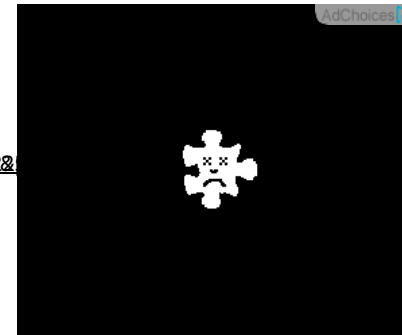


SEARCH

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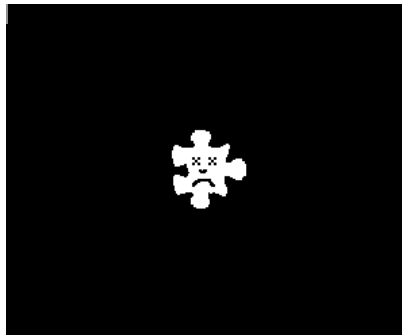
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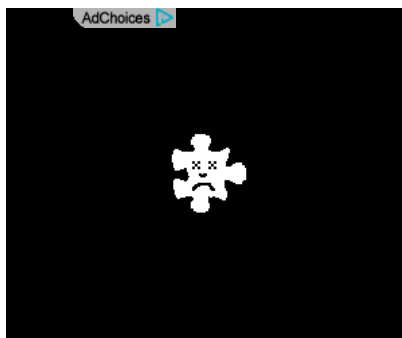
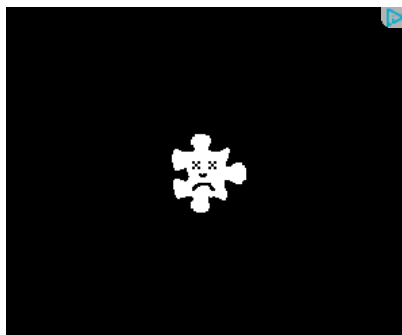
A wooden honey dipper is shown dripping thick, golden honey into a clear glass jar that is already partially filled with the same honey. The background is a clean, bright white, emphasizing the rich color and texture of the honey.

For many early cultures, including the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and peoples of Mesopotamia, honey occupied a unique position, both in the culinary and cultural repertoires. As the only major source of sweetness available, it was used to flavor drinks (mead is a prime example), pastries and all manner of other foods. The sweetness of honey was also viewed symbolically and it was often associated with heavenly bliss and the divine. For example, the Greeks made offerings of honey, as well as cakes and wine, to their deities, and the Promised Land of the ancient Hebrews was described as “flowing with milk and honey”. During the Jewish festival of Rosh Hashanah, held to celebrate the New Year, it is customary to eat fruit that has been dipped fruit in honey to ensure blessings for a “sweet” year.



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This association of honey with the divine also extended to it being considered a symbol of immortality. The reasoning behind that particular symbolism may not be immediately obvious, but it has strong roots in reality: honey acts as a natural preservative and possesses strong antiseptic qualities. It's even been discovered that honey found in jars dating back thousands of years (they were placed in the tombs of ancient Egyptian rulers) is still sanitary enough to be consumed today (though it would probably be wise to use caution in such attempts).

Although such lofty notions as heaven and immortality may no longer be associated with honey in today's world, the sweetness of this foodstuff is still acknowledged, both consciously and unconsciously. Someone may be told they speak in 'honeyed tones' or 'honeyed words', meaning they are very flattering and eloquent. Also, it is not uncommon for people to affectionately refer to their spouses or significant others as 'hon' or 'honey', demonstrating that the food's sweetness has transcended the food itself and become part of common language.

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