

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Phaethon's Ride

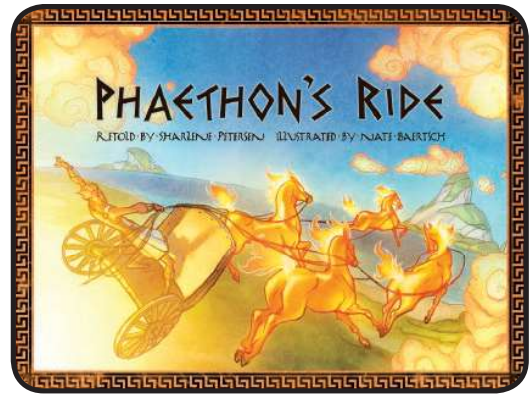
Lesson 112

Lesson Paired with *Is It a Myth?*—Advanced

**Retold by Sharlene Petersen**

**Illustrated by Nate Baertsch**

Lexile®: 900L, 628 words



"Phaethon, if your dad really is the Sun God, then prove it!" Unitas said.

But Phaethon had no way to prove that his dad was the Sun God.

He was proud to be the son of Apollo, who drove the burning chariot that pulled the sun across the sky. He was determined to find a way to make his friend believe, but first he had to meet his father.

Phaethon set out to find Apollo's grand palace. After many days, he saw the palace glowing a radiant, fiery gold against the pale sky. Phaethon boldly approached his father's throne and declared, "If you are truly my father, you must grant me a favor."

"I am indeed your father," said Apollo. And so overjoyed was he to meet his son, he promised, "As proof of this you may have anything you wish."

At that moment Phaethon knew exactly how he could make Unitas believe him. "Let me drive your chariot and pull the sun across the sky so all can see that I am your son," he demanded.

"Oh no!" said Apollo. "The chariot is blazing hot and the journey is steep. The horses breathe flames and are so powerful that I can barely control them. Please, son, choose anything else."

"You promised I could have anything I wanted," said Phaethon, "and I want to drive your chariot."

Once a god has given his word, he must honor it. So to keep his promise, Apollo replied, "You may drive the chariot."

Apollo guided Phaethon to the stables, where his four blazing horses waited. Once harnessed to the chariot, they stamped and tossed their manes, ready to begin their flight across the sky. Phaethon jumped into the chariot confidently as Apollo called out, "Be careful, son. Do not urge the horses on as they are too powerful—instead you must hold them back."

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But Phaethon refused to listen, and he grabbed the reins and flicked them hard. The horses rushed forward, dragging the chariot and the boy across the sky. They quickly realized that this was not their master, because he was lighter than his father and not as strong. With a sudden surge, they galloped out of control.

First they rode too high, pulling the sun far away from the earth. The sun set the stars on fire while the ground below grew cold. Streams and lakes froze and trees were covered in ice.

Then just as quickly the horses rushed back to earth, flying too low. The ground began to burn, and trees burst into flame.

Rivers dried up and the dry earth cracked, causing deep canyons. The sea shrank, and mountains that had once been covered by water now stood bare.

Phaethon was frightened because he couldn't stop the wild horses as they pulled the sun closer and closer to earth. Gods, humans, and animals alike were terrified of the unbearable heat. Mother Earth cried out to Zeus, "King of the gods, save me!"

When Zeus heard Earth's plea and saw the burning earth, he immediately threw a thunderbolt at the runaway chariot.

With a deafening crash the thunderbolt struck the chariot, shattering the grand vehicle. Phaethon fell from the sky, encircled in brilliant flames. He plunged into the Eridanos River and was instantly killed.

The world was dark for three days as Apollo cried over the loss of his son, but he knew Zeus could have done nothing else.

The world still needed light, so Apollo harnessed his fiery horses to a new chariot and once again pulled the giant sun across the sky.

Though Phaethon was gone, his fiery ride could still be seen. It burned the Milky Way across the sky and scorched the forests of Africa, creating the great Sahara desert.

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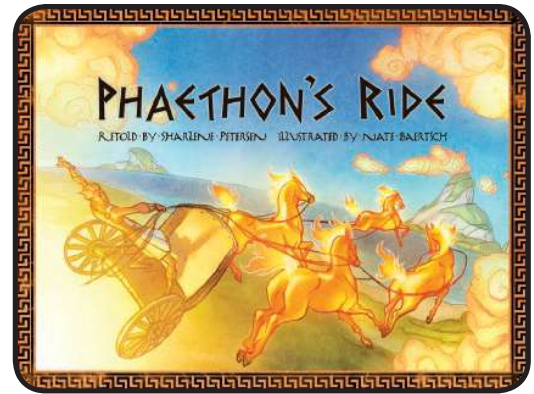
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ACCURACY: # of reading errors: \_\_\_\_\_ (Indep. = 0–13, Instr. = 14–31, Frust. = 32+)  
SPEED: To calculate:  $37680 \div$  \_\_\_\_\_ (Reading time in seconds) = \_\_\_\_\_ WPM

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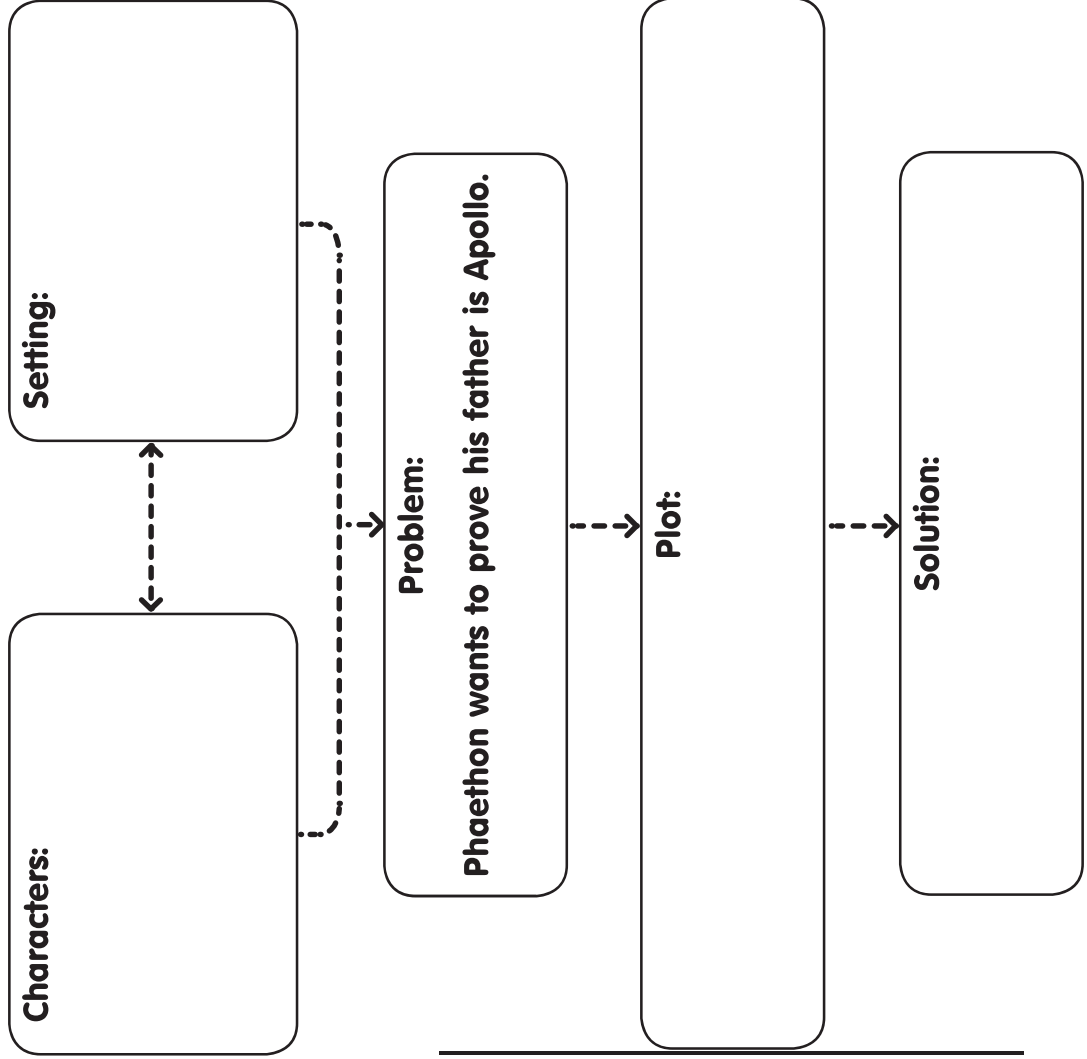
Paired with *Is It a Myth?*—Advanced

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Discover Story Vocabulary</b> | cause, effect, prove it                                     |
| <b>Glossary Words</b>            | prove it, grant me a favor, given his word, harnessed, Zeus |

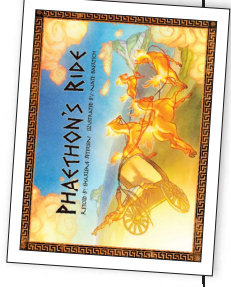
| <b>Question Type</b> | <b>Question</b>  |
|----------------------|--|
| Intertextual         | <p>You can tell that Phaethon is a myth because _____.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. the story is about a father and his son</li><li>b. the story explains something about the world</li><li>c. Phaethon drives a chariot</li></ul>   |
| Inferential          | <p>Why was it so important for Phaethon to go see his father?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. He wanted to find a way to prove that he was Apollo's son.</li><li>b. He wanted to find out what his father looked like.</li><li>c. He liked to travel to palaces all over the world.</li></ul>                             |
| Cause                | <p>According to this myth, what caused the Sahara Desert?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Phaethon took the sun too far from the earth and burned the stars.</li><li>b. Phaethon brought the sun too close to the earth and burned the ground.</li><li>c. Phaethon crashed his chariot into the Eridanos River.</li></ul> |

# Story Map: Phaethon's Ride

\* **Directions:** Fill in the empty boxes, and then write a summary of the story.



My summary  
of the story



Name: \_\_\_\_\_