

WORDS FROM CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY #5

ALCYON

Ceyx and Alcyone were deeply in love. One day Ceyx had to leave on a journey. Alcyone begged him not to go, because she was afraid he would die during a storm at sea. But he left anyway.

Sure enough, a storm destroyed Ceyx's ship, and everyone aboard drowned. Back at home, Alcyone waited for Ceyx to return. She prayed to the gods for him every day. Juno took pity on her and sent a messenger in a dream to tell her of her husband's death.

When Alcyone awoke, she was distraught. She went down to bluff where she had waited for Ceyx to return. In the distance she saw a corpse floating toward shore. When it was close enough, she recognized Ceyx. She jumped into the water to be with him, but the gods transformed both of them into birds.

Every year there is one week of very calm water. During this time Alcyone floats in her nest on the sea until her eggs hatch. After the young birds are born, the spell is broken. Those seven days are called Alcyon or, more commonly, Halcyon days, a time of peace and tranquility.

1. According to the story, why does Aeolus, the god of the winds, stop the winds and calm the waves for a week every year? _____

2. When we remember halcyon days, we often remember them with _____.

- A. uneasiness
- B. frustration
- C. regret
- D. nostalgia



SALUS

Salus is the personified Roman goddess of health and prosperity, both of the individual and the state. She had a temple on the Quirinal, built in 302 BC. Later she became more a protector of personal health. Her attribute was a snake or a bowl and her festival was celebrated on March 30.

Our English words salute, salutation, salutatory, and salutorian are all derived from the name Salus, suggesting a greeting that includes wishes for good health.

Salus is identified with the Greek goddess Hygieia, from whose name we have our word hygiene.

3. Salus was the goddess of _____.

4. All of the following could have a salutary effect on a person except which one?

- A. a visit from an old friend
- B. smoking
- C. taking vitamins
- D. a walk in early morning sunshine



SOMNUS

Somnus was the Roman god of sleep. He lived in a quiet valley that was so deep the sun never shone there. The only sound in the valley came from Lethe, the river of forgetfulness and oblivion. Poppies bloomed near the door to his home. Not surprisingly, Somnus spent his days asleep on a soft, dark bed unless someone had an errand for him to run, like bringing news of Cyex's death to Alcyone.

5. Somnus was the god of _____.

6. Answer this question without using a dictionary: A person who has INSOMNIA is unable to do what?

- A. use a computer
- B. taste sweet things
- C. see red and green things
- D. sleep



TERPSICHORE

Terpsichore (pronounced "terp-SICK-ur-ee") was, like Calliope, a muse, one of the nine daughters of Zeus and a mortal woman. Each was in charge of a different aspect of the arts.

Terpsichore is mostly associated with dancing, though some stories put her in charge of choral singing (groups like choirs). Her name comes from two Greek words meaning "to delight in dancing."

7. Terpsichore was the Muse in charge of choral music and _____.

8. All of the following might be called terpsichoreans except which one?

- A. Anna Pavlova
- B. Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers
- C. Michael Jackson
- D. Tiger Woods



ZEPHYR

Zephyr (pronounced "ZEF-er") was the Greek name for the West Wind.

9. Zephyrus was in charge of the wind from what direction? _____

10. Complete the analogy: zephyr : pleasant :: _____ .

- A. Internet : electronic
- B. mountain: new
- C. test : fun
- D. summer : cold

