

The Book of Genesis: Prehistoric Narratives Answer Key

Question	The Fall (Genesis 3:1–24)	Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1–16)	The Great Flood (Genesis 6:5–9:29)	The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9)
1. Write a summary of the story here.	<p><i>Possible responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The serpent suggests to Eve that she will not die if she eats from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; rather, those who eat of it “will be like gods” (verse 5) Eve and Adam both eat of the fruit, and then they realize they are naked. When God learns what they have done, Adam blames Eve, and Eve blames the serpent. God enumerates the consequences of these actions for the serpent, for Eve, and for Adam. God makes clothes for Adam and Eve. God banishes Adam and Eve from the garden. 	<p><i>Possible responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adam and Eve have two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain and Abel both bring offerings to God; Abel’s offering pleases God, but Cain’s does not. Cain, resentful, kills his brother Abel and then tells God he does not know where Abel is. God, knowing Cain has killed Abel, says Cain’s punishment will be to be “a constant wanderer on the earth” (verse 12). Cain is afraid he will be vulnerable to being killed, so God marks him in order to protect him. 	<p><i>Possible responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because of human evil, God regrets creating humanity. He decides to destroy all of creation except for Noah, Noah’s family, and representatives of each of the animals and other creatures. God instructs Noah to build an ark to house those to be spared from the Flood. The Flood lasts for forty days and forty nights. After the Flood, Noah, his family, and all the creatures emerge from the ark onto dry land. God establishes a covenant with all of creation, promising never again to destroy all life with a flood. The sign of this covenant is the rainbow. 	<p><i>Possible responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People all speak the same language. People decide to build a city and a tower in order to “make a name for ourselves” (verse 4). God decides to thwart their plans by confusing their language so they cannot communicate with one another. God scatters the people all over the Earth, and they stop building their city and tower.
2. In what ways is this story troubling, difficult, perplexing, or problematic? For example, is there violence in the story? Does the story portray God in a way that surprises or bothers you? Does the story illustrate the human capacity for evil and sin?	<p><i>Possible responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> God’s response to Adam’s sin and Eve’s sin—banishing them from the garden—may seem unduly harsh. Isn’t knowing the difference between “good and evil” (Genesis 3:5) a good thing? Why can’t Adam and Eve just take responsibility for their actions? Why do they each blame someone else? 	<p><i>Possible responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why does God approve of Abel’s offering but not Cain’s? Cain’s murder of his own brother because of jealousy is deeply troubling. Cain lies to God about the murder, as if God did not already know what Cain had done! 	<p><i>Possible responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> God is so upset by human sinfulness that he expresses regret for having created the world. Is it really possible that Noah and his family were the only good people left on Earth? It seems unfair that, except for those few creatures left on the ark, all of creation drowns in the Flood: “The Lord wiped out every being on the earth . . .” (7:23). 	<p><i>Possible responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is God so opposed to the people trying to build a city and a tower? Is it possible the people intended their building plan simply to be ambitious, but God viewed it as arrogant? Is God’s “confusion” of the people’s language meant to be a punishment for their arrogance? Or, is it meant to be a gift, leading to all the different languages and cultures we have today?



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3. Despite what you noted for question 2, in what way(s) does this story reveal God's plan of essential goodness, holiness, and justice for all creation? For example, does God show compassion for a sinful humanity? Does the story teach us something important about how to avoid sin and injustice? Can the story strengthen our faith in God's power to save us?	<p><i>Possible responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God does not strike Adam and Eve dead after they've eaten the forbidden fruit. • God allows Adam and Eve to suffer the consequences but doesn't completely abandon them. • God makes leather garments as clothing for Adam and Eve. This shows God's continuing love, compassion, and care for them, even though they have lost the gift of living in the Garden of Eden. 	<p><i>Possible responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After Cain kills Abel, God allows Cain to suffer the consequences but does not strike Abel dead. • Even though Cain has killed his own brother, God shows compassion by putting a mark on Cain that he shouldn't be killed. 	<p><i>Possible responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God saves Noah, his family, and many creatures of the Earth from destruction. • After the Flood, God establishes a covenant with all of creation, symbolized by the rainbow. 	<p><i>Possible responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selfish ambitions hurt us and others. • Ultimately, we can't create anything based on human pride and arrogance; we need God's presence, love, and grace. • Only God can bring us true and lasting peace and joy.
4. Name something interesting about one of the other prehistorical narratives in Genesis that you heard from someone else in your group.	<i>Student responses will vary.</i>	<i>Student responses will vary.</i>	<i>Student responses will vary.</i>	<i>Student responses will vary.</i>
5. What connection did you notice between the story you read and one of the other prehistorical narratives shared by someone else in your group?	<i>Student responses will vary.</i>	<i>Student responses will vary.</i>	<i>Student responses will vary.</i>	<i>Student responses will vary.</i>

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