The dragon devouring the companions of Cadmus, by Hendrick Goltzius
Baillieu Library Print Collection, University of Melbourne

Hendrick Goltzius (Dutch, 1558–1617)
after Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem (Dutch, 1562–1638)
The dragon devouring the companions of Cadmus, 1588
engraving
25.1 × 31.7 (sheet trimmed to image)
Gift of Dr J. Orde Poynton, 1959
Baillieu Library Print Collection
University of Melbourne
1959.2534

According to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, written in 8 AD, The Oracle of Delphi told the Phoenician prince Cadmus to follow a cow and build a city at the first place it decided to lie down. The cow collapsed at the future site of Thebes. The companions of Cadmus, sent out to fetch water, disturbed a dragon – a son of Ares – who was guarding a well. The dragon emerged from its cave and savagely killed the men. In revenge, Cadmus slayed the dragon.

The violence of the narrative is portrayed in gruesome detail in the foreground of the engraving, and continues in the background, where Cadmus can be glimpsed fighting the dragon. The study of anatomy is of key interest in the image; ‘muscle-men’ with impossibly exaggerated physiques were characteristic of mannerism in the Netherlands at this time. Details of veins, oozing blood and torn flesh are carefully captured in the struggling bodies. Artists such as Goltzius learned to draw figures by studying human anatomy directly, often using cadavers. The discovery around this time of the heroic sculpture the *Farnese Hercules* also influenced the depiction of the human figure.
Teaching ideas
The University of Melbourne’s curriculum is rich and varied, and changes from year to year. For more teaching ideas, contact a collection manager.

The Print Room
Discuss the influence of prints by Hendrick Goltzius and related themes in developing an exhibition and online catalogue.

Baroque Art in Polycentric Europe
Interrogate the prints of Hendrick Goltzius to understand the technical and stylistic achievements of the major practitioners of the Baroque period.

Drawing with Anatomy
View prints by Hendrick Goltzius and other Dutch mannerist artists, studying their representations of human anatomy, in order to develop skills and techniques in figure drawing.

Principles of Human Structure
View prints depicting the human body and describe them in detail, to develop skills in identifying and interpreting exposed anatomical structures and regions.

A History of Violence
Identify pictorial examples from the 16th century to the present in the Baillieu Library Print Collection, to demonstrate a critical understanding of the types of violence that have occurred in the past. Discuss how these have been represented.

Animation Research 1
Use the Baillieu Library Print Collection for researching images. Investigate themes and issues surrounding the animation of historic works of art.

Myth, Art and Empire: Greece and Rome
Study Renaissance and Baroque prints to explore the mythic origins and heroic archetypes of the Greeks and Romans. Think critically about the origins of the Western tradition.

Classical Mythology
Focus on mythical narratives from the ancient Greek and Roman traditions portrayed through the print medium. Identify examples from the Baillieu Library Print Collection of hero myths in which men confront monsters, or that are concerned with the story of Troy.

Media Writing: Rhetoric and Practice
Examine the highly controversial history of rhetoric, from the fifth century BC onwards, using pictorial examples from the Baillieu Library Print Collection.
Intersecting objects

Master of the Die (Italian or German, active 16th century)
after Baldassare Peruzzi (Italian, 1418–1536)

**Apollo killing the python**, c. 1530–60
engraving
24.4 × 18.1 cm (sheet trimmed to image)
Gift of Dr J. Orde Poynton, 1959
Baillieu Library Print Collection
University of Melbourne
1959.4667

Agostino Carracci (Italian, 1557–1602)
after Bernardo Buontalenti (Italian, c. 1531–1608) and Andrea Boscoli (Italian, 1550–1660)

**Apollo and the python**, c. 1589–92
etching, engraving
24.2 × 34.9 cm (plate)
Purchased 1986
Baillieu Library Print Collection
University of Melbourne
1986.2032

To learn more, visit the website of the [Baillieu Library Print Collection](#).

**References**
