Name: Date:

*The Myths of Prometheus and Gaea*

Adapted from *D’Aulaire’s Book of Greek Myths*

**Directions:** Please use **five** I’s &/or C’s with corresponding comments while actively reading the following myths in order to facilitate your understanding of the themes presented in *Anthem*.

*The Myth of Gaea*

Gaea, the Earth, came out of darkness so long ago that nobody knows when or how. Earth was young and lonesome, for nothing lived on her yet. Above her rose Uranus, the Sky, dark and blue, set all over with sparkling stars. He was magnificent to behold, and young Earth looked up at him and fell in love with him. Sky smiled down at Earth, twinkling with his countless stars, and they were joined in love. Soon young Earth became Mother Earth, the mother of all things living. All her children loved their warm and bountiful mother and feared their mighty father, Uranus, lord of the universe.

The Titans were the first children of Mother Earth. They were the first gods, taller than the mountains she created to serve them as thrones, and both Earth and Sky were proud of them. There were six Titans, six glorious gods, and they had six sisters, the Titanesses, whom they took for wives.

When Gaea again gave birth, Uranus was not proud. Their new children were also huge, but each had only one glowing eye set in the middle of his forehead. They were the three Cyclopes and they were named Lightening, Thunder, and Thunderbolt. They were not handsome gods, but tremendously strong smiths. Sparks from their heavy hammers flashed across the sky and lit up the heavens so brightly that even their father’s stars faded.

After a while Mother Earth bore three more sons. Uranus looked at them with disgust. Each of them had fifty heads and a hundred strong arms. He hated to see such ugly creatures walk about on lovely Earth, so he seized them and their brothers and the Cyclopes and flung them into Tartarus, the deepest pit under the earth.

Mother Earth loved her children and could not forgive her husband for his cruelty to them. Out of hardest flint she fashioned a sickle and spoke to her sons the Titans: “Take this weapon, make an end to your father’s cruelty and set your brothers free.”

Fear took hold of five of the Titans and they trembled and refused. Only Cronus, the youngest but the strongest, dared to take the sickle. He fell upon his father. Uranus could not withstand the weapon wielded by his strong son and he fled, giving up his powers.

Mother Earth made Pontus, the boundless seas, her second husband, and from this union sprang the gods of the watery depths. And from her rich ground grew an abundance of trees and flowers and, out of her crevices, sprites, beasts, and early man crept forth.

*The Myth of Prometheus*

Minor Gods and Goddesses also lived on Mount Olympus besides the twelve great ones. The most powerful of them were the goddesses of destiny, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. They were the three Fates and they decided how long a mortal would live and how long the rule of the gods should last. When a mortal was born, Clotho spun the thread of life, Lachesis measured a certain length, and Atropos cut the thread at the end of the life. They knew the past and the future, and even Zeus had no power to sway their decisions. Their sister, Nemesis, saw to it that all evil and all good on earth were justly repaid, and all mortals feared her.

Man’s creator and his best friend was the Titan Prometheus. Zeus had given Prometheus and his brother, Epimetheus; the task of repopulating the earth after all living creatures had perished in the early battles of the gods. He gave the two brothers great measures of gifts to bestow upon their creations, and they went down to earth and began to make men and beasts out of river clay. Wise Prometheus modeled men with great care in the shape of the gods. Epimetheus rapidly made all kinds of animals and without any foresight he lavished the good gifts upon them. When Prometheus had finished shaping man, he found that there were few of the good gifts left. Animals could run faster, see, smell, and hear better, and had much more endurance. Besides, they were kept snug in their warm coats of fur, while men shivered in the cold nights.

Prometheus was sorry for mankind and he went to Zeus and asked him if he might have some of the sacred fire for his poor creations. But Zeus said no, fire belonged to the gods alone.

Prometheus could not bear to see his people suffer and he decided to steal fire, though he knew that Zeus would punish him severely. He went up to Olympus, took a glowing ember from the sacred hearth, and hid it in the hollow stalk of fennel. He carried it down to earth, gave it to mankind, and told them never to let the light from Olympus die out. No longer did men shiver in the cold of the night, and the beasts feared the light of the fire and did not dare to attack them.

A strange thing happened; men lifted their eyes from the ground and watched the smoke from their fires spiraling upward, their thoughts rose with it up to the heavens. They began to wonder and think, and were no longer earth-bound clods. They built temples to honor the gods and, wanting to share what they had with them, they burned the best pieces of meat on their altars.

Zeus was furious when he first saw the fires flickering on earth, but he was appeased when the savory scent of roast meat reached his nostrils. All the gods loved the smell of the burnt offerings; it spiced their daily food of ambrosia and nectar. But Prometheus knew how hard men worked to make their living and thought it a pity that they burned up the best parts of their food. He told them to butcher an ox and divide the meat in two equal heaps. In one were the chops and roasts, hidden under sinews and bones. In the other were scraps and entrails, covered with snow-white fat. Prometheus then invited Zeus to come down to earth and choose for himself which part he wanted for his burnt offerings. Zeus, of course, chose the best-looking heap, but when he discovered that he had been tricked he grew very angry. Not only had Prometheus stolen the sacred fire and given it to man, he had also taught them to cheat the gods. He resolved to punish both Prometheus and his creations.

Cast into unbreakable irons, Prometheus was chained to the top of the Caucasus Mountains. Every day an eagle swooped out of the sky and ate his liver. At night his immortal liver grew anew, but every day the eagle returned and he had to suffer again.

Thus was Prometheus punished, but Zeus found a more subtle way to punish the mortals. He sent to earth a beautiful but silly woman. Her name was Pandora.