***Echoes from Mount Olympus***

Study Guide

**“The All-Too-Human Gods”**

**pages 9-11**

**Study Guide Questions:**

1. The essay compares the Olympian gods to a dysfunctional family. What examples does it give to support that metaphor?
2. Why do you think the Greeks and Romans didn’t create perfect gods and goddesses?
3. After reading the essay, do you think you will like this book? Why or why not?
4. What good points and bad points does the essay mention about the civilizations of ancient Greece and of ancient Rome?

**“A Whole Nation and a People”**

by Harry Mark Petrakis

**pages 136-141**

**VOCABUALRY (read over before starting the story)**

**ethnic** sharing distinctive cultural traits as a group in society

**ancestry** the former generations of somebody's family

**sear** burn

**goaded** pushed, prodded

**remorse** regret

**impudent** rude

**apprehensive**  fearful, worried

**abysmal** horrible

**razing**  tearing down, demolishing

**desolate** deserted, gloomy

**Other Unfamiliar Words & Their Definitions** (write these below as you read)

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**Study Guide Questions:**

1. Read the author’s biography in the **back of the book (page may vary depending on the edition you have).** What do you learn about the author’s childhood in terms of the following:

Time

Place

What does Petrakis mean by describing his neighborhood as a “bazaar of nationalities”?

2. Is his writing fiction or non-fiction?

**continued on next page**

3. How does ethnicity play a role in the short story “A Whole Nation and a People”?

4. How does this story bear any relationship to “The All-Too-Human Gods”?

5. What details does Petrakis use to make the story vivid so that the reader can experience the action along with the narrator?

6. A THEME is a lesson conveyed by a piece of writing. For example: “Money is the root of all evil”; “Love conquers all,” etc. How would you state the main theme of Petrakis’s story?

**“Zeus and Hera”**

by Bernard Evslin, Dorothy Evslin, and Ned Hoopes

**pages 18-21**

**Background:**

The Titans represent one generation of gods. (Cronos is usually called a Titan.) Zeus and the Olympians are the next generation. Many early cultures were **polytheistic**. They believed in more than one deity, each with his or her own personality and relationships with other deities such as the sun, ocean, storms, wind, war, or love. The major gods and goddesses formed a pantheon. The Greek pantheon members mostly lived on Mount Olympus, and they often took human form. Giving human traits or forms to non-human beings is called anthropomorphism. Thus, the **pantheon** consisted of **anthropomorphic**deities, the **Olympians***.* The main twelve are listed on pages 12-13.

**VOCABUALRY (read over before starting the story)**

**discord** conﬂict; strife

**forger** maker; craftsman

**infidelities** disloyalties; affairs

**intriguers** schemers; plotters

**pent up** shut up; confined

**prophesied** predicted; foresaw

**swaddling** tightly wrapped; restricting

**tumult** commotion; disturbance

**Other Unfamiliar Words & Their Definitions** (write these below as you read)

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**Study Guide Questions:**

1. Outline the three generations of deities described in this story.

I. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was the First One

 A. He had a son, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 B. He had a daughter, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

II. Cronos and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ married

 B. Rhea gave birth to

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**(continued on next page)**

 III. Zeus and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ married

 A. By \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Zeus fathered Ares, Hephaestus, and Eris

B. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ also fathered Athene, Hermes, Apollo, and Artemis, among others, by other females

2. Using specific examples from the text, describe below at least FIVE ways in which the author portrays the Titans and Olympians as members of a very dysfunctional family.

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3. This story also provides possible explanations for the origins of two or three natural phenomena, a word and a tradition. List these below, as well as the cause(s) given for each:

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**“The Firebringer”**

by Louis Untermeyer

**pages 22-25**

**Pre-reading exercise:**

Recall your most intense conflict with an authority figure and the outcome of that conflict.

**VOCABUALRY (read over before starting the story)**

**destiny** fate; future

**fettered** shackled; chained

**forethought** ability to think ahead

**immortal** deathless; ageless

**manacles** handcuffs; chains

**tyranny** dictatorship; despotism

**Other Unfamiliar Words & Their Definitions (write these below as you read)**

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**Study Guide Questions:**

l. Describe the early (unsuccessful) human races that Zeus created, and why Zeus wasn’t satisfied with them.

2. What was Prometheus told to use— and not use—to create a new race of humans?

3. Why do you think Prometheus was forbidden to take anything from the heavens?

**(continued on next page)**

4. Why do you think that Prometheus was disobedient and took the forbidden fire anyway? Why does Prometheus believe that giving humans fire is more important than Zeus’s threat? Did he do it for the humans’ sake? For his own? Some of both? Explain.

5. Zeus is against humankind’s progress and punishes Prometheus for helping achieve progress through science and technology. Where can we see similar situations in real life?

6. How does the Prometheus story parallel somewhat the story of the creation of humans in Genesis?

7. How was Prometheus punished?

8. What deal did Zeus offer Prometheus eventually (p. 25)?

Why doesn’t Prometheus take Zeus’s offer, and what does this tell us about Prometheus’ character?

**(continued on next page)**

9. The narrator of the story tells us that Prometheus gave mankind “his forethought, his fearless spirit as a fighter against tyranny, his courage and, most of all, his compassion for all people everywhere” (p. 25).

Are these qualities possessed by Prometheus? Use specific references to the story to support your point.

Are these qualities possessed by mankind in general? Use specific references to real life to support your point.

Where in history have we seen “tyrants”?

Where in history have we seen people refuse to “help a tyrant”?

10. Must a person challenge authority in order to be a hero? Explain.

**Extra Credit:** Research myths from other cultures, such as Native American, that explain how humans acquired fire. Compare them with the Prometheus myth in a compare/contrast essay of 200-300m words. Word-process your findings or hand-write them VERY neatly in pen on lined paper. (up to 100 quiz points)

**“Pandora”**

by Barbara McBride-Smith

**pages 27-30**

**Background:**

 Using colloquial American language, Barbara McBride-Smith tells the tale of the longstanding feud between Papa Zeus and the Metheus brothers, Pro (Prometheus) and Epi (Epimetheus). As part of his subtle plan, Zeus creates a woman, Pandora, for Epi to marry. Zeus gives Pandora a beautiful box but forbids her to open it.

 The story of Pandora came into prominence in the *Theogony*, Hesiod’s epic poem, written circa 800 BC. The myth dates back to the first centuries of humanity, just after the Titanomachy, the Great War between the Titans and the Olympians. It is interesting to note that the reference to Pandora’s “Box” came only in the 16th century from Erasmus of Rotterdam. The bottom line is that the entire story about Pandora was fabricated. It may be considered as a misogynist stand that the creation of woman was the harbinger of all evil on this world.

**Note: Phestus is more properly called Hephaestus.**

**VOCABUALRY (read over before starting the story)**

**commenced** began; started

**Other Unfamiliar Words & Their Definitions (write these below as you read)**

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**Study Guide questions:**

1. What are Pandora’s qualities?

2. What is Zeus’s wedding gift, and what is odd about it?

To what modern item does the narrator compare this gift; why?

3. What happens when Pandora finally opens her gift?

**(continued on next page)**

4. We are told that “Pandora got a grip on herself” and closed the box, but earlier we were told that she had opened it because “she was smart.” What do you make of these two seemingly contradictory statements?

5. Some explanations of Pandora’s name say it means “all-gifted” (i.e., possessing many talents) and others “gift to all.” Which interpretation do you think makes more sense? Why?

6. HOPE stays in the jar and is NOT released upon the world as the rest of the contents are. The author makes this seem like a good thing in her version here (hope is “kept safe in the box”), but does that actually make sense? Explain.

7. Although this is an ancient myth, the author has the narrator use words and phrases from current American culture; these are called **anachronisms**.

**List at least six** such anachronisms (references to modern American—not ancient Greek— culture) below.

Which type of narration did you like best: that of “The Firebringer” or of this story? Why?

8. How is this story similar to the Biblical tale of Eve, the serpent, and the forbidden fruit? Use the chart below to make comparisons:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Pandora Story** | **Eve Story** |
| ***Pandora is the first mortal woman*** |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
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**“The Wise Goddess: Athena”**

by Betty Bonham Lies

**pages 31-33**

**Background:**

This piece is considered more of a character study or essay than a myth. Like many myths, however, it focuses on a competition between gods. Its main focus is the theme of WISDOM.

**VOCABUALRY (read over before starting the story)**

**brackish** salty; saline

**innumerable** countless; many**Other Unfamiliar Words & Their Definitions (write these below as you read)**

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**Study Guide Questions:**

1. How did Athena settle disputes?

2. Make a list of Athena’s other accomplishments as depicted on p. 33.

3. How is this portrayal of a female entity in this essay different from the one put forth in “Pandora”?

4. In the concluding paragraph how does author Betty Bonham Lies define “heroism” and “courage”?

**(continued on next page)**

Think of at least two real-life examples of people who demonstrate this sense of “heroism” and “courage.” Name/identify them and describe their actions below. Your descriptions should support your choices.

 **“Apollo and Artemis: The Twins”**

by Ellen Switzer and Costas

**Pages 35-39**

**VOCABUALRY (read over before starting the story)**

**appeased** satisfied; pacified

**banishment** exile; expulsion

**chastity** sexual purity

**commoners** ordinary people

**defiled** soiled; tainted

**impetuous** hasty; impulsive

**nymph** nature spirit; sprite

**prophecies** predictions; forecasts

**Other Unfamiliar Words & Their Definitions**

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**Background:** Zeus fathered children by many females—both mortal and immortal— besides his wife the goddess Hera. Not all these females were impregnated by Zeus willingly! In this story, Zeus mates with Leto, who is a nymph. Nymphs were mythological nature spirits associated with particular natural or geographical forms (such as forests or rivers) and appearing as beautiful young women. Note that three generations are portrayed in the story: (1) Zeus and Leto; (2) Apollo and Artemis; and (3) Aesculapius.

**Study Guide Questions:**

1. Apollo established the oracle at Delphi to foretell the future. What were the Pythonesses?

**(continued on next page)**

Describe the origin of the title Pythoness; give all the details from throughout the story!

2. Why do you think many humans today continue to seek predictions of their own futures through such means as fortune tellers, horoscopes, and tarot readings?

 Would they really want to know what the future holds for them?

How do you think fortune tellers, seers, tarot card readers, etc., are viewed in the U.S.? Why?

3. Is this ability of Aesculapius (also known as Asclepius) to bring the nearly-dead back to life universally admired in the story? Explain.

What condition does Zeus make Aesculapius adhere to before reversing his banishment?

How do Aesculapius’ ability—as well as the reaction of others to this ability—and Zeus’ condition parallel some modern-day debates about medical ethics?

**(continued on next page)**

 4. What did Aphrodite do when Zeus reversed his judgments?

In the end, what did Apollo get instead of Daphne? What has it become symbolic of?

5. What basic differences in Greek and Roman attitudes are revealed by their worship of Apollo?

Which attitude—the Greek or the Roman—is closer to the attitude of modern Americans in the U.S.? On what evidence do you base your conclusion?

6. When Zeus asked Artemis to make a wish, what did she wish for?

Which part of these wishes did Zeus tell her she could change her mind about? Why?

7. Which do you think became the more interesting deity, Apollo or Artemis? Explain your choice, using specific references to elements of the story.

**(continued on next page)**

8. In what ways do the children in this story give evidence of unusual gifts?

 What current books, television shows or movies feature an unusual child as a hero?

9. Under what circumstances might being markedly different from peers be a blessing? A curse?

**“Arachne”**

by Olivia E. Coolidge

**pages 48-51**

**VOCABUALRY (read over before starting the story)**

**descendants** children; heirs

**obscure** unknown; unnoticed

**obstinacy** stubbornness; reluctance

**Other Unfamiliar Words & Their Definitions (write these below as you read)**

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**Study Guide Questions:**

1. What are the different explanations for Arachne’s skilled weaving? What is Arachne’s response?

2. Why do other people’s comments about her skill bother Arachne?

Why won’t Arachne admit the possibility that her talent for weaving is a gift from the goddess Athena?

Is Arachne truly 100 percent responsible for the beauty of what she produces (see p. 50, bottom)?

3. What does Arachne weave during the contest with Athena? What does this show about her?

4. What does Athena weave, and what does this show about her?

5. What does it suggest that Athena tears Arachne’s tapestry before the contest can be judged?

6. Why does Athena change Arachne into a spider instead of letting her hang herself?

**(continued on next page)**

7. What message would you say this story send about taking pride in your talents?

Should people avoid expressing pride in their accomplishments? Why or why not?

What seems to be the difference between **talent** and **accomplishment?**

8. Do you find the characters and actions of Arachne and Athena worthy of admiration, disapproval, pity or other feelings? **Fill out the chart below, noting actions taken by each and your judgment about those actions.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Character****(Athena or Arachne)** | **Action** | **Your Judgment** |
| Arachne | Works many hours at her craft  | Admirable |
|  |  |  |
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**(continued on next page)**

9. What element of nature is this story the origin tale of?

**Demeter and Persephone**

by Homer, translated by Penelope Proddow

**pages 56-64**

**VOCABUALRY (read over before starting the story)**

**laments** expressions of sorrow

**lavish** extravagant; extreme

**omen** foreshadowing; sign

**stately** noble; elegant

**stealthily** secretly; covertly

**treachery** betrayal; disloyalty

**Other Unfamiliar Words & Their Definitions (write these below as you read)**

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**Background:**

The blind poet Homer is best known as the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Little is known about him except that he lived in the ninth century B.C. Some even think he might be fictional. However, the Homeric style was acknowledged and imitated by poets in the sixth century B.C. Their Homeric hymns, such as “Demeter and Persephone,” were presented at public festivals, probably as songs.

**Note:**

“He Who Has Many Names” and “He Who Receives Many Guests” refer to Hades.

 **When reading a poem,** do not put a pause at the end of a line unless there is a mark of punctuation, such as a comma, dash, or period, to indicate that a pause belongs there.

**Study Guide Questions:**

1. Why does Helios think that Hades would be a good choice as a husband?

2. Why do you think the poet refers to Zeus as “black clouded”?

**(continued on next page)**

 3. Demeter is the earth goddess, responsible for growing things and for agriculture. How would you evaluate her helpfulness to mortals?

4. Evaluate Zeus’s responses to Demeter's grief. What finally got his attention and caused him to take action?

5. Who is the first-person speaker, the “I” and “me” at the start and end of the poem?

6. Imagine you had to create three-act play based on the poem. Where would each act begin? Why?

7. What does this poem explain the origin of?

**“Persephone, Falling”**

by Rita Dove

**page 65**

**Study Guide Questions:**

1. In the poem, what happens to Persephone because she “strayed from the herd”?

2. Who is speaking in the second strophe (word group in a poem that doesn’t have a regular rhyme scheme), beginning with the word “Remember”?

**(continued on next page)**

3. What does the term “strayed from the herd” mean when used to describe human actions?

4. Is it a good or bad thing to “stray from the herd”? Explain.

5. Do your elders encourage you to “stray from the herd,” or do the discourage it?

Why do you think this is?

6. There has been much public discussion recently regarding whether today’s parents are overly protective of their children. What do you think, and why?

**“Echo and Narcissus”**

by Anne Terry White

**pages 66-69**

**Background:** Greek nymphs are not deities and are not immortal, but they can love for several thousand years.

**Study Guide Questions:**

1. What words would you use to characterize/describe Echo? What were her good points? What were her bad points?

**(continued on next page)**

2. What was Hera’s motive for punishing Echo?

Do you think Echo deserved it?

3. What words would you use to characterize/describe Narcissus? What were his good points? What were his bad points?

4. Does Echo’s punishment have an impact on her relationship with Narcissus, or would things have gone pretty much the same way had Hera never made Echo’s tongue lose its powers? **Use specific references to the text of the story to back up your argument.**

5. What are the ultimate fates of Echo and Narcissus?

Which character do you feel more sympathy for? Why?

6. What is this tale the origin story of?

**“Homer, The Blind Poet”** by Alisoun Witting

 **“Odysseus”** by W.H.D. Rouse

**pages 74-81**

**Background: The Trojan War, Odysseus and Penelope**

 According to legend, the war began after Paris of Troy kidnapped Helen of Greece. The Greek army sailed to Troy to bring Helen back. After ten years of war, the Greeks defeated the Trojans by trickery. They built a gigantic wooden horse and presented it to the Trojans a gift. That night Greek soldiers hidden inside the horse unlocked the city gates—letting in the rest of the Greek army. The Trojan War was considered a myth until ruins discovered in the nineteenth century in Turkey proved to be the site of ancient Troy. Historians now believe that Troy and Greece actually waged a long war.

Homer’s Odyssey also tells the story of Penelope. For 20 years, she awaits her husband’s return. During this time, many noblemen ask—even demand—to marry her. She refuses to believe that Odysseus is dead but finally says she’ll choose a new husband when she finishes weaving a funeral shroud for her father-in-law. She weaves by day and at night unravels her work. When her suitors catch on, they are furious.

**VOCABUALRY (read over before starting the story**

**siege** blockade; persistent attack

**steward** caretaker; manager

**bowling** rolling; moving quickly

**sty** pig pen

**Other Unfamiliar Words & Their Definitions (write these below as you read)**

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**Study Guide Questions:**

1. What journey does Odysseus wish to make?

2. What events delay Odysseus on his journey?

**(continued on next page)**

3. As a heroic figure, is Odysseus more of a great warrior or more of a great thinker and trickster? Provide **textual evidence** for your response!

4. Why do you think Hermes gives Odysseus protection from the enchantments of Circe?

**“Cupid and Psyche”**

by Barbara McBride-Smith

pages 85-91

**VOCABUALRY (read over before starting the story)**

**degradation** disgrace; dishonor

**exquisitely** beautifully; perfectly

**fester** become infected

**Other Unfamiliar Words & Their Definitions (write these below as you read)**

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**Study Guide questions:**

1. Why does Cupid fall in love with Psyche? (Explain what he was supposed to do and what actually happened.)

2. What lines in the story draw comparisons between the nature of the gods and human nature?

3. What does Psyche have to do to get Cupid back, and how does she accomplish the tasks?

4. What would you say is the moral of, or lesson conveyed by, this story? (State it in one sentence.)

 **(continue on next page)**

5. What other story did we read by the author of this version of “Cupid and Psyche”?

How would you describe the author’s STYLE?

How would you describe her TONE?