

# Music of the Underworld

## The Story of Orpheus and Eurydice

Orpheus was the most cherished musician in all of Greece. When he played his lyre, birds would stop chirping just to listen to him play.

Orpheus was also in love with a beautiful wood nymph named Eurydice. Eurydice and Orpheus were so happy together. In fact, many said his music became even lovelier after he met Eurydice. Soon the couple was married.

Their marriage was celebrated with the most joyous music Orpheus had ever played. Eurydice danced around as her husband strummed the lyre. But their happiness ended abruptly when Eurydice stepped on a venomous snake. The fangs of the snake left a deadly bite on her ankle. Orpheus rushed to his young bride's side, but there was nothing that could be done for Eurydice. His wife was gone.



Orpheus experienced overwhelming grief for the loss of his wife. He did not know how he could live without her. This gave him an idea. Maybe he would not have to live without Eurydice. He decided that he would go to the Underworld to see if he could reclaim his love. He was not sure if this plan would work, but he had to give it a try. With his lyre in tow, he made his way to the Underworld.

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Orpheus reached the entrance of the Underworld. He followed the tunnels until he came to the River Styx. Charon was there. Charon was responsible for taking spirits across on the ferry. Orpheus requested a ride on the ferry, but Charon quickly refused. Orpheus did the only thing he knew to do. He closed his eyes, pictured his precious Eurydice, and began gently plucking the strings of his lyre. Even the stubborn Charon could not resist the beautiful music that came from Orpheus's lyre.

Orpheus had made it passed one obstacle, but soon found himself facing Cerberus, Hades' three-headed dog. This creature was ready to make Orpheus its next meal, but Orpheus was quick on his feet. He began playing a lullaby and before long, all three heads were sound asleep. Orpheus crept passed the sleeping beast.

Orpheus continued to play his way through the Underworld until he reached Hades' throne. Sitting beside Hades was his queen, Persephone. There Orpheus pleaded his case and begged to have his wife return with him. Then he did the only thing he knew to do. He began to play his lyre. He played the saddest song. Hades and Persephone both took pity on poor Orpheus. Hades decided to allow Eurydice to return with Orpheus under one condition. He said Eurydice would follow behind Orpheus, and they could be together again. This would happen under one condition. Orpheus had to agree that he would not look back until he was completely out of the Underworld.



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He said Orpheus must have faith that Eurydice was there.

Orpheus was overwhelmed with joy and set off to return home. He could hear the faint sound of footsteps behind him as he made his journey out of the Underworld. Orpheus was so tempted to turn around, but he knew he could not. He played music to distract himself.

Finally, the sunlight was in the distance. Orpheus had almost made it, but suddenly, he felt fear. Gods were known to be cruel and tricky. What if Hades had tricked him and he had left the Underworld without his wife? Orpheus was overwhelmed with doubt.

As Orpheus neared the light of day, fear overpowered him, and he could not resist the temptation. He had to turn around. When he turned, he saw his beautiful bride, who looked just as lovely and as happy as she had on their wedding day. She smiled, but it quickly faded. Orpheus reached out to grab her hand, but Eurydice vanished.

Orpheus was grief-stricken. He could hardly bear the fact that he had turned around too soon. He had lost his love forever. From that day on, his songs were those of sadness and despair.

What is the theme of the story?

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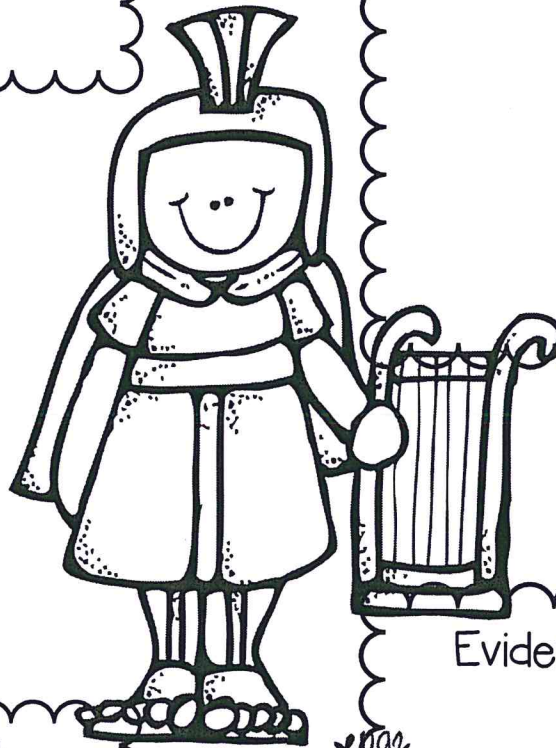
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# Orpheus

What character traits would you use to describe Orpheus? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Character Trait

Evidence from the text



Character Trait

Evidence from the text