Ancient Rome and Byzantium
Venus Was Her Name

Religion was an important part of ancient Roman life. The ancient Romans **worshipped**[1] many gods and goddesses. Each of these gods and goddesses had a special purpose. There was Mars, the god of war, and Minerva, the goddess of wisdom. Neptune was the god of the sea, whereas Diana was the goddess of hunting.

One of the best loved of the gods and goddesses was Venus, the goddess of love. According to Roman **mythology**[2], she was created out of foam from the Mediterranean Sea. She lived on the island of Cyprus with her husband, Vulcan. Vulcan was the god of blacksmiths. Venus didn't like him very much. They didn't have a happy marriage.

Venus was very beautiful. She was also very **vain**[3]. In one ancient myth, three goddesses are fighting over who is the most beautiful. Venus, Juno, and Minerva compete for a golden apple, to be given to the most beautiful goddess. The judge is a man named Paris. Venus promises Paris that she will give him the most beautiful woman in the world if he lets her win. Paris gives her the apple. Now Venus must hold up her end of the deal. The problem is that the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen, is already married to a Greek king. Venus helps Paris kidnap Helen. The kidnapping starts a war that lasts for ten years.

Many artists have attempted to depict Venus in paintings and sculpture. One of the most famous statues of her is known as the Venus de Milo.

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[1] **worshipped -** showed great respect for a god
[2] **mythology -** a collection of stories about gods and goddesses
[3] **vain -** proud of being handsome or beautiful

Name: _____   Date:_____

1. Venus was the goddess of

    a. wisdom
    b. hunting
    c. love
    d. war

2. Why does the author include the fact that many artists have depicted Venus in paintings and sculptures?

    a. to illustrate that she is a beloved part of Roman history
    b. to prove that no one knows what she looked like
    c. to teach about how the gods affected Roman art
    d. to discuss how Venus was also the goddess of art

3. What can be concluded from the story about the beauty competition?

    a. Venus was not really one of the three most beautiful goddesses.
    b. Venus being vain caused big problems in Roman mythology.
    c. Ancient Romans went to war in real life over silly things.
    d. Ancient Romans cared more about beauty than anything else.

4. Read the following sentences: "Each of these gods and goddesses had a special purpose. There was Mars, the god of war, and Minerva, the goddess of wisdom."

The word **purpose** means

    a. a particular form of art
    b. emotion or feeling
    c. a type of government
    d. a reason to exist

5. The passage is mostly about

    a. Roman names.
    b. a Roman goddess.
    c. Helen of Troy.
    d. how to paint goddesses.

6. Why couldn't Venus easily give Paris the most beautiful human woman?

_____

_____

_____

7. Explain why Venus could make a good subject for a painting or sculpture.

_____

_____

_____

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Venus made a promise to Paris, _____ she could not keep that promise.

       a. most importantly
       b. as a result
       c. such as
       d. even though

9. Read the following sentence.

Venus was worshipped in ancient Rome for being the goddess of love.

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

    1. Who? Venus

    2. What was Venus? _____

    3. Why? _____

    4. Where? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word**: worshipped: shown great respect and prayed to.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

_____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 710

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines, or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: Venus was the ancient Roman goddess of love. She was very beautiful but also very vain.

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    a. wisdom
    b. hunting
    c. love
    d. war

2. Why does the author include the fact that many artists have depicted Venus in paintings and sculptures?

    a. to illustrate that she is a beloved part of Roman history
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6. Why couldn't Venus easily give Paris the most beautiful human woman?

    Suggested answer: The most beautiful woman, Helen, was already married to a Greek king and she had to be kidnapped.

7. Explain why Venus could make a good subject for a painting or sculpture.

    Suggested answer: Venus would make a good subject for a painting or sculpture because she is supposed to be very beautiful. She was also an important part of Roman mythology and has had stories told about her.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Venus made a promise to Paris, _____ she could not keep that promise.

     a. most importantly
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Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

  1. Who? Venus

  2. What was Venus? **worshipped**

  3. Why? **for being the goddess of love**

  4. Where? **in ancient Rome**

10. **Vocabulary Word**: worshipped: shown great respect and prayed to.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.