Forethought & Afterthought: Building the World

Greek Theater: The Ember Thief, Lesson 3 · 90 minutes (block) · Grades 6–8 · Intro to Theater / Theater Exploration

Lesson Goals

Central Focus

Students explore the central character contrast of The Ember Thief, Prometheus (Forethought) and Epimetheus (Afterthought), through movement games, then work in teams to build ensemble group sculptures of creatures, objects, and places from the play, the way a Greek chorus physically creates the world of a story.

State Standards

California Arts Standards, Theatre (Grades 6–8)

- TH:Pr4.1 — Use physical choices to communicate character.
- TH:Cr1.1 — Envision and create ideas for the physical world of a drama/theatre work.
- TH:Re7.1 — Identify and describe artistic choices through participation and observation.

Learning Objective

I will contrast Prometheus and Epimetheus through physical choices and work with my team to build a group sculpture of a creature or place from The Ember Thief.

Academic Language and Language Supports

Language function: Compare and contrast

Language demand: Students compare the two brothers using a contrast frame, and give peer feedback on a group sculpture using glow/grow stems.

Lesson vocabulary (English / Spanish):

- Forethought / Previsión
- Afterthought / Reflexión tardía
- Contrast / Contraste
- Ensemble / Conjunto
- Sculpture / Escultura
- Levels / Niveles

Syntax (sentence frames):

- “Prometheus ___, but Epimetheus ___.” / “Prometeo ___, pero Epimeteo ___.”
- “I am more like ___ because ___.” / “Me parezco más a ___ porque ___.”

Discourse (sentence stems):

- “One glow for this team is ___.” / “Un brillo para este equipo es ___.”
- “One grow could be ___.” / “Un crecimiento podría ser ___.”
- “I want to build on what ___ said…” / “Quiero agregar a lo que dijo ___…”

Materials

- Build the Beast cards (one per team): The Giant Vulture, Pandora’s Jar, Hephaestus’s Forge, Mount Olympus, Zeus’s Lightning Storm, The Giant Cow
- Posted sculpture criteria: everyone connected, three levels, one moving part, one sound
- Exit slips (bilingual)
- Grip socks; drum or tambourine for cues

Differentiation

English Language Learners

Forethought/Afterthought are taught with paired gestures (finger to temple vs. jumping forward). Build the Beast is nonverbal, so every student can contribute fully. Contrast and feedback frames are posted bilingually, and teams may plan in Spanish.

Gifted/Advanced Students

Experienced Theater Exploration students lead the warm-up as koryphaios and serve as team captains who side-coach (not direct) their team. Challenge: add a short unison line the sculpture speaks when it comes to life.

IEP/504

Movement games have a seated or partner option. Teams are pre-assigned with a supportive peer. Sculpture roles can include “sound maker” for students who prefer less contact. The exit slip may be drawn or dictated. A water break separates the two halves of the block.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Invite students to connect the brothers to people they know, without naming anyone: “planners” and “doers” in families, teams, and friend groups. Emphasize that both strengths matter. Group sculpture draws on collective, community-based creation, honoring cultures where art-making is shared.

Section Notes

For a large, enthusiastic section, run Build the Beast as a showcase where every team is recognized for one specific strength. For a less engaged section, keep the walk game fast

and scored, and give each team a printed card with the four criteria. For a mixed-experience section, team captains are experienced students paired with new students. For an experienced but less focused section, set a visible timer for the build and require captains to run a 10-second “final check” before showing.

Lesson Plan Details

0–5 min Entry Routine & Purpose

Shoes off, grip socks on, circle up. Read the objective chorally in English and Spanish.

5–15 min Chorus Warm-Up

Quick replay of Lesson 2: Chaos Swirl, three Titan calls, and two chorus responses (“He won’t.” / “He didn’t.”). An experienced student serves as koryphaios.

15–30 min Forethought vs. Afterthought Walk

Introduce the brothers from the play: Prometheus thinks before acting; Epimetheus acts before thinking. Students walk the space. Name an action (build a house, catch a fish, cross a river, carry a giant rock), then call a brother:

- **“Epimetheus!”** — do the action immediately, big and fast.
- **“Prometheus!”** — freeze, think for 3 counts (finger to temple), then do it carefully.

Partner round: one partner is Prometheus and one is Epimetheus doing the same action at the same time. Debrief with the frame “Prometheus ___, but Epimetheus ___.”

> **Assessment: observation – students show a clear physical contrast between the two brothers. Two or three students share contrast sentences.**

30–45 min One Gift Circle & Teaching Chain

From the play: Epimetheus gives every creature one special skill. A student volunteer plays Epimetheus and goes around the circle. Each student names a creature and receives one gift (“Birds can fly!”), then shows it. Stop with a few students left: “Oops, all the skills are gone. These are the humans.” Reveal Prometheus’s loophole: he teaches humans how to teach each other.

Teaching Chain: one student invents a skill gesture (farming, building, cooking) and teaches it to the next person, who teaches the next, around the circle. Compare the last version to the first.

45–50 min Water Break & Team Assignment

Students get water, then sit with their pre-assigned teams of 4–6.

50–62 min Build the Beast

In the play, the chorus becomes creatures and objects with their bodies. Each team draws a card (The Giant Vulture, Pandora’s Jar, Hephaestus’s Forge, Mount Olympus, Zeus’s Lightning

Storm, The Giant Cow) and keeps it secret. Teams have 10 minutes to build a group sculpture that meets the posted criteria: everyone connected, three levels, one moving part, and one sound.

62–82 min Sculpture Showcase

Each team presents: freeze, then bring the sculpture to life on the cue “Awaken!” for five seconds, then freeze again. The audience guesses what it is. Two audience members give feedback using the glow/grow stems, referring to the posted criteria.

> **Assessment: team performance checked against the four posted criteria. Peer feedback uses student-to-student glow/grow stems; note which students give specific, criteria-based feedback.**

82–90 min Closure: Exit Slip

Students complete: “I am more like Prometheus / Epimetheus because ___.” / “Me parezco más a Prometeo / Epimeteo porque ___.” Preview: “When you see the show, watch for these two brothers and for the chorus building the world.” Socks off, shoes on.

> **Assessment: exit slip – student identifies a trait of one brother and connects it to themselves.**