

Hero Twins

Once upon a time there, two twins named One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu. They loved to play Pok-A-Tok and were soon very good at it. Unfortunately, they were very noisy when they played their games. This angered the gods of Xibalba. They were called the Lords of Death. The Lords of Death summoned the twins to the underworld to discuss their grievances.

The boys eagerly accepted the invitation and soon travelled down to meet the gods. The Lords of Death told the boys that they could only leave if they passed the gods' tests. The first test was to greet each of the gods by name, but the Lords of Death had replaced the gods with wooden cutouts. The boys didn't notice this and so failed the test. As punishment, the gods made them sit on a cursed bench. As soon as they touched it, it burst into flames and killed them both.

Even though One Hunahpu was dead and forced to live in the underworld, he fell in love with a goddess. Together, they had another set of twins. These were named Hunahpu and Xbalanque. They were known as the Hero Twins. They were allowed to leave Xibalba and live on Earth with the living. Like their father, they became great Pok-A-Tok players, but they were also very noisy. Once again, the Lords of Death grew tired with the noise and summoned them to Xibalba.

The boys had listened to their father's stories and learned his lesson. When the gods presented them with wooden cutouts of the gods, they used a mosquito to work out which ones were real and greeted them. When offered the bench, they refused to sit. The next test was to play the Lords of Death at Pok-A-Tok.

At first, the gods tried to play with a ball filled with spikes, but the boys demanded they play fairly. The twins had heard that the gods planned to kill them if they won, so they played poorly and let the gods win each game. Eventually, the gods grew tired, and the boys had no choice but to win. As soon as they had, the gods put them to death. The Lords of Death scattered the twins' ashes into the river, not knowing that this was part of their plan.



The river gave the ashes life, and the twins were able to be restored to their former selves. Now, they had the powers of the gods. They could take the life from a living creature and give it back in an instant. The Lords of Death were so impressed with the twins' powers that they asked them to demonstrate them.

Seeing the end of their plan in sight, the boys were happy to oblige. They used their powers to kill the Lords of Death but refused to bring them back. Finally, they had their revenge for their father's death.

Glossary

Pok-A-Tok - an ancient Mayan ball game.

Xibalba - the Maya underworld (it's pronounced Shee-bal-ba).



VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Find and copy a word that tells you the noise made the gods mad.
2. Find and copy a word that tells you the first twins were excited to accept the invitation.
3. Write a definition for the word "summoned".
4. Which word in the text tells you that the Hero Twins were confident to tell the gods off?
5. Find and copy a word in the last paragraph that means "do as they were told".

VIPERS QUESTIONS

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| E | Why has the author included a glossary at the end? |
| R | What game did the twins like to play? |
| R | Why were the gods annoyed? |
| S | How did the Hero Twins defeat the gods? |
| P | How do you think the other gods felt about the Hero Twins defeating the Lords of Death? |