



Ancient Myths Retold

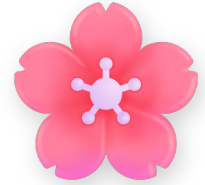
Grade 5

Name: _____

Read the fable carefully. Then answer each question below in a full sentence.

Think about what the character learned and what lesson the fable is teaching.

Narcissus and the Reflection



“No, I cannot love you,” declared Narcissus, his voice echoing with a cold indifference. “My heart belongs only to one, and that one is myself.” He stood tall and proud, his golden hair catching the sunlight, as another heartbroken admirer turned away. In the ancient lands of Greece, Narcissus was known for his extraordinary beauty, a gift that made every nymph and mortal maiden sigh. Yet, his heart was as hard as the marble statues in the temples, incapable of returning affection. He believed no one was worthy of his admiration, and he walked through life seeing only his own reflection in every polished surface.



One day, as he hunted through a quiet, sun-dappled forest, a thirst overcame him. He had wandered far from any well-known streams, seeking a place where no other hunter or shepherd had ever disturbed the peace. Deep within the woods, he stumbled upon a spring so clear and still that its surface mirrored the sky perfectly. The scent of damp earth and blooming wildflowers filled the air. No leaves ever fell into its pristine waters, and no animal dared to muddy its banks. It was a hidden jewel, untouched and serene.

Kneeling by the edge, Narcissus leaned down to drink. As his eyes met the water, he saw a face more beautiful than any he had ever imagined. It was a face of perfect symmetry, with eyes that sparkled like the morning dew and lips curved in a gentle, inviting smile. He was instantly captivated, utterly enraptured by the image. “Who are you, wondrous being?” he whispered, his own voice sounding strange to his ears. He reached out a hand, and the image reached back, yet his fingers only met the cool, liquid surface.



He tried to speak to the reflection, to coax it out of the water, but it only mimicked his every move. If he smiled, it smiled back. If he frowned, it frowned too. He spent hours, then days, gazing into the spring, unable to tear himself away. He forgot about hunting, about eating, about the world beyond the shimmering surface. His only desire was to possess this beautiful being, this perfect reflection of himself that seemed to live just out of reach.



The nymphs and forest creatures who had once admired him now watched from afar, their hearts heavy with pity. They saw him grow pale and weak, his strong body wasting away as he languished by the water's edge. He knew, deep down, that the image was only his own reflection, a cruel trick of the light, but his vanity had trapped him. He could not, would not, leave this perfect vision of himself. "Why do you torment me so?" he murmured to his reflection, his voice barely a whisper.

Finally, with a sigh that carried on the gentle breeze, Narcissus faded away, his life force spent. Where his body had rested, a beautiful flower with white petals and a golden center bloomed, forever bending its head towards the water. And so, the gods taught a harsh lesson: that a heart filled only with self-love will find no true happiness, and a life spent admiring only oneself is a life wasted.



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

(1) Who is the main character of this fable, and where does he find the special spring?



(2) What problem did Narcissus face regarding his own beauty and the spring?

(3) In the third paragraph, the fable states that Narcissus was "utterly enraptured by the image." What does the word "enraptured" mean in this sentence?

(4) Was Narcissus's choice to spend all his time gazing at his reflection a good one? Use a detail from the fable to support your answer.

(5) What important lesson does the fable of Narcissus teach us? How could this lesson be applied to your own life or the lives of others?



