Textboxes to accompany

Peace Literacy Curriculum: An Introduction
Part 1: The Allegory of Metis
The Allegory of Metis
HESIOD’S THEOGONY

- The Allegory of Metis is based on *Hesiod’s Theogony*.
- Who was Hesiod?
  - He was a Greek poet.
  - He wrote *Theogony* around the eighth century BCE.
  - That’s nearly 3,000 years ago.
  - Hesiod’s *Theogony* was influenced by an oral tradition that preceded him.
ZEUS (God of the Sky)

- Zeus was king of the gods and ruler of the universe.
- As a god, he was invulnerable, meaning he couldn’t be killed or seriously injured, but he could be imprisoned.
- He didn’t want any other god/goddess to become more powerful than he was.
- There were four forces (Kratos, Bia, Nike, and the lightning bolt) that helped him maintain his power.
**KRATOS** (God of Brute Force)

- Kratos was a winged male deity symbolizing brute force.
- He was one of Zeus’ bodyguards.

**BIA** (Goddess of Violence)

- Bia was a winged female deity symbolizing violence.
- She was Zeus’s other bodyguard.
- Kratos and Bia were siblings.
NIKE (Goddess of Victory)

- Nike was a winged female deity symbolizing victory.
- Nike was the sibling of Kratos and Bia.
- Her name in Latin was “Victoria,” which is where we get the English word “victory.”
ZEUS’S LIGHTNING BOLT

• The lightning bolt was the most powerful divine weapon.
• Zeus used the lightning bolt to bind (chain) other gods.
ZEUS – Revisited

- By definition, gods and goddesses could not be killed, but they could be bound (chained) and imprisoned.
- Zeus needed Kratos, Bia, Nike, and the lightning bolt to protect him from being overthrown by other deities.
- Zeus used Kratos, Bia, Nike, and the lightning bolt to imprison any deities who opposed him.
METIS

- Metis was the most powerful force in Hesiod’s *Theogony* and the first wife of Zeus.
- She was more powerful than Kratos, Bia, and the lightning bolt.
- The deity Metis is a metaphor for the power of thought.
- She represents a variety of concepts such as:
  - good decisions
  - effective actions
  - discernment
  - forethought
  - skill
  - awareness
  - wisdom
The difference between Metis andmetis:

- Metis = the goddess who serves as a metaphor for the power of thought
- metis = the power of thought itself
THE PROPHECY

Because Metis was so powerful, there was a prophecy that she and Zeus would give birth to a son who was pure metis. This son would overthrow Zeus. The metis of this son would be so powerful that not even the combined might of brute force (Kratos), violence (Bia), the ability to win through brute force and violence (Nike), and the binding/imprisoning power of the lightning bolt would be able to protect Zeus from the immense metis of his son.
• 3,000 years ago people understood that the power of thought – good decisions, effective actions, discernment, forethought, skill, awareness, and wisdom – is more powerful than brute force, violence, and imprisonment.

• To prevent the birth of this son, Zeus swallowed Metis. Because she was immortal, she remained alive in his torso, merged with his mind, and became his thinking.
ATHENA

When Zeus swallowed Metis, she was pregnant with a daughter—Athena. When Athena was born, she erupted from Zeus’s forehead fully grown, fully armored, fully ready for action. Because she was the daughter of Metis and had her own powerful metis, Hesiod said she was “equal to her father [Zeus] in strength and in wise understanding.”
• According to Hesiod, Athena’s power was equal to Zeus’s power.
• Athens, which became the most influential city-state in ancient Greece, was named after Athena.
• Citizens in Athens, Sparta, and many other Greek city-states worshipped Athena.
• Athena was the goddess of wisdom because she was pure metis.
• Athena’s helmet is the central feature on the West Point crest. According to West Point, “Her helmet signifies wisdom and learning.” Wisdom and learning are expressions of metis.