

The Myth of Zeus' Test

Answer:

1-5	
6-10	
11-15	

It was dark when two mysterious, shrouded figures appeared in the hillside village. The strangers knocked on every door in town, asking for food and shelter. But, again and again, they were turned away. Soon, there was just one door left: that of a small, thatched shack. An elderly couple, Baucis and Philemon, answered the thunderous knock. Although there was something off about these visitors, it was in the pair's nature to care for those in need. Philemon invited them to rest, and the cottage flooded with warmth as Baucis teased the fire back to life.

When they were young, Baucis and Philemon had fallen in love, married, and settled in the humble cottage. Decades later, their home was still standing— and they were more devoted to each other than ever. The strangers watched intently as Baucis nestled twigs under a battered pot filled with vegetables. The couple could rarely afford meat, but in honor of their guests, Philemon cut strips from an aging shank for the stew. They made cheerful conversation and offered their visitors hot baths. Baucis used a chip of broken clay to balance the wobbly table's legs and rubbed its surface with mint until it smelled sweet and fresh.

Weaving around each other with care, the couple transformed what they had into a feast. Soon, the tabletop overflowed with food and the last of their sweet wine. Privately, Baucis and Philemon worried that their provisions would run out. Yet, as the night wore on, and their strange guests took hearty gulps of wine, the clay vessel never ran dry. The couple, at first relieved, grew terrified. Their guests weren't humble peasants traveling the countryside. They were almost certainly gods in disguise— but which gods, they didn't know.

Panicked that their preparations were inadequate, Baucis and Philemon searched for another offering. The only precious thing left was the goose that guarded their home. The couple repeatedly lunged after the bird, but they were too worn out for the chase. So, they prepared to receive the wrath of the gods. Their guests rose up, shedding their rags and mortal masks. Looming before them was Zeus, the storm-brewing ruler of the gods, and his son, Hermes, the fleet-footed messenger who shepherded mortals to the underworld.

The gods told the old couple that, unlike the other townspeople, they had shown true *xenia*, or loving hospitality to strangers. They alone had passed the test. The gods commanded the couple to follow them, and the group ascended the nearest mountain. Nearing the summit, Baucis and Philemon looked back— but were shocked to see a murky swamp where their village stood just moments before. As punishment for refusing to shelter the gods, Zeus and Hermes had cast the townspeople underwater, leaving only their hosts' home intact.

Recalling their friends and neighbors, Baucis and Philemon couldn't hide their terror and mournful tears, even as their house transformed below. It grew larger and sprouted marble pillars and steps. Legends etched themselves onto its grand doors. Their rickety cottage had metamorphosed into a gleaming temple for the gods. Hermes commended the couple and gently asked if there was anything they desired. After a brief discussion, Philemon requested that he and Baucis be permitted to care for the new temple. And he asked if, when their time came, they could die together, so neither would have to face life without the other.

Tending to the temple and one another, they lived many more years. Until, one day, Baucis noticed leaves fluttering from her husband's hands and looked down to find her own skin hardening. They embraced, becoming rooted in place. Vines wound around their legs and canopies flourished overhead. They bid each other a loving, last farewell as humans. And where Baucis and Philemon had just stood, bent with age, there towered a linden and an oak tree, their branches intertwined for eternity.

Question:

1. Why were Baucis and Philemon initially terrified during the feast?
 - A. They ran out of wine
 - B. Their guests revealed themselves as gods
 - C. They thought their food was inadequate
 - D. They were worried about the goose
2. What is demonstrated by Baucis and Philemon inviting the strangers in despite feeling uneasy?
 - A. Fearfulness
 - B. Generosity
 - C. Curiosity
 - D. Suspicion
3. What motive did Zeus and Hermes have for visiting the village disguised as travelers?
 - A. To find shelter from a storm
 - B. To test the townspeople's hospitality
 - C. To punish the couple
 - D. To enjoy a feast
4. How did the villagers react when the strangers asked for food and shelter?
 - A. They welcomed them with open arms
 - B. They ignored the requests
 - C. They reported them to the authorities
 - D. They repeatedly turned them away
5. What made Baucis and Philemon worry during their feast with the strangers?
 - A. The strangers were unhappy
 - B. The quality of the food was poor
 - C. They would run out of provisions
 - D. Their house was too small
6. What transformation occurred to Baucis and Philemon's cottage due to the gods' intervention?
 - A. It became a swamp
 - B. It turned into a mountain
 - C. It was destroyed
 - D. It changed into a temple
7. What special request did Philemon make in return for their hospitality?
 - A. Wealth and riches
 - B. Eternal life
 - C. To be caretakers of the temple and to die together
 - D. To have a lavish feast every day
8. What was the townspeople's punishment for not showing xenia?
 - A. They were turned into trees
 - B. Their village was transformed into a desert
 - C. Their village was submerged underwater
 - D. They were forced to serve the gods forever
9. What did the constant supply of wine during the feast indicate?
 - A. The generosity of Baucis and Philemon
 - B. The mystical nature of the visitors
 - C. The richness of the village
 - D. A mistake in the storytelling
10. How did the elderly couple react when they could not catch the goose?
 - A. They gave up and went to sleep
 - B. They laughed at their own clumsiness
 - C. They prepared to face divine anger
 - D. They blamed each other for the failure
11. What was the physical change that Baucis and Philemon experienced at the end of the story?
 - A. They became immortal
 - B. They grew younger
 - C. They turned into birds
 - D. They were transformed into trees
12. How did the elderly couple enhance the experience of dining in their home for the strangers?
 - A. By providing musical entertainment
 - B. By decorating the room with flowers
 - C. By adding a pleasant smell to the table
 - D. By seating the visitors in a special place
13. What did Baucis use to stabilize the table?
 - A. A book
 - B. A stone
 - C. A chip of broken clay
 - D. A piece of wood
14. What ultimate reward did Baucis and Philemon choose for themselves?
 - A. Riches and power
 - B. The company of the gods
 - C. Caretaking of the temple and a shared death
 - D. Rebirth as human children
15. What was the final transformation of Baucis and Philemon?
 - A. Into wine vessels that never run dry
 - B. Into stars in the night sky
 - C. Into protectors of the village
 - D. Into intertwined trees