

Myth #10 Psyche and Eros

Name _____

READ CLOSELY AND SHOW EVIDENCE OF THINKING BY ANNOTATING. Annotate all readings by highlighting the main idea in yellow; the best evidence supporting in blue, and any interesting phrases in green.

Eros, “the fairest among the deathless gods,” was also one of the most feared ones. And how could he not be? Even a single one of his arrows was enough to “unnerve the limbs and overcome the mind” of any god or mortal. However, this is not one of the numerous stories in which his arrows lead to someone’s everlasting happiness, or another’s eternal doom. This is the story of how Eros himself once fell in love with someone; and how that someone was willing to do anything not to lose him. Often read as “an allegory of the soul’s troublous journey through life towards a mystic union with the divine after death,” Eros and Psyche is one of the very few fairytales that have reached us from the Ancient world; and it is undoubtedly the most beautiful one.

Psyche, the Most Beautiful Maiden

The Youngest of the Three Daughters

Once upon a time there lived in the West parts a king and a queen who had three daughters, all of them beautiful beyond belief. The two elder girls were so stunning that they exceeded all other mortal women in loveliness; but the beauty of the youngest of the three, Psyche (which is Ancient Greek for “Soul”), was such that even goddesses envied her. People came from all over the world to admire Psyche, and they were so smitten with her “maidenly majesty” that they even started paying *her* the divine honors typically reserved for Aphrodite, whose ceremonies were neglected and whose temples were defaced.

Aphrodite’s Revenge

Aphrodite, to say the least, wasn’t that flattered by all of this, so she sent her son Eros among the mortals with a simple mission: to fuel in Psyche love for “the most miserable creature living, the most poor, the most crooked, and the most vile, that there may be none found in all the world of like wretchedness.” Some say that it was because he accidentally pricked himself with his arrows, others because Psyche was just that beautiful; either way, the minute Eros laid his eyes upon this beautiful mortal maiden, he fell in love with her; and, for once, he decided to disobey his mother.

The Oracle’s Prophecy

Now, Psyche’s two sisters had enjoyed their fair share of suitors, culminating in their royal marriages to two foreign kings. However – thinking her an embodiment or an unknown daughter of Aphrodite – nobody had even dared to ask for the hand of Psyche, who, consequently, started hating herself for her own beauty. Distraught, Psyche’s father went to Miletus and asked Apollo’s oracle for an advice on how he could find a husband for his youngest daughter. The oracle replied that Psyche’s husband “is no wight of human seed,/ But serpent dire and fierce as may be thought,/ Who flies with wings above in starry skies/ And doth subdue each thing with fiery flight.” To meet this evil spirit – feared by

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the gods themselves – Psyche must be clad in her mourning garments and left alone on a rocky mountaintop, from where her future husband would come and fetch her.

Psyche and Eros

The Marriage of Psyche

Little did the king and queen know – and even less did Psyche – that the god described by the oracle was none other than Eros. Soon after she was left alone on the craggy mountaintop, the frightened Psyche was lifted by Zephyrus, the West Wind, who wafted her gently down into a deep valley, and laid her even gentler in a bed of most sweet and fragrant flowers. In the midst of a nearby wood, Psyche happened upon a heavenly palace, so luxurious and splendid that even Zeus himself would have perhaps marveled at it. After being provided by a host of invisible servants with the most delectable of meals and all kinds of pleasurable things, Psyche went to bed; there, in the darkness, she was visited by Eros, her unknown husband, who “made a perfect consummation of the marriage,” and left Psyche just before dawn.

Psyche Missing Her Family

And so the days passed for Psyche who, for a while, wished for nothing more. Eventually, a baby started growing inside her, and she couldn't help but thinking that nothing could ever spoil her happiness. However, after some time, she realized that unshared gladness is not as joyful as the shared one, and she suddenly started missing her family. So she asked her still unseen husband – who had explicitly told her that he would leave her if she ever sees his face – if it would be possible for her sisters to visit her from time to time. After she solemnly swore that she would ignore her sisters' pleas and advises (whatever they may be), Eros granted Psyche her wish. And so the West Wind lifted Psyche's sisters just as he had once lifted Psyche herself, and softly brought them down in the palace of Eros.

Psyche's Jealous Sisters

Thousands upon thousands of embraces and kisses were shared between the sisters during their reunion. However, with every next visit, the elder sisters of Psyche grew more and more envious of their sibling's extraordinary fortune. And when Psyche once confessed to them that she had no idea what her husband looks like, they scared her stiff that her husband must be an ugly beast who plans to devour her baby once she gives birth. Eventually, they convinced her to kill him.

Eros Flees

That very night, after their lovemaking, Psyche approached the blissfully asleep Eros with a lamp and a razor. It didn't take her long to identify him: she didn't only see hairs of gold, purple cheeks, and neck whiter than milk, but also her husband's bow and arrows lying beside him. Awestruck and curious, she pulled one of the arrows out of the quiver and pricked herself while doing this. The pain startled her, and a drop of burning oil fell from her lamp upon the shoulder of Eros; this awoke the god momentarily and, just as soon as he realized that his wife had broken her promise, he fled away without a word. Too bad that Psyche, owing to the arrow wound, had now fallen even more intensely in love with her husband.

The Wanderings of Psyche

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Not knowing what to do, Psyche started searching for Eros right away. She wandered through country after country and prayed for help, but it was all in vain. Even Demeter and Hera, afraid that everything else would offend Aphrodite, refused to aid Psyche on her quest. Seeing no way out, Psyche eventually came to the palace of Aphrodite herself. Furious that her son had disobeyed her commands, the goddess of love and beauty showed no mercy. She took Psyche violently by her hair and tore her apparel, mocking her for conceiving an illegitimate child; afterward, she handed her over to her two servant-maidens, Sorrow and Sadness, and started torturing her by giving her tasks as formidable as those of Heracles.

WRITE A REFLECTION (3 paragraphs-5 sentences each)-This needs to be submitted through google classroom.

One paragraph that reflects on what the writer said

- **Here's where you summarize the main points of the story**

One paragraph that reflects on the writer's style

- **How does the author use rhetorical devices (similes, metaphors, symbols etc.)**

- **What is the theme/author's message**

One paragraph that reflects the reader's thoughts on the content of the Story

- **Here's where you can discuss your reaction to the story, did it speak to you? Did you like it, why or why not?**