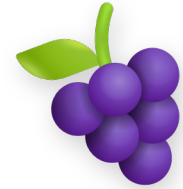




Read each myth or legend carefully. Use details from the passage to answer the questions in complete sentences.

Tantalus's Eternal Torment



Long ago, in ancient Greece, when gods often walked among mortals, there lived a king named Tantalus. He was no ordinary ruler; Tantalus was the son of Zeus, king of the gods, and enjoyed immense favor, often invited to dine with the Olympians on Mount Olympus itself. This privilege, however, filled Tantalus not with gratitude, but with a dangerous pride and a belief that he could outsmart even the divine.



Tantalus began to abuse his unique position. He stole ambrosia and nectar, the food and drink of the gods, to share with his mortal friends, hoping to grant them immortality. Worse still, he would boast about the gods' secrets, betraying their trust. But his most heinous act was yet to come. To test the gods' omniscience—their ability to know everything—Tantalus committed an unspeakable crime. He murdered his own son, Pelops, cooked him, and served him to the gods at a banquet, believing they would not notice.



The Olympian gods, with their divine wisdom, immediately recognized the horrific meal. Only Demeter, grief-stricken over her lost daughter Persephone, unknowingly ate a piece of Pelops' shoulder. Enraged by Tantalus's hubris and cruelty, Zeus condemned him to the deepest pits of Tartarus, the lowest part of the Underworld.



There, Tantalus faced an eternal punishment perfectly suited to his crimes. He stood in a pool of clear, cool water that receded every time he bent to drink. Above his head hung branches laden with ripe, juicy fruits, but these too would be



snatched away by a gust of wind whenever he reached for them. Forever hungry and thirsty, yet forever denied, Tantalus was tormented by the very things he craved, a constant reminder of his disrespect for the gods' generosity. This is why we use the word "tantalize" today, to describe something desirable that remains just out of reach.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

(1) Who is the main character in this myth, and what is their role?

- A Tantalus, a king who abused the gods' favor.
- B Zeus, the king of the gods who punished Tantalus.
- C Pelops, Tantalus's son who was served to the gods.
- D Demeter, a goddess who unknowingly ate human flesh.

(2) In this myth, Tantalus tried to trick the gods by serving them

_____.

— continue writing on the lines below

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

- A The ability to know everything. B The power to control weather.
- C The skill of cooking elaborate meals.
- D The act of being generous to others.

(4) Why did Tantalus commit the unspeakable crime of serving his son to the gods? What does this tell us about his character and the values of ancient Greek society?



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

