Orpheus

**Parks, James and Sally Corbett. “Orpheus.” Austin: Highland Park Elementary School, 1997.**

The greatest of all musicians was named Orpheus. He sang a wide variety of songs. Sometimes he sang high-pitched songs about the mystical creation of the universe. Other times he played low notes on his lyre as he sang of the battles of Zeus ad the Olympians gods who clashed against the Titans. Orpheus even had songs about people who were changed into flowers or birds.

But whatever he sang, the rich clear words and the silvery notes from his harp were so enchanting that they always had a magical effect on everything around him. His songs could charm even rocks and rivers as well as humans and animals. Once when Orpheus was playing his splendid music in the forest, the oak trees pulled up their roots. They followed him down the mountainside and planted themselves by the seashore where Orpheus ended his song.

When the great adventurer Jason was about to set out on his search for the Golden fleece, Orpheus was invited to go along. Orpheus proved to be of great help on the long journey. When the tempers of the heroes of the ship flared up, Orpheus would sing a peaceful song and calm those who had been arguing. Sometimes when the rowing was long and tedious, Orpheus would begin to stroke his lyre. Then time would seem to float by and the rowers would not feel tired and they listened to the soft rippling music.

The time came when Jason and the Argonauts had to sail past the dangerous isle of the Sirens. The Sirens were beautiful creature who were part human, part bird. Their songs were so wonderful that any person who heard them would become enchanted. All the sailors who heard the Sirens' songs would hurl themselves overboard and swim to the island of the Sirens'. Lured by these strange maidens the men would die upon the jagged rocks around the isle. But as the argonauts came close to the rocky island of the Sirens, Orpheus began a splendid song of his own. Jason and this crew did not listen to the Sirens and were able to sail past the island unharmed.

After the Argonauts returned to Greece, Orpheus fell in love with a beautiful woman names Eurydice> They were married and a great feast was held in their honor. On the day of their wedding, Eurydice strolled through a nearby field and talked joyfully with her friends. But as she walked through the bright green meadow, she stumbled upon a poisonous snake. The huge serpent bit her and she died.

Orpheus was heartbroken over this cruel fate. He had been married and widowed on the same day. After many weeks of mourning, he decided that he would go to Hades,the land of the dead. There he would plead for his wife.

He came to the gates that lead to the underworld, playing on his harp. No living mortals were allowed to cross into the shadowy regions of the underworld. But Orpheus' sweet dad music moved the ferry and of the dead and he gave Orpheus a ride across the dark murky river Styx. Thus Orpheus entered the purple-darkened realm of the dead. Formless ghosts and spirits gathered around him. But Orpheus was unfrightened and continued to play his slow music about his lost wife. The Spirits began to weep and the huge vultures of the underworld listened to his song.The three-headed dog that guarded the Underworld stopped growling and laid down and whimpered at the dad tine. Orpheus passed by the coal-black stallions that pulled the chariot of Pluto. The horses' ears stood straight up when they heard the enchanting song. Finally the musician came before Pluto, King of the Underworld called Hades.All the jewels and precious metals that lie in the ground rightfully belonged to Pluto's domain. Thus he and his wife< Persephone, sat on the most magnificent thrones imaginable.Beside Pluto lay a magic helmet that would make anyone who wore it invisible. Here, before the King and Queen of Hades, Orpheus sang his sad, sweet song and pleaded to have his bride back. Even the rulers of the underworld were moved by h is music. Eurydice was called forth and she came still limping from the wound where the serpent had bitten her. The gods of Hades agreed that Orpheus could have his wife back, but only on the condition that he did not look back until he had reached the land of the living.

Orpheus began walking up the long steep path that led to the sunlit world of men. The winding pathway was gloomy and silent. Behind his in the darkness he could hear the soft pad of Eurydice's bare feet upon the rocky steps. At last Orpheus saw sunlight coming through the opening to the overworld. he forgot himself and turned to look at his wife. There stood Eurydice, as lovely as a Spring morning with her dark wavy hair and her snowy cheeks. But as he looked Orpheus saw his lovely wife begin to fade. He desperately tried to embrace her but she only had time to whisper "Farewell" before she vanished.

Orpheus once again tried to cross the River Styx in hopes of regaining his wife. But the ferryman would not listen to Orpheus' enchanting music this time and he soul not cross the river. He sadly returned to the land of Thrace. Oh a hill in Thrace, Orpheus remained the rest of his life, singing songs that enchanted the beast and the trees of the forest.

It is said that when Orpheus finally met his death, the birds wept on the hillside.The trees shed their leaves and the nearby streams were swollen with their own tears. Orpheus' spirit went down to the Underworld and he soon found Eurydice. Although it is a shadowy existence the two walk together for eternity without fear of another separation.

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| Questions |
| 1 | How does Orpheus’s great talent almost get him his wife back? Use examples from the text to back up your reasoning.  |
| 2 | What is the moral of this story or theme of this piece? Use examples from the text to back up your reasoning.  |
| 3 | How does the pacing work for this myth? Too fast, too slow, just right, explain why using words that deal with plot structure (climax, resolution, etc.) Use examples from the text to back up your reasoning.  |
| 4 | Write a short summary, which explains this myth. Use examples from the text to back up your reasoning.  |
| 5 | Orpheus was so worried that his bride hadn’t followed him. Do you think that the setting of where Orpheus had to go had anything to do with why he turned around at the last second? Use examples from the text to back up your reasoning.  |
| 6 | What do you think would have happened if Orpheus hadn’t turned around? Use examples from the text to back up your reasoning.  |
| 7 | What do you think the author was trying to do when they were writing this story? What were they trying to teach their audience? Remember these are people that believed and worshipped Greek gods and goddesses. They believed in rituals and sacrifices. Use examples from the text to back up your reasoning.   |
| 8 | Who do you think loves the other more and why? Use examples from the text to back up your reasoning.  |
| 9  | Would you have looked back? If it had been you attempting to bring back the person that you loved most would curiosity and the fact that you’re in Hades cause you to look back? Use examples from the text to back up your reasoning.   |