Chaos to Titans: The Chorus Speaks

Greek Theater: The Ember Thief, Lesson 2 · 45 minutes · Grades 6–8 · Intro to Theater / Theater Exploration

Lesson Goals

Central Focus

Students develop core Greek chorus skills, unison movement, unison speech, and collective transformation, by staging the creation-myth opening of The Ember Thief. Students transform from Chaos into the primordial forces and Titans, and practice the play's unison chorus responses, so they can recognize and appreciate the chorus when they watch the performance.

State Standards

California Arts Standards, Theatre (Grades 6–8)

- TH:Pr4.1 — Use physical choices (body, gesture, levels, facial expression) to communicate character.
- TH:Pr5.1 — Use physical and vocal exercises to build performance skills, including ensemble work.
- TH:Cn11.2 — Investigate the time period and place of a drama/theatre work to better understand performance choices.

Learning Objective

I will move and speak in unison as part of a chorus to transform into the Titans from the opening of The Ember Thief.

Academic Language and Language Supports

Language function: Describe

Language demand: Students describe a physical choice that shows a Titan's domain, using the character name and a sentence frame.

Lesson vocabulary (English / Spanish):

- Chorus / Coro
- Unison / Al unísono
- Titan / Titán
- Primordial / Primordial
- Transform / Transformar

- Cue / Señal

Syntax (sentence frames):

- “I showed ___ by ___.” / “Mostré a ___ con ___.”
- “I want to play ___ because ___.” / “Quiero ser ___ porque ___.”

Discourse (sentence stems):

- “I noticed the chorus ___ together.” / “Noté que el coro ___ juntos.”
- “One glow is ___. One grow is ___.” / “Un brillo es ___. Un crecimiento es ___.”

Materials

- Titan call list (teacher, in lesson details)
- Slide or poster: chorus response lines with Spanish support
- Grip socks
- Optional: drum or tambourine for swirl/freeze cues

Differentiation

English Language Learners

Each Titan is introduced with its domain as a cognate where possible (océano, estrellas, memoria, profecía) and modeled with a gesture before students try it. Unison speech lets students practice English lines inside the group before speaking alone. Response lines are posted with Spanish translations.

Gifted/Advanced Students

Experienced Theater Exploration students take turns as Titan callers and as the koryphaios (chorus leader), cueing the start and cut-off of each unison line. Challenge: create a two-count “transformation” between Titans rather than a snap freeze.

IEP/504

All cues are predictable (“3, 2, 1, FREEZE”) and paired with a sound cue. Freezes may be done at any level, including seated. Students may choose to call rather than move. The swirl has clear space boundaries marked with tape.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Compare the opening’s creation story to creation stories students know from their families’ cultures (for example, Maya creation stories in the Popol Vuh or the Korean legend of Dangun). Connect unison response to call-and-response traditions students know from sports, church, music, and celebrations.

Section Notes

For a large, enthusiastic section, run Titan calls in two half-choruses that alternate. For a less engaged section, score Titan Transformations as a challenge (fastest group freeze, most unified shape) and keep each instruction to one step. For a mixed-experience section, experienced students lead as callers and koryphaios. For an experienced but less focused section, use a strict sound cue for every freeze and a “hold for 5” rule. This lesson’s whole-group, routine-based structure works well with visitors in the room.

Lesson Plan Details

0–3 min Entry Routine & Purpose

Shoes off, grip socks on, circle up. Read the objective chorally in English and Spanish. Frame: “Yesterday we learned what a chorus is. Today we become one.”

3–8 min Gesture Check Review

Call the four big ideas from Lesson 1 (festival, theatron, chorus, mask) in random order; students hit the gesture. Then reverse: you do the gesture, students call the term.

> **Assessment (Informal): check for retention of Lesson 1 vocabulary.**

8–13 min Chaos Swirl

Read the play’s first line: “First there was Chaos.” Students swirl through the space at different levels and speeds without touching. On the sound cue, everyone freezes in one shape. Coach the chorus rule: we start together, we stop together, we move as one.

13–25 min Titan Transformations

Students swirl as Chaos. Call a name and its domain from the play’s opening; students freeze into a shape that shows it, then return to the swirl. Order from the script:

- **Gaia** — the earth
- **Tartarus** — the underworld
- **Eros** — love
- **Ouranos** — the sky
- **Oceanus, Coeus, Crius, Hyperion** — the sea, intelligence, the stars, the heavens
- **Iapetus, Theia, Rhea, Themis** — mortality, sight, motherhood, law
- **Mnemosyne, Phoebe, Tethys** — memory, prophecy, fresh water
- **Cronus** — time; the Titan who took over everything

After one full round, student callers take over. Final round: half the room transforms while the other half observes, then switch.

> **Assessment: observation of unison freezes and physical choices. Observers share one glow using “I noticed the chorus ___ together.”**

25–35 min Chorus Responses

Teach unison responses straight from the script. Read the setup line; the whole class answers together. Practice each one whispered, booming, and with a group gesture.

- **Setup:** “So Gaia created a husband… Ouranos. It means…” → Chorus: “THE SKY.”
- **Setup:** “They created…” → Chorus: “THE TITANS.”
- **Setup:** “He’ll probably forget!” → Chorus: “He won’t.”
- **Setup:** “He really, really likes me for me.” → Chorus: “He didn’t.”

A student koryphaios conducts: raises a hand to prepare, drops it to speak, closes a fist to cut off.

> **Assessment: group performance – does the chorus start and end each line together? Students self-rate with thumbs up / sideways / down.**

35–41 min Pass the Spark

Circle up. Pass a single clap (“the spark”) around the circle with eye contact, then reverse direction, then speed it up. Finish with the line “And so, Prometheus took the spark…” as each student, one by one, raises a hand holding an imaginary spark.

41–45 min Closure

Turn and talk: “I want to play ___ because ___.” Two or three students share with the class. Preview: “On stage, watch how the chorus becomes all these characters.” Socks off, shoes on.

> **Assessment: oral check – student names a Titan and a physical choice to show it.**