



Demeter and Persephone

3_A

Introducing the Read-Aloud

10 minutes

What Have We Already Learned?

Remind students that they heard the domain’s first Greek myth in the previous read-aloud, “Prometheus and Pandora.” Have students share some of the characteristics of Greek myths. (fictional stories once thought to be true that tried to explain things in nature, taught moral lessons, and educated listeners; stories with supernatural beings and heroes as characters; etc.) Have students retell the myth using Image Cards 1–6 or their Sequencing the Read-Aloud masters from the previous lesson (Instructional Master 2B-1). Review with students that the god Zeus punished both Prometheus and all of mankind. Then have students define what makes a Greek god different from a human being.

Ask students to share what they have learned about the gods (i.e., where they lived; if they were immortal or mortal; etc.).

Essential Background Information or Terms

Tell students that today’s read-aloud features several gods and goddesses. Ask student volunteers to point to the Greek Gods Posters of Zeus, Poseidon, Ares, Aphrodite, and Demeter. As students identify the gods and goddesses, ask them to share what they remember about each of them.

Meet the Characters

Note: You may wish to add to the Character Chart as you introduce the characters in this read-aloud.



← Show image 3A-2: Demeter tending fields and Persephone straying

Tell students that today’s myth is called “Demeter and Persephone.” Remind students that Demeter is one of the goddesses they pointed out on the posters. Ask students whether

Demeter is mortal or immortal. Tell students that Persephone is Demeter's daughter. Ask students what they notice in this image of Demeter and Persephone.



← **Show image 3A-6: Zeus talking to Hades in the underworld**

Remind students that Hades is one of Zeus's brothers. Ask students if they remember where Hades lives. (the underworld)



← **Show image 3A-5: Helios and Demeter**

Tell students they will meet another immortal in this story—Helios. Ask students to look at the image and think about what Helios might be known for. Tell students that Hades and Helios are both immortals who do not live on Mount Olympus.

Show Image Card 7 (Cerberus).

Tell students they will also meet a dog named Cerberus. Ask students in what way Cerberus looks unusual. Tell students to listen carefully to learn whose dog Cerberus is.

Purpose for Listening

Tell students to listen carefully to find out if this myth helps to explain something in nature or teaches a moral lesson.



Demeter and Persephone

← Show image 3A-1: Greek gods Poseidon, Ares, Aphrodite, Persephone, and Demeter¹

1 Who can name any of the characters in this picture?

As you have learned, the ancient Greeks believed that there were many gods and goddesses responsible for the workings of the world. There was Poseidon, the god of the sea; Ares, the god of war; and Aphrodite, the goddess of love, to name a few.

2 [Point to Demeter in the picture. She is on the right in the foreground.]

Demeter [dih-MEE-ter]² was the goddess of the harvest and agriculture, or farming. It was because of her, the ancient Greeks believed, that fruits hung heavy on the trees, wheat grew in the fields, and vegetables ripened on the ground.³

3 Remember, Demeter was the goddess who, at Athena's request, made the olive trees abundant and strong for the ancient Greeks.

Demeter had a daughter named Persephone [per-SEF-uh-nee], who was the joy of her life. Persephone was known by all of the gods and goddesses on Mount Olympus as a beautiful girl—just like her mother—and like her mother, she was full of happiness, warmth, and light. As long as the two of them were together, it was summer year round.



← Show image 3A-2: Demeter tending fields and Persephone straying

4 Who can point to the bouquet in the illustration?

Some days, Demeter would take Persephone with her to tend to the crops in the fields. On these days, Demeter would work among the crops, and Persephone would play in a nearby field of flowers picking bouquets.⁴ One such day, Persephone strayed farther and farther away from her mother, until, humming a little tune, Persephone was far out of Demeter's sight.

5 What is Mount Olympus? Who lives there, according to Greek mythology?

Now, Persephone was not just known by the gods and goddesses on Mount Olympus.⁵ Hades, Zeus's brother and the god of the underworld, had also taken notice of her. As god of the underworld, Hades lived underground and oversaw all of the souls of the dead. He and his three-headed dog, Cerberus, saw to it that none of the dead escaped back to the land of the living.⁶

6 [Show Image Cards 7–10 as you name each creature.] Cerberus is a nonhuman creature in Greek mythology. There are many other nonhuman creatures such as Pegasus, Pan, and the centaurs.



← **Show image 3A-3: Hades taking Persephone down to the underworld**

Hades had fallen in love with Persephone, and the king of the underworld wanted to make her his queen. On that day, as Persephone drifted away from her mother, Hades harnessed his four black horses to his golden chariot. As Persephone bent to pick up one last flower, she could hear the faint sounds of hooves beating. Persephone stood up and looked around. As she did, Hades tore open the ground that separated the underworld from the land of the living and grabbed Persephone. He **spirited** her away, back to the underworld in his chariot.⁷

7 The word *spirited* means carried off mysteriously or secretly.



← **Show image 3A-4 Demeter searching for Persephone**

As the sun began to set, Demeter finally stopped her work in the fields. “Persephone!” she called out, ready to take her daughter home. There was no answer. Thinking that perhaps Persephone had not heard her, she called out again. Demeter heard nothing but the chirps of evening crickets, and then she began to worry. Demeter searched all night, calling for her daughter, but no matter where she looked or how loudly she called, she could not find Persephone.

As the night wore on, Demeter began to look older. Wrinkles formed on her face, her body grew crooked, and she moved more and more slowly. By the time the sun came up the next day, Demeter was no longer full of happiness, warmth, and light, but was a bent, old woman.⁸ In her night of searching, Demeter had not found Persephone, and so she turned to the sun god, Helios—who during the day sees all—and asked for help.

8 How do you think Demeter feels?



← **Show image 3A-5: Helios and Demeter**

“Oh, Helios,” Demeter said, “have you seen my daughter, Persephone? Do you know where she has gone?”

“Hades has taken her down to the underworld to be his queen,” Helios replied.

9 or give up hope

10 or bring back

11 Humans offered food to the gods and goddesses as gifts to show their appreciation, and/or to keep them happy.



12 What does *persuade* mean? [Tell students that this is another form of the word *persuasion*, which they heard in the last read-aloud was one of Pandora's gifts.]

13 A pomegranate is a fruit with a reddish rind that has many seeds enclosed in a juicy pulp. [Show students Image Card 11 (Pomegranate).] What do you think is going to happen?

14 How many seeds did Persephone eat? So how many months of the year must she stay in the underworld? How many months of the year will she live with Demeter?



15 or in great amount

Upon hearing this, Demeter began to **despair**.⁹ How was she to ever **retrieve**¹⁰ her daughter now? Demeter began to weep for her lost daughter, and in her sadness she forgot to tend to the crops in the fields. The grass turned brown, the wheat stopped growing, and soon there was no more food on the earth for the animals and people to eat. Every tree, vine, and field was bare. Even the gods received no more offerings, for the people did not have any food or meat to spare.¹¹

← **Show image 3A-6: Zeus talking to Hades in the underworld**

After some time, Zeus saw that the people would starve if something was not done. Only gods and goddesses could go to the underworld and then leave, so Zeus traveled to the underworld to persuade Hades to let Persephone go.¹²

“Hades,” he said, “if you do not return Persephone to her mother, Demeter, nothing will grow on the earth again. The people will starve.”

“I will gladly return her,” Hades said, “if she hasn’t eaten anything. You know the rule, Zeus: whoever eats of the food of the underworld or drinks of its water must stay forever.”

Zeus and Hades looked at Persephone, waiting for an answer. Had she eaten the food of the underworld? Persephone began to cry. “I ate six pomegranate seeds,” she said.¹³

A rule was a rule, but Zeus knew that if Persephone remained in the underworld, nothing would grow on the earth again. So he made a deal with Hades. “For each seed she has eaten, Persephone will stay one month in the underworld as your queen. For the rest of the year, however, she will live on Earth with her mother, Demeter.”¹⁴

← **Show image 3A-7: Blooming world and barren world**

And so it was that for six months of the year, Demeter and Persephone were happy together. Fruits, wheat, and other plants sprouted from the ground, and it was spring. As they grew **bountifully**,¹⁵ the world was bright, and it was summer.

16 The word *pine* means to yearn for or long to have. The word *pine* can also mean a type of tree that has needles instead of leaves and stays green all year round.

During those six months that Persephone lived in the underworld, however, Demeter would ignore all of the crops on Earth and would **pine** for her daughter.¹⁶ The leaves would fall off the trees in autumn and would be bare in winter, while Demeter longed for her daughter. Once Persephone was returned to Demeter, it would be spring again.

Discussing the Read-Aloud

15 minutes

Comprehension Questions

10 minutes

If students have difficulty responding to questions, reread pertinent passages of the read-aloud and/or refer to specific images. If students give one-word answers and/or fail to use read-aloud or domain vocabulary in their responses, acknowledge correct responses by expanding the students' responses using richer and more complex language. Ask students to answer in complete sentences by having them restate the question in their responses.

1. *Inferential* Does this myth try to explain an event or something that happens in nature, or does it teach a moral lesson? (It tries to explain an event in nature.) What event in nature does this myth try to explain? (the changing of the seasons; the life cycle of plants) Do you remember from your study of other domains the real reason for the change in the seasons? (the tilt of the earth on its axis as it revolves around the sun)
2. *Inferential* What supernatural characters are in today's read-aloud? (Demeter; her daughter, Persephone; Zeus; Hades; Cerberus; Helios) Which of these characters are immortal gods? (all except Cerberus)
3. *Literal* What happens to Persephone at the beginning of the story? (She is spirited away by Hades.)



← **Show image 3A-3: Hades taking Persephone down to the underworld**

4. *Inferential* What is Hades the god of? (the underworld) Why does he spirit Persephone away? (He sees how beautiful she is, and he wants to make her his queen.)



← **Show image 3A-4: Demeter searching for Persephone**

5. *Evaluative* How does Demeter feel when she realizes Persephone is missing? (sad) How do you know? (She begins to look older; she is no longer full of happiness and light.)
6. *Literal* What happens to all of the plants and crops when Demeter begins to despair that she will never be able to retrieve her daughter? (The grass turns brown; the wheat stops growing; every tree, vine, and field is bare.)



← **Show image 3A-6: Zeus talking to Hades in the underworld**

7. *Inferential* Why does Zeus try to persuade Hades to return Persephone to Demeter? (He knows that the people will starve if nothing grows on the earth.)
8. *Inferential* Hades returns Persephone to her mother, but only for part of the year. Why? (Persephone ate six pomegranate seeds, and so has to return to the underworld for six months of the year.)

[Please continue to model the *Think Pair Share* process for students, as necessary, and scaffold students in their use of the process.]

I am going to ask a question. I will give you a minute to think about the question, and then I will ask you to turn to your neighbor and discuss the question. Finally, I will call on several of you to share what you discussed with your partner.

9. *Evaluative Think Pair Share:* Do you think Zeus made a good decision when he made the deal with Hades about having Persephone remain in the underworld one month for each seed she ate? Why or why not? What deal would you have made in this situation? (Answers may vary.)
10. After hearing today's read-aloud and questions and answers, do you have any remaining questions? [If time permits, you may wish to allow for individual, group, or class research of the text and/or other resources to answer these questions.]

Word Work: Retrieve

5 minutes

1. In the read-aloud you heard, “How was she to ever *retrieve* her daughter now?”
2. Say the word *retrieve* with me.
3. *Retrieve* means to rescue or bring back.
4. Andre left his sweater in the classroom and had to retrieve it before going home.
5. Have you ever had to retrieve something? [Ask two or three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase the students’ responses: “I once had to retrieve . . .”]
6. What’s the word we’ve been talking about?

Use a *Synonym* activity for follow-up. Directions: A synonym is a word that means the same thing as another word. What are some synonyms for the word *retrieve*? (Answers may vary, but may include *get back*, *recover*, *rescue*, etc.)



Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day



Demeter and Persephone

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Extensions

20 minutes

Greek Myths Journal (Instructional Master 3B-1)

Tell students that they will be continuing their journal to help them remember important information they learn in this domain about the Greek gods and Greek myths. Have students share which gods and/or goddesses they heard about in today's read-aloud. (Demeter, Zeus, Hades, Helios, Persephone)

Show students Instructional Master 3B-1. Tell them that for today's journal entry, they should write "Demeter and Persephone" on the title blank. They should then write two to three sentences about one of the characters to help them remember who s/he is, what s/he does in today's myth, and why s/he was important to the ancient Greeks. After writing two to three sentences, students may also draw a picture in the rectangle to illustrate the information.

↔ Multiple Meaning Word Activity

Associated Phrase: Pine

1. [Show Poster 1M (Pine).] In the read-aloud you heard, "Demeter would ignore all of the crops on Earth and would *pine* for her daughter." [Have students hold up one or two fingers to indicate which image on the poster shows this meaning.]
2. *Pine* can also mean something else. *Pine* also means a tree that has long, thin needles instead of leaves, which stays green year round. [Have students hold up one or two fingers to indicate which image on the poster shows this meaning.]
3. [Point to the image of *pine* that shows someone who is sad because s/he is missing someone.] With your partner, talk about what you think of when you see this kind of pine. I will call on a few partners to share what they came up with. Try to answer in complete sentences. (When I see this kind of pine, I think of sad, lonely, crying, etc.)

4. [Point to the pine that shows evergreen trees.] With your partner, talk about what you think of when you see this kind of pine. I will call on a few partners to share what they came up with. Try to answer in complete sentences. (When I see this kind of pine, I think of outdoors, green, needles, etc.)