

# Representation of Greek Mythology in History Textbooks of Greek Primary schools

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## Abstract

This article aims to highlight the representation of Greek mythology in Greek primary textbooks and the educational purpose of this representation, which includes macroscopic rearrangement, modification of individual texts, and addition of ancillary materials. In Greek primary schools, third graders begin to learn mythology in the introductory part of the subject History. The educational aspect of mythology in textbooks focuses on heroes being represented as exemplary models for teaching values to children. The texts reflect modern metanarrative of individualism, which teachers and parents consider important for children to learn. In its entirety, the textbook repeats each hero's fighting spirit and struggles (macroscopic metanarratives). In addition, each story is modified to manifest only the hero's individual accomplishments, concealing their negative aspects, and underestimating the influence of social contexts such as gender discrimination (modification of individual texts). Moreover, the pictures and maps, present in the textbooks, create an image of "timeless Greece" as it traces the movements of the heroes. These materials help young students connect the heroes' world with their own. Activities and questions also help children adopt heroes as familiar role models (paratextual and visual elements). In conclusion, mythology in Greek primary school History textbooks function as an effective tool to teach the value of individualism to children.

**Key words:** Greek mythology education, metanarratives, heroes, individualism, identification

## Resumen

La intención de este artículo es resaltar la representación de la mitología en libros de texto griegos y la intención educativa de esta representación que incluye la reorganización y la modificación de textos individuales y la incorporación de material secundario. En los libros de texto griegos, el alumnado de tercero empieza a aprender mitología en la parte introductoria de la asignatura de Historia. El aspecto educativo de la mitología en los libros de texto se focaliza en los héroes, que son representados como modelos ejemplares para enseñar valores a los niños y niñas. Los textos reflejan metanarrativas modernas individualistas, que tanto el profesorado como las familias consideran importante enseñar al alumnado. En general, el libro de texto repite el espíritu de lucha y prueba (metanarrativa macroscópica) de cada héroe. Por otro lado, cada historia se modifica para manifestar solo los logros individuales del héroe, ocultando sus aspectos negativos y minusvalorando la influencia del contexto social tal como la discriminación de género (modificación de textos individuales). Además, las ilustraciones y mapas presentes en estos materiales crean una imagen de "Grecia intemporal" según se trazan los movimientos de los héroes. Estos materiales ayudan al joven estudiantado a conectar el mundo de los héroes con el propio. Las actividades y preguntas también ayudan al alumnado a adoptar los roles y modelos familiares (elementos paratextuales y visuales). En conclusión, la mitología en los libros de texto griegos de Primaria funciona como una herramienta útil para el aprendizaje del valor del individualismo.

**Palabras clave:** Educación en mitología griega, metanarrativas, héroes, individualismo, identificación

## Resum

La intenció d'aquest article és ressaltar la representació de la mitologia en llibres de text grecs i la seua intenció educativa que inclou la reorganització i la modificació de textos individuals i l'afegit de material secundari. Als llibres de text grecs, l'alumnat de tercer comença a aprendre mitologia en la part introductòria de l'assignatura d'Història. L'aspecte educatiu de la mitologia als llibres de text focalitza en els herois que són representats com a models exemplars per tal d'ensenyar valors als infants. Els textos reflecteixen metanarratives modernes individualistes que professorat, pares i mares, consideren important d'ensenyar als infants. En general, el llibre de text repeteix l'esperit de lluita i prova (metanarrativa macroscòpica) de cada heroi. D'altra banda, cada història es modifica per manifestar només les fites individuals de l'heroi, tot amagant els seus aspectes negatius i menyspreant la influència del context social tal com la discriminació de gènere (modificació de textos individuals). A més a més, les il·lustracions i els mapes presents en aquests materials, creen una imatge de "Grècia intemporal" segons es delinea els moviments dels herois. Aquests materials ajuden el jovent a connectar el món dels herois amb el propi. Les activitats i preguntes també ajuden a l'alumnat a adoptar els rols i models familiars (elements paratextuals i visuals). En conclusió, la mitologia als llibres de text grecs de Primària funciona com una eina útil per ensenyar el valor de l'individualisme als infants.

**Paraules clau:** Educació en mitologia grega, metanarratives, herois, individualisme, identificació

## Introduction

As the legacy of a time immemorial, mythology has been passed on from generation to generation. As mythology explains, certain communities have been under one universal order system for a long time. This plays a key role in integrating members of relevant communities. It is important for the socialization of young members of a community. Children become members of a nation by learning its history and taking pride in its historical origin. This is one of the reasons mythology continues to be an integral part of syllabi and curricula in many countries.

In history classes, when the prehistoric era is addressed, the presence of mythology is evident. It helps children confirm the eternal flow of their history. Mythology texts are carefully selected and arranged to build a consistent narrative structure in order for children to find the core values of their communities and take pride in them. For this purpose, mythology needs to be adapted for teaching. This adaptation makes it possible for children to find a consistent message in a limited time and space. Therefore, when we read the abbreviated versions of mythology in History textbooks, we should be attentive to the authors' points and their reasoning behind it.

Adaptation has a wide range of meanings. A systematic approach has been tried recently by Hutcheon (2013, pp. 16-22) with regard to literary adaptations. According to this author, Adaptation is acknowledged transposition of a recognizable work, including the change of media, genre, and contexts. Mythology in History textbooks should be considered a kind of transposition of the pre-texts into educational contexts.

**The original texts of Ovid, Hesiod, and Homer are revised in order for children to read more effectively. Researching the features and effects of these texts is important because teaching mythology to children starts from selecting appropriate versions.**

In this article, the History textbooks of Greek primary schools will be examined. As the origin of humanism, Greek mythology takes a special position in education in many countries. Observing the way Greek textbooks deal with their mythology will allow scholars to understand how mythology functions as a valid means for young people to establish their identity and take pride in their community and its history.

In Greece, in the History textbooks for third graders, mythological texts are presented as rewritten versions. The original texts of Ovid, Hesiod, and Homer are revised in order for children to read more effectively. Researching the features and effects of these texts is important because teaching mythology to children starts from selecting appropriate versions.

### **1 Theoretical Background**

Traditional stories adapted for children, including mythology, are thought to be framed in certain “metanarratives” to convey clear lessons. Regarding the process of retelling of classical stories, Stephens and McCallum (2013) investigated basic principles. The study focuses on main impulses lying behind unending retellings of traditional stories, explaining adult authors construct structural narratives to deliver apparent lessons when they retell traditional stories for children. Since narratives are decided according to what is considered important among adults at the point of retelling, the retelling of traditional stories can be used as a way to reinforce the prevalent values of modern times (2013, p. 92). For example, privileged classics such as the Bible and Greek mythology stories have been accused of offering effective means to make children accept male supremacy in our culture. A prominent example is that of Eve and Pandora who are depicted as the source of all human misfortune. In this way, traditional stories are modified for children in accordance with the adult’s world.

Maurice (2015, p. 4) also paid attention to the utility of classical stories as a vehicle to convey the author’s ideological argument to children. This author examined how children’s books represented ancient Greece and Rome concluding the images of ancient heroes and empires had been manipulated according to the ideological ideals of the prevailing period.

Sometimes, the absence of moral lessons obstructs children’s character identification in traditional stories. As Stephens (2009, pp. 258-271) points out, obscure morality is regarded as a severe problem at the time a story is told to children. This author explained that the moral

obscurity of a pre-text tends to cause continuous retellings. Taking the example of Rumpelstiltskin, he pointed out that retold stories have clearer moral messages. The gods and heroes in Greek mythology are regarded as such cases, since they are not always moral. Their action often leads to unfair consequences. Children might have difficulty in immersing themselves into stories. Furthermore, since childhood is a critical period for forming values, young readers need a consistent value criterion.

There are two ways of enhancing moral lessons in a story (Stephens, 2019, p. 165-166). One way is to simplify the standard of character evaluation. Adaptations often try to make a clearer cause-effect relationship among events so that the story contains an obvious message. For example, Daedalus and Icarus are often represented as selfish and vain; deserving of punishment (Stephens and McCallum, 2013, pp. 69-71). Complicating elements, such as Daedalus' role in the Minoan kingdom or the king's pressure imposed on him, are omitted to make the story's message more obvious. In this context The characters are usually evaluated by their individual personalities.

Another way to enhance moral lessons is by emphasizing the contrast(s) between good and evil characters so that a specific moral message stands out. For example, the problem with Rumpelstiltskin is that none of the characters behaves ethically. Therefore, in a few new versions, the queen's character was revised to that of a victim, and Rumpelstiltskin, to a wicked villain. By contrasting the queen's innocence with the villain's slyness, the story comes to focus on the conflict between good and evil, finally showing that good defeats evil. Similarly, adaptations of mythology often glamorize gods and heroes as opposed to monsters and common people.

Those ways are for reinforcing universal lessons. In history classes, specific values need to be emphasized which is why another method (of what?) is necessary. The second and more complicated way is to introduce a new metanarrative, which challenges the existing one. Metanarrative means "implicit and usually invisible ideologies, systems, and assumptions [...] expressing social values and attitudes prevailing in the time and place of the retelling." (Stephens and McCallum, 2013, pp. 3-6). Another Rumpelstiltskin example affirms divine teleology as the main impetus developing the narrative. In some new versions, the new metanarrative of teleology is realized by a focal shift. Readers come to experience the story from the perspective of a boy who rescues the queen and her son by divine providence.

Prevalent metanarratives of today are presented in the settings of ancient mythology, appearing repeatedly in different stories. Traditional stories can be regarded as a vehicle to show the common worldview of the present day. Divine teleology is one such example. Even though it is found in the context of teaching history, the focus is placed on the present request. Classical texts are more ideologically charged because of their privileged position in children's education (Stephens and McCallum, 2013, p. 88).

**The reinforcement of didactic messages in mythological adaptations for children can be tried in three different levels of metanarratives including: overall framing structures, revising individual texts, and utilizing paratextual elements.**

The specific stories of each individual hero can also be revised for making a clear point. Characters might be modified to be portrayed as good or evil, and narrative structure might be rebuilt to be more consistent. Contradiction that could confuse readers is eliminated. In some adaptations select characters are idealized and rewarded in the end, whereas others are depicted as complete villains.

In forming a metanarrative, ancillary materials and activities are also utilized. Paratexts such as photographs and pictures can contribute considerably to making forceful and significant points (Robert, 2009, pp. 65-66). Activity books are said to function this way in Greek history classes. Questions that follow text in the textbooks can direct pupils to examine relevant texts.

The reinforcement of didactic messages in mythological adaptations for children can be tried in three different levels of metanarratives including: overall framing structures, revising individual texts, and utilizing paratextual elements. These aspects must be investigated in the analysis of adapted mythological texts in Greek History textbooks. Each level can be specified as follows:

a) Macroscopic metanarratives (framing structures): Which stories are selected and how are they organized systemically? Who gains the most attention and who does not? What is the consistent impetus for developing stories? This can be regarded as the author's explanation on why the world is as it is. By comparing the metanarratives of pre texts and adaptations, we will be able to uncover the differences between their didactical messages.

b) Revision of individual texts: How is each character represented? Are the characters different from those in the existing versions? Have any of the events changed or been omitted? How do the texts revise inappropriate events such as the hero's selfish behavior? By tracing specific changes of characters and events, we will be able to detect what kind of lessons the authors presented in the new stories.

c) Paratextual and visual elements: What is the purpose of paratextual elements such as students' activities and questions? Do visual elements contribute to making the texts more meaningful? What is the use of pictures, maps, and photos? What kind of maps and pictures were selected? These questions need to be answered so as to clarify the intention of adaptation.

## 2 Findings

### 2.1 Macroscopic Metanarratives

In Greece, all the primary schools use the same History textbooks edited by the Ministry of National Education and Religion Pedagogic Institute (Maistrellis, Kalivi & Michail, 2016). The textbooks consist of one principle book and one workbook in each grade. The main books are composed of units dealing with each period of Greek History in a chronological order. The main book for the third graders is composed of ten units, among which the first six ones are about Greek mythology. The first six units contain short texts of mythology modified for children. The workbook offers relevant activities like drawing, writing, and oral discussion. In addition, teachers are given a guidebook with an explanation about the purpose and focus of the texts and activities. In the following discussion, the 'textbook' means the main book of History subject for the third graders. 'Workbook' indicates the workbook of History given to the third graders, and 'Teachers' book' means the guidebook offered to the teachers responsible of teaching History to the third graders.

As presented below, each unit is composed of the episodes of a particular hero. After a brief introduction of gods' genealogy (unit 1), the following five units are allocated to describe the struggles and achievements of human heroes (unit 2-6). The main characters are Hercules, Theseus, Jason, Achilles, and Odysseus. The textbook allots greater units for human heroes than for gods.

Unit 1. Η ΔΗΜΙΟΥΡΓΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΚΟΣΜΟΥ (The creation of the cosmos)

Unit 2. Ο ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ (Hercules)

Unit 3. Ο ΘΗΣΕΑΣ (Theseus)

Unit 4. Η ΑΡΓΟΝΑΥΤΙΚΗ ΕΚΣΤΡΑΤΕΙΑ (The Argon campaign)

Unit 5. Ο ΤΡΩΙΚΟΣ ΠΟΛΕΜΟΣ (The Trojan War)

Unit 6. ΟΙ ΠΕΡΙΠΕΤΕΙΕΣ ΤΟΥ ΟΔΥΣΣΕΑ (The adventures of Odysseus)

Each unit deals with one of the most famous heroes of Greek mythology. This clearly shows that the textbook is focused on evaluating the human heroes' achievements. Of course, the superficial objective of each unit is historical facts and not heroes. The story of Hercules is suitable for teaching the dangers of the living environment of ancient ages. Hercules' struggle against monsters reflects the unstable status of human beings in those days and the insufficient

means to cope with the threat of wild beasts. Likewise, Theseus' story explains the changing relation between Crete and mainland Greece. His triumph over Minotaur is interpreted as a sign of the liberation of Athens from Crete.

However, the historical inference is only made after children's interpretation of the symbolic meaning of stories. Children are more immersed in the concrete stories of Theseus and Minos, rather than in interpreting the political relationship of Crete and Athens.

The heroes of each unit have much in common. They are all independent and willing to achieve their individual goals despite difficulties. In the following chapter, we will see how children are led to respect Hercules, Theseus, Jason, Achilles, and Odysseus as agents who developed ancient Greek history. More precisely, the textbook illuminates their indomitable will as the momentum of completing great achievements.

Being from a foreign country, I am also interested in comparing the way Greek mythology is taught to children between Greece and other countries. So far, the main difference is that heroes play a key role in Greece. In other countries, series books about Greek mythology mostly deal with gods and goddess, instead of heroes. For example, in America, Kate McMullan's famous series book *Myth-O-Mania* (2002) is focused on the conflict between Hades and Zeus. Gods and monsters including Cupid, Medusa, Persephone also come into the spotlight. The stories of Theseus and Hercules are told, but they are not depicted as great heroes. In this retelling, Hades reminds (them) of their.... quest and helps them complete it. In Percy Jackson series (2002~) by Rick Riordan, the main characters are the Olympian gods living in modern world. In *Greece! Rome! Monsters!* (2002) By John Harris, monsters are the main characters as shown in the title. It is natural that Olympian gods and monsters are selected as main characters when Greek mythology is retold for children, since they offer more splendid attractions than human heroes. On the contrary, in the educational context of Greek primary schools, the focus is clearly put on the heroes and their struggle.

In Greek mythology, heroes succeed one another thus forming a continuity in Greek history. This emphasizes the common mentality of strong human will. History is represented consistent with a mainstream of continued mentality and helps children find the impression that Greek history is abundant with good role models and worth getting proud of.

In addition, learning about heroes leads to the long continuity of Greek history. For example, the stories of Hercules offer an explanation of modern Olympic Games, which helps children familiarize themselves with their present culture. In this context, learning history, with the focus

on ancient heroes, can be regarded as a way of forming national identity. This could be the reason mythology is put first in the History textbooks of Greek primary schools.

The heroes in History textbooks are mighty, intelligent, altruistic, and most of all, challenging. They pursue their own goals despite continuous impediments. As the textbook idealizes their independence and responsibilities, their faults tend to be ignored. As it were, each story of the heroes is revised to focus on their ideal personalities.

First, from the introduction, it can be seen that Hercules is depicted as "fearless and invincible."

Ήταν ατρόμητος κι ανίκητος και τα κατορθώματά του έμειναν για πάντα αξέχαστα."  
(Textbook, p.21)

He was fearless and unbeatable, and his accomplishments were unforgettable forever.<sup>1</sup>

He is determined to accomplish what he wants. Hercules did not await the gods' punishment for his misdeeds, but went to the Oracle himself to ask what he could do to be forgiven.

Κάποια μέρα όμως η Ήρα, που πάντα τον μισούσε, τον τρέλανε κι ο Ηρακλής έκανε κακό στα παιδιά και στη γυναίκα του, νομίζοντας πως είναι εχθροί του. Συνήλθε όμως και κατάλαβε το κακό που είχε κάνει. Πήγε τότε στο μαντείο των Δελφών, για να ρωτήσει τον Απόλλωνα τι έπρεπε να κάνει για να τον συγχωρέσουν οι θεοί. (Textbook, p.23)

One day, Hera, who had always hated him, was angry at Hercules. Hercules had hurt his children and wife, thinking that they were his enemies. However, he realized the evil he had done and went to the Delphi oracle to ask Apollo what he could do to be forgiven by the gods (Textbook, p.23).<sup>2</sup>

The anecdote of "Η Αρετή και η Κακία" (Virtue and Evil) also represents his autonomous character in setting his goals.

Ηρακλή, είσαι ο δυνατότερος άνθρωπος στη γη. Μπορείς ν' αρπάξεις ό,τι θέλεις, χωρίς ποτέ να εργαστείς. Αν με ακολουθήσεις, ο δρόμος της ζωής σου θα είναι πολύ εύκολος κι ευχάριστος. Θα απολαύσεις χωρίς κόπο πολλές χαρές και διασκεδάσεις.  
-Ποια είσαι εσύ; τη ρώτησε ο Ηρακλής.  
-Οι φίλοι μου με λένε Ευτυχία και οι εχθροί μου με λένε Κακία, του απάντησε. Πλησίασε τότε και η άλλη γυναίκα.  
-Ηρακλή, του είπε, με λένε Αρετή. Αν ακολουθήσεις τον δικό μου δρόμο, η ζωή σου θα είναι γεμάτη κόπους και αγώνες αλλά και καλά έργα. Με τη δύναμη που σου έδωσαν οι θεοί θα ευεργετείς τους ανθρώπους κι εκείνοι θα σε αγαπούν και θα σε τιμούν.

<sup>1</sup> Translation by the author.

<sup>2</sup> For the original in Greek, please see attachment



Ο Ηρακλής αποφάσισε να χρησιμοποιήσει τη δύναμή του, για να βοηθήσει τους ανθρώπους. Γι'αυτό διάλεξε τον δρόμο της Αρετής. (Textbook, p.25)

Hercules, you are the strongest man on earth. You can grab whatever you want without ever working. If you follow me, your life will be very relaxed and pleasant. You will have fun and enjoy many pleasures. / -"Who are you?" Hercules asked her. / -"My friends call me Happiness and my enemies call me Evil," she replied. Then, the other woman approached. / -"Hercules," she told me, "they call me Virtue. If you follow my way, your life will be full of labor and struggles, but also good works. With the power that the gods have given you, you will help people, and they will love and honor you. "/ Hercules decided to use his power to help people and that is why he chose the way of Virtue. (Textbook, p.25)

**Theseus also chose to go through hardship when he met his father. He decided to travel to Athens, taking a hazardous route, and helped people along the way.**

Όταν ο Θησέας μεγάλωσε, η Αίθρα τού έδειξε το βράχο, εκείνος τον σήκωσε, πήρε τα δώρα του πατέρα του κι έφυγε για την Αθήνα. Δεν θέλησε να πάει με καράβι. Προτίμησε το δρόμο της στεριάς που ήταν γεμάτος κινδύνους. Ξεπέρασε όλους τους κινδύνους που συνάντησε, νίκησε πολλούς κακοποιούς, ληστές και άγρια ζώα που τρομοκρατούσαν και σκότωναν ανθρώπους. Οι άνθρωποι μπορούσαν να ταξιδεύουν πια ελεύθερα. (Textbook, p.43)

When Theseus grew up, Aithra showed him a rock. He picked up the rock, took his father's gifts, and left for Athens. He did not want to go by boat. He preferred traveling by land even though it was full of dangers. He overcame all the dangers he encountered and defeated many villains, robbers, and wild animals that terrorized and killed people. People could then travel freely. (Textbook, p.43)

**Theseus also chose to go to Crete, which forms a topic for pupils to ponder over.**

Όταν έφτασε ο Θησέας στην Αθήνα, για τρίτη χρονιά οι Αθηναίοι έπρεπε να στείλουν τα παιδιά τους στην Κρήτη και σε όλη την πόλη ακούγονταν θρήνοι και κλάματα. Ο Θησέας αποφάσισε να πάει κι εκείνος μαζί τους για να σκοτώσει το Μινώταυρο. (Textbook, p.45)

When Theseus arrived in Athens, the Athenians were sending their children to Crete for the third year in a row, and the whole city was lamenting and crying. Theseus, then, decided to go with them to kill the Minotaur.

Q. How do you judge Theseus' decision to go to Crete? (Textbook, p.46)

The teachers' guidebook also says that one of the main purposes of the unit on Theseus is to evaluate his decision to go to Crete.

Να αξιολογήσουν το χαρακτήρα του Θησέα και την απόφασή του να πάει ο ίδιος στην Κρήτη. ). (Teachers' Guidebook, p.40)

Evaluate the character of Theseus and his decision to go to Crete by himself. (Teachers' book, p.40)

Jason is no exception. He is described as being determined to regain the throne from Pelias.

Ο Ιάσοντας μεγάλωσε κοντά στον Κένταυρο Χείρωνα κι έγινε ένα πολύ έξυπνο και δυνατό παλικάρι. Όταν έγινε είκοσι χρονών, αποφάσισε να γυρίσει στην Ιωλκό, για να πάρει πίσω από τον Πελία το θρόνο του πατέρα του. (Textbook, p.52)

Jason grew up near Centaur Chiron and became a very intelligent and powerful man. When he was twenty, he decided to return to Iolkos to take his father's throne back from Pelias. (Textbook, p.52)

Jason does not hesitate to challenge the mission of obtaining the Golden Fleece at Colchis. In the case of Achilles, he even refuses to fight due to his unwillingness to do so, despite the Greek army's crisis during the Trojan War. Achilles is described as acting on his own free will regardless of how difficult the task is or what kind of duty others impose on him. Achilles' behavior is not presented as selfish or foolish. Instead pupils are led to imagine his anger when he lost Briseis and left to to guess what he might talk to Agamemnon about the issue.

Παρατηρώ την εικόνα 2 και διαβάζω το κείμενο 3. Τι νιώθει ο Αχιλλέας; (Workbook, p.27)

See Figure 2 and read Text 3. How does Achilles feel? (Workbook, p.27)

Ο Αχιλλέας και ο Αγαμέμνονας μαλώνουν. Φαντάζομαι και γράφω τι θα μπορούσε να λέει ο ένας στον άλλο. (Workbook, p.27)

Achilles and Agamemnon are fighting. Imagine the scene and write about what they could be saying to one another. (Workbook, p.27)

Παίζουμε θέατρο στην τάξη και παρουσιάζουμε τους διαλόγους που γράψαμε.  
Πρωταγωνιστούν ο Αχιλλέας και ο Αγαμέμνωνας (Workbook, p.27)

Perform a play in the classroom and present the dialogues you wrote. Achilles and Agamemnon are the main actors. (Workbook, p.27)

Hercules, Theseus, and Jason are represented as striving toward their own purpose. The repetitive pattern of each hero's independent behaviour forms a reflection of the editor's intention. Considering that children's books are often designed as a part of an educational project, placing texts in a consistent framework is important. Packaging texts is an effective strategy to define the interpretative paradigm for children. This is especially true in the case of classical mythology retelling where a “unifying frame” that functions as an interpretative base for the relationship between characters and their surroundings, is indispensable (Stephens and McCallum, 2013, pp. 34-35; 62-66). Through consistent framing, mythology implies an obvious message.

There are also exercises asking pupils to find the commonness between Hercules and Theseus, and Hercules and Jason.

Βρίσκω τα κοινά στοιχεία που έχουν ο Ηρακλής και ο Θησέας. (Workbook, p.23)

Find the common elements between Hercules and Theseus. (Workbook, p.23)

Ποιος άλλος ήρωας ανέλαβε να εκτελέσει μεγάλους άθλους και γιατί; (Workbook, p.56)

Which other hero has performed great feats and why? (Workbook, p.56)

The questions above emphasize the similarity of the heroes' situations. All the three heroes completed their tasks that had first seemed impossible. Hercules and Theseus, especially, were placed in dangerous situations due to their opponents' jealousy, but they undertook risks in order to achieve their goals. Their similarity is highlighted by pupils as they attempt to answer the questions above.

As well acknowledged, textbooks are important means for a nation to inculcate young students with certain ideas, among which individualism is one of the core one. As Foucault (1975) pointed out, individualism is an effective way to maintain a social system in modern societies, since the invisible power needs to supervise isolated individuals to maximize their utility values. In schools, every student is treated as an isolated individual, graded by his individual achievements,

and rewarded for them. This kind of individualism is so common that it is not limited to a specified nation.

The individualism found in the textbooks of Greek primary schools, however, is special. It is rather a psychological term indicating a creed that every individual should follow his own motivations, discover his own truth and decide his own goals. As we saw in the heroes' lives described in the textbooks, the focus is on their braveness to act according to their own decisions. Their achievements cannot be graded by any single standard. The heroes are examples of 'inner-directed' characters with stable inner motivations, which contrasts to 'other-directed' characters of the present era (Riesman, 1950, pp. 13-17).

Riesman (1950) explained that 'other-directed' characters keep expanding, as people feel more isolated and unstable in estranged metropolitan environments. He also said that the influence from mass media had increased dependency on others, meaning a long tradition of individualism from the ancient times is being weakened. As a result, the significance of individualism inclines to be defined only as that of supervision and regulation mentioned by Foucault. In this context, the Greek heroes' individualism holds special values reminding us of the true origin of individualism worthy of close attention.

Furthermore, the heroes' individualism is also in harmony with concerns for others. The heroes do not only follow their own desires but also try to contribute to their communities. Hercules defeated the monsters that had threatened people, and Theseus saved young Athenians who were about to be sacrificed by Minotaur. Those heroes' stories tell us that true individualism coexists with communalism. It helps students imagine a state in which a society does not oppress the individual and the individual contributes to the prosperity of the society.

It is also remarkable that the myth texts are received orally. In the classrooms of Greek primary schools, the teacher usually reads aloud the myth texts and the students often recite them. It can lead to more emotional reception of the stories. Oral reception tends to reinforce empathetic responses from readers. (Ong, 2013/1982, pp. 45-49) Students can indulge themselves in the heroes' stories when they recite them together. They can also sympathize with the heroes more easily, since oral communication removes the distance between the participants.

## 2.2 Modification of Individual Texts

The ethics of modern western culture is, "humanism" with emphasis on individual personality. This means that all people should be encouraged to grow through their own experience and aim

to approach their own goals. The heroes in Greek mythology serve as appropriate role models for children in this context.

The close relationship between humanism and Greek mythology is not a new idea. According to Maurice (2015, pp. 9-10), ancient Greece and Rome began to function as resources for building children's characters since the Victorian age. She said that the prevalence of neo-classicism and romanticism respectively led to the idealization of both the ancient age and childhood phase. The idealization of childhood and the ancient age started since, and people began to teach the ideal virtues of ancient heroes to children in the golden age of their lives. The tradition of mythological education with a focus on the virtues of heroes is related to this context. It is reinforced more systematically by the framing structure of units in the History textbook of Greek primary schools. Mythological texts are presented under the metanarrative of "independent agency" with heroes portrayed as role models is being widely accepted these days.

Consequently, the influence of the social system tends to be neglected. Since the textbook is designed for education of individual personality, ignoring the existing social contradiction is inevitable to an extent. As far as an individual's endeavour to achieve his own object is emphasized, the effect of social structures cannot be addressed properly. Stephens and McCallum (2013, pp. 20-21) pointed out that "humanist ideology is often rightly accused of falsely or naively constructing a unified subject as a romantic unitary 'self' capable of acting outside ideological systems, and such a notion of the 'self' pervades children's literature." Apathy to minorities with inferior social status is found in each text. Disappearance of female characters is one such example. In the stories of Theseus and Jason, Ariadne and Medea do not appear as important characters. Although they played key roles in male characters' achievements, their existence is mentioned only briefly or is ignored.

Το καράβι έφτασε στην Κρήτη. Εκεί ο Θησέας γνώρισε την κόρη του Μίνωα, την Αριάδνη. Θαμπωμένη η νέα από την ομορφιά του Θησέα θέλησε να τον βοηθήσει. Γι' αυτό του έδωσε ένα κουβάρι νήμα, το μίτο, και τον συμβούλεψε να δέσει την άκρη του στην είσοδο του λαβύρινθου και να το ξετυλίγει. (...) Το ίδιο βράδυ ο Θησέας και οι νέοι της Αθήνας έφυγαν κρυφά με το πλοίο τους από την Κρήτη. Μαζί τους πήραν και την Αριάδνη. (...) Ταξίδεψαν χαρούμενοι μέχρι τη Νάξο. Εκεί βγήκαν σε μια ακρογιαλιά για να ξεκουραστούν. Τότε όμως πέρασε από κει ο θεός Διόνυσος. Είδε την Αριάδνη, θαμπώθηκε από την ομορφιά της και την πήρε, για να την κάνει γυναίκα του. Ο Θησέας στενοχωρήθηκε πολύ για το χαμό της Αριάδνης. Το πλοίο συνέχισε το ταξίδι του για την Αθήνα, κανείς όμως δε σκέφτηκε ότι έπρεπε ν' αλλάξουν τα μαύρα πανιά. (Textbook, p.47)

The boat arrived in Crete. There, Theseus met Minos' daughter Ariadne. The young woman was dazzled by Theseus' beauty, and wanted to help him. Hence, she gave him a thread and advised him to tie it to the entrance of the labyrinth and then unroll it on his way out. (...) On the same evening, Theseus and the young people of Athens were secretly leaving by ship from Crete. They also took Ariadne with them. (...) They traveled happily to Naxos. There, they went to a beach to rest but then God Dionysus happened to pass by. He saw Ariadne, was dazzled by her beauty, and took her as his wife. Theseus was angry at having lost Ariadne. The ship continued its journey to Athens, but no one thought that the black sails should be changed (Textbook, p.47) .

Ο Ιάσοντας δέχτηκε και με τη βοήθεια της κόρης του Αιήτη, της Μήδειας, που ήταν ξακουσμένη μάγισσα, έδεσε τους άγριους ταύρους, όργωσε κι έσπειρε δόντια δράκου. Αμέσως πετάχτηκαν απ' τη γη γίγαντες σπλισμένοι και τον περικύκλωσαν. Ο Ιάσοντας έριξε αμέσως ανάμεσά τους μία μεγάλη πέτρα, όπως τον είχε συμβουλέψει η Μήδεια. Οι γίγαντες τότε άρχισαν να χτυπιούνται μεταξύ τους, ώσπου σκοτώθηκαν όλοι. (...) Μετά από αυτό το κατόρθωμα του Ιάσωνα, η Μήδεια έμαθε ότι ο πατέρας της δε σκόπευε να δώσει το χρυσόμαλλο δέρας και σχεδίαζε μάλιστα να κάψει την Αργώ. Τότε ο Ιάσοντας διέταξε τους Αργοναύτες να καθίσουν στα κουπιά της Αργώς κι εκείνος μαζί με τη Μήδεια και τον Ορφέα, όταν βράδιασε, έτρεξαν στο δάσος του θεού Άρη. Εκεί η Μήδεια έριξε μαγικό υγρό στα μάτια του δράκου που φύλαγε το δέρας. Ο Ορφέας έπαιξε πολύ γλυκά τη λύρα του κι ο δράκος αποκοιμήθηκε. Αμέσως ο Ιάσοντας άρπαξε το χρυσόμαλλο δέρας. Έτρεξαν γρήγορα στη θάλασσα, μπήκαν όλοι στην Αργώ κι έφυγαν από την Κολχίδα. (...) Εκείνος παντρεύτηκε τη Μήδεια και πήγαν μαζί στην Κόρινθο. (Textbook, p.54)

Jason accepted Aeetes' proposal. With the help of Aeetes' daughter, Medea, a renowned witch, he tied the wild bulls and plowed the field, spread out dragon teeth there. Immediately, giants sprung from the ground and surrounded him. Jason dropped a large stone on them following Medea's advice. The giants, then, began to strike each other until they were all dead. (...) After Jason's feat, Medea learned that her father did not intend to give the Golden Fleece and had planned to burn Argo. Then, Jason ordered the Argonauts to sit down and oar the Argos and he, together with Medea and Orpheus, ran in the woods of god Ares. There, Medea cast a magical liquid in the eyes of the dragon guarding the fleece. Orpheus played his lyre so sweetly that the dragon fell asleep following which Jason grabbed the Golden Fleece. They rode quickly into the sea, heading to Argos and leaving Colchis. (...) He married Medea and they went to Corinth together (Textbook, p.54) .

In the two texts above the narrators do not criticize or raise questions about the responsibility of Theseus and Jason toward their female supporters. Theseus is depicted as perplexed by Ariadne's disappearance and Jason is portrayed as having done nothing wrong to Medea. Theseus did not try to rescue Ariadne. He just worried for a while and then forgot her. Ariadne could not be rewarded for what she had done but the narrator does not care about that. As Peyronie (1992, p. 1121) pointed out, Theseus's abandonment of Ariadne raises the question as to "the true nature of the hero." He cannot be a real hero as long as he fails to renounce his own happiness and demonstrate self-victory, not victory over Minotaur. Jason also betrayed Medea in Corinth, but this is not mentioned either.

The treatment of women is not handled fairly in these texts. Ariadne and Medea were not accepted as independent agents, despite their talents. Humanism as individualism is not applicable to them but the narrators do not address such problems and shed light only on the male heroes in advantageous positions. This has been done not just for glamorizing the heroes but also for prioritizing individualism rather than criticizing unfair social systems.

Depending on the maturity of the reader, some of the Ariadne and Medea stories might be considered inappropriate based on the action of the characters. However, it does not make sense for the narrator to withhold the fact that they had been betrayed by their male partners. Although these stories are for teaching students the fact that Greek world expanded to include Crete and Minor Asia at that time it does not justify nor address the androcentrism of those days. The social position of female characters is also a part of history that should be included in texts for children.

Apathy toward monsters and nymphs should be reflected in this context as well. While their defeat by the heroes are recounted there are not explanations of how they were born or why they were present in the story. If students had the opportunity to know about how Minotaur was born, it would not appear detestable. In the episode of Odysseus and Circe, the fact that Circe was Helios' daughter and had her own territory in the Aiaie is not mentioned properly. With those parts being omitted, only the heroes' struggles to achieve their goals stand out.

Οι άνεμοι τούς έριξαν μετά στο νησί της μάγισσας Κίρκης. Άραξαν σε μια ακρογιαλιά κι ο Οδυσσέας έστειλε μερικούς απ' τους συντρόφους του να πάνε να ρωτήσουν πού βρίσκονταν. Αυτοί βρήκαν γρήγορα το παλάτι της Κίρκης. Η Κίρκη τούς πρόσφερε ένα μαγικό ποτό, μετά τους χτύπησε με το μαγικό ραβδί της και τους έκανε γουρούνια. Μόνο ένας γλίτωσε κι έτρεξε πίσω να το πει στον Οδυσσέα. Εκείνος άρπαξε το σπαθί του κι έτρεξε στο παλάτι. Η Κίρκη τού

πρόσφερε ποτό μα, όταν σήκωσε το ραβδί της να τον χτυπήσει, εκείνος άρπαξε το κοφτερό σπαθί του και την ανάγκασε να ξανακάνει τους συντρόφους του ανθρώπους. (Textbook, p.85)

The winds then threw them on the island of Witch Circe. They landed on a beach and Odysseus sent some of his comrades to go and ask where they were. They quickly found Circe's palace. Circe offered them a magic drink, then hit them with her magic wand, and turned them into pigs. Only one escaped and ran back to tell Odysseus. He grabbed his sword and ran to the palace. Circe offered him a drink, but when she lifted her stick to hit him, he grabbed his sharp sword and forced her to make his companions return to their original forms (Textbook, p.85).

In the text above, Circe is not given much prominence. The narrator does not explain why she is there on the island and what role she plays. She is no more than just an enemy for Odysseus to defeat. She is a talented magician and has lived in the island of Aiaie for very long. She has the right to defend herself from invaders but the narrator does not consider that. It seems that the hero's achieving his goal—returning home in this case—is the only thing History textbook authors want to concentrate on. On contrast, Circe is given more attention in Bulfinch's version. In the famous work of *Bulfinch's Greek and Roman mythology* (1855/2012), Circe is properly introduced as a powerful magician and the original dweller of the island as follows.

With grief for their slain companions mixed with joy at their own escape, they pursued their way till they arrived at the Aean isle, where Circe dwelt, the daughter of the sun. (...) He sent forward one half of his crew, under the command of Eurylochus, to see what prospect of hospitality they might find. As they approached the palace, they found themselves surrounded by lions, tigers, and wolves, not fierce but tamed by Circe's art, for she was a powerful magician (Bulfinch, 1855/2012, pp. 193-194).

The episode of Iphigenia's sacrifice has been revised so as not to damage Agamemnon's image as a representative Greek hero. Iphigenia is said to have been saved before being killed and her father Agamemnon is depicted as having suffered in agony for his decision to sacrifice his loving daughter. It is quite different from other versions in which Agamemnon does not hesitate to sacrifice Iphigenia and cruelly kills her.

Αβάσταχτη θλίψη πλάκωσε την καρδιά του Αγαμέμνονα. Δεν ήθελε να θυσιάσει την αγαπημένη του κόρη. Μέρες θρηνούσε. Τέλος έστειλε μήνυμα στην Κλυταμνήστρα,



τη γυναίκα του, να φέρει στην Αυλίδα την Ιφιγένεια, να την παντρέψει τάχα με τον Αχιλλέα.

Όταν η Ιφιγένεια κι η μητέρα της έφτασαν στην Αυλίδα, με δάκρυα στα μάτια ο Αγαμέμνωνας τους είπε την αλήθεια. Η Κλυταιμνήστρα έκλαιγε και τον παρακαλούσε να μην αφήσει να γίνει η θυσσία. Η Ιφιγένεια τελικά αποφάσισε να θυσιαστεί για την πατρίδα της. Τη μέρα της θυσσίας πήγε στολισμένη στο βωμό και με θάρρος έσκυψε το κεφάλι. Κι ο μάντης Κάλχας, αφού της φόρεσε χρυσό στεφάνι στα μαλλιά, σήκωσε το μαχαίρι. Όμως εκείνη τη στιγμή η Άρτεμη ήρθε μέσα σε ένα σύννεφο, άρπαξε την κόρη και πάνω στο βωμό άφησε ένα μικρό ελάφι. Την Ιφιγένεια την πήγε μακριά στη χώρα των Ταύρων σ' έναν από τους ναούς της. Αμέσως φύσηξε άνεμος και οι Αχαιοί κίνησαν για την Τροία. (Textbook, p.62)

Unbearable sadness plunged the heart of Agamemnon. He did not want to sacrifice his beloved daughter. He mourned for days. Finally, he sent a message to Clytemnestra, his wife, to bring Iphigenia to Aulus to marry her to Achilles. / When Iphigenia and her mother arrived at Aulus, with tears in his eyes, Agamemnon told them the truth. Clytemnestra cried and begged him not to go ahead with the sacrifice. Iphigenia eventually decided to undergo the sacrifice for her homeland. / On the day of the sacrifice, she went to the altar and courageously bent her head. Calchas, after having placed a gold wreath in her hair, raised the knife but at that moment, Artemis came in a cloud, grabbed the daughter, and left a small deer on the altar. She took Iphigenia away to one of her temples in the country of the Taurus. The wind blew and the Achaeans moved to Troy (Textbook, p. 62).

### 2.3 Paratextual and Visual Elements

Humanism with emphasis on individualism, is also prevalent in ancillary materials and activities subordinated to main texts. There is not additional audio-visual material but the textbooks themselves contain abundant photos and pictures for pupils' reference. Pupils are guided to read main texts first and then complete various activities. Those activities help children accept the heroes as friendly and more respectable. The examples are as follows:

Διαβάζω το κείμενο 7. Ποιο δρόμο διάλεξε να ακολουθήσει ο Ηρακλής;

Αν ήσουν εσύ στη θέση του, ποιο δρόμο θα διάλεγες και γιατί;

Παίζουμε θέατρο στην τάξη.

Τα πρόσωπα είναι: ο Ηρακλής, η Αρετή και η Κακία. (Workbook, p.10)

Read text 7. What path did Heracles choose to follow? If you were in his position, which road would you choose and why? / Let's perform a play in the classroom. The characters are: Hercules, Areti, and Kakia. (Workbook, p.10)

Τι θα ήθελες να κάνει για σένα ο Ηρακλής;

Τι θα ήθελες να κάνει για το καλό όλων των ανθρώπων; (Workbook, p.16)

What would you like Hercules to do for you? / What would you like to do for the good of all people (Workbook, p.16)?

Writing and play performing activities, as stated above, are included in the workbook. They require pupils to compare themselves with the heroes. This fertilizes children to perceive the heroes as their role models. Discussing and performing heroes' behaviours allows children to both better understand and remember the stories better. Many ancillary activities are designed around this concept using mythology as a vehicle to learn history through tying it to real world situations. through valuable lessons.

Pictures from ancient times are frequently used as visual materials,. Pictures scribed on ancient potteries describe the heroes' struggles vividly, leading pupils to respect them. The pictures emphasize the heroes' braveness and patience. In (Fig. 1.0) the most cutthroat moment of Hercules's fight with the Nemean lion is described. In the second picture, the very moment of Theseus' defeating Procrustes is captured.



**Figure 1. Ο Ηρακλής παλεύει με το λιοντάρι της Νεμέας. (Hercules fights Nemea's lion. Textbook, p.33)**



**Figure 2. Θησέας και Προκρούστης. (Theseus and Procrustes. Textbook, p.44)**

Although both pictures represent the hero's triumph, the focus is on the process not the struggle. In the (Fig. X), the wildly roaring lion is larger than Hercules, who seems to be struggling to overcome his opponent. In the second picture, Procrustes actively avoids Theseus' attack. This scene makes viewers imagine the critical moment of Theseus and his audacity and resolution.



**Figure 3. Ο Οδυσσέας ξεφεύγει από τη σπηλιά του Πολύφημου, δεμένος κάτω από την κοιλιά του κριαριού. (Odysseus escapes from Polyphemus' cave, bound beneath the belly of a ram. Textbook, p. 84)**

Odysseus's picture is in the same context. He is dangerously bound to the belly of a ram in order to escape secretly from Polyphemus' cave. The viewers can lively feel his fretfulness. Figure X emphasizes that Odysseus' struggle was not easy, leading viewers to understand that he had to

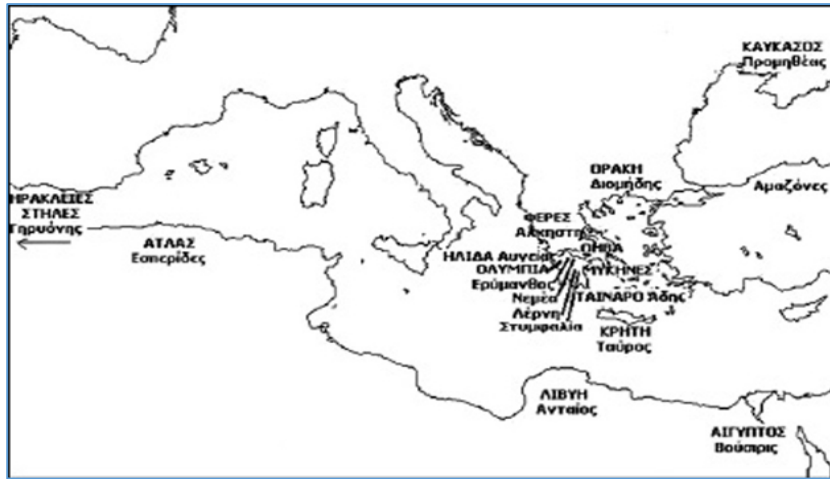
face fierce times as Theseus and Hercules did. As it were, the more vivid their crisis shows, the more admiration is generated on their final triumph. In this way, three pictures above persuade readers to respect the heroes.

Moreover, old pictures drawn by ancient Greeks who might also had admired at the heroes as much as people today, represent the heroes as timeless symbols of Greece. Children are impressed by the fact that the same characters have been respected for eons and this may be the reason that textbooks mostly utilizes old pictures instead of current ones.

Maps are used as a part of ancillary materials as well. Using maps seem to be “dehistoricizing” mythological texts, Hutcheon (2013, pp. 142-148) pointed out that adaptation occurs across different cultures, sometimes compelling the original text to lose some of its original elements derived from a specific time and space. She called it ‘dehistoricizing’ of the original text. Barthes (1971) explains that dehistoricizing happens since texts are always recomposed by readers. It helps children find themselves in the same world as that of the ancient heroes sharing the same names of places presented both on the ancient and modern maps. Creating an image of Greece from the ancient to the present day and transcending time lapses generates an impression that the mythological world is reproducible even today.

Identification with the ancient heroes facilitated through maps help children unite more closely with the heroes through the image of Greece as a permanent nation. Drawing a map is a process of excluding heterogeneous factors and enhancing unity in a geographical framework. Specifically, small scale maps can promote forming of unity among citizens (Kim, 2013, p. 4). That might explain why maps are widely used in children’s books. Hameed (2014, p. 25) pointed out using maps in children’s literature will continuously contributed to “world-building” of children which will inculcating a desire to uphold their national identity. Kaplan and Guntram (2011, pp. 349-360) also supported the idea that maps help children identify community and have a place in children’s education.

As shown in, pupils can check out where Hercules, Theseus, and Jason had passed through on a modern map. Map activities related to Hercules are especially important since he left traces all over the nation. With old pictures contributing to the image of Greece as a timeless space for children, a map of Hercules’ traces may help children feel geographically united. Likewise, maps with Theseus and Jason’s exploration routes also offer children the image of a timeless world of Greece including Crete and Minor Asia, as presented in Figure X



**Figure 4. Οι περιπλανήσεις του Ηρακλή (The wanderings of Hercules, textbook, p.39)**

Δείχνω στο χάρτη την πορεία του Θησέα από την Τροιζήνα στην Αθήνα. (Workbook, p.44)

The map shows the course taken by Theseus from Trizina to Athens.)

Σημειώνω στον χάρτη τα κυριότερα μέρη απ' όπου πέρασε η Αργώ. (Workbook, p.22)

The map notes the main areas crossed by Argo.

The following maps respectively show the regions concerned with Argonaut Campaign (Figure 5) and Trojan War (Figure 6). Although the time is different, the maps do not change. Jason and Achilles take similar positions in building up the framework of united Greece.



**Figure 5. Η Αργοναυτική εκστρατεία. (The Argonaut Campaign, workbook, p.44)**





Figure 6. Οι περιοχές απ' όπου ξεκίνησαν οι Αχαιοί και η πορεία τους από την Αυλίδα προς την Τροία.  
(The regions from which Achaeans began their journey from Avlida to Troy. Textbook, p.65)

In Figure 6, various regions are endowed with the same status as the starting point of heroes. The heroes explicitly combine different regions under a single frame. The consistent form of tags marking heroes' names the place names show that the map is not just indicating the locations.

### Conclusion

Greek mythology has been taught as a part of history in primary schools for a very long time. Mythological texts are adapted so as to be framed by new metanarratives for building the national identity of children. As one of the classical traditional stories with a privileged position in education, mythology contains a strong potential to influence children's mental growth. Greek primary school textbooks of history are effectively activating this potential.

**Heroes are good role models and help children form a proper social identity. They help children form the image of an eternal community, and also help them establish steadfast historical identity.**

As long as the object of teaching history lies in building social identity, mythology will remain as an integral part of the History textbook. Greek textbooks can be presented as an exemplary example. Heroes are represented in a familiar manner in textbooks, for children to easily identify with, functioning as the focal point where students can discover the connection between the ages. Heroes are good role models and help children form a proper social identity. They help

children form the image of an eternal community, and also help them establish steadfast historical identity.

The result of the analysis in this article should be evaluated by relevant fieldwork studies. Children's actual response to the adapted texts needs to be investigated in order for us to draw out practical guidelines for teaching the modified version of mythology. Although children are not expected to show a single pattern of response. Their response can show how the intent of the authors should be adjusted. The way teachers use these materials are important topics to be researched. Since the adapted texts with new metanarratives are mediated by teachers, their opinions about mythology education and their class activities need to be carefully studied. Through future studies, we will be able to clearly verify the feasibility of the analysis in this article.

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### **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

This article does not contain any studies with human participants.

### **Declaration of Conflict of Interests**

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