People in ancient Greece and Rome believed supernatural gods and goddesses directed events in their world. These supernatural beings were more powerful than humans, but they experienced human emotions such as jealousy and passion. The myth of “Echo and Narcissus” shows the human qualities of the gods and explains the origin of two things in nature, a narcissus flower and an echo. A narcissus is a lilylike flower with a showy yellow or white bloom. An echo is a sound repetition that occurs when sound waves bounce off a hard surface.

**Word watch**

**PREVIEW VOCABULARY**
- beguile
- ebb
- curtail
- enigmatic
- disintegrate
- oblivious

**Reader’s journal**

What qualities do you find attractive in another person? Is physical appearance as important as other aspects such as personality or intellectual qualities? Why, or why not?

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**Active READING STRATEGY**

**WRITE THINGS DOWN**

**Before Reading**

- Brainstorm ideas about mythology. List what you know about Greek and Roman gods and goddesses.
- Read the Reader’s Resource.
- Prepare to fill in the chart below as you read.

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**Graphic Organizer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stopping Point</th>
<th>Question 1</th>
<th>Answer 1</th>
<th>Question 2</th>
<th>Answer 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After line 43</td>
<td>What is an echo?</td>
<td>How does Greek mythology explain an echo?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After line 49</td>
<td>Who is the character named Echo?</td>
<td>What happened to Echo?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After line 82</td>
<td>Who is the character named Narcissus?</td>
<td>What happened to Narcissus?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the end of the story</td>
<td>What is a narcissus flower?</td>
<td>How does Greek mythology explain a narcissus flower?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Liriope the river nymph gave birth to a beautiful child. She brought him to the blind seer Tiresias to ask his destiny. Tiresias predicted that the boy would live a long life, but only if he never “came to know himself.”

The child was named Narcissus. As he grew, his beauty increased. His dazzling looks had a strange effect upon the woodland spirits, the naiads and the dryads, around whom he spent his days. They all fell in love with him, but he was oblivious, interested only in hunting in the hills with his companions. His pride in his beauty grew so great that he had nothing but scorn for the feelings of others.

There was one nymph, Echo by name, who saw Narcissus chasing deer into nets in the hills. Echo was instantly seized by love and could not overcome it. Secretly, she followed him through the wilderness, waiting for her chance to make herself known to him—but one thing held her back: she could not initiate speech on her own. She could only repeat

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1. the naiads and the dryads. Nymphs of the water and of trees

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**words for everyday use**

- oblivious (ə bliˈvē əs) adj., unaware; lacking attention. Pete cranked up the volume of the television, oblivious to the fact that he was disturbing everyone’s sleep.
what was said to her. This was her condition, and it had come about because one day the goddess Hera was questioning the nymphs about her husband Zeus. She asked them where Zeus was, suspecting that the unfaithful god had been chasing the lovely nymphs and dwelling among them. Indeed he had, and while he was making his escape Echo distracted Hera with a flow of entertaining conversation. When Hera learned she had been fooled, she cursed Echo, saying, “From now on your words will not be your own. You will only be able to repeat what is said to you. That way your powers to beguile and distract will be curtailed.”

Thereafter Echo could only repeat the words she heard. She could not announce herself to Narcissus. She trailed him silently, hoping for the right circumstance to meet him and declare her love. One day Narcissus had wandered away from his companions, and was in the forest looking for them. Echo was nearby, but Narcissus did not see her. “Is anyone here?” he cried. “Here,” she answered. “Come to me,” he called out. “Come to me,” she replied. “Do not avoid me,” he pleaded. She said the same to him. “Let us meet,” he announced. This was her chance. She stepped out of hiding and stood before him smiling, saying, “Let us meet.” He fell back from her scornfully. “You are not the one I seek. I would die before I would be near you.” Echo advanced toward him, pleading, “I would be near you.” But he ran from her.

Haunted by his rejection and crushed by shame, Echo hid herself in caves and covered herself with leaves. She began to waste away and disappear. In the end only her bones were left, and these became rocks. But her voice remained. Travelers and wanderers heard it sometimes, answering them with their own words. Still Echo did not forget Narcissus.

Meanwhile, Narcissus too fell victim to a curse. Another nymph had fallen in love with him, but was also spurned. This one cried to the heavens for vengeance: “May Narcissus fall into a love that is not returned!” The goddess of righteous anger, Nemesis, heard these words. And so it

**words for everyday use**

*be • guile (bi’gal*) vt., lead by deception; distract. When my little brother screamed for a toy he wanted, I *beguiled* him with the promise of an ice cream cone.

cur • tail (kar’tál*) vt., make less as if by cutting away a part. The dictator’s power was *curtailed* when his army was defeated.*
happened that on a sunny and hot day Narcissus found himself at a pond to which no shepherd’s flocks had been, from which no goats had drunk. It was a wild place. A green meadow surrounded it, and tall trees shaded it from the sun and sheltered it from winds. Putting his face to the waters in order to quench his thirst, Narcissus caught sight for the first time of his own reflection. He was astonished by the beautiful face that met his eye.

“What star-like eyes are these; what smooth skin! That forehead, that jaw, that gorgeous flowing hair! Who are you? Draw near to me!” He reached his hands to the water, but the reflected image disintegrated. He waited for it to reappear.

“Only the surface of these waters parts us. No fortress gates nor city walls; no long rocky highway, no impenetrable forest nor unclimbable mountain stands between us. Yet I cannot reach you! How can this be?” He cried to the endless skies, “How is it that when I find my love his very nearness keeps us far apart?” But there was no answer.

Narcissus could not leave this place. Entranced by his own reflection, he began to waste away from hunger and thirst. His strength and his life ebbed away and did not return. Echo hovered around him, invisible and unforgetting. Her disembodied voice repeated his final word, which was “Alas.” He died, and his spirit left his body. Even on the boat of souls, crossing the river between this world and the other one, Narcissus leaned over the edge, looking into those waters, trying to catch a glimpse of the image that so captivated him.

The nymphs heard of his death and went to the pond to retrieve his body for the funeral ceremony. But when they got there, they found no corpse, only a new blossom with snowy petals and a yellow corona. The flower came to be called “Narcissus,” in honor of one who, in the enigmatic words of Tiresias, “came to know himself,” and fell in love.
Reflect ON YOUR READING

SHARE A SUMMARY

Share the information in your chart with the class, and discuss the origins of the words *echo* and *narcissus*. How does writing things down help you?

Reflect ON YOUR READING

SHARE A SUMMARY

Reading Skills and Test Practice

IDENTIFY CAUSE AND EFFECT

Discuss with your group how best to answer the following cause-and-effect questions.

1. What causes Echo to lose her ability to speak her own thoughts?
   a. her love of Narcissus
   b. her love of herself
   c. her trickery of Hera
   d. her hatred of Zeus

   What is the correct answer to the question above? How were you able to eliminate other answers? How did your use of the reading strategy help you?

2. Which of the following did NOT cause Narcissus to die young?
   a. He came to know himself.
   b. He spurned Echo and the other nymphs who loved him.
   c. He was excessively proud of his beauty.
   d. He realized how cruel he had been to Echo.

   What is the correct answer to the question above? How were you able to eliminate other answers? How did your use of the reading strategy help you?
Investigate, Inquire, and Imagine

**Recall: Gather Facts**
1a. With whom does Narcissus fall in love? Who caused this to happen?

**Analyze: Take Things Apart**
2a. What metamorphoses, or transformations, occur in “Echo and Narcissus”?

**Perspective: Look at Other Views**
3a. From the nymphs’ perspective, what is Narcissus’s crime? Explain whether you think Narcissus’s punishment is appropriate to the crime.

**Interpret: Find Meaning**
1b. Why does Nemesis punish Narcissus?

**Synthesize: Bring Things Together**
2b. This story explains two phenomena in nature. What are these phenomena, and how are they explained?

**Empathy: See from Inside**
3b. Imagine you were Narcissus and everyone was instantly captivated by your exceptional good looks. Would you find this annoying? How would you react?

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**Literary Tools**

**Suspension of Disbelief.** Suspension of disbelief is the act by which the reader willingly sets aside his or her skepticism to participate imaginatively in the work being read. The willingness to suspend disbelief, to participate imaginatively in a story being read, is the most important attribute, beyond literacy, that a person can bring to the act of reading literature. Which elements of the story require you to suspend your disbelief? Why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supernatural Events That Require Suspension of Disbelief</th>
<th>Why These Elements Are Unbelievable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hera is able to put a curse on Echo.</td>
<td>People can’t put a curse on someone else.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**WordWorkshop**

**Mnemonic Devices**

*Remembering Meanings and Spellings.* Look through “Echo and Narcissus.” Find five words whose meanings or spellings are unfamiliar or difficult. Write them on the lines below. Add mnemonic devices, or memory aids, behind each word that help you remember the meanings or spellings. Example: *Malodorous* means having a bad odor because *mal* means bad and the word *odor* is in the word.

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**Read-Write Connection**

Do you feel sympathy toward Narcissus, or do you think he deserves his fate? Explain your answer.

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**Beyond the Reading**

**The Greek Pantheon.** Read about the Greek pantheon, or the temple where all of the Greek gods lived. Learn more about the major gods and their roles, or find information about some of the minor gods and earthly heroes. Create a booklet that describes ten of these figures and what they did.

**Go Online.** Visit the EMC Internet Resource Center at [emcp.com](http://emcp.com) to find links and additional activities for this selection.