

Reader's Resource

People in ancient Greece and Rome believed supernatural gods and goddesses directed events in their world. These supernatural beings were more powerful than humans, but they experienced human emotions such as jealousy and passion. The myth of “Echo and Narcissus” shows the human qualities of the gods and explains the origin of two things in nature, a *narcissus* flower and an *echo*. A *narcissus* is a lilylike flower with a showy yellow or white bloom. An *echo* is a sound repetition that occurs when sound waves bounce off a hard surface.

Word watch

PREVIEW VOCABULARY

beguile ebb
curtail enigmatic
disintegrate oblivious

Reader's Journal

What qualities do you find attractive in another person? Is physical appearance as important as other aspects such as personality or intellectual qualities? Why, or why not?

“Echo and Narcissus”

retold by Walker Brents

Active READING STRATEGY

WRITE THINGS DOWN

Before Reading PREVIEW

- Brainstorm ideas about mythology. List what you know about Greek and Roman gods and goddesses.
- Read the Reader's Resource.
- Prepare to fill in the chart below as you read.

Graphic Organizer

Stopping Point	Question 1	Answer 1	Question 2	Answer 2
After line 43	What is an <i>echo</i> ?		How does Greek mythology explain an <i>echo</i> ?	
After line 49	Who is the character named Echo?		What happened to Echo?	
After line 82	Who is the character named Narcissus?		What happened to Narcissus?	
At the end of the story	What is a <i>narcissus flower</i> ?		How does Greek mythology explain a <i>narcissus flower</i> ?	



During Reading

FILL IN A CHART

- Follow along in the text as your teacher reads through line 43 aloud.
- Discuss the Greeks' explanation for an echo.
- Go back to your graphic organizer and fill in the Answer 1 and Answer 2 columns of the first row.
- Read the remainder of the myth aloud with a partner. Alternate reading and listening tasks.
- Answer the rest of the questions in the graphic organizer as you read.



READ ALOUD

To make reading the myth easier, practice saying the Greek names found in the myth.

Liriope (lə rī' ō pē)

Tiresias (tī rē' sē əs)

Narcissus (när si' səs)

Hera (hir' ə, or her' ə)

Zeus (zūs)

Nemesis (ne' mə sis)



MARK THE TEXT

Underline or highlight words or phrases in this passage that show how others react to Narcissus and how he treats them.

Liriope the river nymph gave birth to a beautiful child. She brought him to the blind seer Tiresias to ask his destiny. Tiresias predicted that the boy would live a long life, but only if he never “came to know himself.”

The child was named Narcissus. As he grew, his beauty increased. His dazzling looks had a strange effect upon the woodland spirits, the naiads and the dryads,¹ around whom he spent his days. They all fell in love with him, but he was oblivious, interested only in hunting in the hills with his companions. His pride in his beauty grew so great that he had nothing but scorn for the feelings of others.

There was one nymph, Echo by name, who saw Narcissus chasing deer into nets in the hills. Echo was instantly seized by love and could not overcome it. Secretly, she followed him through the wilderness, waiting for her chance to make herself known to him—but one thing held her back: she could not initiate speech on her own. She could only repeat

1. the naiads and the dryads. Nymphs of the water and of trees

words for everyday use

o • bliv • i • ous (ə bli'vē əs) *adj.*, unaware; lacking attention. *Pete cranked up the volume of the television, oblivious to the fact that he was disturbing everyone's sleep.*

Literary TOOLS

SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF.

Suspension of disbelief is the act by which the reader willingly sets aside his or her skepticism to participate imaginatively in the work being read. As you read, think about which elements of the story require you to suspend your disbelief.

NOTE THE FACTS



Who punished Echo and how was she punished?

Use THE STRATEGY

WRITE THINGS DOWN. After line 49, stop reading to fill in your graphic organizer. Who is the character named Echo? What happened to Echo?

20 what was said to her. This was her condition, and it had come about because one day the goddess Hera was questioning the nymphs about her husband Zeus. She asked them where Zeus was, suspecting that the unfaithful god had been chasing the lovely nymphs and dwelling among them. Indeed he had, and while he was making his escape Echo distracted Hera with a flow of entertaining conversation. When Hera learned she had been fooled, she cursed Echo, saying, "From now on your words will not be your own. You will only be able to repeat what is said to you. That way your powers to beguile and distract will be curtailed."

30 Thereafter Echo could only repeat the words she heard. She could not announce herself to Narcissus. She trailed him silently, hoping for the right circumstance to meet him and declare her love. One day Narcissus had wandered away from his companions, and was in the forest looking for them. Echo was nearby, but Narcissus did not see her. "Is anyone here?" he cried. "Here," she answered. "Come to me," he called out. "Come to me," she replied. "Do not avoid me," he pleaded. She said the same to him. "Let us meet," he announced. This was her chance. She stepped out of hiding and stood before him smiling, saying, "Let us meet." He fell back from her scornfully. "You are not the one I seek. I would die before I would be near you." Echo advanced toward him, pleading, "I would be near you." But he ran from her.

40 Haunted by his rejection and crushed by shame, Echo hid herself in caves and covered herself with leaves. She began to waste away and disappear. In the end only her bones were left, and these became rocks. But her voice remained. Travelers and wanderers heard it sometimes, answering them with their own words. Still Echo did not forget Narcissus.

50 Meanwhile, Narcissus too fell victim to a curse. Another nymph had fallen in love with him, but was also spurned. This one cried to the heavens for vengeance: "May Narcissus fall into a love that is not returned!" The goddess of righteous anger, Nemesis, heard these words. And so it

words for everyday use

be • guile (bi gīal') vt., lead by deception; distract. *When my little brother screamed for a toy he wanted, I beguiled him with the promise of an ice cream cone.*

cur • tail (kər tāl') vt., make less as if by cutting away a part. *The dictator's power was curtailed when his army was defeated.*

happened that on a sunny and hot day Narcissus found himself at a pond to which no shepherd's flocks had been, from which no goats had drunk. It was a wild place. A green meadow surrounded it, and tall trees shaded it from the sun and sheltered it from winds. Putting his face to the waters in order to quench his thirst, Narcissus caught sight for the first time of his own reflection. He was astonished by the beautiful face that met his eye.

60 "What star-like eyes are these; what smooth skin! That forehead, that jaw, that gorgeous flowing hair! Who are you? Draw near to me!" He reached his hands to the water, but the reflected image disintegrated. He waited for it to reappear. "Only the surface of these waters parts us. No fortress gates nor city walls; no long rocky highway, no impenetrable forest nor unclimbable mountain stands between us. Yet I cannot reach you! How can this be?" He cried to the endless skies, "How is it that when I find my love his very nearness keeps us far apart?" But there was no answer.

70 Narcissus could not leave this place. Entranced by his own reflection, he began to waste away from hunger and thirst. His strength and his life ebbed away and did not return. Echo hovered around him, invisible and unforgetting. Her disembodied voice repeated his final word, which was "Alas." He died, and his spirit left his body. Even on the boat of souls, crossing the river between this world and the other one, Narcissus leaned over the edge, looking into those waters, trying to catch a glimpse of the image that so captivated him.

80 The nymphs heard of his death and went to the pond to retrieve his body for the funeral ceremony. But when they got there, they found no corpse, only a new blossom with snowy petals and a yellow corona.² The flower came to be called "Narcissus," in honor of one who, in the enigmatic words of Tiresias, "came to know himself," and fell in love. ■

2. **corona.** Trumpet-shaped part of the inner cup of a flower such as the daffodil

words for everyday use

dis • in • te • grate (di sin' tə grāt') vt., break apart. *The note disintegrated into tiny pieces after it had accidentally gone through the wash.*

ebb (eb') vi., decline; fall to a lower or worse state. *My determination ebbed, and I became depressed as I realized how difficult it would be to reach my goal.*

en • ig • ma • tic (e' nig ma' tik) adj., mysterious; hard to decipher. *Julia is so enigmatic; I can never seem to understand where she is coming from.*

FIX-UP IDEA

Reread

If you have difficulty understanding a paragraph in the myth, reread it aloud to a partner. Help each other unlock difficult words and ideas. You may need to reread some sentences several times. Rereading makes it easier to fill in your chart.

Use THE STRATEGY

WRITE THINGS DOWN. At the end of the story, write down what happened to Narcissus in your graphic organizer.

Reflect ON YOUR READING

After Reading

SHARE A SUMMARY

Share the information in your chart with the class, and discuss the origins of the words *echo* and *narcissus*. How does writing things down help you?

Reading Skills and Test Practice

IDENTIFY CAUSE AND EFFECT

Discuss with your group how best to answer the following cause-and-effect questions.

1. What causes Echo to lose her ability to speak her own thoughts?
 - a. her love of Narcissus
 - b. her love of herself
 - c. her trickery of Hera
 - d. her hatred of Zeus

What is the correct answer to the question above? How were you able to eliminate other answers? How did your use of the reading strategy help you?

2. Which of the following did NOT cause Narcissus to die young?
 - a. He came to know himself.
 - b. He spurned Echo and the other nymphs who loved him.
 - c. He was excessively proud of his beauty.
 - d. He realized how cruel he had been to Echo.

What is the correct answer to the question above? How were you able to eliminate other answers? How did your use of the reading strategy help you?

THINK-ALOUD NOTES

Investigate, Inquire, and Imagine

RECALL: GATHER FACTS

1a. With whom does Narcissus fall in love? Who caused this to happen?

→ INTERPRET: FIND MEANING

1b. Why does Nemesis punish Narcissus?

ANALYZE: TAKE THINGS APART

2a. What metamorphoses, or transformations, occur in “Echo and Narcissus”?

→ SYNTHESIZE: BRING THINGS TOGETHER

2b. This story explains two phenomena in nature. What are these phenomena, and how are they explained?

PERSPECTIVE: LOOK AT OTHER VIEWS

3a. From the nymphs’ perspective, what is Narcissus’s crime? Explain whether you think Narcissus’s punishment is appropriate to the crime.

→ EMPATHY: SEE FROM INSIDE

3b. Imagine you were Narcissus and everyone was instantly captivated by your exceptional good looks. Would you find this annoying? How would you react?

Literary Tools

SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF. **Suspension of disbelief** is the act by which the reader willingly sets aside his or her skepticism to participate imaginatively in the work being read. The willingness to suspend disbelief, to participate imaginatively in a story being read, is the most important attribute, beyond literacy, that a person can bring to the act of reading literature. Which elements of the story require you to suspend your disbelief? Why?

Supernatural Events That Require Suspension of Disbelief	Why These Elements Are Unbelievable
Hera is able to put a curse on Echo.	People can't put a curse on someone else.

WordWorkshop

MNEMONIC DEVICES

REMEMBERING MEANINGS AND SPELLINGS. Look through “Echo and Narcissus.” Find five words whose meanings or spellings are unfamiliar or difficult. Write them on the lines below. Add mnemonic devices, or memory aids, behind each word that help you remember the meanings or spellings. Example: *Malodorous* means having a bad odor because *mal* means bad and the word *odor* is in the word.

Read-Write Connection

Do you feel sympathy toward Narcissus, or do you think he deserves his fate? Explain your answer.

Beyond the Reading

THE GREEK PANTHEON. Read about the Greek pantheon, or the temple where all of the Greek gods lived. Learn more about the major gods and their roles, or find information about some of the minor gods and earthly heroes. Create a booklet that describes ten of these figures and what they did.

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