

Theme 1

THE MYTH OF PYGMALION

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This story was told by the Roman poet Ovid in a book called Metamorphoses.

Pygmalion was a prince of Cyprus, a hater of women, and a very talented sculptor. Resolving that he would never marry, Pygmalion created a marble statue of a woman so beautiful that no living woman approached her allure. Pygmalion called his statue Galatea, which means “sleeping love”. Infatuated with his own creation, he clothed the statue and gave it gifts of jewels and flowers. He kept it on a bed of the softest blankets and pillows, where it looked so alive that he could hardly believe it wasn’t human.

The festival of Aphrodite, goddess of love, was approaching. This festival was highly celebrated in Cyprus, and Pygmalion decided to visit the altar of the goddess and make a request. He brought gifts to please Aphrodite and asked her to give him a wife who was just like his statue. In response, Aphrodite caused the flame on the altar to flare up three times into the air.

After Pygmalion left the altar, Aphrodite decided to visit Galatea. She went to Pygmalion’s home, and was very please to discover that Galatea resembled herself. To reward Pygmalion for his creation, she brought Galatea to life. When Pygmalion discovered that Galatea was alive, he decided to marry her. Their marriage was blessed with a daughter, Paphos. Pygmalion and Galatea brought gifts to the altar of Aphrodite every year. They were rewarded with a long and happy marriage.