



Read each myth or legend carefully. Use details from the passage to answer the questions in complete sentences.

## Izanagi and Izanami Create Japan

In ancient Japanese mythology, the gods played a direct role in shaping the world. Long ago, before the land was solid, the cosmos was a swirling, silent chaos, like a vast, empty ocean. From this formless void emerged the first gods, who then called forth two divine beings: Izanagi, "He Who Invites," and Izanami, "She Who Invites." These sibling deities were given a sacred task: to create the world.

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Standing upon the Floating Bridge of Heaven, Izanagi and Izanami looked down at the misty, watery expanse below. The elder gods had entrusted them with a magnificent jeweled spear, named Ama-no-nuboko . Their mission was to use this spear to bring forth solid land from the primordial soup.



Izanagi dipped the gleaming spear into the churning, dark waters. He stirred and stirred, the spear swirling the brine with a mighty motion. As he lifted the spear, drops of salty water dripped from its tip. These sparkling drops congealed and hardened, forming the very first island, Onogoro, the "Self-Formed Island."

Delighted, Izanagi and Izanami descended to Onogoro. They built a grand palace and decided to marry, to populate their new world with more islands and gods. During their marriage ritual, Izanami spoke first, which was considered improper. Their first child, Hiruko, was born deformed, a "leech child," and set adrift in a boat .

Realizing their mistake, they repeated the ritual, this time with Izanagi speaking first. From their union, the beautiful islands of Japan were born, one after another, along with countless kami, or spirits and gods, who would inhabit them.



This myth explains how the many islands of Japan were formed by the divine will and actions of Izanagi and Izanami, and it teaches the importance of proper order and ritual in creation and life.

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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

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**(1) Who are the main characters in this myth, and what was their primary task?**

- A Izanagi and Izanami, tasked with creating the world.
- B Hiruko, tasked with sailing the seas.
- C The elder gods, tasked with giving a spear.
- D Ama-no-nuboko, tasked with stirring the ocean.

**(2) Izanagi and Izanami used a jeweled spear named Ama-no-nuboko to stir the primordial ocean and create the first \_\_\_\_\_.**

*— continue writing on the lines below*

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**(3) What does the word 'primordial' mean as it is used in the story?**

- A Existing at the very beginning; ancient.
- B Full of strange creatures; mysterious.
- C Dark and dangerous; stormy.
- D Very deep; bottomless.

**(4) Why was Izanami speaking first during the marriage ritual considered improper, and what does this tell us about the values of this culture?**

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**(5) What do you think this myth was trying to explain or teach? How does its message connect to something in real life today?**

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