

The Story of Ceres and Proserpina

Classical Myth Retold by Mary Pope Osborne

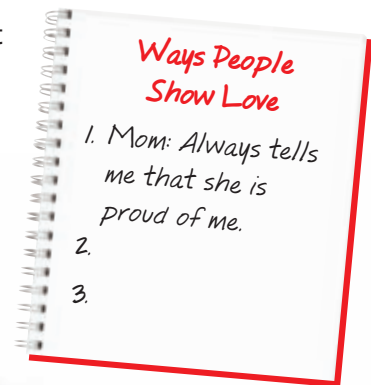
How powerful is LOVE?



READING 3 Analyze, make inferences, and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts.
3B Analyze the function of stylistic elements in classical literature from various cultures.

Love can be a powerful force in people's lives, shaping the decisions they make and the actions they take. In this myth, you'll read about a mother's deep affection for her daughter and how it affects the people and places around her.

LIST IT Make a list of three people you care about deeply. You can include relatives, friends, or other special people who have been meaningful in your life. Under each name, note at least one way in which the person has shown his or her love.



LITERARY ANALYSIS: CLASSICAL MYTHS

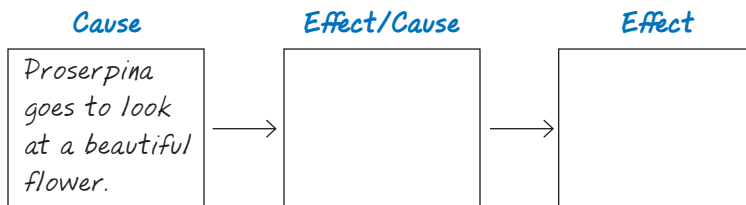
Classical myths are ancient stories that were used to explain the world and the gods and goddesses who ruled over it, shaping the lives of all humans. Passed down by word of mouth for generations, these myths have **recurring**, or repeating, themes and stylistic elements, such as:

- They explain how something in the world, such as the seas or the mountains, came to be.
- They feature gods, goddesses, and other beings with extraordinary powers. However, these beings often have the same emotions and weaknesses as humans.

As you read “The Story of Ceres and Proserpina,” notice what it explains about the natural world and the behavior of the gods.

READING SKILL: RECOGNIZE CAUSE AND EFFECT

The events of a story are often linked by cause-and-effect relationships. That is, one event acts as a **cause**, directly bringing about another event, or **effect**. The effect might, in turn, be the cause of another effect, creating a chain of events. As you read “The Story of Ceres and Proserpina,” look for cause-and-effect relationships. Record them in a graphic organizer like the one shown.



VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Osborne uses the listed words to create a vivid setting for this myth. Which word best completes each sentence?

WORD LIST barren chariot fertile shrouded

1. The ____ field produced an enormous crop of corn.
2. Two horses pulled a golden ____.
3. The ____ mountain was difficult to see.
4. The sandy desert was dry and ____.



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Mary Pope Osborne

born 1949

Adventure Seeker

Mary Pope Osborne grew up in a military family. By the time she was 15, she had lived in Austria, as well as a number of places in the United States. She continued to travel as an adult and once spent many months traveling through Asia. “I craved the adventure and changing scenery of our military life,” Osborne said.

Time Travel

As children, Osborne and her brothers sought adventures everywhere they went. These adventures became the basis for Osborne’s most popular fiction series, *The Magic Tree House*, about a brother and sister who find books that transport them to distant times and places.

BACKGROUND TO THE MYTH

Classical Mythology

The myths told by the ancient Greeks and Romans are known as classical mythology. The earliest Greek myths appeared almost 3,000 years ago. When Rome conquered Greece around 178 B.C., the Romans adopted the Greek myths but changed the names of the gods to Roman names.



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THE STORY OF CERES AND PROSERPINA

Retold by Mary Pope Osborne

One day Proserpina, the young maiden of spring, was picking wildflowers with her mother, Ceres, the goddess of grain. Entering the cool moist woods, Proserpina filled her basket with lilies and violets. But when she spied the white petals of the narcissus flower, she strayed far from her mother.

Just as Proserpina picked a beautiful narcissus, the earth began to rumble. Suddenly the ground cracked open, splitting fern beds and ripping flowers and trees from their roots. Then out of the dark depths sprang Pluto, god of the underworld. **A**

10 Standing up in his black **chariot**, Pluto ferociously drove his stallions toward Proserpina. The maiden screamed for her mother, but Ceres was far away and could not save her.

Pluto grabbed Proserpina and drove his chariot back into the earth. Then the ground closed up again, leaving not even a seam.

When the mountains echoed with Proserpina's screams, her mother rushed into the woods, but it was too late—her daughter had disappeared.

Beside herself with grief, Ceres began searching for her kidnapped daughter in every land. For nine days the goddess did not rest, but carried two torches through the cold nights, searching for Proserpina.

Analyze Visuals ▶

What can you tell about the girl's emotions, based on her body positioning and the fuzziness of the illustration?

A CLASSICAL MYTHS

Reread lines 6–9. What extraordinary power is Pluto exhibiting?

chariot (chăŕ'ē-ət) *n.*
a two-wheeled vehicle
used in ancient times



20 On the tenth day, Hecate, goddess of the dark of the moon, came to Ceres. Holding up a lantern, the **shrouded** goddess said, “I also heard your daughter’s screams, but I didn’t see her. Let us fly to Helios, the sun god, and ask him what happened.”

Ceres and Hecate flew to Helios, the sun god; and weeping, Ceres asked Helios if he’d seen her daughter while he was shining down upon the woods.

“I pity you, Ceres,” said Helios, “for I know what it is to lose a child. But I know the truth. Pluto wanted Proserpina for his wife, so he asked his brother, Jupiter, to give him permission to kidnap her. Jupiter gave
30 his consent, and now your daughter reigns over the land of the dead with Pluto.”

Ceres screamed in rage and thrust her fist toward Mount Olympus,¹ cursing Jupiter for aiding in the kidnapping of his own daughter. Then she returned to earth, disguised as an old woman, and began wandering from town to town.

One day as she rested by a well, Ceres watched four princesses gathering water. Remembering her own daughter, she began to weep.

“Where are you from, old woman?” one princess asked. ◆

“I was kidnapped by pirates, and I escaped,” said Ceres. “Now I know
40 not where I am.”

Feeling pity for her, the princesses brought Ceres home to their palace. At the palace, their mother, the queen, took an immediate liking to Ceres when she noticed how good she was with her baby son the prince. When she asked Ceres if she would live with them and be his nurse, the goddess gladly consented.

Ceres grew deeply fond of the child. The thought that he would someday grow old and die was too much for her to bear. So she decided to change him from a mortal to a god. Every night, when everyone else was asleep, she poured a magic liquid on the body of the baby prince and
50 held him in a fire. Soon the prince began to look like a god; everyone was amazed at his beauty and strength. The queen, disturbed by the changes in her child, hid in the nursery and watched Ceres and the boy. And when she saw Ceres place the child into the fire, she screamed for help.

“Stupid woman!” shouted Ceres, snatching the baby from the fire. “I was going to make your son a god! He would have lived forever! Now he’ll be a mere mortal and die like the rest of you!”

The king and queen then realized that the boy’s nurse was Ceres, the powerful goddess of grain, and they were terrified. **B**

shrouded (shroud’əd)
adj. concealed or hidden

Language Coach

Word Roots The word root *wander* comes from the Old English word meaning “to travel.” How does knowing this root give you a clue to the meaning of the word *wandering* (line 34)?

◆ GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

Titles used for royalty—king, queen, prince, princess (as in line 38), duke, etc.—are only capitalized when they are used as a name or directly before a name, as in *Queen Elizabeth* or *Prince William*.



TEK 3B

B STYLISTIC ELEMENTS

Myths and other classical stories have **motifs**, or recurring story elements, such as magical transformations and wicked stepmothers. This passage features a common motif: a god or goddess takes a human form, but the disguise is ruined when people see the god do something extraordinary. Look for other motifs in this myth, and ask yourself how they affect the story.

1. **Mount Olympus** (ə-lym’pəs): the highest point in Greece and home of the gods and goddesses.

“I will only forgive you,” said Ceres, “if you build a great temple
60 in my honor. Then I will teach your people the secret rites to help the
corn grow.” **C**

At dawn the king ordered a great temple be built for the goddess.
But after the temple was completed, Ceres did not reveal the secret
rites. Instead she sat by herself all day, grieving for her kidnapped daughter.
She was in such deep mourning that everything on earth stopped growing.
It was a terrible year—there was no food, and people and animals began
to starve. **D**

Jupiter grew worried—if Ceres caused the people on earth to die, there
would be no more gifts and offerings for him. Finally he sent gods from
70 Mount Olympus to speak with her.

The gods came to Ceres and offered her gifts and pleaded with her to
make the earth **fertile** again.

“I never will,” she said, “not unless my daughter is returned safely to me.”

Jupiter had no choice but to bid his son, Mercury, the messenger god,
to return Proserpina to her mother.

Wandering the underworld, Mercury passed through dark smoky
caverns filled with ghosts and phantoms, until he came to the misty

C CAUSE AND EFFECT

Reread lines 46–61.
What are the effects
of the queen’s scream?

D CLASSICAL MYTHS

What extraordinary
abilities has Ceres
displayed?

fertile (fûr’tl) *adj.*
able to produce farm
crops or other vegetation

▼ Analyze Visuals

What **mood**, or feeling,
is conveyed through this
illustration?



throne room of Pluto and Proserpina. Though the maiden was still frightened, she had grown
80 accustomed to her new home and had almost forgotten her life on earth.

“Your brother, Jupiter, has ordered you to return Proserpina to her mother,” Mercury told Pluto. “Otherwise, Ceres will destroy the earth.”

Pluto knew he could not disobey Jupiter, but he didn’t want his wife to leave forever, so he said, “She can go. But first, we must be alone.”

When Mercury left, Pluto spoke softly to
90 Proserpina: “If you stay, you’ll be queen of the underworld, and the dead will give you great honors.”

As Proserpina stared into the eyes of the king of the dead, she dimly remembered the joy of her mother’s love. She remembered wildflowers in the woods and open sunlit meadows. “I would rather return,” she whispered.


Pluto sighed, then said, “All right, go. But before you leave, eat this
100 small seed of the pomegranate fruit. It is the food of the underworld—it will bring you good luck.”

Proserpina ate the tiny seed. Then Pluto’s black chariot carried her and Mercury away. The two stallions burst through the dry ground of earth—then galloped over the **barren** countryside to the temple where Ceres mourned for her daughter.

When Ceres saw her daughter coming, she ran down the hillside, and Proserpina sprang from the chariot into her mother’s arms. All day the two talked excitedly of what had happened during their separation, but when Proserpina told Ceres about eating the pomegranate seed,
110 the goddess hid her face and moaned in anguish.

“What have I done?” cried Proserpina.

“You have eaten the sacred food of the underworld,” said Ceres. “Now you must return for half of every year to live with Pluto, your husband.” **E**

And this is how the seasons began—for when fall and winter come, the earth grows cold and barren because Proserpina lives in the underworld with Pluto, and her mother mourns. But when her daughter comes back to her, Ceres, goddess of grain, turns the world to spring and summer: The corn grows, and everything flowers again. 



barren (bărr’ən) *adj.*
unable to produce or
without vegetation

E CAUSE AND EFFECT

What are the effects of the trick Pluto plays on Proserpina?



READING 3 Analyze, make inferences, and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts.
3B Analyze the function of stylistic elements in classical literature from various cultures.

Comprehension

- 1. Recall** How long does Ceres search for Proserpina before Hecate visits her?
- 2. Summarize** How does the myth explain the changing of the seasons?
- 3. Represent** Ceres, Pluto, Hecate, Helios, and Mercury are each the god or goddess of something. Create a chart or diagram showing what each controls.

Literary Analysis

- 4. Draw Conclusions** The gods in mythology are not equal in rank or power. Make a chart like the one shown. Using details from the myth, note the powers that each of the three gods has. Then explain which god in this myth has the greatest power.

<i>Jupiter</i>	<i>Ceres</i>	<i>Pluto</i>

- 5. Identify Cause and Effect** Look at the cause-effect chains you created while reading “The Story of Ceres and Proserpina.” Think about how the events in the plot are connected to each other. Which events in the plot create cause-effect chains?
- 6. Analyze Classical Myths** In what ways does this myth demonstrate the gods’ influence over people on Earth? Explain.
- 7. Evaluate Theme** Why might a story about the power of love and loss be used to help explain the change of seasons?

Extension and Challenge

- 8. Creative Project: Writing** Imagine that the gods and goddesses used the same methods of communication that we use today. Compose a few of the e-mails that Ceres and Proserpina might have sent to each other during Proserpina’s second visit to the underworld.
- 9. Inquiry and Research** Research one of the gods or goddesses from “The Story of Ceres and Proserpina.” What additional information did you find about that character? Share your findings with the class.

How powerful is LOVE?

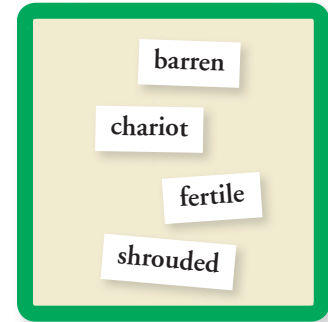
Look back at your list of the ways people you know have shown their love. How convincing is this myth in showing the power of a mother’s love for her child?

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Show that you understand the vocabulary words by deciding if each statement is true or false.

1. A **barren** hillside is covered with trees and flowers.
2. If there is a **shrouded** opening to a castle, it is easy to see it clearly.
3. In **fertile** soil, crops usually grow easily.
4. A **chariot** has four wheels and a powerful engine.



ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

• circumstance • contribute • element • significant • tradition

Retell the most **significant** events in this myth. Which **circumstance** surprises you most? Use at least one of the Academic Vocabulary words in your response.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: WORDS DERIVED FROM LATIN AND GREEK

The ancient Romans and Greeks gave us more than just classical mythology. They also gave us words and word parts that have greatly expanded and enriched the English vocabulary. Some of these Latin (Roman) and Greek words and word parts are connected to the classical myths. For example, we get the word *martial*, as in “martial arts,” from the name of the Roman god of war and warriors, Mars. (In Greek myths, Mars is called Ares.)

PRACTICE Match the words from Greek and Roman mythology on the left with the modern English words derived from them on the right.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Helios, Roman god of the sun | a. cereal (grain-based food) |
| 2. Ceres, Roman goddess of grain | b. Olympics (world athletic competition) |
| 3. Olympus, home of the Greek and Roman gods | c. jovial (happy) |
| 4. Pluto, Roman god of the underworld | d. helium (a naturally occurring element in the atmosphere) |
| 5. Jupiter, Roman king of the gods (also known as Jove) | e. plutonium (a radioactive element) |



READING 2A Determine the meaning of grade-level academic English words derived from Latin and Greek linguistic roots.

Interactive Vocabulary **THINK** central

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Conventions in Writing

◆ GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: Capitalize Correctly

Be sure to capitalize a family relationship word, such as *mother*, *father*, or *uncle*, when it is used as a name or directly before a name. Do not capitalize a family relationship word when it follows a possessive pronoun like *her* or *my* or an article like *a*, *an*, or *the*.

Original: Proserpina and **her Mother** were very close.

Revised: Proserpina and **her mother** were very close.

PRACTICE Correct the capitalization errors in each sentence.

1. Proserpina said, "I long for the days when mother and I were together."
2. It was clear that Ceres missed her Daughter.
3. "I'll find an Aunt to look after you," Jupiter said.
4. Mercury said, "I'd be happy to send a message for you, father."

For more help with capitalization, see page R51 in the *Grammar Handbook*.



ORAL AND WRITTEN CONVENTIONS 20 Use appropriate capitalization and punctuation conventions.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Demonstrate your understanding of "The Story of Ceres and Proserpina" by responding to the following prompt. Then use the **revising tip** to improve your writing.

WRITING PROMPT

Extended Response: Analyze a Character

Why was Ceres unable to go to the underworld and bring Proserpina back? In **two or three paragraphs**, explain why Ceres's power to rescue her daughter was limited.

REVISING TIP

Review your response. Have you used correct capitalization in describing Ceres's powers and limits as a goddess? Pay particular attention to how you have handled family relationship words like *mother* and *daughter*.

Interactive
Revision



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