Greek Mythology Quiz

Use this key to check answers and read the explanations.

1. In Hesiod’s Theogony, which group of goddesses are the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the personification of memory?

A. The Muses
B. The Graces
C. The Fates
D. The Seasons

Correct answer: A. The Muses
Hesiod names Mnemosyne as the Muses’ mother. The poem describes her nine daughters taking pleasure in song.

2. In Ovid’s retelling of the Midas story in Metamorphoses Book 11, what does the king ask to turn objects into by touching them?

A. Marble
B. Silver
C. Gold
D. Glass

Correct answer: C. Gold
Midas asks for a touch that turns things into gold. Ovid then shows the gift at work on ordinary objects such as a twig and a stone.

3. The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s fragmentary bronze of Herakles shows an animal skin draped over his arm. Which animal does the museum identify?

A. A wolf
B. A lion
C. A deer
D. A horse

Correct answer: B. A lion
The museum points to the lion skin on the Roman statuette as a feature that identifies the Greek hero Herakles.

4. In Book 11 of Homer’s Odyssey, what repeated task does Odysseus see Sisyphus doing?

A. Planting seeds that the wind blows away
B. Filling a jar with water from a spring
C. Weaving a cloth that unravels
D. Pushing a large stone uphill

Correct answer: D. Pushing a large stone uphill
Sisyphus pushes a large stone uphill. It rolls back down as he nears the top, and he starts again.

5. In the account Plutarch summarizes in Life of Theseus 19.1, who gives Theseus the thread and explains how to find his way through the labyrinth?

A. Medea
B. Ariadne
C. Phaedra
D. Helen

Correct answer: B. Ariadne
Plutarch’s summary credits Ariadne with giving Theseus the thread and showing him how to make his way through the maze.

6. In Book 6 of Homer’s Odyssey, why does Nausicaa ask her father for a wagon before she meets Odysseus?

A. To carry clothing to the washing place by the river
B. To bring home firewood for a feast
C. To take food to sailors waiting at the harbor
D. To bring stones back for work on the palace

Correct answer: A. To carry clothing to the washing place by the river
Nausicaa asks for transport for the household clothes. She and her attendants take them to the water to wash them.

7. In the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, which island agrees to receive Leto and becomes Apollo’s birthplace?

A. Rhodes
B. Crete
C. Ithaca
D. Delos

Correct answer: D. Delos
Leto speaks to Delos as a character in the hymn. Delos agrees to receive her, and the hymn places Apollo’s birth there.

8. In Book 18 of Homer’s Iliad, what feature lets the tripods in Hephaestus’s workshop move to the gods’ gathering on their own?

A. Bronze springs that make them hop
B. Wings attached to their sides
C. Golden wheels underneath them
D. Silver chains that pull them through the doorway

Correct answer: C. Golden wheels underneath them
The poem gives each tripod golden wheels. The wheels let the tripods go to the gathering and return by themselves.

9. In Description of Greece 5.18.1, Pausanias identifies two figures on the Chest of Cypselus as Sleep and Death. Who is shown holding them as children?

A. Night, or Nyx
B. Dawn, or Eos
C. Earth, or Gaia
D. Memory, or Mnemosyne

Correct answer: A. Night, or Nyx
Pausanias reads the inscriptions as identifying the children as Sleep and Death and the figure holding them as their mother, Night.

10. In Homeric Hymn 7 to Dionysus, what do the sailors who leap into the sea become?

A. Sea turtles
B. Seals
C. Gulls
D. Dolphins

Correct answer: D. Dolphins
The hymn describes the sailors leaping from the ship and taking the form of dolphins.

11. A fictional study note splits Persephone’s year into equal halves. Which revision matches the arrangement described in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter?

A. One half below, and one half with her mother and the other immortals.
B. Two thirds below, and one third with her mother and the other immortals.
C. One third below, and two thirds with her mother and the other immortals.
D. The entire year with her mother and the other immortals.

Correct answer: C. One third below, and two thirds with her mother and the other immortals.
The hymn allocates one third of the year to the realm below. It gives Persephone the other two thirds in the company of Demeter and the other immortals.

12. A caption about Pandora calls the vessel a box and says everything escapes. Which pair of details matches Hesiod’s Works and Days?

A. The vessel is a box, and Hope remains inside.
B. The vessel is a jar, and Hope remains inside.
C. The vessel is a jar, and Hope leaves with everything else.
D. The vessel is a basket, and Hope leaves first.

Correct answer: B. The vessel is a jar, and Hope remains inside.
Hesiod describes a jar. The account names Hope, or Elpis, as what remains inside when the rest has escaped.

13. In Ovid’s Metamorphoses Book 3, Echo gives replies even though Juno has limited her speech. Which description explains how those replies work?

A. Someone else speaks first, and Echo repeats only the beginning of what they say.
B. Echo speaks first, and others have to repeat the last part of what she says.
C. Echo hears someone else speak, then answers in entirely new words.
D. Someone else speaks first, and Echo repeats the last part of what they say.

Correct answer: D. Someone else speaks first, and Echo repeats the last part of what they say.
Ovid gives Echo a form of speech that depends on hearing someone else. The end of that person’s remark supplies the words she can reply with.

14. A retelling sends the ship Argo through the Clashing Rocks before the dove. What order does Apollonius of Rhodes give in Argonautica Book 2?

A. The crew sends the dove through first, then follows after it passes.
B. The crew takes the ship through first, then releases the dove from the far side.
C. The crew and the dove enter together, and both turn back.
D. The dove returns to the ship, and the crew waits for a second ship to pass first.

Correct answer: A. The crew sends the dove through first, then follows after it passes.
The crew watches the dove make it between the rocks before moving the Argo through after it.

15. A fictional label reverses the direction of the lyre’s transfer. Which sequence follows the Homeric Hymn to Hermes?

A. Apollo gives the lyre to Hermes. Hermes first hears it played after receiving it.
B. Apollo plays the lyre. Hermes takes an interest in it, and Apollo gives it to him.
C. Hermes plays the lyre. Apollo takes an interest in it, and Hermes gives it to him.
D. Hermes and Apollo hear the lyre together, then give it to Leto.

Correct answer: C. Hermes plays the lyre. Apollo takes an interest in it, and Hermes gives it to him.
Hermes plays the lyre for Apollo. Apollo wants to learn about the music, and Hermes later hands him the instrument.