

Worksheet 4. Orpheus and Eurydice (teacher)

Comparing two versions of the Orpheus and Eurydice story (teacher version)

Directions: Use the space below to identify the main similarities of the Orpheus and Eurydice story in the accounts by Ovid and H.D.

The basic plot is the same: Orpheus has gone down to the underworld to rescue his wife Eurydice. Because he looks back as they are climbing up, contrary to the mandate of the god, she must return.

Now list their differences, using the criteria in the chart below. Under the column headed “So What?” explain why each difference is significant. Additional cells have been included to allow students room to add their own criteria.

Criterion	Ovid’s “Orpheus and Eurydice”	H.D.’s “Eurydice”	So What?
Opening of the poem	<i>Begins with the wedding and failure of Hymen to bless it</i>	<i>Begins with Eurydice’s bitter anger at Orpheus for his arrogance</i>	<i>Ovid tells the full story from beginning to end. Hymen’s appearance and actions are a foreshadowing of what will happen. H.D. is more focused, telling only a few minutes of the story.</i>
Narrator	<i>Ovid is the omniscient narrator, telling the story in a measured, unemotional tone.</i>	<i>Eurydice speaks in first person, clearly expressing her anger and frustration and using elaborate, heartfelt descriptions.</i>	<i>Ovid is classical, relatively restrained in emotion, even in a tale involving the underworld, death, and lost love. H.D. exhibits more of a modern, romantic tone, bursting with resentment and feeling.</i>
Attitude of Eurydice	<i>Orpheus is loving and brave; he even declares his willingness to die himself if he can’t have Eurydice back. So she has nothing to complain about.</i>	<i>Orpheus’s personality is only conveyed through Eurydice’s eyes, and she views him as “arrogant” and “ruthless”</i>	<i>Good example of how point of view can radically alter the interpretation of a narrative.</i>
Theme(s)	<i>A lover will risk all to be with the beloved. Happiness is fleeting and death will eventually win.</i>	<i>Although death is inevitable, the spirit, the self, will endure.</i>	<i>H.D. is much more personal, more individualistic.</i>

Ovid's Metamorphoses: A Common Core Exemplar

<p>Descriptive details/imagery</p>	<p><i>Uses many allusions to other stories of the Underworld (Tartarus, Cerberus, Ixion, Tityus, the Belides, Sisyphus and the Furies. A few descriptive words about the climb upward, "through the still silence, steep and dark, shadowy with dense fog..."</i></p>	<p><i>Hell is "flame upon flame/and black among the red spark." She provides details of the beauty of life on earth, particularly flowers: hyacinth, azure and gold crocuses, white wind-flowers.</i></p>	<p><i>Ovid is more concerned with the narrative itself. H.D. focuses on emotions: Eurydice's anger, her longing for earth, and then her realization that she is no worse off than Orpheus.</i></p>