“Arachne”

By: Olivia E. Coolidge

Objectives and Standards:
6 RL 1 Read a variety of literature within a range of complexity appropriate for grades 6-8.

6 RL 3.1 Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a work or literature and contributes to the development of the theme, characterization, setting, or plot.

6 RL 3.2 Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a work of literature and how the narrator or speaker impacts the mood, tone, and meaning of a text.

6 RV 1 Gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

6 RV 3.1 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in works of literature, including figurative and connotative meanings: analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

6 RV 3.3 Interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification) in context.

Directions:
1. Read Word List A on the next page and complete Exercise A.
2. Read the story and answer all questions located on the side of each page.
3. Submit your completed work to your teacher.
VOCABULARY WARM-UP

Word List A

Study these words from “Arachne.” Then, complete the activity that follows.

**challenged** [CHAL uhnjd] v. dared someone to participate in a contest
  
  Rita challenged her friends to a race to prove how fast she was.

**descend** [dee SEND] v. to climb down or go lower
  
  Tomorrow, Jake plans to descend the mountain and hike the valley.

**goddess** [GAHD is] n. a female god or deity
  
  The ancient Egyptians worshipped Isis, the goddess of fertility.

**judged** [JUHJD] v. decided the winner of a competition
  
  Stephen judged the writing contest and gave Pablo’s essay first prize.

**marvelous** [MAHR vuh luhs] adj. creating surprise or wonder
  
  The fireworks display was a marvelous sight and impressed everyone.

**olive** [AHL iv] adj. relating to the small green fruit that can be eaten or crushed for oil
  
  The olive trees were ready to be harvested.

**presence** [PREZ uhns] n. the position near a person or thing
  
  Marco felt smarter in the presence of his teacher.

**products** [PROD uhktz] n. things that are made or created
  
  Products like cheese and butter can be made from cow’s milk.

Exercise A

Fill in each blank in the paragraph below with an appropriate word from Word List A. Use each word only once.

Irene looked out onto the beautiful valley. She thought the view was

[1] __________. From the mountaintop she began to [2] __________

the slope to where the farmhouse stood. The valley below was covered in

[3] __________ and plum trees. It was harvest season. Some families kept the

tradition of making offerings to the harvest [4] __________. Now they were

picking the fruit. Later they would make oil and jam. Irene soon found herself

in the [5] __________ of a group of farmers. While she was there, one farmer

[6] __________ another to a contest. Each farmer thought his plum jam was

the best. They asked Irene to try their [7] __________. Irene tasted the jams

and [8] __________ the first farmer’s plum jam the best. The farmers smiled

and laughed. Irene loved this valley. She felt as if she could stay here forever.
Arachne
Olivia E. Coolidge

The main character in this story is Arachne, a young Greek woman. Arachne was not rich or famous or beautiful. She came from a small village where her father was known for his ability to dye, or color, wool into beautiful colors. But Arachne was more talented than her father. She spun the wool into soft thread and then wove it into beautiful cloth on a loom.

Arachne was small and pale from much working. Her eyes were light and her hair was a dusty brown, yet she was quick and graceful, and her fingers . . . went so fast that it was hard to follow their flickering movement. So soft and even was her thread, so fine her cloth, so gorgeous her embroidery, that soon her products were known all over Greece. No one had ever seen the like of them before.

People came from far away to watch her. They said that the goddess Athene must have taught Arachne her great skill. But Arachne was very proud and did not like people to think she learned her skill from anyone else, even from a goddess. She told them that Athene herself could not weave cloth more beautiful than her own.

One day a poor old woman warned Arachne that it was not wise to say that she was better than one of the gods. The old woman told Arachne that she should be satisfied to be the best human spinner and

Activate Prior Knowledge

Think about a time when someone you knew was bragging. How did this person’s bragging make other people feel?

Reading Skill

A cause is an event, action, or feeling that makes something happen. An effect is what happens. What causes Arachne’s work to be known all over Greece?

Literary Analysis

Myths are fictional tales that describe the actions of gods or heroes. Read the bracketed paragraph. Underline a clue that tells you that this story is a myth.

Vocabulary Development

embroidery (im BROY der ee) n. design stitched on cloth
weaver. But Arachne was angry and yelled at the old woman. She told her that she had challenged Athene to a spinning and weaving contest, but Athene was not brave enough to come.

At these words the old woman threw down her staff and stood erect. The wondering onlookers saw her grow tall and fair and stand clad in long robes of dazzling white. They were terribly afraid as they realized that they stood in the presence of Athene. Arachne herself flushed red for a moment, for she had never really believed that the goddess would hear her.

But Arachne was also proud and stubborn, so she led Athene to a loom where they began their spinning and weaving contest. Both of them created beautiful cloth, but the goddess moved faster.

Athene wove a picture into her cloth as a warning to Arachne. The picture showed the goddess in the middle. In the corners were pictures of awful things that had happened to humans who had challenged the gods. Athene finished weaving and stepped back. When Arachne saw Athene’s picture, she became angry. In her own cloth she created a picture of evil things the gods and goddesses had done in the past.

When the goddess saw this insult glowing in bright colors on Arachne’s loom, she did not wait while the cloth was judged, but stepped forward, her gray eyes blazing with anger, and tore Arachne’s work across. Then she struck Arachne across the face. Arachne stood there a

Vocabulary Development

clad (klad) v. dressed
dazzling (DAZ ling) adv. bright; very light
moment, struggling with anger, fear, and pride. “I will not live under this insult,” she cried, and seizing the rope from the wall, she made a noose and would have hanged herself.

The goddess touched the rope and touched the maiden. “Live on, wicked girl,” she said. “Live on and spin, both you and your descendants. When men look at you they may remember that it is not wise to strive with Athene.”

Arachne’s body began to change. The people soon saw a small dusty brown spider hanging on a thin thread. All spiders come from Arachne. When Greeks saw spiders, they remembered that it was not wise for humans to say they are equal to the gods.

Vocabulary Development

- noose (noos) n. loop of rope
- descendants (di SEN duhnts) n. people who are related to a particular person who lived long ago