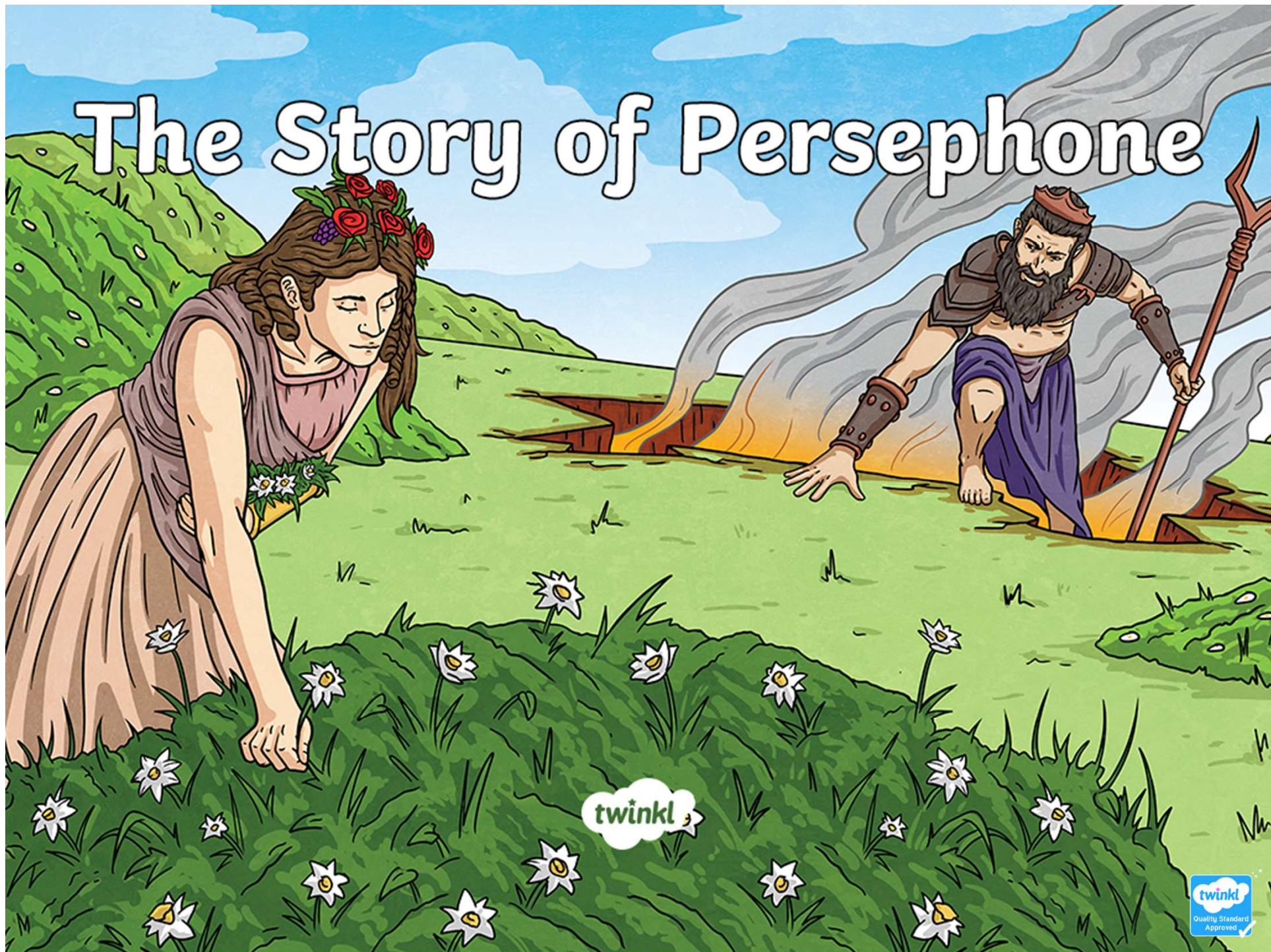


The Story of Persephone



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There was once a Greek goddess called Persephone. Her mother was Demeter, the goddess of earth's fertility and harvest. Her father was Zeus, King of all Olympians.



Demeter and Persephone had a very special bond. Demeter was an exceptional mother and she cared as deeply for her daughter as she did the earth.

One day, as Persephone picked flowers in the gardens of Olympus, the ground opened up before her. Out of the ground rose Hades – god of the Underworld.



Upon his arrival, Hades admired Persephone's beauty and wanted her to be his wife. He asked Zeus for permission for her hand in marriage and Zeus agreed. As they travelled to the Underworld, Persephone called for Demeter but her mother did not hear.

Demeter looked for her daughter but nobody knew where Persephone had gone.



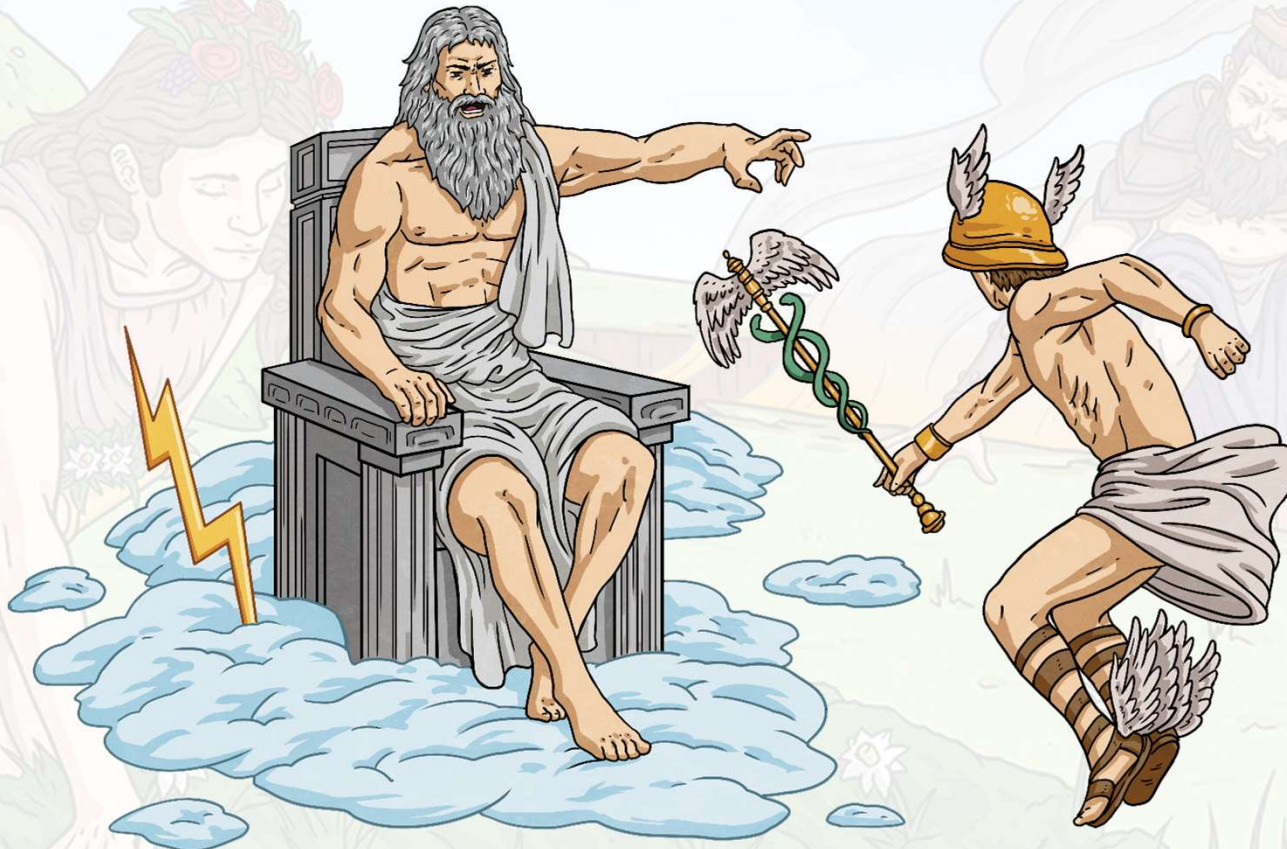
Suddenly, Demeter heard sobbing and turned to see a nymph. She gently asked the nymph where her daughter was but the nymph was so upset that she could not answer.

Demeter was very distressed. She had looked everywhere but to no avail. Her grief at losing her daughter caused the earth to grow cold, infertile and dark. The once beautiful gardens died.



Demeter spoke with her husband to see if he knew where their daughter could be and Zeus told her about the marriage.

An unimaginable rage overcame Demeter. She demanded Persephone's immediate return.



Seeing what Demeter's grief was doing to the earth, Zeus agreed. He instructed Hermes, the messenger, to return Persephone to Demeter at once.

Hermes spoke with Hades, who knew he could never refuse Zeus' demands. However, Hades did not want to be separated from his one true love. He had a plan.



Just as Persephone was about to leave the Underworld, Hades offered her a pomegranate. She knew that eating something from the Underworld would cause her to remain there forever so she decided to only eat six small seeds, thinking this wouldn't count.



However, as she ate the sixth seed, she was approached by the Fates. They told her she would now have to stay in the Underworld for eternity.

Hermes knew he couldn't return to Zeus and Demeter without Persephone so he made a deal with Hades. As she had only eaten six seeds, she should spend only six months of each year in the Underworld. The other six months she would be able to be with her mother.



Hades agreed and Persephone returned to land. For the next six months, while Persephone was with Demeter, the land was warm, lush and beautiful. The rain came and the trees grew tall and strong.

When Persephone left and entered Hades' Underworld, Demeter's misery caused her to forget about nurturing the earth and the land became barren once more. According to Greek mythology, this led to the creation of the seasons.



Autumn and winter months were when Persephone was Queen of the Underworld and spring and summer were her time reunited with her mother.



