Hermes/Mercury:
Ritual, Logos, Trickery

1. Characteristics: ever-changing mobility, furtiveness, thieving
2. *herma* = heap of stones > demarcation [slide] phallic display = symbolic demarcation
   a. Apotropaic function
   b. Mythopoieia > Burkert: “That a monument of this kind could be transformed into an Olympian god is astounding.”
      i. Two motifs: 1.) Trickster responsible for founding civilization; 2.) Messenger of the gods
         Creation through language: civilizing force of logos; logos as the instrument of divine revelation (and human communication) and means through which creation is revealed
   c. Biological ethology: Myth, like rituals, are founded on basic biological and cultural programs of action.
3. Lyre, theft, denial: Cosmogony (*Hom. hymn to Hermes* p. 98)
4. In common with Prometheus:
   a. Fire
   b. (Firesticks = here Hermes outdoes Prometheus)
   c. Sacrifice
5. Sanctuary of Hermes at Olympia (any sanctuaries of Prometheus?)
6. Survey of Homeric loci:
   a. Hermes steals Apollo from brazen barrell in Il. 5.385-91
   b. Priam’s supplication
   c. Logos as joke in Od. 8.
7. Psychopompos

Select key words: herm; hermetic/hermeneutic; phallus; apotropaic; ethology (please peruse the OED accessible online from the campus network: [http://dictionary.oed.com/entrance.dtl](http://dictionary.oed.com/entrance.dtl))

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This is your chance to set out on your own as an interpreter of myth. Choose a story that intrigues/troubles/puzzles you, concerning beginning and creation (e.g. the role of the female in theogonic myth). The best papers usually arise from asking a question to which you don't know the answer—and trying to come closer to an answer through your creative effort of reflection and writing.

Some practical suggestions:

1. **Focus:** The topic must fall within the assigned parameter: Analyzing Beginnings and Making Sense of Creation. To make sure you stay focused,
   a. Choose ONE text we have read as your main focus
   b. Feel free to compare with other myth texts, be they included or not in our syllabus
   c. Avoid quotations
   d. Offer an interpretation of the text you discuss
   e. Do not give extended summaries of the myth(s) or text(s)
   f. Practice conciseness: be brief

2. **Before you begin to write:**
   i. Make an outline of your argument per points in half a page
   ii. Begin writing by sticking to your outline point by point
   iii. Provide smooth transitions from one point to the next

3. **Before you hand in your essay:**
   i. Do not hand in a first draft (make sure your essay is polished and clear)
   ii. Make sure you have a title for your essay
   iii. Sign your essay with your first and last name, class year, and major

4. **Exposition and style:**
   a. Length: 1500 words min. - 2500 words max (3 to 5 pages single-spaced pages in 12-point Times-type font with one-inch margins)
   b. Privilege clarity over jargon
   c. Watch your grammar
   d. Respect your beautiful language
   e. Watch the spelling of names
   f. Proof-read yourself and/or ask several mates to proof-read for you (do not trust computerized spell-checks, or you will be paying for somebody else's mistakes)
   g. Write for an audience of non-experts; imagine some reasonably well-read fifteen-year-old who wants to know what you think about these myths
   h. Explain, interpret, engage the text(s) and myth(s) you discuss -- again: no summaries
   i. Ask questions and answer them right away, in your own words
   j. Make sure your first paragraph tells the reader what your topic is and how your argument is developed
   k. Do not begin to write this essay at the last minute before the day it is due