

# Orpheus and Eurydice

(A tragic love story)



There once lived a contented and skilled musician named Orpheus, who could play his lyre so beautifully that his music would enchant all who heard it. It was so powerful that it could turn evil men good and tame even the most wild of beasts.

One day, Orpheus met the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Her name was Eurydice and Orpheus was so captivated by her charm and beauty that he quickly fell in love with her. When Eurydice saw Orpheus playing his lyre, her heart melted at once and she too fell in love. The couple were married within a few days and were blissfully happy together.

Eurydice was enjoying a stroll through the woods one day when she came across a shepherd tending to his flock. The shepherd, whose name was Aristaeus, was in awe of

Eurydice and he longed to talk to her and find out who she was. Eurydice was frightened by the man and she began to run from him. Aristaeus, not understanding why she was so scared, pursued Eurydice. He chased her through the woods, calling out to her to stop and speak to him. Eurydice ran on in a panic, eventually tripping over a log and landing with a thud on the ground. Unseen by Eurydice, a vicious snake crawled out from beneath the log and bit her. Its venom was so potent that she died at once.

When Orpheus heard what had happened, he was distraught. His wonderful wife had been taken from him so soon and he was inconsolable in his grief. Orpheus played his lyre to help ease his pain and the music that emanated from the instrument was so haunting that it moved the men, gods and even the plants and trees to tears.



Orpheus decided that he must try to bring Eurydice back to him. He set out on a daring quest to beg Hades - god of the underworld - to allow his wife to return to the human world. Hades was deeply saddened by Orpheus' plight, and so moved by the poignant music Orpheus played for him, that he agreed to give him the opportunity to get Eurydice back. He presented a challenge to the eager musician.

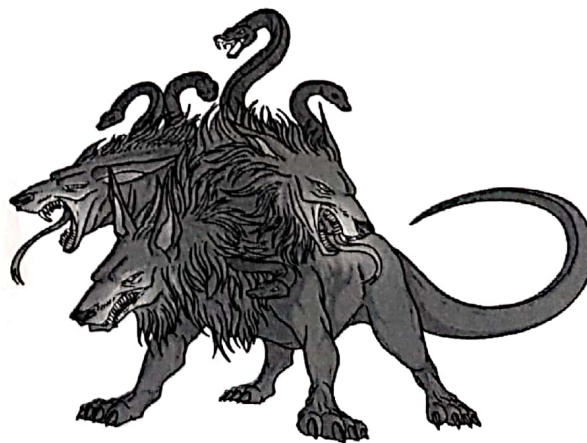


"I will allow Eurydice to follow you out of the underworld on one condition. Whatever obstacles you may encounter along your journey, you must not look back at your wife. If you do, then she will remain here with me eternally."

Orpheus did not hesitate in accepting the challenge. He was prepared to take on anything to get back his beloved wife. If all he had to do was not look at Eurydice as she followed him back out of the underworld, it would be easy!

Orpheus set off on his journey with hope in his heart and his beautiful Eurydice close behind him, but soon he came to a huge wooden door which was chained shut. Lifting his lyre, Orpheus' quick fingers began to play a magical tune. The chains burst off the door which swung gently open, allowing Orpheus to slip inside and continue on his way. The young man longed to turn around to check that Eurydice was still there but he managed to resist and he continued on.

Beyond the wooden door, Orpheus found himself inside a dank, dark room. The air was thick and stale and Orpheus' eyes watered involuntarily in the putrid atmosphere. As the light was so low, Orpheus pressed his hands against the moist, slimy walls and felt his way along through the room, moving as quickly as he dared. After a few minutes, he became aware of the sound of heavy breathing and a deep rumbling growl began to resonate off the walls, suddenly bursting into a thunderous roar. Orpheus' heart pounded in his chest and his ears rang painfully. He could just make out the shape of a humongous three-headed dog looming down on him menacingly. Orpheus recognised the beast at once as Cerberus - Hades' grotesque hound. Thinking quickly, Orpheus snatched up his lyre and began to play a soothing melody. Saliva rolled off the creature's three tongues, splashing onto a terrified Orpheus whose whole body trembled as he played. However, almost at once, the beastly dog began to calm down. It cocked its three heads sideways to listen to the soothing music and then it dropped to the ground, pacified by Orpheus' captivating tune. Orpheus crept on through the room, treading nervously over the dog's monstrous paws while continuing to play his instrument. Finally, he reached the end of the room and was able to slip away unnoticed. He took a deep breath and slumped against the wall, mopping his wet brow with the back of his hand.







In his terror, Orpheus had forgotten about Eurydice following him and he began to panic about whether she had made it through the room behind him or whether she was trapped with Cerberus. Orpheus remembered Hades' words – he had promised that Eurydice would follow unharmed as long as he did not look back at her and he managed to calm down. Ahead of him in the distance he could see the inky black waters of the river Styx and he knew that once he had sailed across the river he would be able to pass safely back into the mortal world and be with his dear wife once more.

Orpheus took large purposeful strides towards the river. He felt giddy with excitement, encouraged by the thought of holding and talking to Eurydice very soon. At the water's edge two boats were moored, ready to transport Orpheus and Eurydice to safety. Orpheus climbed into the first boat and the magical waters started to ripple, pushing the boat on its way. If he listened carefully, Orpheus could just about make out the sound of the second boat beginning its journey too and he knew that Eurydice was following behind. Orpheus smiled happily. His journey was almost complete. His quest would be a success! Suddenly, a huge wave was formed from nowhere and crashed heavily against the boat and then slid over Orpheus to the deck. Slick, black hands and arms, which formed from the murky waters, began to grab at the

boat and then slide over Orpheus' face and body, pulling him towards the water. Orpheus struggled against them but he could not move. He cried out in frustration and anger but the hands moved around his throat and tightened their grip and Orpheus feared this was how he would die. Orpheus' lyre lay next to him at the bottom of the boat. He scrabbled around trying to grasp it towards him with his one free hand. Suddenly, he managed to get a grip on it and he strummed it, releasing a single note. At once, the hands relaxed and Orpheus took his chance, grabbing the lyre properly and beginning to play. The hands released him fully and sank back below the water. Orpheus' music had saved him again!



The boat continued on. Orpheus carried on playing his lyre in case the grabbing hands returned again. He listened for the sound of Eurydice's boat following along but by now he couldn't hear it anymore so he stopped playing his lyre to listen more carefully. Nothing. Not a sound. Orpheus started to worry. Had the hands taken Eurydice? Had her boat stopped moving? He strained to hear even the tiniest sound but there was only silence and Orpheus began to despair that Eurydice had gone. Without thinking, he turned around and looked for her. Eurydice was there! Her boat was sailing towards him and she waved and smiled, filling his heart with joy. Then it happened...

# Year 5 Reading Assessment Fiction

Questions 1 to 15 are about '*Orpheus and Eurydice (A Tragic Love Story)*'

Circle the correct option to complete each sentence below.

1. The story is mainly told from the perspective of...

Eurydice

Aristaeus

Hades

Orpheus

1 mark

2. At the start of the extract, Orpheus is a...

god

shepherd

musician

hero

1 mark

3. Eurydice saw a shepherd who was...

walking

shearing

working

sleeping

1 mark

4. When Aristaeus first saw Eurydice, he was...

frightened

in love

amazed

angry

1 mark

5. In the first paragraph it says, 'It was so powerful that it could turn evil men good and tame even the most wild of beasts.'

How do these comparisons help the reader to understand the powers the lyre had?

1 mark

total for  
this page



6. Look at the sentence: 'Orpheus played his lyre to help ease his pain and the music that emanated from the instrument was so **haunting** that it moved the men, gods and even the plants and trees to tears.'

1 mark

The word haunting in this sentence is closest in meaning to...

Tick **one**

scary ☐

ghostly ☐

disturbing ☐

beautiful ☐

7. How does Orpheus' mood change throughout the beginning, middle and end of the story?  
Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

3 marks

Beginning - \_\_\_\_\_

Middle - \_\_\_\_\_

End - \_\_\_\_\_

8. Order these events as they happen in the story. Number them 1, 2, 3, 4.

**Eurydice is poisoned by a snake.**

☐

**Eurydice waves at her husband.**

☐

**Orpheus meets a gorgeous woman.**

☐

**Orpheus goes to the gods to ask for help.**

☐

1 mark

total for this page

**Slick, black hands and arms**

9. Explain **two** things that the words **slick** and **black** suggest about the creature.

2 marks

10. Describe two ways in which the lyre saves Orpheus' life in the story. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

2 marks

11. 'Beyond the wooden door, Orpheus found himself inside a dank, dark room. The air was thick and stale and Orpheus' eyes watered involuntarily in the putrid atmosphere.'

2 marks

How does this description make the reader feel about the room?

12. 'Orpheus' heart pounded in his chest'

1 mark

Give another **word** with the same meaning as 'pounded' that could have been used instead.

total for this page

13. Using information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether the statement is **true** or **false**.

1 mark

	True	False
Orpheus captivated people with his music.		
Eurydice was scared of the shepherd.		
Hades set Orpheus an impossible challenge.		
A strange creature tried to strangle Orpheus.		

14. "I will allow Eurydice to follow you out of the underworld on one condition. Whatever obstacles you may encounter along your journey, you must not look back at your wife. If you do, then she will remain here with me eternally."

2 marks

Why do you think Hades set this challenge for Orpheus?

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15. Based on what you have read, what does the last paragraph suggest might happen at the end of the story?

2 marks

Use evidence from the story to support your prediction.

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**End of questions about 'Orpheus and Eurydice (A Tragic Love Story)'**

**\*\*END OF TEST\*\***

total for  
this name



question	answer	marks	notes
1.	The story is mainly told from the perspective of...		
	Orpheus	1	<b>Content domain:</b> 2b - retrieve and record information / identify key details from fiction and non-fiction. <b>Award 1 mark</b> for the correct option indicated.
2.	At the start of the extract, Orpheus is a...		
	musician	1	<b>Content domain:</b> 2b - retrieve and record information / identify key details from fiction and non-fiction. <b>Award 1 mark</b> for the correct option indicated.
3.	Eurydice saw a shepherd who was...		
	working	1	<b>Content domain:</b> 2b - retrieve and record information / identify key details from fiction and non-fiction. <b>Award 1 mark</b> for the correct option indicated.
4.	When Aristaeus first saw Eurydice, he was...		
	amazed	1	<b>Content domain:</b> 2b - retrieve and record information / identify key details from fiction and non-fiction. <b>Award 1 mark</b> for the correct option indicated.
5.	In the first paragraph it says, 'It was so powerful that it could turn evil men good and tame even the most wild of beasts.' How do these comparisons help the reader to understand the powers the lyre had?		
	<b>Award 1 mark</b> for reference to providing comparisons that are two opposite extremes, showing it was so powerful that it could change something from one extreme to another. <b>Award 1 mark</b> for reference to providing a comparison to something the reader will relate to.	1	<b>Content domain:</b> 2d - make inferences from the text / explain and justify inferences with evidence from the text. <b>Award 1 mark</b> in total for either response.
6.	The word haunting in this paragraph is closest in meaning to ...		
	beautiful	1	<b>Content domain:</b> 2a - give / explain the meaning of words in context. <b>Award 1 mark</b> for the correct option indicated.



7.	How does Orpheus' mood change throughout the beginning, middle and end of the story? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.										
	<p><b>Beginning:</b> Accept appropriate synonyms for 'contented': happy, satisfied, pleased; with a relevant quote, 'There once lived a contented and skilled musician named Orpheus'.</p> <p><b>Middle:</b> Accept appropriate synonyms for 'distraught': distressed, troubled; with a relevant quote, 'When Orpheus heard what had happened, he was distraught.'</p> <p><b>or</b></p> <p>Accept appropriate synonyms for 'hopeful': optimistic; with a relevant quote, 'Orpheus set off on his journey with hope in his heart'.</p> <p><b>or</b></p> <p>Accept any other relevant feeling taken from the <b>middle</b> of the extract, with a quote.</p> <p><b>End:</b> Accept appropriate synonyms for 'joyful': delighted, happy; with a relevant quote, 'filling his heart with joy'.</p>	3	<p><b>Content domain:</b> 2h - make comparisons within the text</p> <p><b>Award 3 marks</b> for answers that refer to his mood at the beginning, middle and end, with evidence from the text to support each section.</p> <p><b>Award 1 mark</b> for feelings only or <b>1 mark</b> for evidence only.</p>								
8.	Order these events as they happen in the story. Number them 1, 2, 3, 4.										
	<table><tr><td>Eurydice is poisoned by a snake.</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>Eurydice waves at her husband.</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td>Orpheus meets a gorgeous woman.</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>Orpheus goes to the gods to ask for help.</td><td>3</td></tr></table>	Eurydice is poisoned by a snake.	2	Eurydice waves at her husband.	4	Orpheus meets a gorgeous woman.	1	Orpheus goes to the gods to ask for help.	3	1	<p><b>Content domain:</b> 2b - retrieve and record information/identify key details from fiction and non-fiction.</p> <p><b>Award 1 mark</b> for all <b>four</b> correct.</p>
Eurydice is poisoned by a snake.	2										
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Orpheus meets a gorgeous woman.	1										
Orpheus goes to the gods to ask for help.	3										

9.	Explain <b>two</b> things that the words <b>slick</b> and <b>black</b> suggest about the creature.		
	<p>Acceptable points for slick include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• glossy</li> <li>• smooth</li> <li>• slippery</li> <li>• sleek</li> </ul> <p>Acceptable points for black include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dark</li> <li>• dismal</li> <li>• dirty</li> <li>• inky</li> </ul>	2	<p><b>Content Domain:</b> 2a - give /explain the meaning of words in context.</p> <p><b>Award 2 marks</b> for responses that interpret both <b>slick</b> and <b>black</b>.</p>
10.	Describe two ways in which the lyre saves Orpheus' life in the story. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.		
	<p>Appropriate quotations include:</p> <p>'It cocked its three heads sideways to listen to the soothing music and then it dropped to the ground, pacified by Orpheus' captivating tune.'</p> <p>'Suddenly, he managed to get a grip on it and he strummed it, releasing a single note. At once, the hands relaxed and Orpheus took his chance, grabbing the lyre properly and beginning to play. The hands released him fully and sank back below the water. Orpheus' music had saved him again!'</p>	2	<p><b>Content domain:</b> 2f - identify /explain how information /narrative content is related and contributes to meaning as a whole.</p> <p><b>Award 1 mark</b> for each appropriate quotation from the text that refers directly to his life being <b>saved</b> from <b>danger</b> (up to a maximum of <b>2 marks</b>).</p> <p><b>Do not accept</b> answers which simply refer to places where the lyre has helped him, such as, 'Hades was deeply saddened by Orpheus' plight and so moved by the poignant music Orpheus played for him, that he agreed to give him the opportunity to get Eurydice back.'</p> <p>'Beyond the wooden door, Orpheus found himself inside a dank, dark room. The air was thick and stale and Orpheus' eyes watered involuntarily in the putrid atmosphere.'</p>
11.	How does this description make the reader feel about the room?		
	<p><b>Award 1 mark</b> for answers that refer to dank/dark – it suggests that the room is not pleasant because it is <b>damp</b> and there is <b>no light</b> to see.</p> <p><b>Award 1 mark</b> for answers that refer to the thick, stale, putrid atmosphere – it suggests that something <b>old</b> and <b>rotten</b> is in the room and that there is <b>no fresh air</b> to be able to breathe.</p> <p><b>Award 1 mark</b> for more general answers that refer to a feeling of danger or that something might go wrong.</p>	2	<p><b>Content domain:</b> 2d - make inferences from the text /explain and justify inferences with evidence from the text.</p> <p><b>Award 1 mark</b> for each of the following points up to a maximum of <b>2 marks</b>.</p>



12.	Give another <b>word</b> with the same meaning as 'pounded' that could have been used instead.																		
	Accept synonyms for 'pounded' that make sense in the sentence, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>thumped</li><li>throbbed</li><li>thudded</li></ul>	1	<b>Content domain:</b> 2a - give /explain the meaning of words in context. <b>Award 1 mark</b> in total. <b>Do not accept</b> 'beat'.																
13.	Using information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether the statement is <b>true</b> or <b>false</b> .																		
	<table><thead><tr><th></th><th>T</th><th>F</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Orpheus captivated people with his music.</td><td>✓</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Eurydice was scared of the shepherd.</td><td>✓</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Hades set Orpheus an impossible challenge.</td><td></td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>A strange creature tried to strangle Orpheus.</td><td>✓</td><td></td></tr></tbody></table>		T	F	Orpheus captivated people with his music.	✓		Eurydice was scared of the shepherd.	✓		Hades set Orpheus an impossible challenge.		✓	A strange creature tried to strangle Orpheus.	✓		1	<b>Content domain:</b> 2b - retrieve and record information/identify key details from fiction and non-fiction. <b>Award 1 mark</b> for all <b>four</b> correctly ticked.	
	T	F																	
Orpheus captivated people with his music.	✓																		
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14.	Why do you think Hades set this challenge for Orpheus?																		
	<p><b>Award 1 mark</b> for references to the beauty of Eurydice meaning that Hades may have wanted to keep her in the underworld for himself so set Orpheus a very difficult challenge.</p> <p><b>Award 1 mark</b> for references to Hades wanting Orpheus to prove how much he loved Eurydice.</p>	2	<b>Content domain:</b> 2d - make inferences from the text /explain and justify inferences with evidence from the text. <b>Award up to 2 marks.</b>																

15.	Based on what you have read, what does the last paragraph suggest might happen at the end of the story? Use evidence from the story to support your prediction.			
	Examples of <b>2 mark</b> responses.  'Then it happened...' suggests that something bad will happen. Orpheus has broken the rules of the challenge so Eurydice will die for a second time and be taken back to Hades in the underworld.  The text says that it is 'a tragic love story' so I think that the ending will be catastrophic and Eurydice will die.  <b>Do not accept</b> general answers not relating to specific events or actions, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It's going to be disastrous.</li><li>• The ending will be happy.</li><li>• She will die.</li></ul> <b>Do not accept</b> predictions that are not supported by the text.	2	<b>Content domain:</b> 2e - predict what might happen from details stated and implied.  <b>Award 2 marks</b> for an acceptable point supported by text-based evidence.	
			Acceptable points (can be implied)	Evidence
			Death	'Then it happened...' - suggests that something is going to go wrong.  A tragic love story – suggests that the ending is not happy.
			She returns to the underworld	'Without thinking, he turned around and looked for her.'  Orpheus was warned not to look at her: 'If you do, then she will remain here with me eternally.'
		Total 22		