

Persephone

retold by Stephanie Paris

Long ago Greek gods and goddesses ruled the lands. All growing things were cared for by Demeter. She was the Earth goddess. Her lovely daughter, Persephone, helped. Persephone was the goddess of spring. She loved to walk in the meadows. She liked to help the plants. She was filled with joy for life!

Hades was the god of the Underworld. He ruled the dead. He loved the happy young goddess. One day, he made up his mind. Persephone would be his queen. She would rule the Underworld with him. Hades spoke with Zeus, the king of the gods. He asked about marrying Persephone. She was Zeus's daughter. But Zeus knew that Demeter would not like this! The Underworld was deep under the Earth. Demeter would not want her daughter to be so far away. Zeus told Hades that he should try something unusual. Hades was startled by the idea.



So the death god jumped on his black chariot. He rode to the surface of the world. There, he burst out from a crack in the ground. It was only meters from where Persephone stood. Hades whisked her away! He took her to the Underworld.

Demeter soon noticed that her daughter was missing. She began a search. She ignored all her other work. She wanted her daughter back. Hecate was the goddess of magic. She went with Demeter. She held the torches. They went everywhere they thought that the girl might be.

Helios, the sun, had seen it all. He lived in the sky. He told Demeter the story. She was angry! Then she was very sad. The Underworld was not in her power. She could not get to Persephone. Demeter mourned. She wondered how she would be able to do all the work in springtime. She stopped working. The plants began to die. The animals began to die. The humans were dying, too!

This put Zeus in a difficult position. Demeter wanted Persephone back. And if she did not work, all life would soon die. But Zeus did not want to upset Hades. Having the king of the Underworld angry would be a bad thing. After all, the dead outnumber the living!

In the end, Zeus decided that life on Earth was most important. He told Hades to let Persephone go. But he wanted to seem fair. So he said if Persephone had eaten anything in the Underworld, she would have to stay. She would be Hades's queen. Zeus knew that the girl would not eat anything unless she wanted to stay.

Persephone had been careful to not eat a thing. But one day, Hades brought her a kind gift. It was her favorite fruit. It was a pomegranate. By that time, she was very hungry. And she was homesick. But she now knew the Underworld much better. She was confused. She liked the idea of being queen. But she wanted to run free. She wanted to breathe the spring air. She missed her mother. Carefully, Persephone took out six small seeds. She ate each one. The sweet juice ran down her throat. She thought of the Earth. She thought of being queen. She remembered her mother.

Hermes, the messenger god came. He was there to tell them Zeus's decision. He had to ask. Had Persephone eaten? She said, "Yes."



This was a problem! The gods argued. Demeter said that six seeds should not count. Zeus said that his laws were final. He said Persephone must stay. But Persephone knew this would happen. She had talked with Hades. The two of them had an idea. They said that Persephone should stay with the death god. She would be his queen for six months out of the year. That would be one month for each seed. For the rest of the year, she would go with her mother. She would help Demeter tend the Earth.

Demeter and Zeus agreed. The idea was good for everyone. But Demeter said that she would not work when her daughter was away. So every year for six months, Persephone stays in the Underworld. The plants die. The Earth goes through autumn and winter. But in spring and summer, Persephone walks at her mother's side. So growing things turn green! They are alive once more!

Element Focus: Language Usage

Describe how Persephone's homes during the year act as symbols for the seasons on Earth.

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Long ago gods and goddesses ruled the lands of Greece and beyond. All growing things were cared for by the Earth goddess, Demeter. Her lovely daughter, Persephone, helped. Persephone was the goddess of spring. She loved to wander through the fields and meadows. She liked helping to tend the growing plants. And she was filled with a joy for life that spread to those nearby.

Hades was the god of the Underworld. He ruled the dead. He was fascinated by the happy young goddess. One day, he made up his mind that Persephone should be his queen. She would rule the Underworld with him. Hades spoke with Zeus, the King of the gods. He asked about taking Persephone's hand in marriage. For Persephone was Zeus's daughter, too. But Zeus knew that Demeter would never allow this marriage! The Underworld was deep under the Earth. Demeter would not wish her daughter to be so far away from her. Zeus hinted to Hades that he should try something unusual. Hades was startled by the suggestion. But he believed Zeus to be wise.



So the death god leapt on his black chariot. He thundered to the surface of the world. There, he burst forth from a crack in the ground. It was only meters from where Persephone stood. Taking hold of the young goddess, Hades whisked her away to the Underworld!

Demeter soon noticed that her daughter was missing. She began a search. She ignored all her other work. Her attention was on getting her daughter back. Hecate, the goddess of magic, went with Demeter on her search. She held the torches as they traveled. They went everywhere they thought that the girl might be. Along the way, the goddesses asked everyone if there was any news.

Helios, the sun, had seen it all from the sky. He told Demeter the story. She grew furious! Then she became very sad. The Underworld was beyond her power. She could not get to Persephone. Demeter mourned the loss. She wondered how she would be able to manage all the new plants in the springtime. She stopped tending the Earth. The plants began to die. Soon, the animals and humans began to die, too.

This put Zeus in an awkward position. If he didn't help Demeter get Persephone back, all life on Earth would soon die. On the other hand, enraging the king of the Underworld would not be a good thing. After all, the dead outnumber the living!

In the end, the possibility of all life on Earth dying out was just too great a risk. Zeus demanded that Hades release Persephone immediately. He wanted to seem fair, so he provided a condition. If Persephone had eaten anything while she was in the Underworld, she would have to stay. She would be Hades's queen. Zeus knew that Persephone would not eat anything unless she wanted to stay.

Persephone did know the ways of the gods and goddesses. She had been careful to not eat a thing while in the Underworld. But one day, Hades brought her a kind gift. It was her favorite fruit, the pomegranate. By that time, she was very hungry. But she had gotten to know the Underworld much better. She liked the idea of being queen. But she wanted to run free in the springtime air, too. Carefully, Persephone separated out six small seeds. She ate each one. The sweet juice ran down her throat. She thought of the surface world. She remembered her mother. She smiled.

Hermes, the messenger god, came to tell them Zeus's decision. He had to ask Persephone if she had eaten while she was in the Underworld. She said, "Yes."



This complicated things! Demeter said that such a small amount of food should not count. Zeus said that his laws were final. He said Persephone must stay. But Persephone knew this would happen. She had spoken with Hades. The two of them had an idea. They said that Persephone should stay with the death god as his queen for six months out of the year. That would be one month for each seed. Then for the rest of the year, she would go with her mother. She would help Demeter with tending the Earth.

Demeter and Zeus agreed. The idea was good for everyone. But Demeter said that she would not work when her daughter was away. So for the six months that Persephone spends in the Underworld, the Earth goes through autumn and winter. But in spring and summer, Persephone once again walks at her mother's side. So, growing things turn green and alive once more!

Element Focus: Language Usage

In what ways does Persephone's yearly journey symbolize the cycle of the seasons?

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Long ago the gods and goddesses of Mt. Olympus ruled the lands of Greece and beyond. All growing things of the world were cared for by the powerful Earth goddess, Demeter. Assisting her was her lovely daughter, Persephone. Persephone was the goddess of spring. She delighted in wandering through her mother's fields and meadows. She liked helping to tend the growing plants. And she was filled with a joy for life that affected all who knew her.

Hades was the god of the Underworld and ruler of the dead. Unsurprisingly, he found himself fascinated by the spirited young goddess. One day, he made up his mind that Persephone should be his queen. She would rule the Underworld by his side. As was the tradition of the time, Hades spoke with Zeus, the king of the gods. Hades asked about taking Persephone's hand in marriage. For Persephone was Zeus's daughter, too. But Zeus knew well that Demeter would never permit this union! The Underworld was deep beneath the Earth. Demeter loved her daughter too much to be separated from her willingly. Zeus hinted to Hades that perhaps a less traditional method of wooing his bride would be more successful.



So taking Zeus's advice, the death god leapt on his black chariot and thundered to the surface of the world. He burst forth from a crack in the ground meters from where Persephone stood. Taking hold of the young goddess, Hades whisked her away to the Underworld before anyone could do anything!

Demeter soon noticed that her daughter was missing, of course. She began a frantic search. Ignoring all her other duties, she devoted her entire attention to the matter at hand. Hecate, goddess of magic, accompanied Demeter in her search, holding the torches as they traveled everywhere they thought that the girl might have gone.

Helios, the sun, had witnessed it all from his perch in the sky. When Demeter heard the story from him, she grew furious! Then she became terribly sad. The Underworld was beyond her domain. She was powerless to retrieve Persephone. She wondered how she would be able to cope without her daughter's help with all the new plants in the springtime. She stopped tending the Earth. The plants began to die. Soon, the animals and humans that relied on the plants began to die, as well.

This put Zeus in an awkward position. If he didn't help Demeter retrieve Persephone, all life on Earth would soon perish. On the other hand, enraging Hades would not be a good thing, either. After all, the dead outnumber the living!

In the end, the possibility of all life on Earth dying out was just too great a risk to take. Zeus demanded that Hades release Persephone immediately. But in order to seem more fair, he provided a condition. If Persephone had eaten anything while she was in the Underworld, she would have to stay and be Hades's queen. Zeus knew that Persephone was aware of the ways of the gods. She would not eat anything in the Underworld unless she truly wished to stay.

Indeed, Persephone was well versed in the ways of the gods and goddesses. The young goddess had been careful to not eat a thing while she had been in Hades's realm. But one day, the lord of the Underworld brought her a very thoughtful gift. It was her favorite fruit, the pomegranate. By that time, she was very hungry and quite homesick. Carefully, Persephone separated out six small seeds. She savored each one. She thought of the surface world and the mother she wished to see.

When Hermes, the messenger god, arrived to give Hades Zeus's decision, he was required to ask Persephone if she had eaten while she had been in the Underworld. Immediately, she admitted what she had done.



This complicated things! Demeter insisted that such a small amount of food should not count. Zeus said that his laws were final, and Persephone must stay. But Persephone had anticipated this. She had spoken already with Hades. The two of them made a different proposal. They suggested that Persephone stay with the death god as his queen for six months—one month for each seed. Then for the rest of the year, she would return to Demeter and help with the Earth.

Demeter and Zeus quickly agreed. The matter was settled. But Demeter swore that she would always refuse to work when her daughter was away from her. Thus, for the six months of the year that Persephone spends in the Underworld, the Earth is dark and barren. But in spring and summer, when Persephone once again walks at her mother's side, growing things turn green and alive once more!

Element Focus: Language Usage

Describe the ways that Persephone's yearly journey symbolizes the cycle of the seasons on Earth.

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Long ago when the gods and goddesses of Mt. Olympus ruled the lands of Greece and beyond, all growing things of the world were cared for by the powerful Earth goddess, Demeter. Assisting her in her task was Demeter's lovely daughter, Persephone. Persephone was the goddess of spring. She delighted in wandering through her mother's fields and meadows, helping tend the growing plants and enjoying the days as only a carefree young goddess can.

Hades, the god of the Underworld and ruler of the dead, found himself fascinated by the joy and life displayed by the spirited young goddess. One day, he made up his mind that Persephone should be his queen, ruling the Underworld by his side. As was the custom of the time, Hades spoke with Zeus, the king of the gods, about taking his daughter's hand in marriage. But Zeus knew well that Demeter would never permit this union! The Underworld was deep beneath the Earth, and Demeter loved her daughter too much to be separated from her. Zeus hinted to Hades that perhaps a less traditional method of wooing his bride would be more successful.



So taking Zeus's advice, the death god leapt on his black chariot and thundered to the surface of the world. He burst forth from a crack in the ground meters from where Persephone stood. Taking hold of the young goddess, Hades whisked her away to the Underworld before anyone could do anything!

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Helios, the sun, had seen it all from his perch in the sky. When Demeter heard the story, she grew furious! The Underworld was beyond her domain, and she was powerless to retrieve Persephone. Demeter mourned the loss and wondered how she would be able to cope without her daughter's help with all the new plants in the springtime. She stopped tending the Earth and the plants began to die. Soon, the animals and humans that relied on the plants began to die, as well.

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This complicated things immensely! Demeter insisted that such a small amount of food should not count. Zeus said that his laws were final, and Persephone must stay. Persephone had anticipated this, and had spoken with Hades. The two of them made a proposal. They suggested that Persephone stay with the death god as his queen for six months—one month for each seed. Then she would return to Demeter and help with tending the Earth.

Demeter and Zeus quickly agreed and the matter was settled. However, Demeter swore that she would always refuse to work when her daughter was away from her. Thus, for the six months of the year that Persephone spends in the Underworld, the Earth goes through autumn and winter. But in spring, when Persephone once again walks at her mother's side, growing things turn green and alive once more!

Element Focus: Language Usage

In what ways can Persephone's yearly journey to the Underworld and back to the Earth's surface serve to symbolize the life cycle of a seasonal plant?