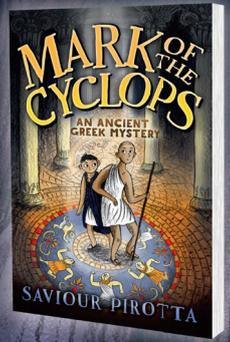


MARK OF THE CYCLOPS

AN ANCIENT GREEK MYSTERY

by SAVIOUR PIROTTA



Synopsis

Young Nico lives in Athens and works as a scribe for Master Ariston – a travelling singer and poet. Master Ariston gets a new slave, a young man called Thrax who is unusually clever and observant, and he and Nico soon become firm friends.

Master Ariston takes Thrax and Nico with him when he travels to perform at a wedding in Corinth. The wedding preparations are disrupted when a valuable wedding vase is broken. A slave girl called Gaia is blamed. Gaia's mistress, Fotini, has heard about Thrax's cleverness and asks him to prove that Gaia is innocent – Gaia says she saw a Cyclops break the vase.

The boys investigate and realise that the vase had a Cyclops on it, which was painted at a different time from the rest of the decoration. They suspect that a gang is using pottery to smuggle stolen goods and that they are targeting four pots. A second pot is broken at the temple and a third at the theatre but the thief escapes both times.

With one chance left, the boys masquerade as the owner of the fourth pot, and, having warned the archon's (magistrate's) men and hoping to draw out the gang, they go to a graveyard to leave a plain jug as an offering. The boys are captured, but the archon appears. He reveals that the gang is in fact a secret society which helps slaves buy their freedom. The Cyclops Gaia saw is revealed to be an ex-slave called Bek who had an eye removed by a cruel master. The boys join the secret society.

The boys return for the wedding feast and the secret society organise a mock break in – Bek runs through the packed wedding party, proving that Gaia was telling the truth. Nico, Thrax, Gaia and Fotini form a secret society of their own, to solve mysteries and fight for justice: The Medusa League.



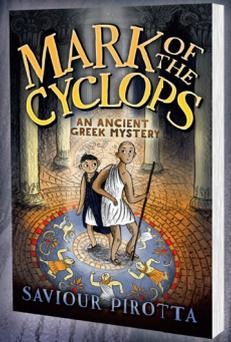
About the Author

Saviour Pirotta is originally from Malta and now lives in Scarborough, Yorkshire. He is the author of nearly one hundred titles, ranging from non-fiction about pirates to short novels, as well as stories for *Barbie* magazine, Disney and educational material for the Teletubbies franchise. He is the author of *The Orchard Book of First Greek Myths* which has been published successfully around the world in countries as diverse as Italy, Greece, Brazil and Korea.

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Hook for the Book – To create curiosity before engaging with the book

- **TIME DETECTIVES** - put the pupils into groups with a tray of sand and brushes. Buried within the sand should be replica artefacts and pictures of objects from ancient Greece. Pupils to become archaeologists and recover the items making suggestions to what each item might be used for and what time in history it is from.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Ask pupils to look at the title *Mark of the Cyclops*. Get the pupils to predict what they think the story might be about. Does the title give any clues? Who will be the main character? Where might the story be set? What is a Cyclops?
- Do the pupils know of any other stories by the same author? Pupils could research information about the author.
- Give pupils the opportunity to share their existing knowledge about the ancient Greeks.

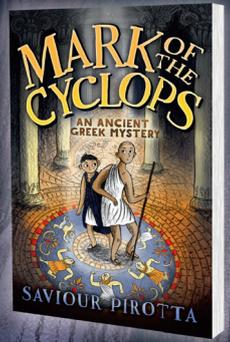
Exploring the Book – On-going activities

- Pupils could keep a reading log/journal to record of their thoughts, feelings, ideas and viewpoints as they progress through the book (all ideas support the 2014 National Curriculum for reading).
- Make notes to aid/promote discussion within reading groups/literature circles. Pupils can develop and build on own and others' ideas ensuring all opinions are respected.
- Explore the meaning of words – clarifying unfamiliar words and extending personal vocabulary. Create word banks and use new words within own writing.
- Collect and explore the meaning of words which show the story is set in a different time and place i.e. ancient Greece. Use the glossary at the back of the book to clarify the meaning of Greek words used by the author.
- Ask questions, exploring the answers through reading, research and discussion.
- Explore and record examples of author techniques
 - language (simile, adjectives, verbs, synonyms, metaphors etc)
 - viewpoint (the book is written from the perspective of Nico)
 - tension
 - sentence structure including use of punctuation
 - plot development (summarise each chapter)
- Explore speech – using illustrations from the book, create speech bubbles to show what the character(s) might be saying at the different points of the story.
- Explore dialogue – using examples from the book, explore the use of inverted commas and other punctuation when composing speech. Pupils to use these models to create their own dialogue using the correct punctuation.
- Make regular predictions about what might happen next from details stated and implied.
- Character Portraits
 - explore how the characters change through the story

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- write descriptions
- draw illustrations
- compare two characters
- Track character feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions using emotion graphs* and conscience alley**.

***Emotion Graph** - create a graph showing the feelings of a character(s) at the different points of the story. Discuss how their emotions might contribute to their actions.

****Conscience Alley** - divide the class in two. Half of the class are to support one point of view while the other half the opposing point. Then organise the class into two facing rows, making a central alley. Ask one of the pupils to be a selected character from the book who then slowly walks down the 'alley' created. Pupils on both sides call to the character voicing their thoughts and feelings. Review some of the things that were said by both sides. Selected character then makes an informed decision of what they would do in this situation. Does the rest of the class agree? Discuss.

Exploring the Book - Reading

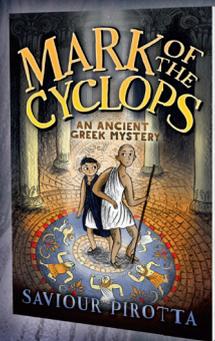
Chapter 1 – A New Slave for Master Ariston

1. What is 'the mark of a slave'?
2. What does it mean to be a slave? How do you think it would feel to be a slave? Discuss whether it is right to keep someone as a slave. What was it like to be a slave in ancient Greece?
3. What is the name of the new slave? How did he get his name? Where is he from? What is his back story? Predict what circumstances might have occurred to make him a slave.
4. What extra information can you gather from the illustration on page 12?
5. The book is written in the 1st person from Nico's perspective. What is Nico's first impression of Thrax? Give evidence from the text to support your answer. What do you think is Thrax's first impression of Nico?
6. Explain what Nico means when he says '*My throat's drier than a rubble wall.*' (p.13)
7. How did Thrax know Nico was a scribe?
8. How do you think Nico is feeling from this description?
'By the golden chariot of Apollo, I've never met anyone so observant. I wouldn't want you on my tail if I'd broken the law.' (p.13)
9. What is the difference between a 'slave' and a 'freeborn apprentice'?
10. How did Nico become a scribe?
11. From this description what might have turned out differently for Nico?
'But things might have turned out very differently had I not met that kind scribe. I might have become a penniless farmer trying to eke out a meagre living from the dusty land. Or my parents might have had to sell me into slavery too.' (p.20)
12. Does Nico like living with Master Lykos? Give reasons for your answer using evidence from the text to support your answer.
13. What is a lyre?
14. How does the author create suspense at the end of the first chapter?

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15. Summarise to a partner what you have found out about Thrax, Nico, Master Lykos and Master Ariston. Summarise your first impressions in five key words for each character.

Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 1: festival, gasped, intense, scribe, detect, pine sap, observant, winced, lyre, freeborn, apprentice, complaining, obey, courtyard, altar, barber, jowly cheeks, bellowed, himations, rambling poem, Apollo, Medusa, silversmith, penniless, eke, meagre, before dawn, glazed expression

Chapter 2 – Of Mice and Sailors

1. Why is Master Lykos not keen on his only son going to Corinth?
2. Who are Hermes and Poseidon?
3. Draw an illustration of Master Ariston using the author's description.
'He was a thin, gawky fellow with big ears and a puny chest, but he had a surprisingly loud voice.' (p.22)
*'Then we all trooped out of the house and down the street, Ariston sitting sideways on a donkey. He wore a wide-brimmed hat to protect his face from the sun and carried his precious lyre in a cedar-wood box on his lap.
The donkey, a sweet furry creature called Ariana, also carried a large wicker chest strapped to her side. It was packed full of the master's clothes and footwear as well as a miniature bronze statue of Apollo.'* (p.23)
Add to your illustration as you find out more information from the author.
4. What is an archon? Find the words used by Nico to answer this question.
5. Explain the author's meaning.
'They manoeuvred us deftly out of the harbour.' (p.26)
'I must nip this quarrel in the bud.' (p.28)
6. Did the Captain's plan to escape from the pirates work? Would you have done the same? How would you have felt during this situation? Why did the crew offer a sacrifice to Poseidon?
7. How did the oarsman feel when he was left on the island of Salamina? Use the author's description of his actions to help.
'Thrax and I saw him standing stiffly on the quay as the remaining oarsmen carried us out of the harbour. He was glaring at us with eyes full of suppressed rage.' (p.32)
Do you think it was right to leave him behind?

Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 2: Hermes, gawky, puny chest, merchants, colonel, champion, influential, retired trierarch, terrace, trooped, kalamos, papyrus, styluses, wax tablet, pilgrims, archons, deftly, quarrelling, tamed, tumbled, overboard, bickering, chiton

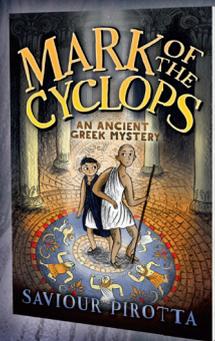
Chapter 3 – Under Attack

1. Why is it dangerous to sail around the southern half of Greece during this time?
2. How does the author create suspense during the chapter?
3. Compare the way the different characters react when the thieves attack the caravan. What does this say about their different personalities?
4. What were Nico's first impressions of Corinth?
5. Predict what you think might happen next.

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Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 3: cargo, moored, gangplank, scrambled, jostling crowd, lekanis, withered, bandits, savage, agora, amphorae, sanctuary

Chapter 4 – The Temple on the Hill

1. What compliment does Thrax give to Nico? What compliment would you give to Thrax and Nico?
2. Give a description of Corinth from the perspective of one of the characters.
3. Compose an acrostic poem which Master Ariston might have written about Corinth. (p.51)

Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 4: dictated, palatial, weary, tavern, liveliest, straggly hair, blotchy skin, encounter

Chapter 5 – Trouble at the Party

1. What is Thrax's opinion of Master Zenon? Do you think Nico agrees with him? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Look at the illustration on page 57. What extra information can you gather from the picture? How does it support and add to the events and emotions shown during this chapter?
3. How did you feel when you heard the slave girl had been dismissed without her master finding out whether she was guilty of breaking the vase? Did you feel empathy for her? Do you agree with Thrax's statement that 'there's no justice in this world if you're a slave'?

Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 5: diluted, discreetly, perspired, priceless treasures, justice

Chapter 6 – An Offer of Gold

1. How does the author create a different mood at the beginning of this chapter? Possible answers could be: there's a change in the weather as it dawned grey and misty, Master Ariston wakes up in a foul mood, he wants to be alone and quiet, he has no creative flow, initial excitement has ceased.
2. What do the phrases 'I wolfed down the remains of his breakfast'; 'given me a giant's appetite' and 'stopped us dead in our tracks' mean?
3. Where had the dark figure come from? Who do you think it is? How would you feel in this situation? Would you follow the dark mysterious figure? Was your prediction correct? What does the mysterious figure want? Why have they asked Thrax and Nico for help? What would you do if you were Thrax or Nico?

Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 6: foul mood, creative flow, solitude, muse, copper brazier, exile, emerged, clambered, eavesdropped, dispute, culprit

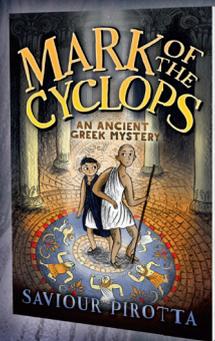
Chapter 7 – Enter the Cyclops

1. Why is Thrax not keen on helping Mistress Fotini?
2. Why does Nico think he should help her?
3. What does Thrax decide to do? What are his conditions?

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4. What are your first impressions of the new characters in this chapter – Cook, Gaia, Mistress Fotini. Create a character portrait in your reading journal (pupils sketch and draw the character, describing them in their own words ensuring rich descriptive vocabulary is used to describe their appearance and personality).
5. Pretend you are Gaia and make a statement in no more than 300 words, summarising what happened when the vase got smashed.
6. Draw an artist's sketch of the real culprit using Gaia's description on pages 78 & 79.
7. Work with a partner to jot down some ideas to help answer the question at the end of the chapter – 'How were we to go about tracking down the thief?'

Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 7: defiantly, to do her bidding, lavish banquet, deserted

Chapter 8 – Our First Secret Meeting

1. Read chapter 8 and summarise the key points made by Thrax and Nico.
2. What does Thrax mean when he says:
'But Gaia gave us some very strong clues. Four, to be precise. They're enough to unmask the thief and bring him to justice.' (p.82)
'The hot clay left burn marks on her forearm that turned into scars. Her right arm was laddered with them.' (p.84)
'There's also the possibility that someone in this house might be in league with the thief.' (p.86)
3. Nico poses a few questions. What questions would you ask? What do you think might have happened?
4. Why does the author write some of the words in this chapter in capital letters?

Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 8: innocent, precise, corpse, accidentally, fermenting yeast, kiln, yanked, distinctive, hulking

Chapter 9 – Enquiries at the Market

1. Why did it take two days before they could start investigating? What progress do they make? What characteristics do you think are needed for a great detective?
2. Visualisation – listen to or read the description of the market in Corinth. Pupils then become the illustrator and create a picture using their imagination to add in extra detail. Discuss how the words used by the author are important for the reader.

Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 9: frustrating, agora, teeming, haggled, tempt

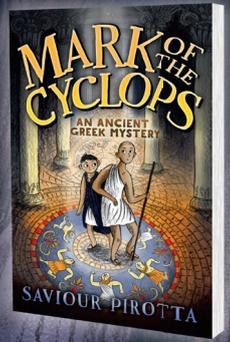
Chapter 10 – An Ode to a Vase

1. Discuss the author's meaning:
'The ruined temple soon loomed up before us.' (p.97)
'It was a jumble of busy workshops and warehouses.' (p.97)
'... we caught tantalising glimpses of beautiful pots inside.' (p.98)
2. How does the author show the emotion felt by Donos? Find other examples throughout the book where the author shows the character's emotion through their actions.
e.g. 'His shaved head was glistening with sweat and his fists were balled up tight against his chin.' (p.20)

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Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 10: terracotta, amulets, medallions, carved, ferociously

Chapter 11 – In the Women’s Quarters

Chapter 12 – Sour Wine and Rowdy Sailors

Chapter 13 – Gold Dust, and a Sinister Face

Chapter 14 – A Gang of Thieves

1. Read chapter 11 and summarise the key findings. Predict what you think might have happened.
2. Discuss the author’s meaning:
'I couldn't make head nor tail of it.' (p.111)
'I feel... rejuvenated.' (p.117)
'Humour me.' (p.121)
3. Predict what you think Thrax might need the pot of glue for. Was your prediction correct?
4. What information does the vase show Thrax and Nico?
5. How does the author develop tension and suspense through chapters 11-14?

Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 11: infested, insult, incident

Chapter 12: barged, rickety, citizens

Chapter 13: emerged, coiffure, rejuvenated, cascaded, fragments, laborious

Chapter 14: associated, leering, assured, subtle detail, colluding

Chapter 15 – A Song of Swallows

Chapter 16 – Spartan Mice

1. Pretend you are Thrax and recount to Nico what you have found out with Mistress Fotini.
2. What is an inspection sphere?
3. How does Thrax get the boys out of trouble? Do you think it was right for Thrax and Nico to break into the potter’s workshop and to give the dog a sleeping potion?

Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 15: jovial mood, sublime, haughty, rowdily, quiver, miraculously, ruffians

Chapter 16: agitation, dishevelled, merchandise, gnaw, colluding, dumbfounded, preposterous

Chapter 17 – Trouble at the Theatre

1. Discuss the author’s meaning:
'A sea fret was drifting in from the harbour, casting a thin veil over the streets. It made the people around us look like shades from the underworld.' (p.157)
2. Why is the chapter called 'Trouble at the Theatre'?

Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 17: shamefaced, satire

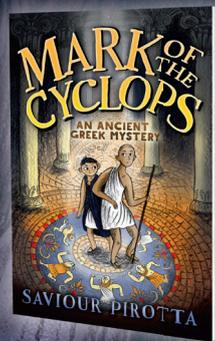
Chapter 18 – The Last Vase

Chapter 19 – Shadows in the Graveyard

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Chapter 20 – Prisoners

Chapter 21 – Thrax Explains the Mystery

1. Predict who you think might have the last vase from the description:
'1 lekythos, decorated with sportsmen and swallows (for Polydeuces of Rhodes, to be collected)' (p. 168)
2. Discuss the author's meaning:
'The house was humming with activity. (p.173)
3. Discuss how the author creates suspense through his descriptions and the action in the story.
4. Create an emotion graph to show the emotions of the characters at the different stages during chapters 19 and 20.
5. Create a comic strip to show the key moments of how Thrax and Nico solve the case. Plan what illustrations and text will go in each frame.
6. Before reading chapter 21, summarise the mystery to your partner. Does your description match the one given by Thrax?

Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 18: physical defect, imperfect, lowly

Chapter 19: pallet, tattered, ancient, lichen, assailants

Chapter 20: yanked, worthless, accomplice, instantly numb, captors, impostor, henchmen

Chapter 21: laboured breathing, stomped, prominent, quivered

Chapter 22 – The Gang Revealed

Chapter 23 – The Wedding Feast

Chapter 24 – The Medusa League

1. Why does the archon help slaves in secret? Why do you think acting against slavery would cause people problems? Do you agree with the statement 'if all slaves were free, our civilization would collapse'? Discuss the pros and cons of slavery in the times of ancient Greece.
2. Why does the secret society have no name? What would you call it?
3. What is the 'mark of the Cyclops'?
4. What is the plan to save Gaia?
5. Discuss the author's meaning:
'Master Zenon gawped at him like a landed fish.' (p.204)
6. What is the purpose of the Medusa League?
7. Do you think Thrax and Nico are brave? Are they heroes? What does it mean to be a hero?

Discuss the meaning of the language used by the author

Chapter 22: enquiring, oppose, existence

Chapter 23: suspicions, awning, regally, narcissi, bondage, gawped, apologise profusely

Chapter 24: impressive, dowry

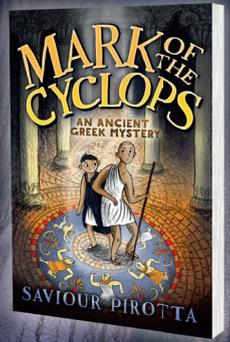
Exploring the Book - Post-reading Activities

- What did you like about this story? Think of three positives.
- Who is your favourite character? Give reasons for your choice.

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- I like the way the author...
- Which moments in the story did you find the most tense?
- Create a crossword for some of the unfamiliar words you have collected from the story. Now give it to a friend to complete.
- Summarise the story in a strapline.
- Write a back cover blurb for *Mark of the Cyclops*. Remember it needs to grab the attention of a potential reader but should not spoil the story by giving too much away.
- Were your initial predictions made from the title correct?
- Create a front cover for the story.
- Wider Reading – read a selection of ancient Greek myths.

Beyond the Book - Writing opportunities

• Create your own story (variety of options to choose from)

- Plan and write the story from the perspective of a different character.
- Write a sequel for the book ensuring a new mystery is solved in the setting of ancient Greece.
- Explore the features and structure of mystery stories and ask pupils to create their own using the knowledge and features acquired/collated. The new plot could be explored on a story mountain or timeline to gather thoughts and ideas of plot development.
- Nico makes reference to the Greek writer Homer who wrote epics about ancient myths: *'Homer for epics that retold ancient myths. I needed to find a genre of writing that best suited my talents.'* (p.44)
Pupils could explore the different Greek myths and re-tell one in their own words ensuring descriptive language is used e.g. adjectives, similes, metaphors, personification, onomatopoeia, adverbs, verbs, nouns, etc.
- Create own story involving a Cyclops as the main character.

• Write a Play Script

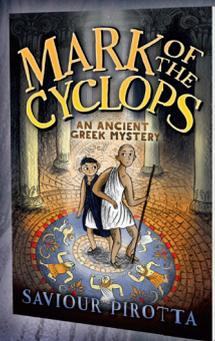
- Pupils to explore some of the ancient Greek myths referred to in the story. They could then act out the myths, explore the features of a play script and compose their own.
- Explore the role of Greek theatre – pupils could create their own Greek tragedy or comedy, perform and design masks to be worn.

- **Edit the author** – improve/alter the descriptive language used by the author. Discuss the effect this has on the meaning/reader.
- **Diary Account** – create a diary entry from the viewpoint of one of the characters for one of the events in the story. Ensure main events, the 1st person, thoughts and feelings are explored.
- **Recount of a Historical Event** – Nico makes reference to Herodotus *'for his fanciful accounts of historical events and famous people'* (p.44). Pupils could research a moment in ancient Greek history (e.g. Battle of Marathon) and write a full factual account for a textbook using various resources to gather evidence.
- **Using Senses** – write a description of the various settings ensuring adjectives, metaphors, adverbs, verbs, personification, alliteration, onomatopoeia etc. are used to create the mood and atmosphere of the setting.

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- Harbour
- Whilst on the boat
- Corinth
- Market
- Graveyard
- **Aesop Fables** – research the Greek writer Aesop and read a variety of his fables. Study the structure and create own fables in the same style to be performed to a younger audience.
- **Poetry** – Create a poem which could have been written by Master Ariston e.g. on the theme of roses or Corinth.
 - Write a narrative poem summarising the mystery of the 'Mark of the Cyclops'.

Beyond the Book – Links to History

KS2 History (2014 Curriculum): Pupils should be taught about ancient Greece – a study of Greek life and achievements and their influence on the western world.

- What impact did the ancient Greek civilisation have on the world?
- Learn about ancient beliefs through the study of the ancient Greek gods.
- Study aspects of Greek everyday life e.g. what was life like for women in ancient Greece? What was life like for a slave in ancient Greece? Use examples of ancient artefacts (pictures or replicas) and buildings to make inferences about life in ancient Greece.
- Role play – Should the Greeks build the Parthenon? Discuss the pros and cons.
- Why were Greek ships important to the different city states?
- Study the Battle of Marathon. Look at the different viewpoints of the same battle – how would a Persian or a Greek recount this event?
- Illustrate the part that each side would want to be told.
- Write a newspaper report from either perspective.
- Discuss the issue of propaganda and bias when listening to evidence from either side.
- Study a Greek myth/legend and discuss whether there is any evidence for the legend.
- Study the Greek alphabet

Links to Geography

- What is life like in modern Greece? Explore the culture, buildings and physical geography (size, location, rivers, mountains, climate, landscape etc).
- Study a map of ancient Greece and create a papier maché model of the map showing the landscape.
- Create a travel guide for ancient or modern Greece – focusing on activities and places you might want to persuade people to go to.

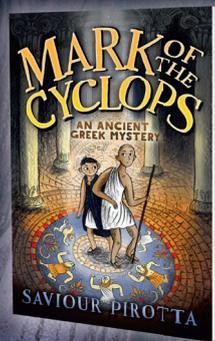
Links to Art and Design

- The Answer is on the Pot!
Study a variety of Greek pots studying who and what is depicted in the decorations. What is the meaning

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of the illustrations? What clues are in the illustrations to show they are from ancient Greece?

Pupils make and paint own Greek pot and illustrate a Greek myth, battle etc in the style depicted on ancient Greek pottery. Alternatively, create a storyboard of the main event(s) of the story *Mark of the Cyclops*.

Give pupils pictures of different Greek pots alongside the descriptions given of them in the glossary. Match the picture to its description.

- Nico and Thrax find a beautiful mosaic in the bathroom – ‘*But I think it takes your breath away. You should see the bathroom, Nico. Such a huge bath, you can practically swim in it. And the mosaics! There are mermaids and water nymphs all over the walls.*’ (p.45). Pupils create their own coloured mosaic showing a scene from Greek mythology/Greek boat.

Links to Design and Technology

- Taste food from Greece. Design, make and evaluate a chosen Greek dish.
- Design, make and evaluate a replica of one of the Greek buildings applying their understanding of how to strengthen, stiffen and reinforce complex structures.

Links to Science

- What did the ancient Greeks do for science?
Study developments in medicine and astronomy.

Links to P.E.

- What can we learn about the ancient Greeks by studying the Olympics? Pupils take part in their own games which involve the skills of running, throwing and catching.

PSCHE

- Study democracy in ancient Greece. How is it similar and different to today? Do you think it was right that some people could not vote? Do you think the Greek system was fair or unfair on the citizens of Greece?
- Thrax gives Nico a compliment on Page 44. ‘*I noticed you are very good with words,*’ replied Thrax. ‘*You should be doing something more interesting with your skills than taking down Master Ariston’s rubbish.*’ Discuss the importance of individuality and pupils to explore their own talents. What makes them special? What are they good at? What do they like/dislike? Does it matter that we are not all the same and don’t necessarily like the same things?