

What Makes a Monster?

A lesson plan for *The Red House Monster*
by Education Director Maria McConville

[The Red House Monster](#) by Rachel Bublitz is not only a haunting tale that caters to our desire to have fun being scared. This one-act play has us take a deep look at how we view others, how we are influenced by our community, and how we come to our own conclusions. These activities are here as a starting off point for teachers and directors whose students are wrestling with this play. I hope these activities and discussion questions inspire broader explorations of the play and more nuanced performances of the amazing characters!



OBJECTIVE:

Students will read and compare the Myth of Geryon and the play THE RED HOUSE MONSTER. In this comparison, students will define what makes a monster. Before the activities, the class should read both the [myth of Geryon](#) and [the play](#).

RESOURCES:

Definition of Monster – an animal or plant of abnormal form or structure; one who deviates from normal or acceptable behavior or character; a threatening force; an animal of strange or terrifying shape; one unusually large for its kind.

The Myth of Geryon

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geryon>

<https://mythology.wikia.org/wiki/Geryon>

WARM-UP

*Have the class create physical tableaux of known monsters. If you are in your classroom, allow students to be socially distanced and if this is a virtual classroom, well, they get to take up as much space as they need. At your cue students, shall create a still, silent picture using their gesture, physicality and facial expression to create any one of these characters.

Example: Frankenstein, Dracula, Zombie, Cyclops

Feel free to have students offer monsters for the class to create a physical tableau!

*Have the class create physical tableau of Geryon from the Greek Myth.

*Have the class create a physical tableau of Geryon from *The Red House Monster*.

Be sure to have students check out each other's creations! Highlight when a student really commits to a facial expression or a physical gesture. Explain how that helps the audience understand the character.

ACTIVITY 1- COMPARE AND CONTRAST

This activity can be in group work, a class discussion or solo homework. Teachers choice!

*What aspects of the myth, the source material, did the playwright carry over into the play? What is different?

*Compare the monster Geryon in the Greek myth to Geryon in *The Red House Monster*.

MYTH	PLAY
PHYSICAL TRAITS OF GERYON	PHYSICAL TRAITS OF GERYON
EMOTIONAL TRAITS OF GERYON	EMOTIONAL TRAITS OF GERYON

ACTIVITY 2- DESIGN YOUR OWN MONSTER

Depending on your class and your venue (in-person or virtual classroom), please choose which activity works best for you.

MONOLOGUE – Students should have their monsters tell their origin story. What are their traits? What makes them different? How did they become that way?

DESIGN – Either through drawing, painting, or making a collage, allow students to design their own monster using the dictionary definition of Monster as a source for starting. If you are conducting any costume lessons, use this as an opportunity for students to design the costume for Geryon in *The Red House Monster*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/ESSAY QUESTIONS

- *Does society make the monster or is a monster born that way?
- *Is Geryon misunderstood in the play?/Is Geryon misunderstood in the myth?
- *Are there similarities in Hercules' quest and that of Hannah's quest? If so, what are they?
If no, why not?
- *Who are modern day monsters?

Have fun! If you would like to share your monologues or designs with us, send them to
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Maria McConville has been a NYC Public School teaching artist since 2005. In the past she has worked with the Theatre Development Fund, LeAP! Onstage, and Periwinkle Theater for Youth, and as a Shakespeare and Playwriting teaching artist with Theatre For A New Audience. Her students have performed and adapted the work of Shakespeare, written their own plays, devised ensemble performance pieces, sang and danced in musical productions, and performed their peers work on a Broadway stage. Growing up in New York, Maria attended LaGuardia High School of Performing Arts for Drama, and recently adjudicated the auditions for incoming students. In addition to being Stage Partners' Education Director, Maria is also a playwright; her published plays include *#Censored* and *#Viral* (Stage Partners) and *To Date or Not to Date* (Playscripts).



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