The Lyre
by ReadWorks

The lyre is a curved stringed instrument that is often played as accompaniment for a poetry recitation or to a solo singer. It was a very popular instrument in ancient Greece and was used in many contexts, ranging from grief-stricken funerals to wild festivals. The lyre was also used as a tool for educating the young. There are accounts of famous Greeks, like Plato, applauding the lyre as the best teaching instrument. There is also a famous tale of Achilles, a hero from Greek mythology, taking lyre lessons from a character named Cheiron.

Another story in Greek mythology describes how the lyre was invented. According to Greek mythology, the lyre was invented by Hermes, the god whose responsibilities included travel, luck, and commerce. The origin story of the lyre recounts when Hermes used the shell and gut of a tortoise, as well as tall reeds, to create this instrument.

Rather than using a tortoise, ancient Greeks were thought to have constructed their lyres out of wood, ivory, and bone, depending on the parts of the instrument. Instead of the reed strings of Hermes's lyre, most ancient Greek lyres had strings made of stretched sheep gut!

The body of the lyre is U-shaped, and multiple strings run between the bottom of the lyre and the top of the cross bar. In the pictures above and to the side, you can see what a lyre looks like. Does this instrument remind you of any others?
1. What is a lyre?
   A. a wild festival
   B. a solo singer
   C. a poetry recitation
   D. a curved stringed instrument

2. What does the text describe?
   A. how ancient Greeks used and made the lyre
   B. how people today use and make the lyre
   C. how ancient Greeks learned to play the lyre
   D. how people today learn to play the lyre

3. Read these sentences from the text.

   [The lyre] was a very popular instrument in ancient Greece and was used in many contexts, ranging from grief-stricken funerals to wild festivals. The lyre was also used as a tool for educating the young. There are accounts of famous Greeks, like Plato, applauding the lyre as the best teaching instrument.

   Based on the text, who was the lyre played for in ancient Greece?
   A. young people
   B. students
   C. old people
   D. people of all ages
4. Read these sentences from the text.

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How does the ancient Greek lyre compare to Hermes's lyre?

A. The ancient Greek lyre had the same parts as Hermes's lyre, and it was made of the same materials.
B. The ancient Greek lyre had the same parts as Hermes's lyre, but it was made of different materials.
C. The ancient Greek lyre had different parts from Hermes's lyre, but it was made of the same materials.
D. The ancient Greek lyre had different parts from Hermes's lyre, and it was made of different materials.

5. What is the main idea of the text?

A. In ancient Greece, the lyre was a very popular instrument made of various materials.
B. The lyre is a U-shaped instrument with some strings running from top to bottom.
C. In ancient Greece, the lyre was very useful in educating young people.
D. There is a story about how the lyre was invented by Hermes, a god in Greek mythology.