Name:

Haflin

Humanities (3)

Date:

Women in Mythology Myth Review

We’ve read a number of Greek myths to this point, but it’s important for this essay assignment that you have an understanding of certain stories from the texts. Use these summaries to help you locate details for the “Women in Mythology” Essay.

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| **MYTH** | **SUMMARY OF MYTH** | | | **PURPOSE OF MYTH** | | |
| “Metis and Athena”  p. 41-44 | Zeus’s first wife Metis was supposed to give birth to two children: a daughter equal in strength and power to Zeus, and a son, who would overthrow him. To avoid this fate, Zeus tricked Metis while she was pregnant with child #1 into shape shifting into a small object (fly) so he could swallow her. The child (Athena) sprang out of his head fully grown after Prometheus cracked Zeus’s head open with an axe to cure his headache. The second child was never born. Metis still resides in Zeus and gives advice. | | | **Explains:** the idea of a conscience, splitting headaches, the term “brainchild”  **Teaches:** be careful of “honeyed” speech or people trying to trick you to get what he/she wants. You can avoid your fate if you are smart enough.  **Cultural Sig:** Notice that Athena is almost on equal footing with Zeus and that she never marries. This indicated some conflict on the Minoans’ behalf. They were clearly unwilling to hand over their female power. Zeus’s fear being overthrown by the son is a very Myceanaen theme. Eating others for power (Minoan). The fact that Zeus takes over the power of childbirth really indicates that Mycenaean desire to have full authority over all feminine power. | | |
| “Hera, Hephaestus, and Ares”  p. 50-54 | Hera did not want to marry Zeus because of his infidelity, but he tricked her into it and then forced her to marry. They had four children together, the youngest Hephaestus, but Hera claimed she made him independently because Zeus made Athena “independently”. However, because Hephaestus was lame, she threw him off of Mt Olympus, and he was raised by sea nymphs who saved him and taught him the art of jewelry and weapon making- also how to use the forge for that process. He also because a kind and loving god. He expressed his love through his art. To share his art, he made beautiful gifts of golden sandals for the gods, but for Hera he made a thrown, on which she became stuck. This was his revenge for Hera’s rejection of him. He released her only after Dionysus got him drunk and he confronted Hera, and she admitted to her wrong doings and accepted him as her child. As a reward, Hephaestus could pick any goddess as a wife. He wanted Athena, but she refused so he picked Aphrodite. . She had a secret affair with Ares (his brother) and to get revenge on them he fashioned a fine net that trapped them in the act and shamed them in front of everyone. | | | **Explains:** weapons, jewelry, art, the use of the forge, the presence of disabilities in their culture  **Teaches:** to see people for what is on the inside. Many tough guys or bullies are often cowards (Ares); don’t cheat or you will be totally humiliated. Forgive and accept those who love you.  **Cultural Sig:** The fact that Athena refuses to marry despite being treated as a “prize” for Hephaestus reinforces the battle between the Minoan and Mycenaean culture. Clearly women were owned as Aphrodite is given to Hephaestus, but Athena holds fast to her power, and yet she is described as “handsome” and virginal-an indication of a Minoan-Mycenaean combo. | | |
| “Leto and Apollo”  p. 56-60 | Because Leto was destined to give birth to a son Zeus would love more than other sons, Hera harassed Leto, refusing to allow any village to offer Leto a safe place to birth (ironic considering Hera’s domain). Also, Python—the snake like dragon that knew Leto’s son would eventually kill him, chased Leto all over the world so that she would not give birth to her twins. It was later killed by Apollo anyway. Once born, Apollo (twin brother of Artemis) grew to a full sized male. He killed Python, and took took over a Cretan ship (after becoming a dolphin) forcing the sailors to become his disciples. His temple is located at Delphi where he took over the power of oracle from Gaea and Themis. Apollo the god of the sun, healing, music, and death. He is associated with mice because of the connection of mice to death, He is the epitome of the golden mean-know thyself-moderation in all things. Avoid emotional excessiveness. | | | **Explains:** sudden death, sudden healing, connection of mice to disease, music, temple, prophecy, disciples, dolphins, twins  **Teaches:** the central rule of “golden mean”, don’t mess with Hera, to have faith that people will follow and live and faithful life. The fact that Hera tries to harm a pregnant woman, the very power she should uphold, shows that even the gods and goddesses let their emotions get the better of them.  **Cultural Sig:** the fact that Apollo takes over the once female power of prophecy shows that Minoan power being taken over and controlled by the Mycenaens. | | |
| “Demeter and Persephone”  p. 71-81 | **Demeter**—Goddess of corn and the harvest. Searched far and wide for Persephone after Hades kidnapped Pesephone. While searching all over the world for Persephene, she neglected her duties of nature. She was treated poorly by Abas, a young boy, she turned him into a lizard. Later, at Eleusis, she met kindly women who took her in. She tried to make their little boy immortal by rubbing ambrosia on him and placing him in the fire, but she was stopped by the mother. After showing her true identity to the women, the town built at temple for her in that place. Demeter teaches that all strangers should be treated as gifts of Zeus.  **Persephone** was abducted by her uncle Hades (via earthquake) who was lonely and wanted a wife in the underworld. She is Demeter’s daughter and is often called Queen of the underworld. She reluctantly became Hades’ wife after she ate a pomegranate seed and is therefore forced to return there one season a year. (turned the messenger into an owl)  **Hades-** God of the underworld. He tricked Persephone with the pomegranate to force her to stay for some time of the year in the underworld. | | | **Explains:** winter, drought, depression, spring and seasonal rebirth, lizards, flowers, earthquakes, forest fires (Demeter’s search), the temple at Eleusis, owls  **Teaches:** be wary of tricks, be hospitable to strangers, do not question a god or goddess’s plan, you are what you eat, women are possessions, do not let your grief overpower you.  **Cultural Sig:** The battle between Demeter, Hades, and Zeus shows a clashing of gender power, but notice the Minoan power is weakened in the end. | | |
| **Myth Title** | | **Characters and their qualities, both physical and emotional…** | **What does the myth explain?** | | **What does the myth teach?** | **Link back to the Mycenaean and Minoan cultures…** |
| “Pandora”  Pages 112-116 | | **Pandora**-beautiful but evil  **Prometheus**-creative (made man)  **Zeus**-vengeful-punishing man out of anger towards Prometheus  **Hephasetus**-Agreat artist-creates woman  **Athena-**pleases dad-creates dress for Pandora-is part of trick against man | Creation of women  Disease, suffering, hardship  The patriarchal structure of society | | Women are beautiful but manipulative, dangerous  Don’t trust all gifts  Hope remains in face of tragedy | Since Mycenaeans feared the Minoan women’s powers, this story reinforces the idea that such dangerous women should be controlled, thereby securing a patriarchal society. |
| “Arachne”  Pages 127-130 | | **Arachne**-a great weaver, proud, rude  **Athena**-also a great weaver, also proud, vengeful | Tapestries  Spiders  webs | | Pride (hubris)= punishment  Be kind to strangers-they could be a god in disguise  Heed the warnings of elders  Keep a balance of golden mean | The negative portrayal of women, both immortal and mortal, reinforce a patriarchal power |
| **Myth Title** | | **Characters and their qualities, both physical and emotional…** | **What does the myth explain?** | | **What does the myth teach?** | **Link back to the Mycenaean and Minoan cultures…** |
| “Niobe”  Pages 131-136 | | **Niobe**-wife and daughter of kings, full of hubris; ungrateful  **Leto**-Zeu’s lover, mother of Apollo and Artemis-vengeful  **Artemis-**gidess of the hunt-kills all of Niobe’s children-**defenders her mother’s honor**  **Apollo**-sun god., music god, kills all of Niobe’s soncs, defender of hismother’s honor | Lifelike statues  Terrible tragedy beyond comprehension | | Avoid hubris  Do not live through your children  Do not disrespect the god  Your whole world can change in a day  How you act is more important than what you create or produce | Minoan  battle of female power  Fertility competition  Defending mother and motherhood is most important. |
| “Narcissus and Echo”  Pages 165-70 | | Narcissus-a man who was not allowed to see self b/c of prophecy  Echo-river nymph-chatty, good conversationalist-Hera’s friend  Hera-Z’s wife  Zeus-the big man | echoes  Origin Narcissus flower | | The damage of self-love and arrogance –end up alone  The result of being part of a scheme (echo is punished)  The consequences of revenge | Patriarchal themes-the male can cheat while women become jealous and vengeful |