

Compare and Contrast Fictional Stories: Persephone

The Story of Persephone

Persephone was the daughter of Zeus, ruler of the gods, and Demeter, the goddess of the harvest. Demeter was very protective of her daughter, and turned down many suitors who asked for Persephone's hand in marriage.

One of these suitors was Hades, the god of the Underworld. Demeter was repulsed by the notion of her only daughter living with Hades in darkness, among the Dead. However, Hades did not take Demeter's rejection lightly, and instead crafted a plan to kidnap Persephone.

While she was out picking flowers in the valley, the Earth opened and Hades emerged on a chariot pulled by 6 black horses. He took Persephone and descended back into the Underworld. No one but Zeus and Helios, god of the sun, knew that Persephone was kidnapped, but they decided to keep quiet in order to avoid an argument with stubborn Hades and the tempestuous Demeter.

When Demeter discovered that her beloved daughter had gone missing, she fell into a deep depression. She wandered the Earth looking for Persephone until Helios, feeling sorry for her, told Demeter the truth about her daughter's whereabouts. Demeter was furious with Hades, and angry with Zeus for lying to her. She became so upset that she took leave from her duties as goddess of the harvest, which plunged the earth into winter. Everyone was cold and hungry.

In order to restore order, Zeus called forth Persephone to determine if she was being kept in the Underworld against her will. Just before she left, Hades gave Persephone the seeds of the pomegranate fruit, whose magical properties made people miss their life in the Underworld.

When Persephone arrived back at Mount Olympus, she went before Zeus and Demeter. Zeus asked his daughter where she wanted to live.

"In the Underworld, with Hades," she replied.

"It's a trick!" Demeter cried. "Hades has brainwashed her! If I can't have Persephone with me, I will make sure that the crops never grow again!"

Zeus raised his hand for silence.

"It is decided: To please both sides, Persephone will spend 6 months of the year with her mother and 6 months in the Underworld with Hades," Zeus said.

From then on, Persephone visited her mother every spring and summer. During this time the Earth was fertile and fruitful. The rest of the year, when Persephone was with Hades, Demeter's depression caused the Earth to fall into winter again.

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How I Became the Queen of the Underworld

I never wanted to displease Mother. I just wanted the freedom to explore some new worlds and meet new people. When Mother told me that I couldn't go to pick that year's crop of narcissus flowers in the valley by myself, that was the last straw.

Mother had always been generous in her service to Mankind, giving them the gift of the harvest, but she often failed to recognize the wishes of her only daughter. All I wanted was to find my own way to be useful to Mankind, but I was cramped up in stuffy Mount Olympus.

I decided to take matters into my own hands, so I went out alone to the Valley of the Narcissus. There I met Hades, god of the Underworld. He told me all about the important job he held caring for the eternal souls of the Dead.

"I need a likeable queen to help me convene with the Dead, someone who can listen carefully to them and inspire them to make the Underworld their new home," Hades said. "Otherwise, they will want to go back to Earth and haunt Mankind, and Zeus will be very displeased."

Hades looked at me intently. The thought of holding a very important position that would impact Mankind thrilled me! However, I knew it would anger Mother.

"How about you try it for a little while, and if you don't like it we will find a way to bring you back to Mount Olympus," he said.

"If Mother doesn't find a way first," I said.

We smiled at each other and made our way down to the Underworld. For the next six months, I heard the Dead's complaints about the Underworld. I took notes and together with Hades we made a 10-point plan for making the Underworld a better place to spend eternity. The amount of hauntings on Earth dropped by 78%. I was loving my new job, but I also missed Mother.

One day, we received word that Zeus commanded our return to Mount Olympus for a court hearing. Hades was being accused of kidnapping me! While I hoped to dispel this terrible myth, I also worried if we left I would never be able to return.

"The pomegranate is the official fruit of the Underworld," Hades said. "If you eat it, you must return for at least half of the year. All the gods and goddesses know that."

"You mean mother will be forced to recognize my role here with you and allow me to come back?" I asked.

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“Yes,” said Hades. With that, I gobbled up a handful of the delicious pomegranate seeds and we made our way back to Mount Olympus.

There I explained to Mother and Zeus that Hades had not kidnapped me, and explained my important work to them. To further illustrate how I felt, I told them about eating the pomegranate seeds. Mother was distraught, swearing that she would take the harvest away from Mankind forever.

“Mother, aren’t you even a little proud of me?” I asked.

Her eyes welled up with tears. “Of course I am. It’s just...I miss you.”

Then, Zeus raised his hand to speak:

“It is decreed: Persephone will spend 6 months of the year ruling the Underworld by Hades’ side and another 6 months helping Demeter with the harvest season.”

Mother and I embraced and I let out a sigh of relief. Finally, I had found my own way to give to Mankind, and also be with my family.

And that’s how I became Queen of the Underworld.

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Now, it's time to **compare** and **contrast** these two stories! Fill out the compare and contrast diagram below with details from the text.

Answer Sheet -
Answers may vary

