
ELA Grade 7 Unit 1 - Open Response - Print

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What Became of the Giants

by Carolyn Sherwin Bailey

The giants had decided to invade Mount Olympus. They thought they could easily do this, for there were none of the gods who could hurt them; the giants were proof against all their weapons. They believed that this wonderful place among the clouds was theirs by right just because they were larger and stronger than the heroes. If the gods refused to give up their abode with its palaces, the gilded car of day, its stores of food such as had never been tasted by mortals and its weapons, the thunder and lightning, the giants were going to destroy the Mount.

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The worst part about this race of giants was the fact that their hearts were different from those of the celestials and the mortals. They had hearts made of solid stone which could never beat and feel warm. That was why the giants made preparations to climb up the steep sides of Mount Olympus.

No one in all Greece dared to try and stop this war of the giants ...

It seemed as if the giants were going to win, for even the gods were frightened and made haste to change their forms. The mighty Jupiter took upon himself the figure of a ram. Apollo became a crow, Diana a cat, Juno a cow, Venus a fish and Mercury a bird. But Mars, the god of war, got out his chariot and went to meet the giants, and the others returned at last, for there was really no courage like theirs.

The battle was still with the giants, though, for no weapons could kill them. Mars threw his spears and they rebounded from the stone hearts of the giants. No one knew what would happen, for certain of the giants went down to the earth again and brought up hills with which to crush the habitations of the gods, but just then a great idea came to Apollo. He believed that there were unseen forces which were quite as powerful as the giants' trees and rocks and hills in deciding this battle.

So Apollo sent Mercury, the messenger with winged shoes, post haste with a secret message to Helios, who lived in the palace of the sun, commanding him to close

and lock the doors. There was no light for the giants to fight by and they were well known to be hulking, awkward creatures, very clumsy about using their hands and feet. They needed the light. But the giants had neglected to bring any sunshine with them and it was suddenly as dark as night on Mount Olympus.

The giants fumbled about and stumbled and fell upon their own weapons. Taking advantage of this temporary rout, Jupiter sent a sky full of thunderbolts into their midst and they tumbled back to earth again.

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The giants were not particularly hurt by their fall; they were only driven out of the habitation of the gods and they began taking counsel together at once as to how they might begin their war all over again. But they suddenly discovered that they had nothing to eat. In their absence, Ceres had cut down and uprooted from the earth the herbs that they needed to keep them alive and preserve their strength. Then, to make sure that their destruction would be complete, Jupiter covered each giant with a volcano. Each was imprisoned fast underneath a mountain, and all he could do was to breathe through the top once in a while in a fiery way.

That was the end of the giants. For a while they did some damage, particularly the giant Enceladus whom it took the whole of the volcano Aetna to cover and keep down. But gradually even the volcanoes became quiet and there was more peace upon the earth.

Mortals, for all time, though, have followed the example of the giants and have tried to use their strength in battle for pillage. They have destroyed beautiful buildings and put out home fires* and interfered with teaching and music and painting and writing, because they could not see the light shining in these. But what usually happens to them in the end is just what happened to the giants who started out to destroy Mount Olympus. They find that they have pulled a volcano down over their shoulders.

* reference to putting out a fire in the hearth or destroying a home

In "What Became of the Giants," the author concludes by criticizing people or mortals. Discuss the reasoning behind this criticism, and explain how people might be able to change in order to avoid making the same mistakes as the giants. Be sure to:

- establish the setting of the myth to situate readers

- describe the narrator's point of view

- use specific details from the text to support your answer

Hope Renewed

by Proud Dzambukira

“There will always be hope, hope never dries up.” Five years ago, in June 1998, I delivered the above words with the innocence of the child I was. I was being interviewed by David Moricca and Eric Farmer, who were shooting video footage for a documentary, *Meet Zimbabwe’s Young Scholars*. They thought I had a remarkable story to tell. And I did. It was a tale of hope renewed.

In 1996, during the final year of my primary school education, my world collapsed. I suffered the same fate suffered by so many children in Zimbabwe today. My father, the sole bread winner in the family, died. With his passing, died my hope of proceeding with my education and being the sole architect of my future. In Zimbabwe, education is the key to prosperity and happiness. I had not just lost my father; I had lost the key to unlocking the door to a happier future for my family and myself.

My hope was resurrected by Students for Students International, a student organization based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 1998 I was at a well renowned secondary school, trying to mold a better future for myself, my family, and in turn, for my community. I was very grateful and optimistic.

Of course I did exceptionally well in my studies—I had to. Not because I was particularly intelligent, but because I understood only too well the value of the education that I had almost been denied. My studies took me, at no expense to my family or myself, halfway across the

country to one of the best schools in the region for the last two years of my high school education. There my eyes were opened to a wider world of opportunities, which deepened my gratitude and heightened my appreciation and outrage at the disparity that exists between the rich and the poor. I started growing up then. My resolve to make the most out of the opportunities available to me was thus steeled, but more importantly, I defined what, for me, has come to be a life statement: to balance the scale, to reach out and make available the same opportunities that I have had to children in circumstances to mine in 1996.

In 2002, I was chosen to be a participant in the United States Student Achievers Program (USAP). Each year this program assists thirty students from around the country to take advantage of the educational and personal growth opportunities available at some universities in the United States. I applied and was accepted into Harvard on a full scholarship.

This is my story today. In the fall of 2003, I traveled halfway around the world to begin a new chapter in my life. It is impossible to look into the future without pausing to reflect on the past. Seven years ago my life, my hopes, and my dreams lay broken at my feet. Today, the future is full of boundless possibilities. The happy contrast is humbling and gratifying. However, with the gratitude always comes the reminder that my happiness is not universally shared. So many people around me are still trying to put together the broken pieces of their hope.

Read the passage “Hope Renewed” by Proud Dzambukira. The author states, “There will always be hope, hope never dries up.” Write a brief personal narrative reflecting on an experience when you or someone you know felt hopeful in a difficult situation. Be sure to:

- use a clear structure in which you describe an incident, response, and reflection
- use descriptive language and sensory details
- include transitions to create cohesion
- provide a conclusion that reflects on the experience

