened them to his shoulders and found himself lifted upwards, where he hung poised in the air. Filled with excitement, he made another pair for his son. They were smaller than his own, but strong and beautiful.

5 Finally, one clear, wind-swept morning, the wings were finished, and Daedalus fastened them to Icarus's shoulders and taught him how to fly. He bade him watch the movements of the birds, how they soared and glided overhead. He pointed out the slow, graceful sweep of their wings as they beat the air steadily, without fluttering. Soon Icarus was sure that he, too, could fly and, raising his arms up and down, skirted over the white sand and even out over the waves, letting his feet touch the snowy foam as the water thundered and broke over the sharp rocks. Daedalus watched him proudly but with



DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION
Scaffolding for English Learners

NOTICE & NOTE Ask students to give examples of useful advice, or **Words of the Wiser**, that adults have given them.

- ▶ **Substantial** Read paragraph 5 aloud. Ask: Does Daedalus tell Icarus to fly at a moderate height? (yes) Does Icarus reply? (no)
- ▶ **Moderate** Have pairs reread paragraph 5. Provide sentence frames:

Daedalus tells Icarus to fly at a _____. Daedalus says that the sun could _____ the wings.

- ▶ **Light** Have students answer these questions: What does Daedalus tell Icarus? What does he say could happen if Icarus doesn't fly at a moderate height?



Don't forget to **Notice & Note** as you read the text.



Handwriting practice lines consisting of several horizontal blue lines.

misgivings. He called Icarus to his side and, putting his arm round the boy's shoulders, said, "Icarus, my son, we are about to make our flight. No human being has ever traveled through the air before, and I want you to listen carefully to my instructions. Keep at a moderate height, for if you fly too low, the fog and spray will clog your wings, and if you fly too high, the heat will melt the wax that holds them together. Keep near me and you will be safe." **WW**

moderate

(mōd'ər-īt) *adj.* When something is moderate, it is kept within a certain limit.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of several horizontal blue lines.

prowess

(prou'ɪs) *n.* Prowess is strength and courage.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of several horizontal blue lines.

6 He kissed Icarus and fastened the wings more securely to his son's shoulders. Icarus, standing in the bright sun, the shining wings dropping gracefully from his shoulders, his golden hair wet with spray, and his eyes bright and dark with excitement, looked like a lovely bird. Daedalus's eyes filled with tears, and turning away, he soared into the sky, calling to Icarus to follow. From time to time, he looked back to see that the boy was safe and to note how he managed his wings in his flight. As they flew across the land to test their prowess before setting out across the dark wild sea, plowmen below stopped their work and shepherds gazed in wonder, thinking Daedalus and Icarus were gods.

7 Father and son flew over Samos and Delos, which lay on their left, and Lebinthus,¹ which lay on their right. Icarus, beating his wings in joy, felt the thrill of the cool wind on his face and the clear air above and below him. He flew higher

¹ Samos ... Delos ... Lebinthus (sā'mōs' ... dē'lōs' ... lu bīn'thus'): small Greek islands in the eastern Aegean Sea.

Teach

Vocabulary in Context

frantic: Icarus beats his wings *frantically* because he wants more power to fly higher.

ASK STUDENTS how the author's use of the word *frantically* helps readers picture the scene. (*It helps readers visualize Icarus moving his arms or wings with great speed and in a highly excited way.*)

Vocabulary in Context

anxiety: Daedalus is "crazed by *anxiety*" because he hears his son cry out but doesn't know where he is.

ASK STUDENTS what Daedalus's anxiety says about his feeling for Icarus. (*Daedalus's anxiety makes it clear he loves his son and is concerned for his well-being.*)

Text in Focus

Analyze Idioms Have students view the Text in Focus video online to learn how to analyze an idiom and consider how it relates to the theme of the myth.

Activity Have students use the **Text in Focus Practice** to apply what they have learned.

Determine Themes

- Remind students that thinking about a story's moral, or lesson, will help them determine an important theme.
- Point out that in the last sentence the author provides an explanation for why Icarus fell. Tell students that this sentence emphasizes the idea that people should not get so excited that they forget to be careful.

Possible response: *The placement of the sentence at the very end of the myth emphasizes the theme that lack of moderation can lead to disaster and heartbreak. This is the final thought the reader is left with, so it drives home the main life lesson that the myth teaches.*

frantic

(frān'ĭtĭk) *adj.* If you do something in a *frantic* way, you do it quickly and nervously.

anxiety

(āng-'zī-tē) *n.* *Anxiety* is an uneasy, worried feeling.



Text in Focus Video

Learn about analyzing idioms.

DETERMINE THEMES

Annotate: Mark the sentence in paragraph 9 that relates directly to the main theme of this myth.

Critique: How does the location of this sentence help emphasize the theme?

and higher up into the blue sky until he reached the clouds. His father saw him and called out in alarm. He tried to follow him, but he was heavier and his wings would not carry him. Up and up Icarus soared, through the soft, moist clouds and out again toward the glorious sun. He was bewitched by a sense of freedom and beat his wings **frantically** so that they would carry him higher and higher to heaven itself. The blazing sun beat down on the wings and softened the wax. Small feathers fell from the wings and floated softly down, warning Icarus to stay his flight and glide to earth. But the enchanted boy did not notice them until the sun became so hot that the largest feather dropped off and he began to sink. **Frantically** he fluttered his arms, but no feathers remained to hold the air. He cried out to his father, but his voice was submerged in the blue waters of the sea, which has forever after been called by his name.

8 Daedalus, crazed by **anxiety**, called back to him, "Icarus! Icarus, my son, where are you?" At last he saw the feathers floating from the sky, and soon his son plunged through the clouds into the sea. Daedalus hurried to save him, but it was too late. He gathered the boy in his arms and flew to land, the tips of his wings dragging in the water from the double burden the bore. Weeping bitterly, he buried his small son and called the land Icaria in his memory.

9 Then, with a flutter of wings, he once more took to the air, but the joy of his flight was gone and his victory over the air was bitter to him. He arrived safely in Sicily, where he built a temple to Apollo and hung up his wings as an offering to the god, and in the wings he pressed a few bright feathers he had found floating on the water where Icarus fell. And he mourned for the birdlike son who had thrown caution to the winds in the exaltation of his freedom from the earth.



DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION To Challenge Students...

Review Foreshadowing Point out that the author of "The Flight of Icarus" uses foreshadowing to hint at Icarus's fate. Review that **foreshadowing** occurs when a writer provides hints about future events in a story. Foreshadowing creates suspense and makes readers eager to find out what will happen. Have partners locate details in paragraphs 5–7 that foreshadow what will happen to Icarus. (*Daedalus warns Icarus to stay near him and not fly too high or too low; Daedalus's eyes fill with tears as he looks at Icarus; Daedalus is alarmed when he sees Icarus fly into the clouds.*)

TURN AND TALK

With a partner, discuss what people have learned from this story for thousands of years.



ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How do actions define us?

Review your notes and add your thoughts to your Response Log.

Assessment Practice

Answer these questions before moving on to the **Analyze the Text** section on the following page.

1. Select the sentence that supports the idea that Icarus loves to fly.

- A "The sun shone on the bright feathers; the breezes ruffled them." (paragraph 4)
- B "As thousands of gulls soared over the island, Icarus soon collected a huge pile of feathers." (paragraph 3)
- C "He bade him watch the movements of the birds, how they soared and glided overhead." (paragraph 5)
- D "Icarus, beating his wings in joy, felt the thrill of the cool wind on his face and the clear air above and below him." (paragraph 7)

2. This question has two parts. First answer **Part A**, then **Part B**.

Part A

What is a central theme of the story?

- A Only true heroes can perform superhuman acts.
- B People must know their place in the universe.
- C Being able to live in freedom is worth any cost.
- D Spending time with family members is important.

Part B

How does the author develop the theme in Part A?

- A by describing Daedalus's joy at seeing his son fly
- B by detailing how Daedalus created the wings
- C by noting Daedalus's concerns about Icarus
- D by highlighting Icarus's playfulness



Test-Taking Strategies

Apply

2

RESPOND: 2 days

Analyze the Text

FLEXIBLE GROUPING OPTION

Have students form five small groups. Assign each group a question. Have each group share their responses with the class.

Possible responses:

- 1 **DOK 2:** See possible responses on the Student Edition page.
- 2 **DOK 2:** *Daedalus is on an island and knows he cannot escape by boat. He must plan a different kind of escape. He uses the gull feathers he finds on the beach to construct wings. He also watches the birds that fly around the island so he can design his wings and learn to fly. He must take into account the weather conditions on the island in planning his escape.*
- 3 **DOK 3:** *Both Daedalus and Icarus ignore their limitations and seek to be more than human. Daedalus is mature and careful, but Icarus is impulsive and caught up in the thrill of the moment. If you are going to do something that has never been tried before, you must be especially moderate.*
- 4 **DOK 4:** *Daedalus's original plan was to escape from the island. He succeeded at that goal, but "his victory over the air was bitter to him" because he lost his son. This outcome suggests the theme "know your place"—don't soar too high or try to be like the gods.*
- 5 **DOK 4:** *The myth emphasizes the ideas of acting in moderation and of listening to someone who has authority over you. The "wiser" person could be the storyteller or the society at large. Either way, the "words" encourage the audience to avoid extremes and to live in harmony with the culture's values.*

Respond

Analyze the Text

Support your responses with evidence from the text.

- 1 **SUMMARIZE** Reread paragraphs 3–4. Fill in this chart to summarize in a few sentences what Daedalus does to help himself and his son escape from the island.

DAEDALUS'S ACTIONS	
Paragraph 3 Details Daedalus has Icarus gather feathers. He uses them to make a set of wings from melted wax and feathers.	Paragraph 4 Details Daedalus tests the wings, and they work. He makes another pair for Icarus.
Summary Daedalus makes wings for himself and Icarus so they can fly away from the island.	

NOTICE & NOTE
Review what you noticed and noted as you read the text. Your annotations can help you answer these questions.

- 2 **IDENTIFY** Review paragraphs 3–5. What elements of the setting help Daedalus carry out his plan?
- 3 **COMPARE** How are the actions of Daedalus and Icarus related to the universal theme of moderation? Explain how their actions reflect similarities and differences in their personalities and experiences. Refer to the chart on page 113 on finding the theme of a myth.
- 4 **SYNTHESIZE** Reread paragraph 9. Keeping in mind Daedalus's original goal, do you think he succeeded or failed? What does your answer suggest about the Greeks' beliefs concerning their place in the world in relation to their gods?
- 5 **CONNECT** "The Flight of Icarus" includes some specific wise words from a father to his son. How does this myth, as a whole, illustrate the idea of **Words of the Wiser**?

DI DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION When Students Struggle...

Intervention, Review & Extension

Reteach: Determine Themes Remind students that to determine the theme of a myth, they should consider whether the characters succeed or fail at achieving their goal—and why.

- Have students work in small groups to discuss the myth's themes and to locate examples from the text to support their ideas. Provide these questions for discussion: *What did Icarus fail to do? What caused Icarus's failure? What can we learn from Icarus?*