

Prometheus

Greek Myth Retold by Bernard Evslin

Orpheus and Eurydice

Greek Myth Retold by Olivia Coolidge

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML7-646

Do you **THINK** before you act?

COMMON CORE

RL 1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly. **RL 10** Read and comprehend literature. **L 5b** Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., antonym) to better understand each of the words.

Have you ever made a decision you wished you could take back? If so, then you know that your actions sometimes have consequences, or effects, that you didn't bargain for. You're not alone. As you'll see in the Greek myths you're about to read, people have been acting without thinking since ancient times.

QUICKWRITE Think of a risky decision you might make, such as choosing not to study for a test or choosing to make friends with a person outside your group. What are the possible **consequences** of the decision, both negative and positive? Write a short paragraph explaining whether you would be willing to face these consequences.



Meet the Authors

● TEXT ANALYSIS: CHARACTERISTICS OF MYTHS

Since ancient times, people have passed down **myths**, or stories that explain mysteries of the universe. Most myths share these characteristics:

- They tell how something came to be, or they reveal the effects of human behavior.
- They feature gods or other beings with supernatural powers. These beings often show such human qualities as anger.

Many famous myths, like the ones you're about to read, were first told in Greece over 3,000 years ago. As you read, note what the myths explain and how the gods act.

● READING STRATEGY: ASK QUESTIONS

The unusual characters, places, and situations in these myths may sometimes distract or confuse you. As you read, try **monitoring**, or checking, your understanding. One way to do this is by asking yourself **questions** about what's going on. If you can't answer, clarify your understanding by reading more slowly, going back, or reading on. Note your questions and the answers in a chart like the one shown.

Q	What does Prometheus ask Zeus?	
A		

▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

In the selections, the boldfaced words help tell what happens when the gods are disobeyed. Restate each sentence, using a different word or words for the boldfaced terms.

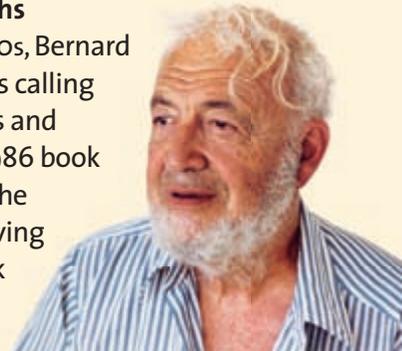
1. The gods were **infinitely** more powerful than the humans.
2. He had little **aptitude** for following orders.
3. He swore **vengeance** against his enemies.
4. After her son was banished, she was **inconsolable**.
5. She wanted to **ascend** the mountain where the gods lived.

Bernard Evslin

1922–1993

Drawn to Myths

In the mid-1960s, Bernard Evslin found his calling retelling myths and legends. His 1986 book *Hercules* won the Washington Irving Children's Book Choice Award.

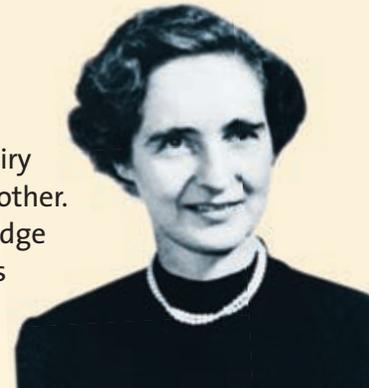


Olivia Coolidge

1908–2006

Bridging Past and Present

As a child, Olivia Coolidge and her sister made up fairy tales to tell each other. As an adult, Coolidge became a famous reteller of Greek tales and myths.



BACKGROUND TO THE MYTHS

Zeus, Prometheus, and Hades

The Greek gods were not all equal in power or status. Prometheus was a part of a family of giants, the Titans. Zeus defeated them and became ruler of all gods. He ordered Prometheus to create humans. Hades, who appears in "Orpheus and Eurydice," was the ruler of the underworld. He, too, answered to Zeus.



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Authors Online



Go to thinkcentral.com. KEYWORD: HML7-647

PROMETHEUS

Retold by Bernard Evslin

Prometheus was a young Titan, no great admirer of Zeus. Although he knew the great lord of the sky hated explicit questions, he did not hesitate to beard¹ him when there was something he wanted to know.

One morning he came to Zeus and said, “O Thunderer, I do not understand your design. You have caused the race of man² to appear on earth, but you keep him in ignorance and darkness.”

“Perhaps you had better leave the race of man to me,” said Zeus. “What you call ignorance is innocence. What you call darkness is the shadow of my decree. Man is happy now. And he is so framed that he will remain happy unless someone persuades him that he is unhappy. Let us not speak of this again.”

But Prometheus said, “Look at him. Look below. He crouches in caves. He is at the mercy of beast and weather. He eats his meat raw. If you mean something by this, enlighten me with your wisdom. Tell me why you refuse to give man the gift of fire.” **A**

Analyze Visuals ▶

Notice the expression on the god’s face and the position of his arms. What can you **infer** about the emotion he might be feeling?

A GREEK MYTHS

Based on the conversation between the two gods, what aspect of the natural world do you think this myth will explain? Make a **prediction**.

1. **beard**: to confront or defy.

2. **man**: In older translations, the expression *man* was commonly used to refer to all people.



Zeus answered, “Do you not know, Prometheus, that every gift brings a penalty? This is the way the Fates³ weave destiny—by which gods also must abide. Man does not have fire, true, nor the crafts which fire teaches. On the other hand, he does not know disease, warfare, old age, or that inward pest called worry. He is happy, I say, happy without fire. And so he shall remain.”

“Happy as beasts are happy,” said Prometheus. “Of what use to make a separate race called man and endow⁴ him with little fur, some wit, and a curious charm of unpredictability? If he must live like this, why separate him from the beasts at all?”

“He has another quality,” said Zeus, “the capacity for worship. An **aptitude** for admiring our power, being puzzled by our riddles and amazed by our caprice.⁵ That is why he was made.”

“Would not fire, and the graces he can put on with fire, make him more interesting?”

“More interesting, perhaps, but **infinitely** more dangerous. For there is this in man too: a vaunting pride that needs little sustenance⁶ to make it swell to giant size. Improve his lot, and he will forget that which makes him pleasing—his sense of worship, his humility. He will grow big and poisoned with pride and fancy himself a god, and before we know it, we shall see him storming Olympus. Enough, Prometheus! I have been patient with you, but do not try me too far. Go now and trouble me no more with your speculations.”

Prometheus was not satisfied. All that night he lay awake making plans. Then he left his couch at dawn and, standing tiptoe on Olympus, stretched his arm to the eastern horizon where the first faint flames of the sun were flickering. In his hand he held a reed filled with a dry fiber; he thrust it into the sunrise until a spark smoldered. Then he put the reed in his tunic and came down from the mountain. **B**

At first men were frightened by the gift. It was so hot, so quick; it bit sharply when you touched it and for pure spite made the shadows dance. They thanked Prometheus and asked him to take it away. But he took the haunch of a newly killed deer and held it over the fire. And when the meat began to sear and sputter, filling the cave with its rich smells, the people felt themselves melting with hunger and flung themselves on the meat and devoured it greedily, burning their tongues.

“This that I have brought you is called ‘fire,’” Prometheus said. “It is an ill-natured spirit, a little brother of the sun, but if you handle

aptitude (ăp'tī-tōōd') *n.*
natural ability

infinitely (īn'fē-nīt-lē)
adv. extremely; greatly

SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTION



Many settings in Greek myths are real places in Greece.

B ASK QUESTIONS
Make sure you understand the **conflict** between Prometheus and Zeus. What questions do you have about what has already happened and about what will happen next?

3. **the Fates:** in Greek mythology, the three goddesses who decide the course of people's lives.

4. **endow** (ĕn-dou'): to provide with a quality or talent

5. **caprice** (kə-prēs'): the quality of acting without planning or thinking beforehand.

6. **vaunting pride that needs little sustenance:** boastful pride that needs little support.

it carefully, it can change your whole life. It is very greedy; you must feed it twigs, but only until it becomes a proper size. Then you must stop, or it will eat everything in sight—and you too. If it escapes, use this magic: water. It fears the water spirit, and if you touch it with water, it will fly away until you need it again.”

He left the fire burning in the first cave, with children staring at it
60 wide-eyed, and then went to every cave in the land.

Then one day Zeus looked down from the mountain and was amazed. Everything had changed. Man had come out of his cave. Zeus saw woodmen’s huts, farmhouses, villages, walled towns, even a castle or two. He saw men cooking their food, carrying torches to light their way at night. He saw forges⁷ blazing, men beating out ploughs, keels, swords, spears. They were making ships and raising white wings of sails and daring to use the fury of the winds for their journeys. They were wearing helmets, riding out in chariots to do battle, like the gods themselves. **C**

Zeus was full of rage. He seized his largest thunderbolt. “So they want
70 fire,” he said to himself. “I’ll give them fire—more than they can use. I’ll turn their miserable little ball of earth into a cinder.” But then another thought came to him, and he lowered his arm. “No,” he said to himself, “I shall have **vengeance**—and entertainment too. Let them destroy themselves with their new skills. This will make a long, twisted game, interesting to watch. I’ll attend to them later. My first business is with Prometheus.”

He called his giant guards and had them seize Prometheus, drag him off to the Caucasus,⁸ and there bind him to a mountain peak with great chains specially forged by Hephaestus⁹—chains which even a Titan in
80 agony could not break. And when the friend of man was bound to the mountain, Zeus sent two vultures to hover about him forever, tearing at his belly and eating his liver. **D**

Men knew a terrible thing was happening on the mountain, but they did not know what. But the wind shrieked like a giant in torment and sometimes like fierce birds.

Many centuries he lay there—until another hero was born brave enough to defy the gods. He climbed to the peak in the Caucasus and struck the shackles from Prometheus and killed the vultures. His name was Heracles.¹⁰ 

C GREEK MYTHS

According to this myth, what event allowed people to build homes, farm, and go to war?

vengeance (vēn'jəns)
n. the infliction of punishment in return for an offense

D ASK QUESTIONS

What does Zeus do to Prometheus, and why? To **clarify** the answer, think about the conflict between the two gods. Then reread lines 77–82.

7. **forges** (fōr'jīz): places where metal is heated and hammered into shape.

8. **Caucasus** (kō'kə-sēs): a mountainous region in southeastern Europe.

9. **Hephaestus** (hē'fēs'təs): the Greek god of fire and metalworking.

10. **Heracles** (hēr'ə-klēz'): another name for Hercules, a son of Zeus who was famous for his great strength and courage.

Orpheus *and* Eurydice

Retold by
Olivia Coolidge

In the legend of Orpheus the Greek love of music found its fullest expression. Orpheus, it is said, could make such heavenly songs that when he sat down to sing, the trees would crowd around to shade him. The ivy and vine stretched out their tendrils. Great oaks would bend their spreading branches over his head. The very rocks would edge down the mountainsides. Wild beasts crouched harmless by him, and nymphs¹ and woodland gods would listen to him enchanted. **E**

Orpheus himself, however, had eyes for no one but the nymph, Eurydice.² His love for her was his inspiration, and his power sprang from the passionate longing that he knew in his own heart. All nature rejoiced with him on his bridal day, but on that very morning, as Eurydice went down to the riverside with her maidens to gather flowers for a bridal garland, she was bitten in the foot by a snake, and she died in spite of all attempts to save her.

Analyze Visuals ▶

Describe the listeners' expressions. How can you **connect** this ancient scene to your own experience with music?

E GREEK MYTHS

Note what quality makes Orpheus special. According to the first sentence, how much did the Greeks value this quality?

1. **nymphs** (nĭmfz): divine beings represented as beautiful maidens who live in natural places such as trees.

2. **Eurydice** (yŏŏ-rĭd'ĭ-sē).

Orpheus in the Underworld (1863),
Louis Jacquesson de la Chevreuse.
Oil on canvas, 115 cm × 145 cm.
Musée des Augustins, Toulouse,
France. © akg-images.



Orpheus was **inconsolable**. All day long he mourned his bride, while birds, beasts, and the earth itself sorrowed with him. When at last the shadows of the sun grew long, Orpheus took his lyre and made his way to the yawning cave which leads down into the underworld, where the soul of dead Eurydice had gone.

20 Even grey Charon, the ferryman of the Styx,³ forgot to ask his passenger for the price of crossing. The dog, Cerberus, the three-headed monster who guards Hades' gate, stopped full in his tracks and listened motionless until Orpheus had passed. As he entered the land of Hades, the pale ghosts came after him like great, uncounted flocks of silent birds. All the land lay hushed as that marvelous voice resounded across the mud and marshes of its dreadful rivers. In the daffodil fields of Elysium⁴ the happy dead sat silent among their flowers. In the farthest corners of the place of punishment, the hissing flames stood still. Accursed Sisyphus,⁵ who toils eternally to push a mighty rock uphill, sat down and knew not
30 he was resting. Tantalus,⁶ who strains forever after visions of cool water, forgot his thirst and ceased to clutch at the empty air.

The pillared hall of Hades opened before the hero's song. The ranks of long-dead heroes who sit at Hades' board looked up and turned their eyes away from the pitiless form of Hades and his pale, unhappy queen. Grim and unmoving sat the dark king of the dead on his ebony throne, yet the tears shone on his rigid cheeks in the light of his ghastly torches. Even his hard heart, which knew all misery and cared nothing for it, was touched by the love and longing of the music. **F**

40 **A**t last the minstrel came to an end, and a long sigh like wind in pine trees was heard from the assembled ghosts. Then the king spoke, and his deep voice echoed through his silent land. "Go back to the light of day," he said. "Go quickly while my monsters are stilled by your song. Climb up the steep road to daylight, and never once turn back. The spirit of Eurydice shall follow, but if you look around at her, she will return to me."

Orpheus turned and strode from the hall of Hades, and the flocks of following ghosts made way for him to pass. In vain he searched their ranks for a sight of his lost Eurydice. In vain he listened for the faintest sound behind. The barge of Charon sank to the very gunwales⁷ beneath

inconsolable
(ɪnˈkɒn-sɔʊlə-bəl) *adj.*
impossible or difficult
to comfort

VISUAL VOCABULARY



lyre (līr) *n.* an ancient stringed instrument resembling a small harp

F ASK QUESTIONS

What **questions** do you have about what the underworld is like? Reviewing what you've read, along with the footnotes, might help you find answers.

-
3. **Styx** (stīks): in Greek mythology, the river across which the souls of the dead are transported.
 4. **Elysium** (ɪ-līz'ē-əm): the home of the blessed, or those who were judged to have lived well, after death.
 5. **Sisyphus** (sīs'ə-fəs): a cruel king of Corinth condemned forever to roll a huge stone up a hill, only to have it fall down again.
 6. **Tantalus** (tăn'tə-ləs): a king who, for his crimes, was condemned to stand in water that receded when he tried to drink.
 7. **gunwales** (gŭn'əlz): the upper edge of the side of a vessel.

50 his weight, but no following passenger pressed it lower down. The way from the land of Hades to the upper world is long and hard, far easier to descend than climb. It was dark and misty, full of strange shapes and noises, yet in many places merely black and silent as the tomb. Here Orpheus would stop and listen, but nothing moved behind him. For all he could hear, he was utterly alone. Then he would wonder if the pitiless Hades were deceiving him. Suppose he came up to the light again and Eurydice was not there! Once he had charmed the ferryman and the dreadful monsters, but now they had heard his song. The second time his spell would be less powerful; he could never go again. Perhaps he had lost
60 Eurydice by his readiness to believe. **C**

Every step he took, some instinct told him that he was going farther from his bride. He toiled up the path in reluctance and despair, stopping, listening, sighing, taking a few slow steps, until the dark thinned out into greyness. Up ahead a speck of light showed clearly the entrance to the cavern.

At that final moment Orpheus could bear no more. To go out into the light of day without his love seemed to him impossible. Before he had quite **ascended**, there was still a moment in which he could go back. Quick in the greyness he turned and saw a dim shade at his heels, as

Orpheus Leading Eurydice from the Underworld (1861), Jean Baptiste Camille Corot. Oil on canvas, 112.3 cm × 137.1 cm. © Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. © Bridgeman Art Library.



COMMON CORE L.5b

Language Coach

Antonyms Antonyms are words with opposite meanings. You can sometimes figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word in a sentence when its antonym appears in the same sentence. Read lines 50–52. The word *descend* is an antonym for *climb*. Can you tell what *descend* means?

C GREEK MYTHS

Recall the rule Hades gave to Orpheus.

Predict whether Orpheus will obey it.

ascend (ə-sĕnd') v. to go or move upward; rise

70 indistinct as the grey mist behind her. But still he could see the look of sadness on her face as he sprung forward saying, “Eurydice!” and threw his arms about her. The shade dissolved in the circle of his arms like smoke. A little whisper seemed to say, “Farewell,” as she scattered into mist and was gone. **H**

The unfortunate lover hastened back again down the steep, dark path. But all was in vain. This time the ghostly ferryman was deaf to his prayers. The very wildness of his mood made it impossible for him to attain the beauty of his former music. At last, his despair was so great that he could not even sing at all. For seven days he sat huddled together
80 on the grey mud banks, listening to the wailing of the terrible river. The flitting ghosts shrank back in a wide circle from the living man, but he paid them no attention. Only he sat with his eyes on Charon, his ears ringing with the dreadful noise of Styx.

Orpheus arose at last and stumbled back along the steep road he knew so well by now. When he came up to earth again, his song was pitiful but more beautiful than ever. Even the nightingale who mourned all night long would hush her voice to listen as Orpheus sat in some hidden place singing of his lost Eurydice. Men and women he could bear no longer, and when they came to hear him, he drove them away. At last the women
90 of Thrace, maddened by Dionysus⁸ and infuriated by Orpheus’ contempt, fell upon him and killed him. It is said that as the body was swept down the river Hebrus, the dead lips still moved faintly and the rocks echoed for the last time, “Eurydice.” But the poet’s eager spirit was already far down the familiar path.

In the daffodil meadows he met the shade of Eurydice, and there they walk together, or where the path is narrow, the shade of Orpheus goes ahead and looks back at his love.  **I**

H ASK QUESTIONS

Reread lines 66–74. What is the “dim shade” at Orpheus’ heels? Why does the shade disappear? If you’re not sure, try rereading lines 41–45 and then rereading this passage to **clarify** your understanding.

I ASK QUESTIONS

How are Orpheus and Eurydice reunited? If you have any **questions**, review this page.

8. **women of Thrace** (thrās), **maddened by Dionysus** (dī’ē-nī’sēs): Thrace was a Balkan region colonized by the Greeks; Dionysus was the god of wine.



Orpheus (1618), Marcello Provenzale. © Massimo Listri/Corbis.

Orpheus with his lute¹ made trees,
And the mountain tops that freeze,
Bow themselves when he did sing;
To his music plants and flowers
5 Ever sprung; as sun and showers
There had made a lasting spring.

Every thing that heard him play,
Even the billows² of the sea,
Hung their heads, and then lay by.
10 In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or hearing, die.

1. **lute:** a small, stringed musical instrument with a pear-shaped body.

2. **billows:** huge waves.

Song of Orpheus

William
Shakespeare

Comprehension

- Recall** When Prometheus gives humans fire, what is their first reaction?
- Recall** Why does Zeus decide not to punish the humans for having fire?
- Clarify** Why does Hades at first agree to return Eurydice to Orpheus?

Text Analysis

- Ask Questions** Review the chart you created as you read. Are there questions you are unsure how to answer? Compare your chart with a classmate's. Together, go over the story to answer any remaining questions.
- Compare Literary Works** Compare "Orpheus and Eurydice" to William Shakespeare's "Song of Orpheus" on page 657. Identify the part of the myth the poem describes. Which literary work, the myth or the poem, better helps you visualize the scene? Explain your answer with details from the selection you choose.
- Analyze Characteristics of Greek Myths** Review lines 39–60 of "Prometheus." Why is this passage important in terms of explaining where fire comes from? Give specific details from the passage to support your answer.

- Draw Conclusions** What kind of behavior do you think these myths were meant to encourage? Make a chart and go back through the stories, noting which behaviors are rewarded and which are punished. Then give your conclusions about what kind of behavior the Greeks hoped to encourage in people by telling these myths.

<i>Rewarded</i>	<i>Punished</i>

Extension and Challenge

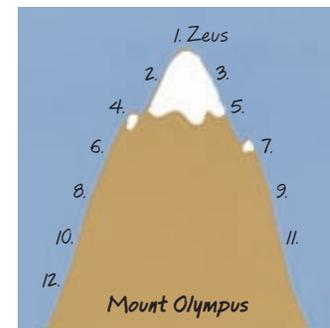
- Inquiry and Research** Zeus and Hades were part of a group of 12 gods who ruled from Mount Olympus. Do research to find out more about the Olympians. Then create a poster that lists all 12 of these gods and goddesses and tells what they were known for.

Do you THINK before you act?

Imagine you could ask Prometheus or Orpheus this question. Choose one of these characters and write the answer you think he would give on the basis of his experiences.

COMMON CORE

RL 1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly. **RL 10** Read and comprehend literature. **W 7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question.



Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Decide whether the words in each pair are synonyms (words that mean the same) or antonyms (words that mean the opposite).

1. aptitude/talent
2. ascend/descend
3. inconsolable/comforted
4. infinitely/barely
5. vengeance/mercy

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

- attribute
- conduct
- physical
- status
- task

In these myths, the gods often disapprove of the way people **conduct** themselves. Write a paragraph describing how the gods react to the humans' behavior. Use at least two of the Academic Vocabulary words in your response.

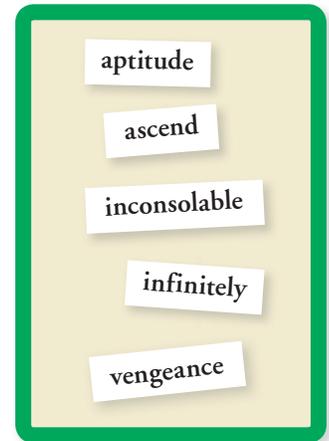
VOCABULARY STRATEGY: FOREIGN WORDS IN ENGLISH

The English language is constantly adopting foreign words and phrases, especially Greek and Latin. Some words may keep their original meanings, but others may change. For example, the first line of the Greek myth "Prometheus" describes Prometheus as "a young Titan." In Greek mythology, the Titans were a family of giants. Today, the word *titan* means "a person or thing that has great power or influence." A dictionary will have the definitions and histories of many foreign words and phrases that are commonly used in English.

PRACTICE Create a chart like the one shown. Use a dictionary to fill in the chart for each word.

Foreign Word	Original Language	Original Meaning	Meaning in English
<i>alfresco</i>	Latin	<i>in the fresh air, outdoors</i>	<i>in the fresh air</i>

1. alibi
2. de facto
3. apogee
4. ad nauseam
5. mea culpa
6. hoi polloi



COMMON CORE

- L4c** Consult general reference materials (e.g., dictionaries).
L6 Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic words.

Interactive Vocabulary **THINK central**
 Go to thinkcentral.com.
 KEYWORD: HML7-659