



ONLY ARTEMIS, HESTIA, AND ATHENA
COULD RESIST APHRODITE'S CHARM.
ALL OTHER GODS, GODDESSES, AND
MORTALS WERE SUSCEPTIBLE.



MYTHOLOGY

FROM GODS AND
GODDESSES TO MONSTERS
AND MORTALS, YOUR GUIDE
TO ANCIENT MYTHOLOGY

101

A
CRASH COURSE
IN GREEK
AND ROMAN
MYTHS

ATHENA AND HER ROMAN
COUNTERPART, MINERVA,
ARE THE VIRGIN GODDESSES
OF WISDOM. IN BOTH
MYTHOLOGIES, IT IS SAID THEY
SPRANG TO LIFE OUT OF THEIR
FATHERS' HEADS.



THE ORIGINAL OLYMPIC GAMES
WERE HELD IN HONOR OF ZEUS.



KATHLEEN SEARS

MYTHOLOGY 101

**FROM GODS AND GODDESSES TO
MONSTERS AND MORTALS, YOUR
GUIDE TO ANCIENT MYTHOLOGY**

KATHLEEN SEARS

 **adams**media
Avon, Massachusetts

Contents

INTRODUCTION

DEFINING A MYTH

THE GREEK STORYTELLERS

ROMAN MYTHMAKERS

CHAOS, PROMETHEUS, AND THE BIRTH OF MAN

THE ORDERED UNIVERSE: SUN, MOON, AND DAWN

PANDORA'S BOX

GAIA (EARTH) AND PONTUS

CYCLOPES AND THE HUNDRED-HANDED ONES

MYTHS IN LITERATURE

THE TITANS AND TITANESSES

THE GIANTS

TYPHON

CRONUS AND THE BIRTH OF ZEUS

ZEUS VERSUS CRONUS: THE BATTLE WITH THE TITANS

MOUNT OLYMPUS AND MYTHOLOGICAL LAWS

THE TWELVE OLYMPIAN GODS

ZEUS AND HERA

POSEIDON

HADES

A MAP OF THE UNDERWORLD

MYTHS IN ART AND MUSIC

ZEUS'S MANY AFFAIRS

ESCAPING DEATH: MORTALS WHO TRAVELED TO THE UNDERWORLD

HESTIA

DEMETER

ATHENA

THE JUDGES OF THE DEAD

APOLLO

DIONYSUS

ARES

ARTEMIS

APHRODITE

STILL A MYSTERY: THE ELEUSINIAN RITES

HEPHAESTUS

HERMES

SIX WIVES FOR ZEUS

THE WRATH OF HERA

MUSES, NYMPHS, SATYRS, AND CHARITES

TRITON, HECATE, AND PAN

OTHER LESSER GODS

MYTHS IN MOVIES AND POPULAR CULTURE

SCYLLA

AMAZONS

MINOTAUR

CHIMERA

MEDUSA

CENTAURS

MORE MONSTERS: GRIFFINS, ERINYES, HARPIES, AND
THE HYDRA OF LERNA

SPHINX

WHAT MAKES A HERO?

THE TWELVE LABORS OF HERACLES

ANCIENT FEUDS: ATHENA VERSUS ARES

PERSEUS

Theseus

JASON

ODYSSEUS

ACHILLES, AGAMEMNON, AND OTHER IMPORTANT HEROES

THE ORIGINS OF THE TROJAN WAR

HEROES OF THE TROJAN WAR

THE FALL OF TROY

COMPARING GREEK AND ROMAN MYTHOLOGIES

AENEAS: THE TROJAN HERO

ROMULUS, REMUS, AND THE CREATION OF ROME

THE ROMAN KINGS

MODERN-DAY MYTHOLOGY

APPENDIX A: FAMILY TREE OF THE GREEK GODS

APPENDIX B: FAMILY TREE OF THE ROMAN GODS

INSERT IMAGES

COPYRIGHT

INTRODUCTION

Many years have passed since the Greeks and Romans worshiped the gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus—centuries, in fact. The ancient characters you may have heard of before, like mighty Zeus, monstrous Medusa, and seductive Aphrodite, originate from myths dating back to 900 B.C. So why study mythology today? In short, classical mythology has impacted history, literature, culture, and life across the Western world and beyond; truly, it has shaped the ancient world *and* the modern world, and continues to impact contemporary life today. For example, the language you speak has been impacted by classical mythology: Conceited people are *narcissists*; your enemy's weakness is his *Achilles heel*; you may have experienced a dreamlike state of *hypnosis*; and you've used an *atlas* to gaze at the world. The months of the year trace their names to Roman mythology; the constellations have their origins in myth, too. Some of the world's most famous writers and philosophers detailed the quarrels of the gods and the lives of men, including Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, and Ovid. This list may be impressive, but it merely scratches the surface of what classical mythology has to offer.

The ancient Greeks and Romans used myths to explain the wonders of the world, including the rise of humanity, the causes of natural phenomena, and the origin of the Earth and the universe. Myths not only shared stories of creation—they

wove narratives of love, betrayal, war, lust, jealousy, loyalty, and tragedy across many centuries, told through tales of mighty gods, noble heroes, and terrifying monsters. And the myths aren't limited to the tales of gods of men alone. You'll discover some of the most creative beings ever recorded in history, including the aggressive Centaurs, half man and half horse; the irresistible Sirens, luring wayward sailors to their deaths; and the *original* monsters, like the Minotaur, the Sphinx, the Chimera, and the Cyclopes. You will also find the stories behind some of history's most famous adventures and battles, including the Trojan War, Odysseus's epic journey, and Oedipus's tragic life story. Plus, you'll meet the most popular gods and goddesses in Greek mythology (and their Roman counterparts), including war-loving Ares, wise Athena, jealous Hera, elusive Hades, furious Poseidon, and their heroic mortal counterparts, like Jason, Perseus, Heracles, and Theseus.

Mythology 101 will guide you through the most glorious (and completely terrifying) tales the ancient world had to offer. And don't worry; we've highlighted the Greek and Roman myths with their own icons, **G** and **R**, so you'll know the exact origins of every account. In addition, you'll find family trees for the Greek and Roman gods, so you can easily remember the "who's who" of the ancient world. No matter what type of story you enjoy most—romance, adventure, mystery, horror—these ancient legends will have something for all your interests. Whether you're new to the gods and want to learn more about their stories, supplementing a literature or history course, or brushing up on what you learned in high school, this fun and comprehensive guide to gods is the perfect introduction to Greek and Roman mythology.

DEFINING A MYTH

Adventures of Passion, Tragedy, War, and Heroism



A myth, defined simply, is a fictitious story or half-truth, but it goes much deeper than that. Scholars of mythology have struggled to pinpoint an exact definition that encompasses all of the attributes contained within a myth. It's funny how such a small word both defines and gives purpose to lofty ideas, such as the meaning of life. It's no wonder an accurate definition has not been settled on!

In popular usage, the word *myth* usually refers to a fictitious story or a half-truth. For example, you might see a report in the media that uses *myth* for some commonly held belief that the reporter wants to prove is untrue. But myths go much deeper than false beliefs or made-up stories. Scholars of mythology have struggled to agree on an exact definition, one that encompasses everything myth can mean. Myths may deal with questions of origins—who you are and where you came from. They may teach values or attempt to explain natural phenomena. Myths are often intertwined with religion, and some look ahead to the end of time.

This book focuses on Greek and Roman mythology, but these are not the only myths. Other cultures—such as Japanese, Native American, Indian, Chinese, Norse, African, Celtic, Aboriginal, and Egyptian peoples—have their own myths. Although the stories may be wildly different, all myths share certain characteristics. Looking

at these similarities offers a starting point for developing a working definition of myth.

CREATING MYTHS, EXPLAINING PHENOMENA

The myth has several characteristics that set it apart from other kinds of stories. One characteristic is how a myth is created. Unlike most works of fiction, myths are not the creation of a single author. A myth evolves as it's told, over and over again. Scholars explain that the mythology of a culture is created through the oral renderings of its people. Someone tells a story, and then the audience tells it again, and their listeners tell it again—and on it goes. Because myths are told and retold, passed from one person to the next, there is often more than one version of the same story.

A myth is a religious story that involves a higher power or entity. The gods, goddesses, and other supernatural beings who appear in myths are worshiped or revered. Within the culture that created it, the myth is considered sacred and believed to be true.

A myth may attempt to explain the unknown, such as how the universe or Earth was created. It also attempts to answer the broad, fundamental questions all people ask themselves about the meaning and purpose of human existence.

Any individual myth is part of a larger mythology, a group of stories that belong to one culture. The myths that make up a mythology may be tied together by shared characters (such as the gods and goddesses involved), historical events (such as the Trojan War), or common themes (such as love and sex). A culture's mythology contains socially accepted truths that provide a sense of identity, shared values, and purpose.

These characteristics comprise the essential elements of a myth. In addition, a few other elements—not necessarily essential to all myths—may appear. For example, many myths highlight activities

that break the laws of nature: People change into inanimate objects, the dead rise and live again, and so forth. Also, myths often convey different planes of existence and the interaction between them— heaven and hell, for example, or the future and the past.

ANCIENT QUESTIONS

The ancients, just like us, hungered for knowledge. Most wanted explanations for what they considered to be phenomena they encountered in their daily lives. Others went beyond that and wanted reasons for the structure of the universe. Regardless of the importance or size of the question, a curiosity drove them to begin asking questions. And myths were formed to provide explanation for these otherwise unanswerable questions.

Myths not only take on the challenge of tackling these colossal questions, but also venture to answer the more everyday wonderings, including:

- The origin of certain constellations
- Why the sun disappears at night
- Why certain creatures behave the way they do (for instance, why the spider weaves a web)
- How the evils—sickness, death, grief—were released upon the world
- How fire came to man
- The changing of the seasons

The Greeks and Romans answered these questions through myths. This explanatory element of the myth is quite important to its structure. Just like any other religion, classical mythology sought to provide definitive answers to these ever-looming questions.

A STORY FOR EVERY READER

If you enjoy stories of war and bravery in battle, you'll be glad to know that classical mythology is full of exciting battle scenes. The ancients were fierce warriors, and the myths describe their fights in great detail. The story of the Trojan War, for example, contains many graphic descriptions of fighting.

Horror fans will find a fascinating variety of monsters in classical mythology—including some you never dreamed might be lurking under your bed. From Typhon, who had a hundred serpentine heads, to the Minotaur, who ate children, the monsters of classical mythology will give you chills and might even keep you up at night.

Adventure, tragedy, battles, and monsters are just the beginning. You'll also encounter tales of witchcraft and revenge, murder and mystery, crime and punishment, and passionate love and seduction. Love and sex play a major role in mythology, including stories of scandalous affairs—such as the one between Aphrodite and Ares—and stories of true love—such as the myth of Perseus and Andromeda.

With such a wide variety of tales to choose from, classical mythology is guaranteed to have something for everyone!

THE GREEK STORYTELLERS

A Blind Bard, an Epic Performer, and Other Ancient Authors



Mythology doesn't come from a single source. Myths develop as they're told and retold, passed from one storyteller to another, from one generation to the next. This section surveys some of the most important mythmakers of ancient Greece. These poets, dramatists, and other storytellers were the best-selling authors of their time. Because their works were popular and valued, they were recorded and preserved.

HOMER: THE GREATEST POET OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

You will never study classical mythology without hearing the name of Homer. Homer is regarded as not only the greatest poet of the ancient world, but also one of the greatest—and certainly one of the most influential—artists of the literary world. But did Homer truly exist? This question has been debated among scholars, historians, and the common man alike for centuries. What is not argued, though, is the prominence of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, literary tomes attributed to Homer.

Several theories assert that Homer wasn't the single author of all the works attributed to him. Some scholars even doubt that he existed at all. One theory posits that several different people composed these poems, and the result was later attributed to Homer. Other theories suggest that Homer composed the first part of the *Odyssey* and that one or more other bards concluded the poem.

Ancient Entertainment

Homer's epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, each run approximately 12,000 lines. To perform either poem in its entirety would take several evenings. To the ancients, listening to an epic poem was an exciting way to spend an evening. These two poems tell of the Trojan War and its aftermath. The Greek victory over Troy was a defining moment for the Greeks and the catalyst for the foundation of Rome. These epics became an integral part of Greek

culture. In fact, the Greeks were said to have introduced the study of these works into their schools around 400 B.C.

Why is there this skepticism? The works of Homer have been studied for centuries. Scholars who have compared the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and other poems attributed to Homer have found significant differences. Others note that Homeric works blend different dialects, even though people typically speak only one dialect. Although the differences among Homeric works raise questions about who composed them, “Homer” still created the foundation for classical mythology—whether he was a single man or several different authors.

HESIOD: SHROUDED IN MYSTERY

Hesiod is another important Greek poet. Often called the father of Greek didactic poetry, Hesiod probably lived some time after Homer. Unlike Homer's epic poetry, which typically narrates heroic deeds and important events, didactic poetry tells a story to teach a moral lesson.

Like Homer, Hesiod is mysterious, but scholars do know a bit more about his life. The best guess is that he lived sometime around 700 B.C. in the village of Ascra in central Greece. According to his poems, he tended sheep in his youth, becoming a farmer after his father died. Although he was poor, Hesiod wasn't a typical peasant. Yet his works clearly show the perspective of a farmer who lived a difficult life.

While tending his flock one day, the young Hesiod was visited by the Muses, goddesses of literature and the arts. They appeared to him in a mist and gave him a poet's staff and a poet's voice. Then they told him to use these gifts to spread the word about the gods. Hesiod did as he was told, even competing in poetry contests. The results of this mystical visitation were the famous works *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, as well as several lesser-known poems.

As with Homer, scholars debate whether Hesiod was the sole author of his works. But there is general agreement that Hesiod was an actual person and that he authored most of *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. Only parts of these works are suspected of having been added later by other poets.

Theogony fulfilled the Muses' command by telling the history of the gods. Beginning with creation, this poem provides a foundation on which to build the stories of the gods and goddesses. *Theogony*

explains the origin of the universe, the gods, and the world. *Works and Days*, a poem of about 800 lines, is framed as a disagreement between Hesiod and his brother, Perses, over their late father's estate. *Works and Days* is filled with fables and myths as the two brothers debate the issue.

AESCHYLUS: SOLDIER, PERFORMER, PLAYWRIGHT

The next important period for mythology was the fifth century B.C., when Greece experienced a flowering of the theater. During this period, three Greek playwrights rose to fame for their tragic plays. The first of these tragedians was Aeschylus, who wrote more than ninety plays and is sometimes called the father of tragedy.

Historians know several facts about Aeschylus. He was born into an aristocratic family near Athens around 525 B.C., served as a soldier in the Persian Wars, and became a celebrated tragedian. He participated numerous times in the Great Dionysia, part of a festival honoring Dionysus, the Greek god of wine.

Competition at the Great Dionysia

For this festival, three dramatists each created three tragedies and a satyr play (a short play featuring drunkenness, sexuality, and practical jokes), which were performed and judged at the celebration. His first competition is thought to have taken place around 499 B.C., with his first victory in 484 B.C. From then on, Aeschylus won first prize in nearly every competition (although he was bested once by his protégé Sophocles).

Aeschylus is thought to have written ninety plays during his lifetime, approximately eighty of which are known from the bits and pieces that have survived. However, only seven of his plays, all tragedies, remain intact today: *The Persians*, *Seven Against Thebes*, *The Suppliants*, *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, *The*