[Orpheus and Eurydice](http://www.greecegreek.com/Mythology/orpheus-eurydice.html)

The story of [Orpheus and Eurydice](http://www.greecegreek.com/Mythology/orpheus-eurydice.html) is a tale of a love so strong that it challenged even death.

[Orpheus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orpheus) was a musician who received the gift of poetry from his mother [Calliope](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calliope), the muse of poetry, and who was taught to play the [lyre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyre) by his father [Apollo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo), the god of music. It was said that when Orpheus played the lute his music was so wonderful that it charmed wild beasts, and rivers would change course to listen to him play.

All the maidens were charmed by his music, but Orpheus loved only [Eurydice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurydice). Tragically, she died soon after they were married. One day when she was walking in a field of long grass, the shepherd Aristaeus made advances to her, and as she fled she was bitten by a snake hiding in the grass.

Grief-stricken, Orpheus sang a sad mourning song. The gods heard it and were so moved that they encouraged Orpheus to descend into the underworld to find his love.

Orpheus was able to travel safely through the underworld because his lute playing tamed the ghosts that lived there. Finally, he reached the throne of [Hades](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pluto_%28mythology%29) the god of the underworld and [Persephone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proserpina) the queen of Hades. He played the lyre to them, sang movingly of his love for Eurydice, and begged for her release from Hades. All the inhabitants of the underworld were entranced by his music, and even the Furies were reduced to tears. Persephone was so moved that she persuaded Hades to grant Orpheus’ wish.

Hades granted Orpheus his wish but attached a condition. Eurydice should follow behind Orpheus as he walked back to the upper world, but he was not allowed to speak to Eurydice or to look at her as they walked.

Orpheus accepted the condition and began to make his way back to the surface. But as he reached the light of day, he gave into temptation. He turned back to make sure that Eurydice was behind him, only to see her snatched back down into the underworld a second time.

Orpheus begged [Charon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charon_%28mythology%29) to ferry him back over the River Styx into the underworld, but Charon refused. Orpheus remained at the gates of Hades, playing such heartrending music that the trees moved towards him to listen.

Orpheus vowed never to love another woman, and after returning home he rejected every woman who made advances to him. Incensed, the women attacked him. One threw a javelin at him, but the magic of Orpheus’ music caused it to fall away harmlessly. The women began to throw stones at him, but again his music caused the stones to fall away. The women screamed in anger and their screaming drowned out his music so that the stones reached their target. Then the incensed women tore his body apart and threw his head and lyre into the River Hebrus.

Orpheus’ head and lyre floated down the river singing mournfully. [The Muses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muse) buried his body at Libethra, where the nightingale sang over his grave, and is still said to sing more sweetly there than in any other part of Greece. Then they hung his lyre in the sky, where it became the constellation [Lyra](http://www.topastronomer.com/StarCharts/Constellations/Lyra.php).

Orpheus’ soul returned to the underworld to finally join his beloved Eurydice forever.

**Discussion Questions –** Answer all questions in complete sentences.

1. What happened when Orpheus played his lyre and sang songs? (Hint: What moved?)
2. How did Eurydice die?
3. How does Orpheus convince Hades to release his wife?
4. What one condition does Pluto have in releasing Eurydice? Is Orpheus able to keep it? Why/why not?
5. How does Orpheus die?
6. Where were Orpheus and Eurydice reunited for all eternity?
7. Complete a reading log entry for this story.