

Orpheus – A Greek Myth Reader’s Theatre Script

Cast Size

Flexible / 10-30 students (The teacher may play the narrator for younger students.)

About the Story

The story of Orpheus originated in ancient Greece, the birthplace of theatre. The Greeks used masks to portray characters and spoke some parts in unison by a chorus.

Meet the Characters:

- **Cerberus:** (SUR-bur-us) A three headed dog guarding the Underworld (may be played by 3 people)
- **Charon:** (KAIR-on) A skeleton Ferryman of the Underworld
- **Chorus:** A group of people who speak in unison, much like a narrator
- **Hades:** (HAY-dees) The god of the Underworld (also known as Pluto)
- **Eurydice:** (yu-RID-uh-see) Orpheus' wife
- **Orpheus:** (OR-fee-us) A talented musician
- **Music Lover**
- **Narrators:** They tell the story and set the scenes. These lines are divided into 3 parts in the script but may be redistributed to accommodate different group sizes.
- **Rocks and Stones**
- **Savage Beasts:** lions, bears, monsters etc.
- **Snake**

Staging

The Narrators and Chorus may read their parts as the others act out the story. There should be pauses between the narrator’s lines to allow time for action. The Charon skeleton can be built out of milk jugs and used as a puppet. Parts may be doubled or split to accommodate any size group.

STAGING TIP: Try speaking the chorus parts in unison. The chorus will need to rehearse it together to get the timing and rhythm right. It helps to clap out the rhythm emphasizing the downbeat and make your words clipped (short).

Orpheus – A Greek Myth

Narrator 1: Long, long ago in Greece, there was a man named Orpheus, who played an excellent lyre.

Music Lover: A lyre? What’s a lyre?

Narrator 1: It’s a musical instrument sort of like a harp.

(**Orpheus** plays or mimes playing lyre)

Narrator 2: His music was so good that it soothed the savage beasts, and even the rocks and stones were moved.

(**Savage Beasts** make as if to attack and then are peacefully lulled by the music)

Narrator 3: Orpheus and his lyre made everyone and everything really happy. And there was one person who made Orpheus really happy; her name was Eurydice.

(Enter **Eurydice**)

Narrator 1: One day Eurydice was out frolicking in the woods when she was bitten by a snake.

(**Snake** bites Eurydice)

Narrator 1: The snake died, (Eurydice celebrates) but Eurydice died too.

Narrator 2: Hades came and took Eurydice away to the Underworld.

Narrator 3: When Orpheus heard the news, he was saddened by it so much that he hung up his lyre and stopped playing it.

Music Lover: “Orpheus why do you no longer play your lyre? Your music was so beautiful, that it could even waken the dead.”

Orpheus: “Hey that gives me an idea!”

Narrator 2: He knew that the entrance to the Underworld was hidden by some rocks. So, Orpheus took down his lyre and went out into the mountains.

(**Rocks and Stones** enter and hide the entrance from Orpheus)

Narrator 3: Then he played for all of the rocks, and stones, and boulders. Finally, two large boulders rocked and rolled, revealing the entrance to the Underworld.

(**Rocks and Stones** dance and move aside)

Narrator 1: Orpheus stepped in the cave and found himself face to face with the three-headed dog Cerberus.

Narrator 2: Orpheus took out his lyre and began playing. This soothed Cerberus and Orpheus managed to slip by.

Chorus:

Down, down, down, through the dark and the chill journeyed Orpheus with his lyre. Till he came to the river, the river Styx.

Narrator 3: After walking through a long tunnel, he found Charon, an eerie skeleton who ferried the dead across the river Styx.

(Enter **Charon – Orpheus** reacts with fear)

Narrator 1: Once again Orpheus took out his lyre and began playing. Charon liked the music so much that he ferried Orpheus across the river.

Chorus:

So he ferried on over the River Styx ‘til he came to the palace of Hades.

Orpheus: Hades! Hades!

(Hades enters.)

Hades: Yeah, yeah, what do you want?

Orpheus: O mighty Hades, I hate to trouble you, but I was just wondering if, um, er, well...

Hades: (impatiently) What, what, what? Spit it out!

Orpheus: Well, I was just wondering if, uh—if Eurydice could come back with me.

Hades: Oh, is that all. Why didn’t you say so? NO!!! Now beat it, before I find you a place here, too.

Narrator 2: So Orpheus started to leave, but first he decided to try playing his lyre.

(**Orpheus** starts playing music and **Hades**, in spite of himself, begins dancing along merrily)

Hades: All right, all right! She can go with you! Just stop playing that awful happy music! Eurydice!!

(Eurydice comes out, and she and Orpheus start to leave.)

Hades: Wait! Just one more thing: she may not speak to you, and you may not look at her, until you are on the outside. If you do, the deal’s off. Now, get out of my sight!

Chorus:

So they started the journey, the long spooky journey and came once again to the river Styx. Over the river they started the climb back up, up, up to the top.

Orpheus: There is the entrance! We're almost there . . . but if we're almost there, that's as good as being there. Right?

Narrator 3: So, Orpheus turned to get a look at Eurydice. Eurydice tried to dodge his gaze, but finally he saw her.

Orpheus: Eurydice!

(**Hades** appears.)

Hades: (imitating Eurydice’s voice) Yes, dear! (Then his own voice) Ha! Fooled you. (To Eurydice) Come on dearie, it’s back to the resort. (He leads her away.)

Narrator 1: And although Orpheus continued to play his lyre for the rest of his life, all of his songs were tearjerkers; and he taught the rest of the world the sound of sadness.

~The End