

## Sample Lesson #2

### The Noblest of All Cities\*

Erechtheus was the father of a free and brave people and had built a city in a rocky land near the banks of the Kephisos stream. Zeus, by his wisdom, foresaw that one day this would become the noblest of all cities throughout the wide earth. A quarrel began to brew between Poseidon, lord of the sea, and Athena, the child of Zeus. Both wanted the city to be named after them.

Zeus gathered the great gods who dwelt high on Mount Olympus and sat them upon golden thrones on the banks of the Kephisos. The two rivals stood before the gods, awaiting the judgment of Zeus. High in her left hand, Athena held the invincible spear, and close beside her, Poseidon held the gleaming trident in his right hand. Then, Hermes rose from his golden throne.

“Zeus will now judge between Poseidon and Athena,” he said. “The city of Erechtheus shall bear the name of that god who brings forth out of the earth the best gift for the people.”

Poseidon rose up in the greatness of his majesty, and with his trident he struck the earth where he stood. The hill was immediately shaken to its depths, and the earth split asunder. Coming forth from the chasm leaped a horse with amazing strength and beauty. Its body shone white as the driven snow, and its mane streamed proudly in the wind, as it surveyed the hill and valley.

“Behold my gift,” said Poseidon, “and name the city after me.”

Athena looked steadfastly at the gods with her keen gray eyes. She stooped slowly down to the ground, planted a little seed, and spoke no words as she gazed calmly on the great council. The gods saw a little germ springing from the earth, which grew up and threw out its boughs and leaves. Higher and higher it rose, with all its thick green foliage, and put forth fruit on its clustering branches.

“My gift is better, Oh Zeus, than the gift of Poseidon,” she said. “The horse he has given shall bring war and strife and anguish to the people of Earth. My olive tree is the sign of peace and plenty, of health and strength, and the pledge of happiness and freedom. Shall not, then, the city be named after me?”

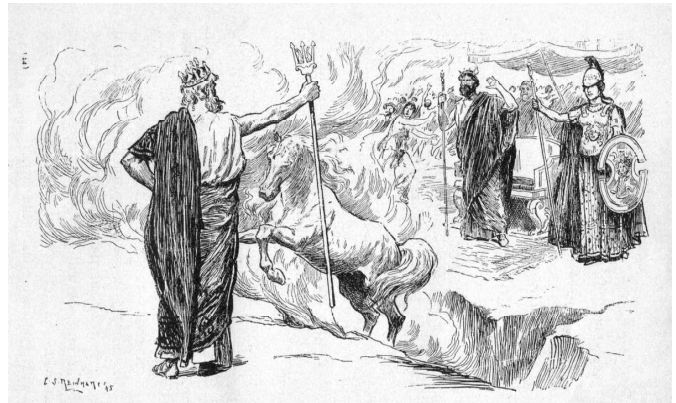
Then with one accord rose the voices of the gods in the air.

“The gift of Athena is the best gift given to the people of Earth. It is a sign that the city shall be greater in peace than in war and nobler in its freedom than its power. Let the city be called Athens.”

Zeus, the mighty son of Kronos, bowed his head as a sign of his judgement. Athena then stretched out her spear toward the city of Athens.

“I have won the victory, and here shall be my home. Here shall my children grow up in happiness and freedom, and here shall they see what great things may be done by mortal hands when aided by the gods who dwell on Olympus.”

\* from *The Junior Classics, Volume 2: Folk Tales and Myths* by William Patten, 1912



RL.7.1 1. Why do Athena and Poseidon want the city near the banks of the Kephisos stream to be named after them?

- A) It lies near a water source which is important for survival.
- B) It is the first to be named after a god or goddess.
- C) It will one day become the most noble throughout the land.
- D) It will be named after the god that is the most clever and intelligent.

RL.7.4 2. Match each term with its clue.

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|-------------------|--------------------------|
| _____ asunder     | A) look at or examine    |
| _____ chasm       | B) intellectually alert  |
| _____ survey      | C) deep gap in the earth |
| _____ steadfastly | D) into parts            |
| _____ keen        | E) unity                 |
| _____ accord      | F) firmly fixed in place |

RL.7.2 3. What is this passage mostly about?

- A) It describes how Poseidon created the horse.
- B) It describes the longstanding rivalry between Athena and Poseidon.
- C) It explains how the city of Athens got its name.
- D) both A and B

RL.7.6 4. What explanation does Athena give to prove her gift is better than Poseidon's?

- A) Athena merely planted a few seeds. Poseidon split the earth in two when creating his gift.
- B) Athena's tree will be a symbol of peace and happiness. Poseidon's horse will bring about fighting and suffering.
- C) Athena's tree will bear fruit for many. Poseidon's horse can only benefit one person at a time.
- D) Athena is Zeus' daughter and his favorite. Poseidon is Zeus' brother and his least favorite.

RL.7.1 5. Which gift is chosen as the best gift for the people of Earth?

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What reason do the gods give for choosing this gift as the winner? Underline your answer in the text.

RL.7.1 6. What type of myth is "The Noblest of All Cities," a creation myth or an explanatory myth? Explain your answer.

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