

Name: _____ Class: _____

Chiron, the Wisest Centaur

By Meredith Engel
2018

Centaurs are creatures that have the upper body of a human and the lower body of a horse and appear in various works of fiction and Greek mythology. One of the most well-known centaurs in Greek mythology is Chiron. In this fictional interview with Hermes, the Messenger of the Gods, Chiron discusses his life and his accomplishments. As you read, take notes on how the author describes Chiron's character.

- [1] **HERMES:** This is Hermes, Messenger of the Gods, reporting for the Greek Mythology News Network, live from Mount Pelion.¹ We're lucky today to be joined by Chiron the Centaur — the extremely talented mentor who trained many of the heroes we feature regularly on our show. Chiron, I've heard you had a challenging childhood — what happened and how did you get through it?



"Golden porch : a book of Greek fairy tales" by Hutchinson, W. M. L. (Winifred Margaret Lambart), b. 1868 has no known restrictions on copyright.

CHIRON: It is true, my early years were not easy. As a baby, I was abandoned by my parents, Cronus² and Philyra. My mother was disgusted by my half-human, half-horse appearance. Luckily, the god Apollo and his sister Artemis discovered me, and they found it in their hearts to take me in and raise me as their own. From Apollo, I learned about music and medicine. From Artemis, I learned about archery³ and hunting. With their guidance I have been able to master all of these skills and more.

HERMES: Fascinating! And thank the stars⁴ for Apollo and Artemis. What else do you think separates you from other typical centaurs?

CHIRON: Well, as you can see, my two front legs are not horse legs but human legs — this is a significant difference. Additionally, I enjoy wearing human clothing from time to time, something my centaur brothers and sisters never try. I embrace⁵ civilization, that's why I've been able to develop friendships with gods, goddesses, and humans alike.

- [5] **HERMES:** Speaking of which, the hero Peleus speaks very highly of you. How long have you known him and how did you make such a strong impression on him?

1. Chiron's homeland
2. Cronus overthrew his father to be leader of the Titans, until he was later overthrown by Zeus.
3. the skill of shooting arrows with a bow
4. a phrase expressing extreme gratitude for the way something is
5. **Embrace (verb):** to support or accept something enthusiastically

CHIRON: I've known Peleus for many years. As a young man, he was left stranded in the wilderness by the traitor Acastus. Fortunately, I came across Peleus and was able to restore him to his full strength and even give him some advice as to how to win over the woman of his dreams, Thetis the ocean nymph!⁶ Eventually, Peleus returned to me and asked me to train his son, Achilles. Now Achilles is one of the greatest archers in the world! Possibly even better than me...

HERMES: Oh, wow! I didn't know you trained Achilles! Do you have any other stories about students of yours whom our viewers may have heard of?

CHIRON: Well, Ajax, who fought alongside Achilles in the Trojan War, was also brought to me as a young boy for training. And of course, Apollo, my adoptive father, brought his son Asclepius to me, as well. Asclepius was particularly adept⁷ at the healing arts,⁸ and I'm honored to have had a hand in sculpting the great god of medicine. Actually, one of my favorite stories isn't about my years as a teacher but rather as a healer. You see, tragically, Phoenix — another one of Achilles' mentors — was blinded during a fight with his father, Amyntor. Using my knowledge of herbal medicine, I was able to restore Phoenix's sight. This is certainly one of my proudest accomplishments.

HERMES: Just incredible. We really are blessed to have such a talented centaur in our midst.⁹ Well, Chiron, I know your time is short, just one last question though. Seeing as you are an oracle¹⁰ — on top of all your other abilities — do you have any predictions about what, if anything, may ultimately cause your death?

[10] **CHIRON:** I don't pretend to know anything for certain, and I try to shy away¹¹ from looking into my own future. However, my gifted daughter Melanippe has foretold my death. Though she was disturbed by the vision and is not willing to speak openly about it, she did mention it involved Heracles and an arrow... My only wish is that my death is not in vain,¹² that someone or something else benefits from my passing.

HERMES: Oh my! For the sake of the world, I certainly hope Melanippe is wrong! Well, you heard it all here first folks! Tune in after the break for *Cooking with Hestia*.¹³

"Chiron, the Wisest Centaur" by Meredith Engel. Copyright © 2018 by CommonLit, Inc. This text is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

-
6. a mythological spirit of nature
 7. **Adept (adjective):** very skilled at something
 8. the arts and sciences involved in healing or treating mental or physical illness
 9. a phrase meaning "among us"
 10. a person with great wisdom who makes predictions about the future, usually aided by the gods
 11. to avoid something you dislike or fear
 12. to be useless because it did not achieve something
 13. the goddess of domestic activities

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which sentence describes the main idea of the interview?
 - A. Chiron is a special centaur who stands apart from the others by helping gods and humans.
 - B. Despite the challenges of Chiron's childhood, he has been able to find happiness and peace with his daughter.
 - C. Chiron has lived an unhappy life, as he was rejected by his parents and his fellow centaurs.
 - D. Chiron has been unable to focus on mentoring young heroes because of the prophecies around his death.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "It is true, my early years were not easy. As a baby, I was abandoned by my parents, Cronus and Philyra." (Paragraph 2)
 - B. "And thank the stars for Apollo and Artemis. What else do you think separates you from other typical centaurs?" (Paragraph 3)
 - C. "Eventually, Peleus returned to me and asked me to train his son, Achilles. Now Achilles is one of the greatest archers in the world!" (Paragraph 6)
 - D. "I don't pretend to know anything for certain, and I try to shy away from looking into my own future. However, my gifted daughter Melanippe has foretold my death." (Paragraph 10)

3. PART A: Which of the following describes how Hermes feels about Chiron?
 - A. Hermes is jealous of all of the important gods and humans Chiron has worked with.
 - B. Hermes feels somewhat uncomfortable by Chiron's unusual appearance as a centaur.
 - C. Hermes feels excited for Chiron to mentor him and improve his own skills.
 - D. Hermes is impressed by all that Chiron has overcome and accomplished.

4. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "And thank the stars for Apollo and Artemis. What else do you think separates you from other typical centaurs?" (Paragraph 3)
 - B. "Speaking of which, the hero Peleus speaks very highly of you. How long have you known him and how did you make such a strong impression on him?" (Paragraph 5)
 - C. "Just incredible. We really are blessed to have such a talented centaur in our midst." (Paragraph 9)
 - D. "do you have any predictions about what, if anything, may ultimately cause your death?" (Paragraph 9)

5. What is the relationship between Chiron and other important figures in Greek mythology?
