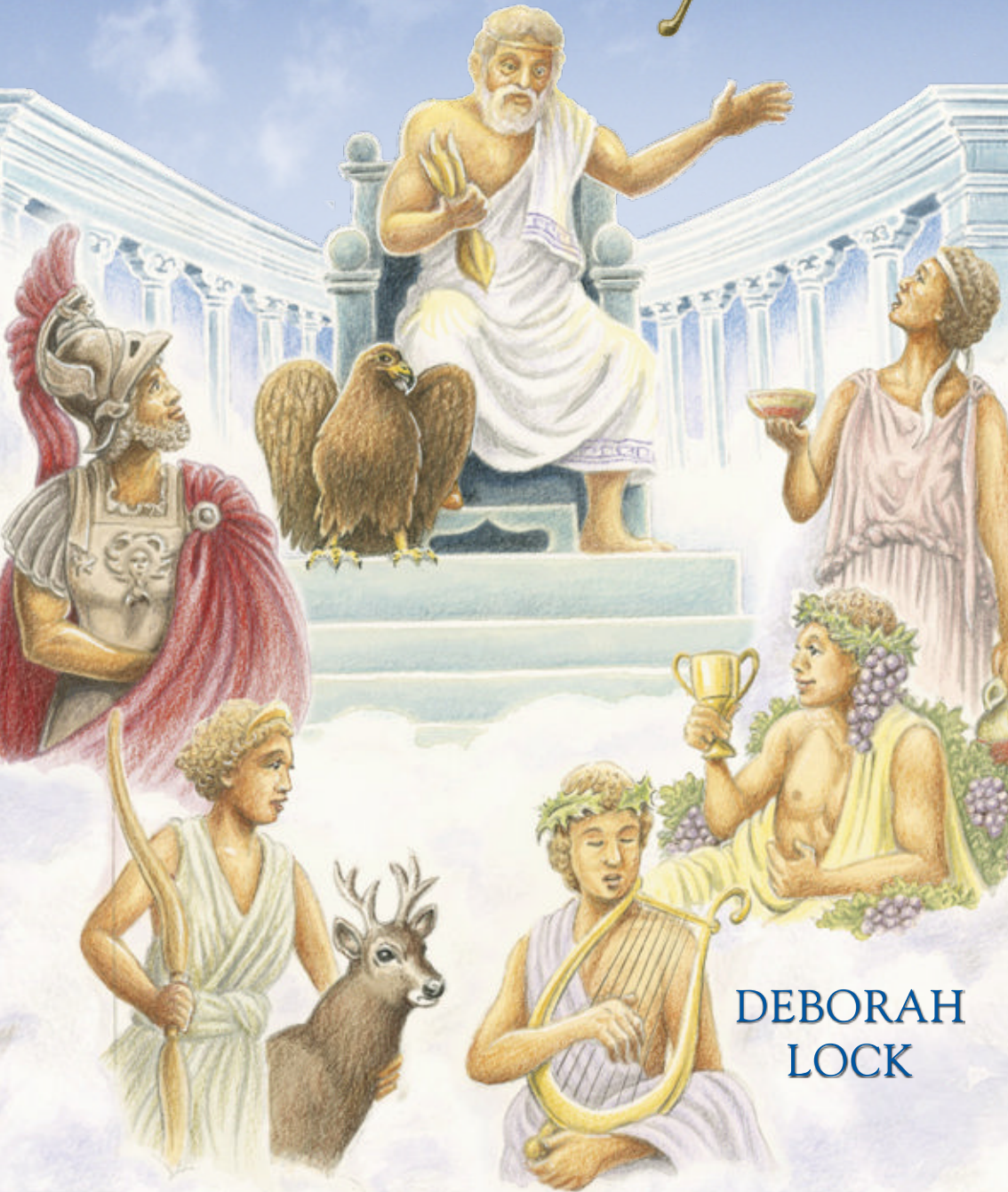




READERS



# Greek Myths



DEBORAH  
LOCK

# READERS

## Level 3

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Spacebusters: The Race to the Moon  
Beastly Tales  
Shark Attack!  
Titanic  
Invaders from Outer Space  
Movie Magic  
Plants Bite Back!  
Time Traveller  
Bermuda Triangle  
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Zeppelin: The Age of the Airship  
Spies  
Terror on the Amazon  
Disasters at Sea  
The Story of Anne Frank  
Extreme Sports

Spiders' Secrets  
The Big Dinosaur Dig  
The Story of Chocolate  
School Days Around the World  
Welcome to China  
My First Ballet Show  
Ape Adventures  
Greek Myths  
LEGO: Mission to the Arctic  
Star Wars: Star Pilot  
Star Wars: I Want to be a Jedi  
Star Wars: The Story of Darth Vader  
Marvel Heroes: Amazing Powers  
The X-Men School  
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Superteam

## Level 4

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Volcanoes and Other Natural  
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Secrets of the Mummies  
Pirates! Raiders of the High Seas  
Horse Heroes  
Trojan Horse  
Micro Monsters  
Going for Gold!  
Extreme Machines  
Flying Ace: The Story of  
Amelia Earhart  
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Free at Last! The Story of  
Martin Luther King, Jr.  
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Welcome to The Globe! The  
Story of Shakespeare's Theatre  
Antarctic Adventure  
Space Station: Accident on Mir  
Atlantis: The Lost City?  
Dinosaur Detectives  
Danger on the Mountain: Scaling  
the World's Highest Peaks  
Crime Busters  
The Story of Muhammad Ali  
First Flight: The Story of the  
Wright Brothers  
D-Day Landings: The Story of  
the Allied Invasion  
Solo Sailing  
Thomas Edison: The Great Inventor  
Skate!  
JLA: Batman's Guide to Crime  
and Detection

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JLA: Aquaman's Guide to the Oceans  
JLA: Wonder Woman's Book of Myths  
JLA: Flash's Book of Speed  
JLA: Green Lantern's Book of  
Inventions  
The Story of the X-Men: How it all  
Began  
Creating the X-Men: How Comic  
Books Come to Life  
Spider-Man's Amazing Powers  
The Story of Spider-Man  
The Incredible Hulk's Book of Strength  
The Story of the Incredible Hulk  
Transformers: The Awakening  
Transformers: The Quest  
Transformers: The Unicron Battles  
Transformers: The Uprising  
Transformers: Megatron Returns  
Transformers: Terrorcon Attack  
Star Wars: Galactic Crisis!  
Star Wars: Beware the Dark Side  
Star Wars: Epic Battles  
Graphic Readers: The Terror Trail  
Graphic Readers: The Price of Victory  
Graphic Readers: The Curse of  
the Crocodile God  
Graphic Readers: Instruments of Death  
Graphic Readers: The Spy-Catcher  
Gang  
Graphic Readers: Wagon Train  
Adventure  
Fantastic Four: Evil Adversaries  
Marvel Heroes: Greatest Battles

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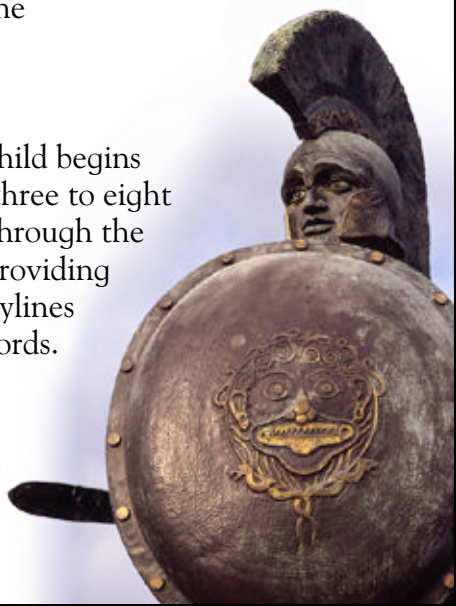
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No matter which level you select, you can be sure that you are helping your child learn to read, then read to learn!





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DK READERS

READING  
3  
ALONE

# Greek Myths

Written by Deborah Lock



A Dorling Kindersley Book

# Stories of old

In ancient times, the people of Greece built huge temples where they worshipped their gods and goddesses. Where did the idea of these gods come from? Like all cultures, the Greeks wanted to understand the changing seasons, the weather, why good and bad things happened to them, and what would happen when they died.





*The belief in the Greek gods and goddesses spread throughout the ancient Greek empire.*

Their answers lay in the belief that there were gods and goddesses who took an interest in people's everyday lives. They told stories about these immortals that we call myths. These included tales of heroes, monsters and spirits. ❖

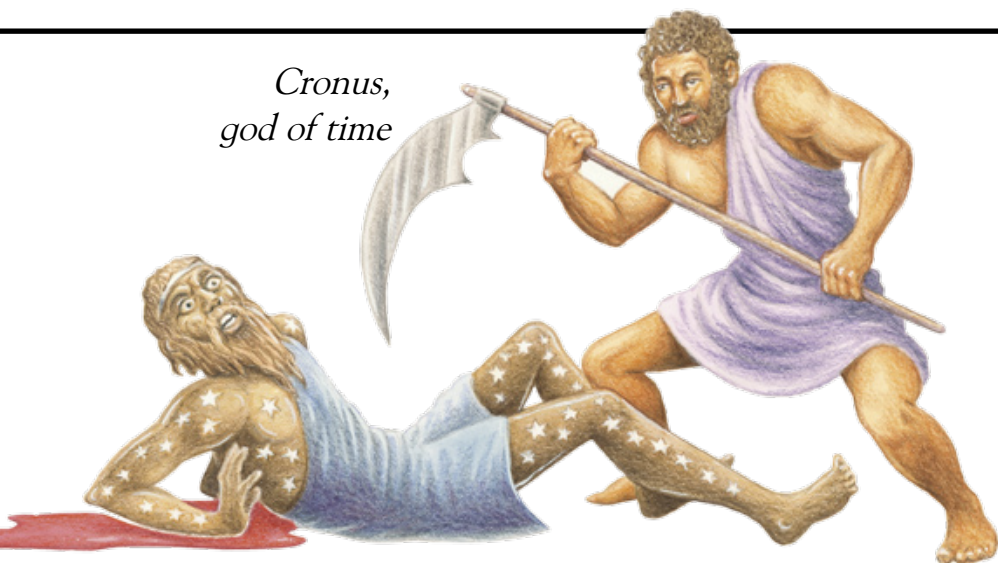
# Family of Greek gods

Let's begin at the beginning with the god of the heavens, Uranus, and the earth goddess, Gaia. Their children were the race of Titans, a group of powerful giants who roamed the heavens and earth. The youngest, Cronus, the god of Time, took control when he killed his father. Aphrodite [af-ro-DIE-tee], the goddess of love, sprang from the sea as Uranus was cut into pieces.

*Aphrodite, goddess  
of love and beauty*

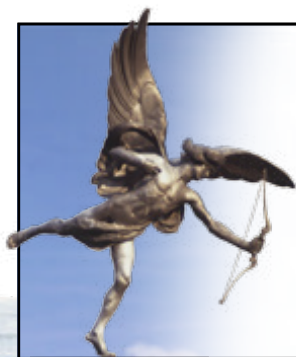


*Cronus,  
god of time*



*Uranus, god of the heavens*

Cronus had three sons: Zeus, Poseidon [poss-EYE-don] and Hades. He also had three daughters: Hestia, Demeter and Hera. It was these immortals and their children who appeared in many of the Greek myths.



### **Eros**

The beautiful son of Aphrodite, Eros, was the god of love. In myths, he was known for shooting his arrows at people to make them fall in love.



*Zeus, god of  
the heavens  
and earth*



*Hera, goddess  
of childbirth  
and marriage*



*The peak of Mount  
Olympus was believed to  
be the home of the gods.*

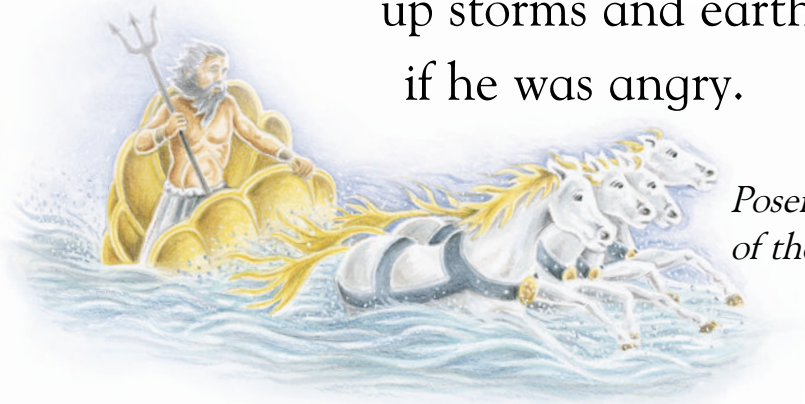
Zeus waged a terrifying war against his father and some of the Titans, and defeated them.

He then became the god of heaven and earth and went on to father many gods, goddesses and heroes. He lived with his wife, Hera, along with Demeter, Aphrodite and his eight immortal children on Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece.

Hestia, the goddess of the home, gave up her seat on Olympus to look after the fire within the mountain.

Poseidon, the god of the sea, lived in his golden underwater palace, stirring

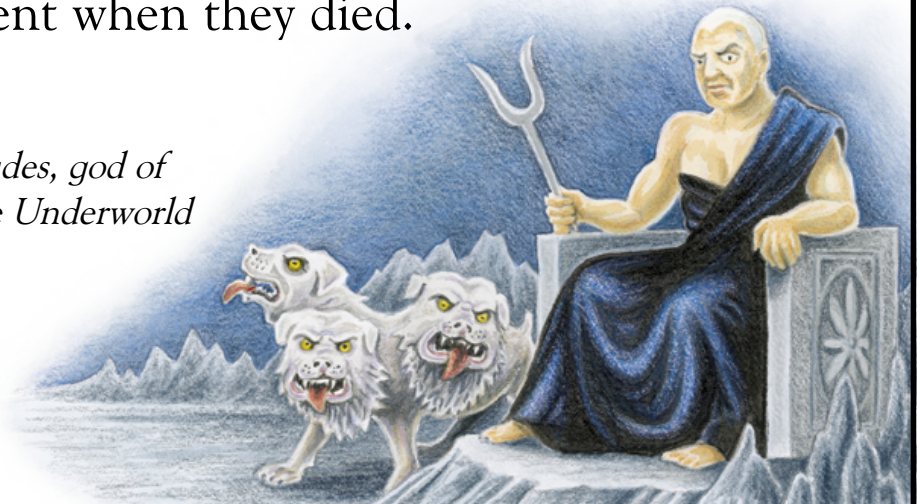
up storms and earthquakes if he was angry.



*Poseidon, god of the sea*

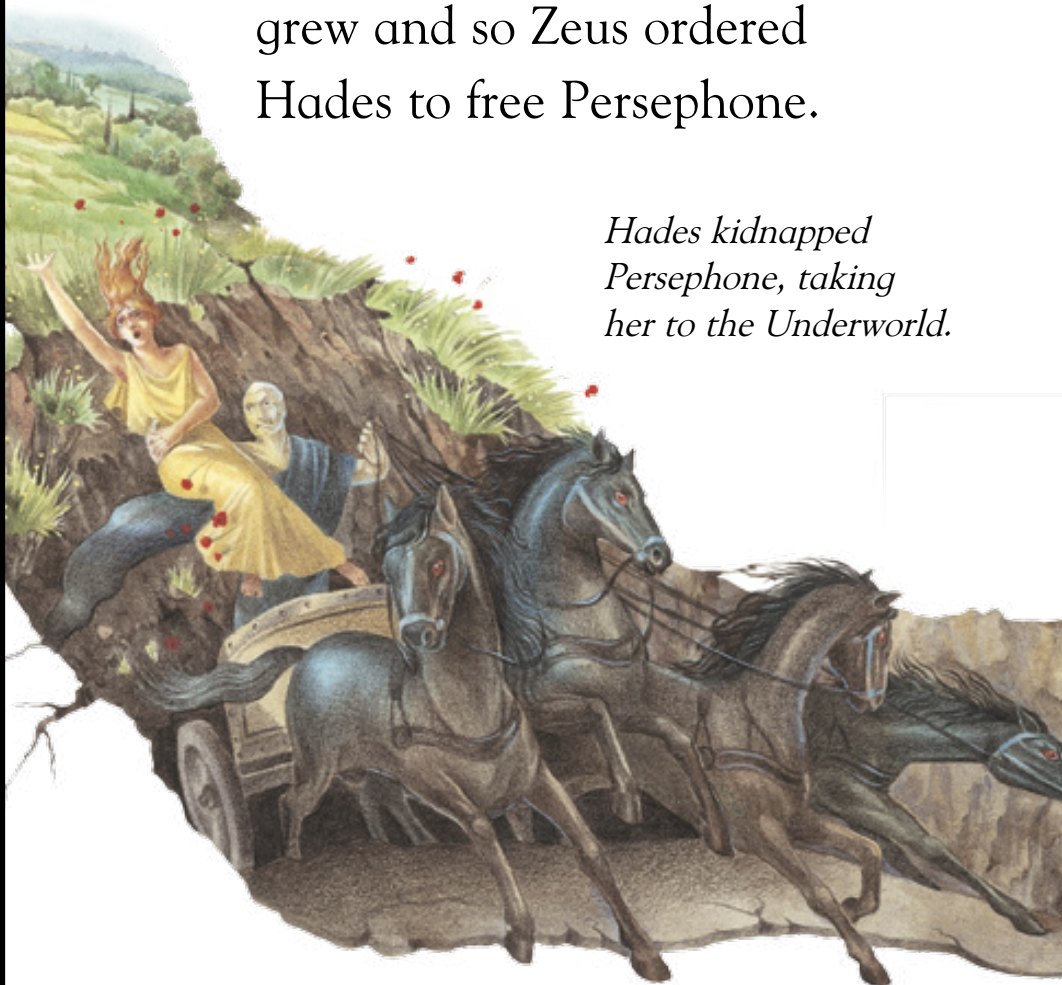
Hades was the dark god of the Underworld – the place where people went when they died.

*Hades, god of the Underworld*



Demeter, the goddess of crops, had a beautiful daughter named Persephone [per-SEFF-on-nee]. Hades kidnapped Persephone and made her his wife in the Underworld. As Demeter grieved, the earth became frozen and nothing grew and so Zeus ordered Hades to free Persephone.

*Hades kidnapped Persephone, taking her to the Underworld.*





When she saw her daughter again, Demeter's sadness melted, winter faded and the plants grew. However, Persephone had eaten six pomegranate seeds during her time in the Underworld, so each year she had to spend six months with Hades. For the other six months, she could be with her mother, and the seasons changed to spring and summer.





Many of Zeus's immortal children had unusual birth stories. One day Zeus had a bad headache.

He asked his son Hephaestus [hef-EEST-us] to split open his head with an axe. Out sprang Athena [a-THEE-na], dressed for battle and shouting her war cry.

Just like us, these titanic Olympians had emotions such as love, jealousy and anger. They were fascinated by people and meddled in their lives with both heroic and fateful consequences. ❖

### Athena's city

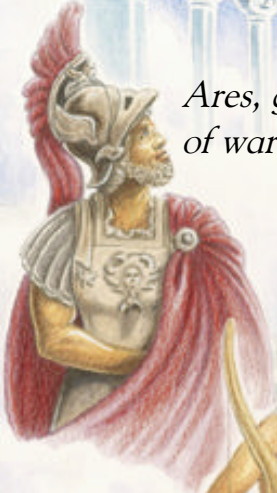
Athens, the capital of Greece, was named for Athena after she won a competition against Poseidon.





**Zeus and his eight immortal children**

*Zeus, god of thunder and lightning*



*Ares, god of war*



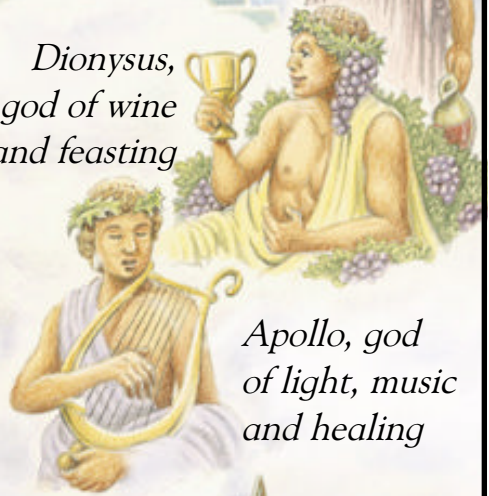
*Hebe, goddess of youth*



*Dionysus, god of wine and feasting*



*Artemis, goddess of the moon and wild animals*

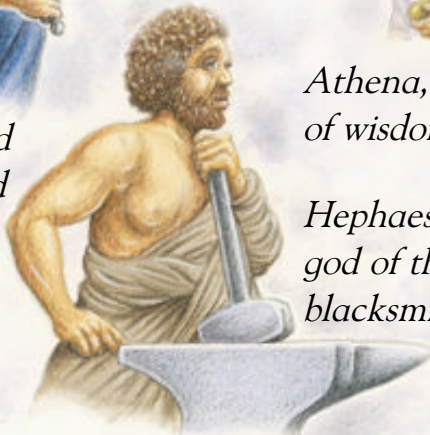


*Apollo, god of light, music and healing*



*Hermes, god of trade and protector of travellers*

*Athena, goddess of wisdom and war*

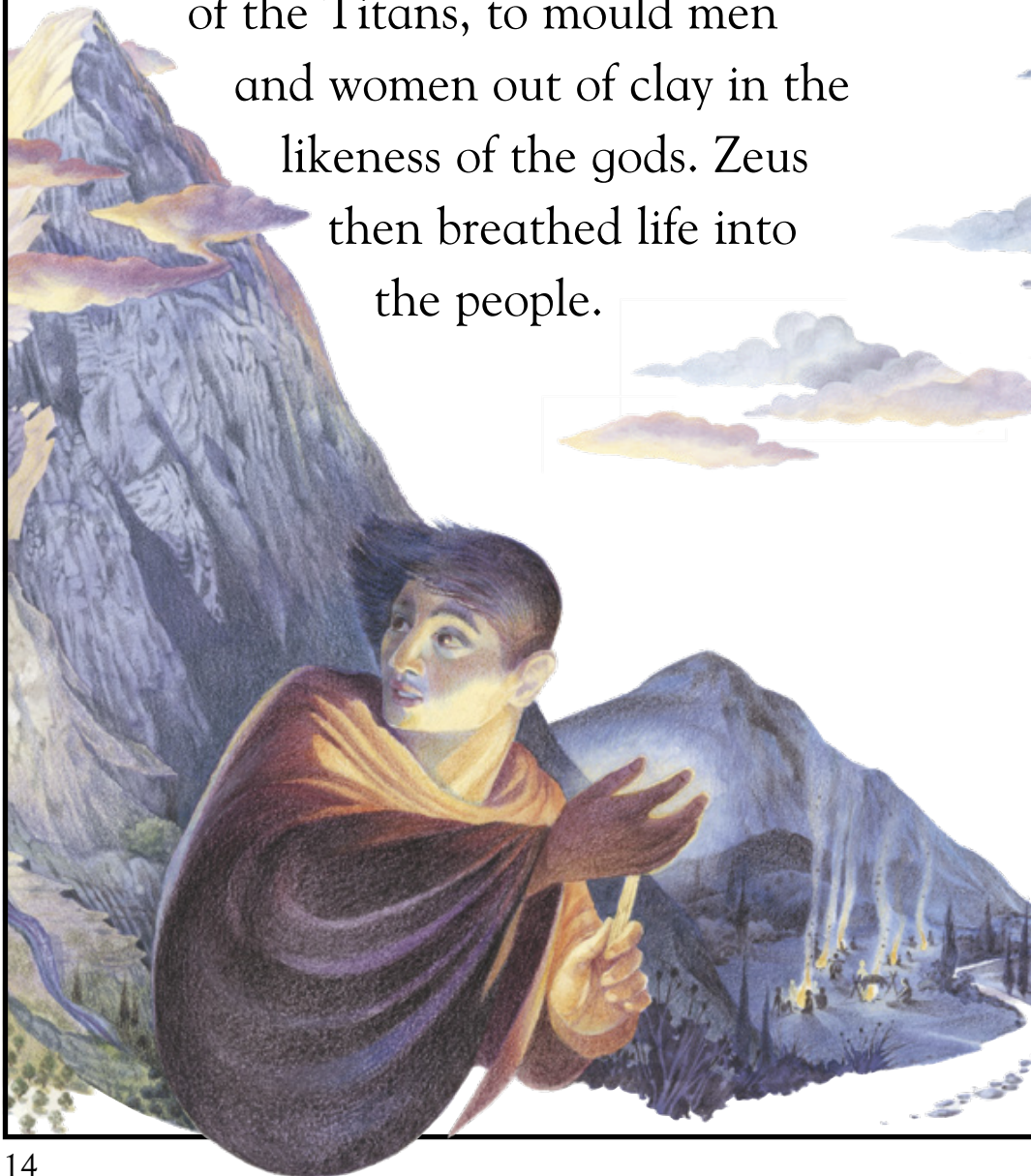


*Hephaestus, god of the blacksmith's fire*



# Pandora's jar

According to legend, Zeus wanted to create a race of people. He ordered Prometheus [pro-MEE-thee-us], one of the Titans, to mould men and women out of clay in the likeness of the gods. Zeus then breathed life into the people.



Prometheus lived among the people and taught them how to build homes, grow plants and hunt animals.

He begged Zeus to give them fire so they could cook and make metal tools, but Zeus refused.



“It will make them as powerful as the gods,” he said.

However, Prometheus stole some fire from the rising sun. When Zeus saw the people using fire, he was very angry and punished Prometheus severely.

### **Eternal punishment**

For disobeying Zeus, Prometheus was chained to a high rock and had his liver torn out each day by an eagle. As he was immortal, his liver grew back every night.





Zeus also wanted to punish the people, so he asked Hephaestus to make a woman in his blacksmith's fire. The gods gave her gifts, such as beauty, love, curiosity and deceit. They named her Pandora meaning "all-gifted".



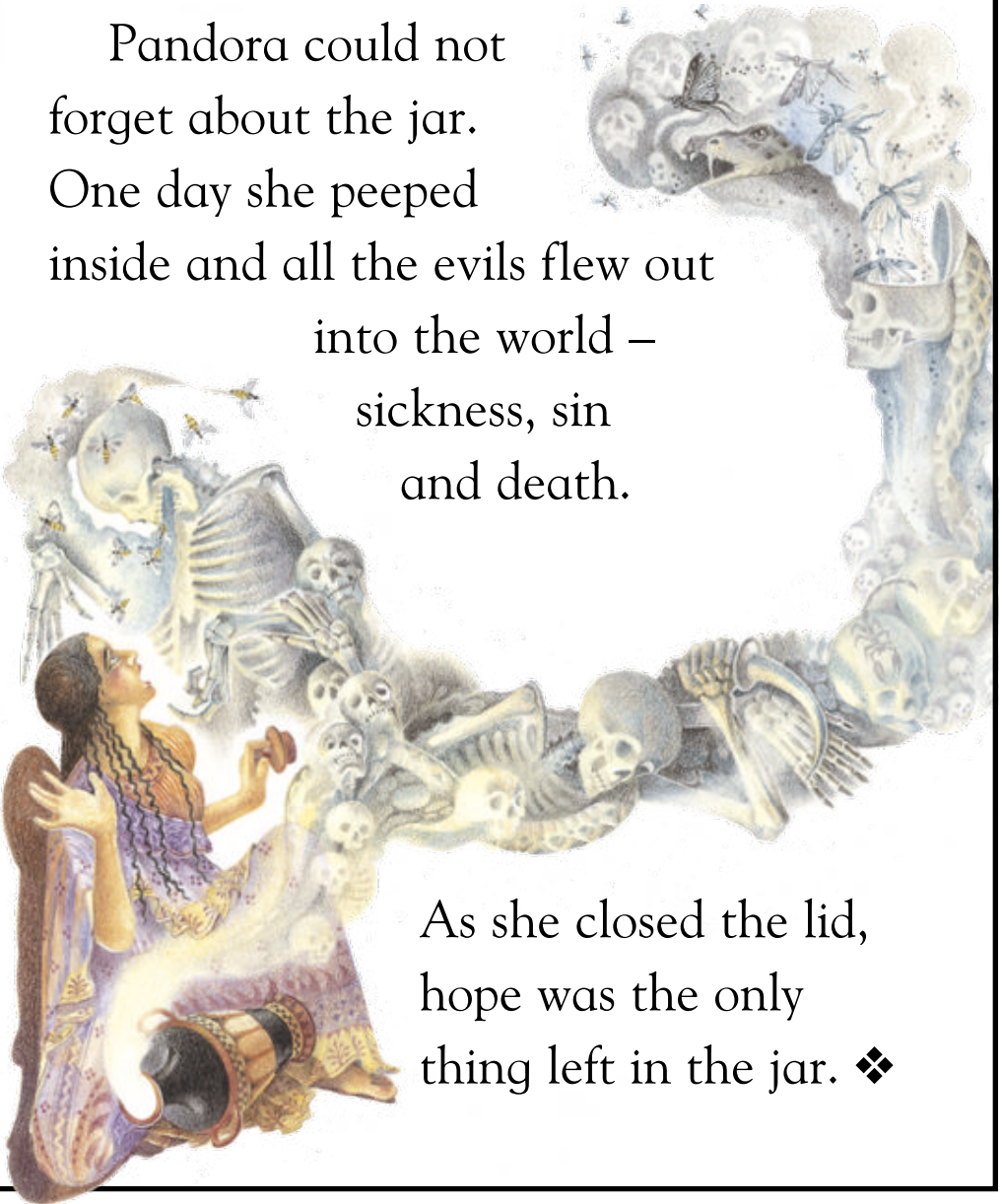
*Pandora receives the gifts of beauty from Aphrodite, music from Apollo and deceit from Hermes.*

She was sent to Prometheus's brother, Epimetheus [e-pee-MEE-thee-us]. She was also given a jar, which she was forbidden to open.

Although his brother had warned him not to accept a gift from Zeus, Epimetheus was enchanted with Pandora and married her.

Pandora could not forget about the jar. One day she peeped inside and all the evils flew out into the world – sickness, sin and death.

As she closed the lid, hope was the only thing left in the jar. ❖





# Labours of Heracles

This is the tale of the greatest and strongest of all heroes – Heracles [HAIR-a-kleez]. He was the son of Zeus, but his mother was a mortal woman. Hera was extremely jealous of Heracles. He grew into a determined, wise young man with superhuman strength and skill.

Zeus wanted his son to become a god when he died. Hera replied, “I will only agree to this if Heracles can perform twelve labours to be set by his cousin Eurystheus [you-RIS-thee-us], the king of Mycenae [my-SEE-nee]”.

## **Super strong**

As Heracles lay in his cot, Hera sent serpents to kill him. Even though he was only a baby, Heracles strangled them with his bare hands.



Eurystheus hated Heracles and wanted him dead.

“Your first task is to kill the lion, which is devouring the people of Nemea,” he commanded.



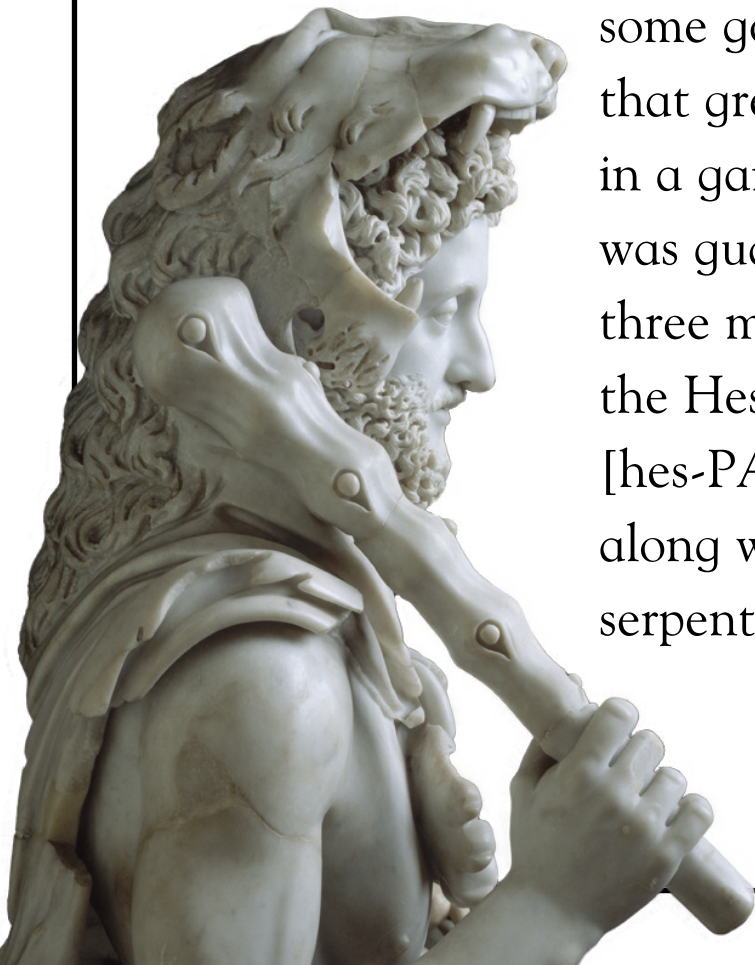
*Heracles was called Hercules by the Romans.*

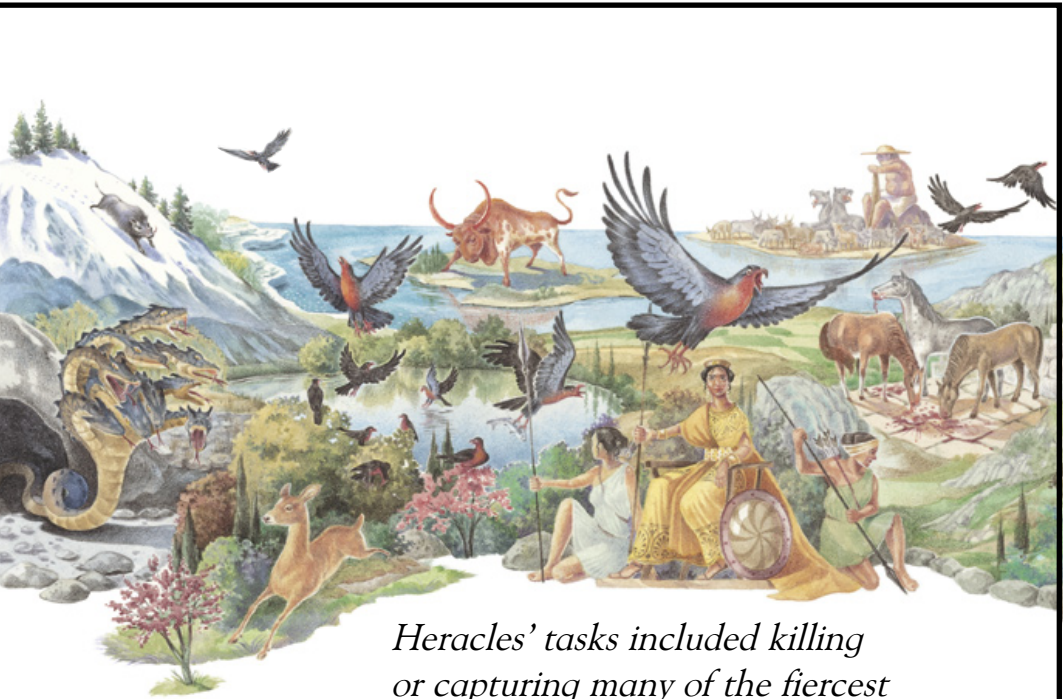
*Athena guided Heracles in many of his tasks.*

The Nemean lion had skin that could not be pierced by weapons. So Heracles followed the lion to its cave and wrestled with it. After strangling it to death, he returned to Eurystheus, wearing the lion's skin as armour.

Heracles successfully completed task after task. His eleventh task was to steal

some golden apples that grew on a tree in a garden that was guarded by three maidens called the Hesperides [hes-PAIR-i-deez], along with a fierce serpent.





*Heracles' tasks included killing or capturing many of the fiercest mythical animals.*

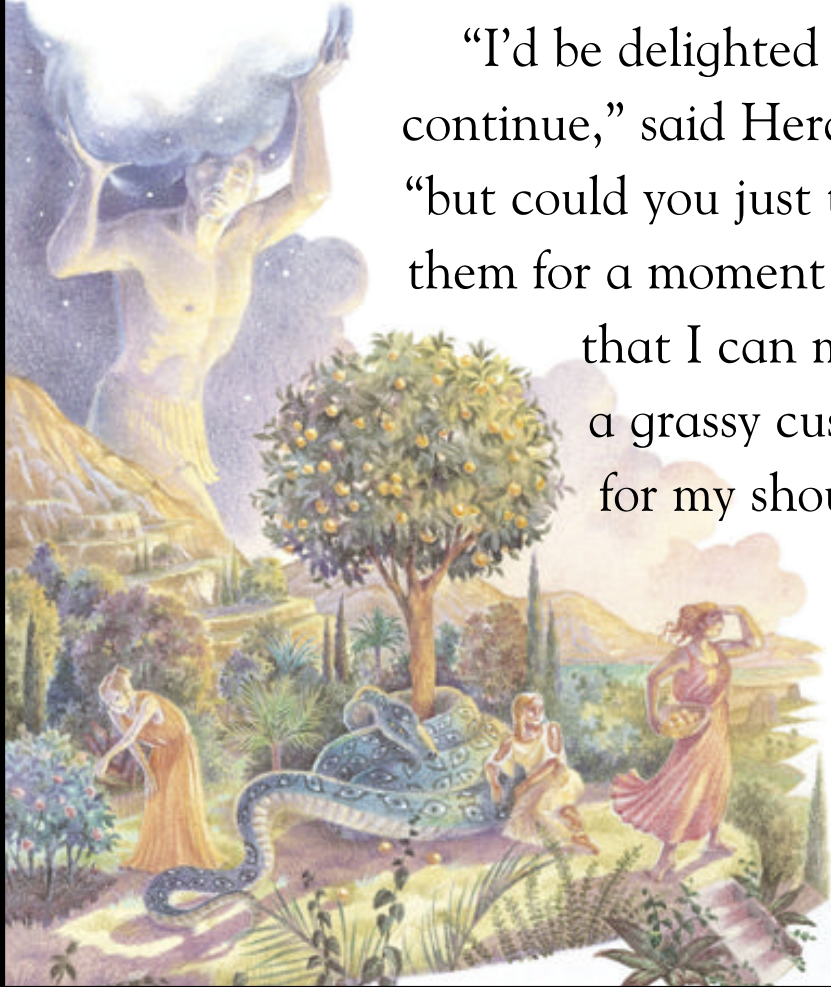
After seeking advice from the gods, Heracles went first to the Hesperides' father, Atlas. He was one of the Titans defeated long ago by Zeus. Atlas's everlasting punishment was to hold up the heavens on his shoulders.

“If you ask your daughters for a couple of apples,” said Heracles, “I’ll hold up the heavens for a while.”



Atlas agreed but asked Heracles to kill the serpent first. Heracles did this by shooting a single arrow over the garden wall. He then took up Atlas's burden. When Atlas returned with the apples, he did not want to take the heavens back.

“I'd be delighted to continue,” said Heracles, “but could you just take them for a moment so that I can make a grassy cushion for my shoulder?”

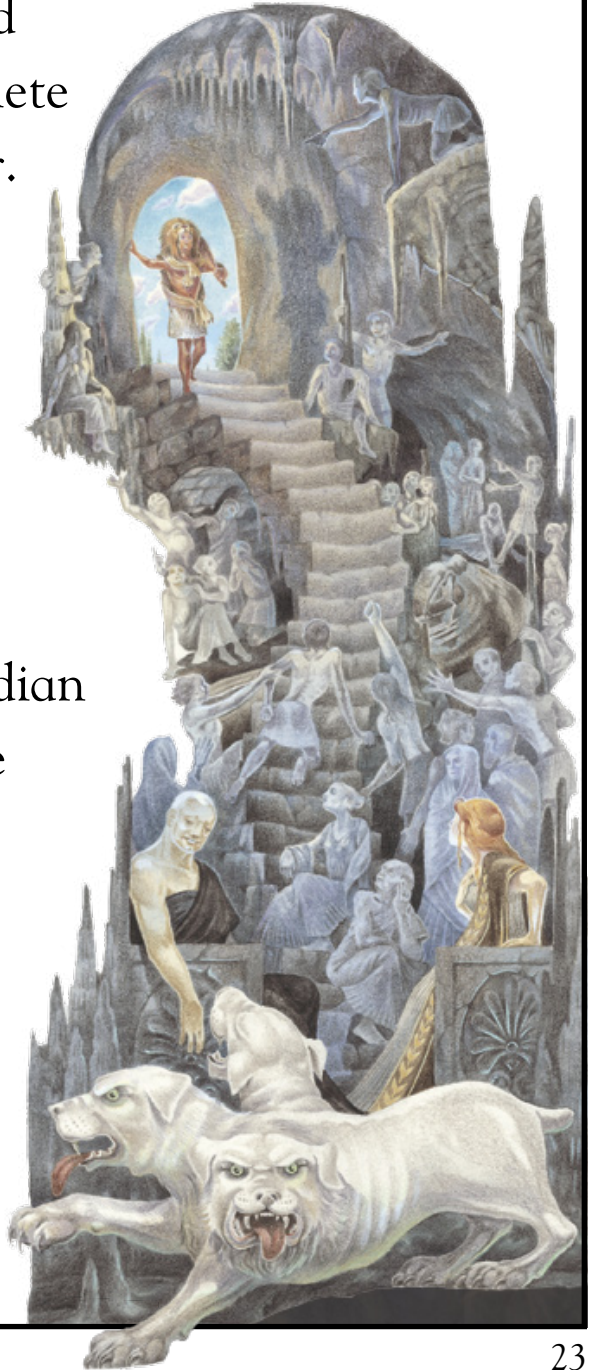




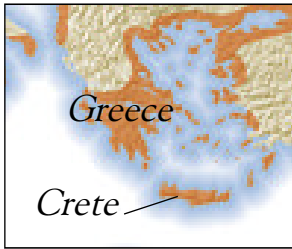
When Atlas took the heavens back, Heracles picked up the apples and walked away, and went on to complete his twelfth labour.

Zeus was pleased. When Heracles died, he joined the gods on Mount Olympus and he became the guardian of the door to the heavens. ❖

*Heracles' twelfth labour was to go to the Underworld and bring back Hades' three-headed dog, Cerberus.*



# Theseus and the Minotaur



Just off the coast of Greece is an island called Crete. It was here, say the myths, that a most fearsome creature called the Minotaur lived during the reign of King Minos. The Minotaur was half-man and half-bull and only ate human flesh. The beast was so terrible that the king commanded his greatest craftsman, Daedalus [DED-uh-lus] to build a labyrinth that no one could escape from.

## **Bulls of Knossos**

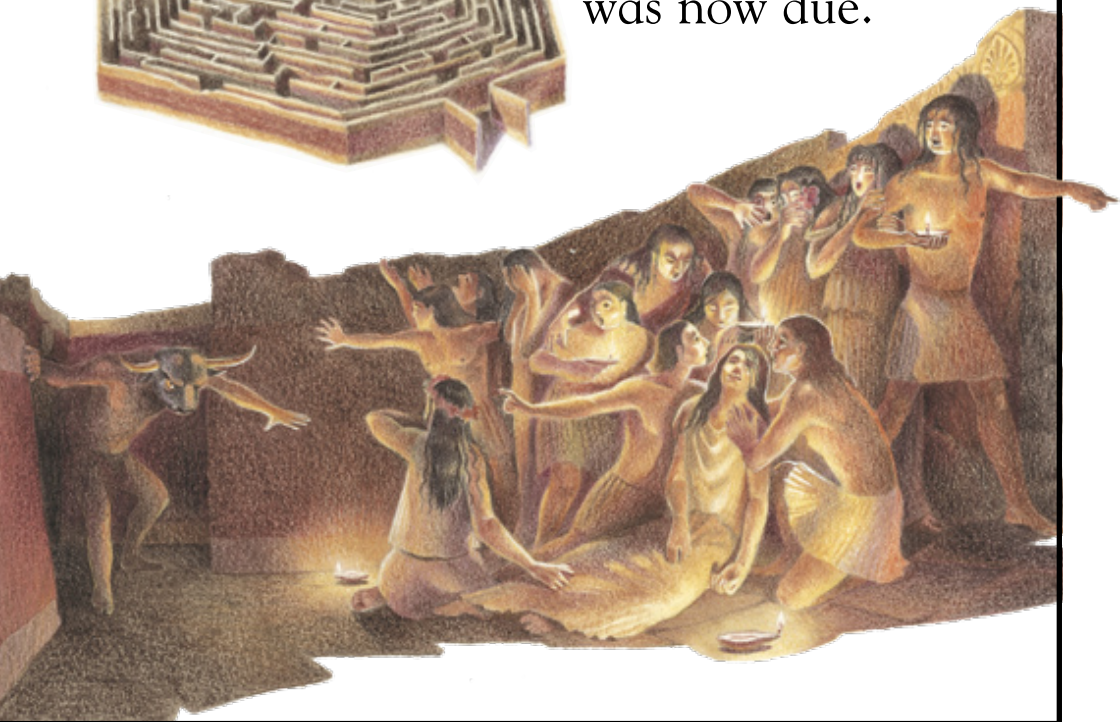
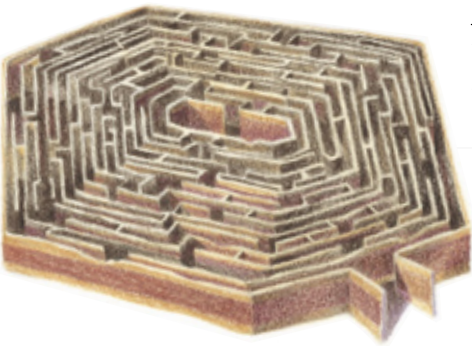
When the ancient palace of Knossos in Crete was excavated, images of bulls were found. Some think this proves that the ancient Cretans worshipped bulls.



At the centre of this maze lived the Minotaur.

Every nine years, seven boys and seven girls were sent from Athens to be fed to the Minotaur. This was payment from the King of Athens, Aegeus [ay-GEE-us], for accidentally causing the death of Minos's son

many years before. The third payment was now due.

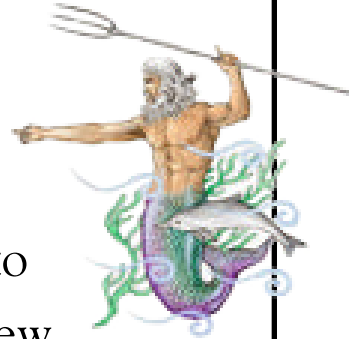








In Athens, the victims were being selected. A young prince named Theseus offered to go and kill the Minotaur. He was the adopted son of Aegeus and the son of the sea-god Poseidon.

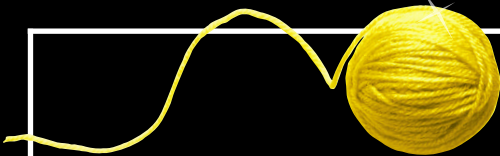


The ship that Theseus took to Crete had black sails but the crew also took white sails with them.

“If you succeed, raise the white sails on your return,” said Aegeus to his son.

When they arrived at Crete, the Athenians were met by King Minos and his daughter, Ariadne. She fell in love with Theseus at first sight.

“I’ll help you kill the Minotaur if you take me back to Athens and make me your wife,” Ariadne said to Theseus. He agreed.



“Tie one end of this magical ball of thread to the entrance of the labyrinth and follow it to the centre,” Ariadne instructed. “Go at night while the Minotaur sleeps. After killing it, roll the thread back up and it will lead you out.”



That night, the glimmering thread led Theseus to the Minotaur, which he wrestled and killed. When he arrived back at the entrance, Ariadne and the Athenians were waiting. They boarded their ship and set sail for Athens.

On the way, Theseus left Ariadne asleep on the island of Naxos because he did not love her. He also forgot to change the sails from black to white. When King Aegeus saw the black sails, he thought his son was dead and threw himself into the sea.

Theseus's triumphant return was overshadowed by grief. ❖



# The fall of Icarus

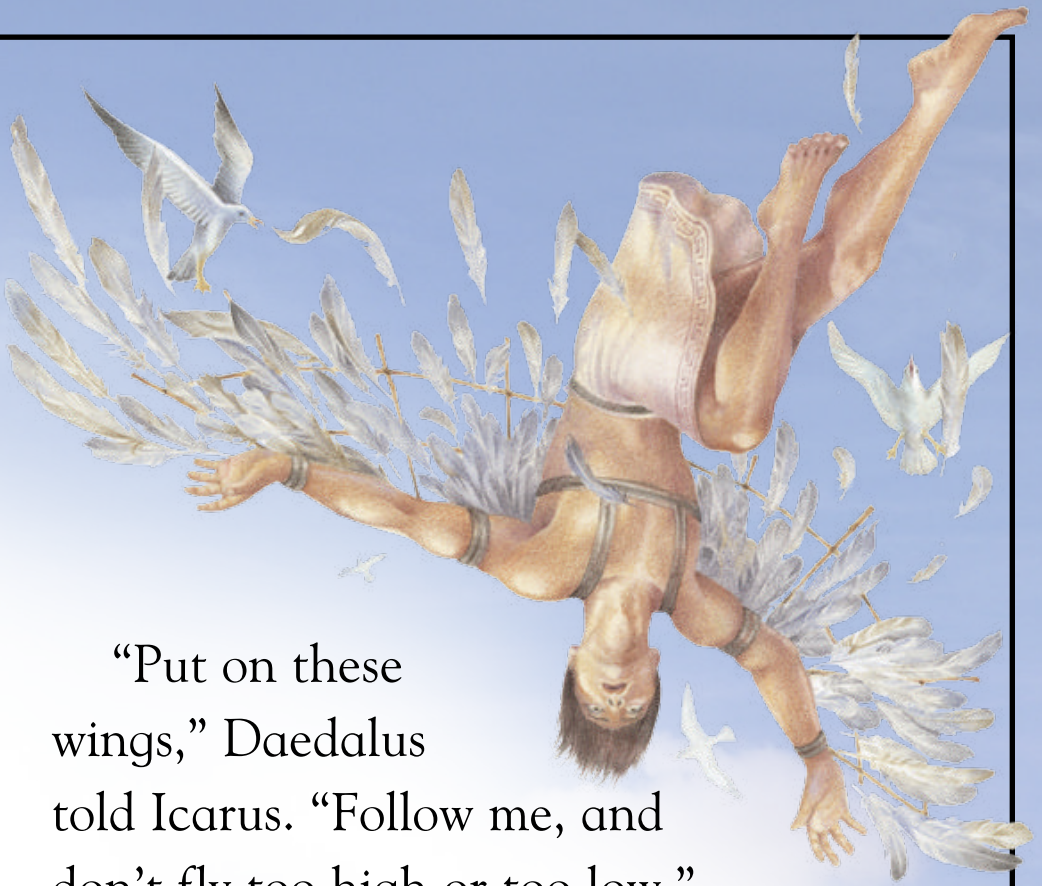
King Minos was furious that Theseus had succeeded in defeating the Minotaur. He put the inventor of the labyrinth, Daedalus, and his lazy son, Icarus, into prison. Daedalus started planning how to escape.

He collected feathers from passing birds and made two pairs of wings by threading the feathers together and sealing them with wax from their

candles. Finally, they were ready to escape.







“Put on these wings,” Daedalus told Icarus. “Follow me, and don’t fly too high or too low.”

They both took flight over the sea. Icarus was careful at first, but then soared upwards, feeling free like a bird. The sun’s heat then melted his wings and he tumbled to his death.

When Daedalus looked back for his son, he could see only feathers floating on the water. ❖

# The adventures of Perseus

There was a young man named Perseus, who lived with his beautiful mother, Danae [DAN-ay-ee], on the island of Seriphos [SEH-ri-fos]. The evil king, Polydectes, wanted to marry Danae but Perseus protected her. So Polydectes tricked Perseus into attempting an impossible task.





Polydeuces  
held a feast.  
Being poor,  
Perseus came  
without a gift

but promised the king a present.

“Bring me the head of the Gorgon  
Medusa,” challenged Polydeuces.

The Gorgons were three fearsome,  
scaly monsters, who had snakes for hair.  
Anyone who looked at Medusa’s face  
turned to stone.





Perseus's father was none other than Zeus. From Olympus, Zeus sent Athena and Hermes to help his son. They gave him the shiniest shield and the sharpest sickle in the world.

Following their advice, Perseus then visited the nymphs of the North Wind. These female spirits lent him some



winged sandals, a leather bag and Hades' Cap of Invisibility.

*Nymphs were female spirits who protected natural things such as mountains, valleys, rivers, trees, wind and rain.*



## The winged horse

When Perseus killed Medusa, a winged horse, Pegasus, sprang from her body. Another myth tells how a boy named Bellerophon tamed Pegasus, using Athena's bridle.



Wearing the sandals and cap, Perseus flew unseen to the far west where he found the three Gorgons asleep. Looking only at Medusa's reflection in the shield, he cut off her head with the sickle and put it into the bag.





As Perseus flew home, he saw a princess, Andromeda, chained to a rock, about to be eaten by a sea monster. Her parents had angered Poseidon, who had sent the monster to destroy their kingdom unless their daughter was sacrificed.

### Story in the stars

Some star patterns have been named after the characters in Perseus's story. These include Perseus, Andromeda [an-DRUM-ih-duh], her parents and the sea monster.

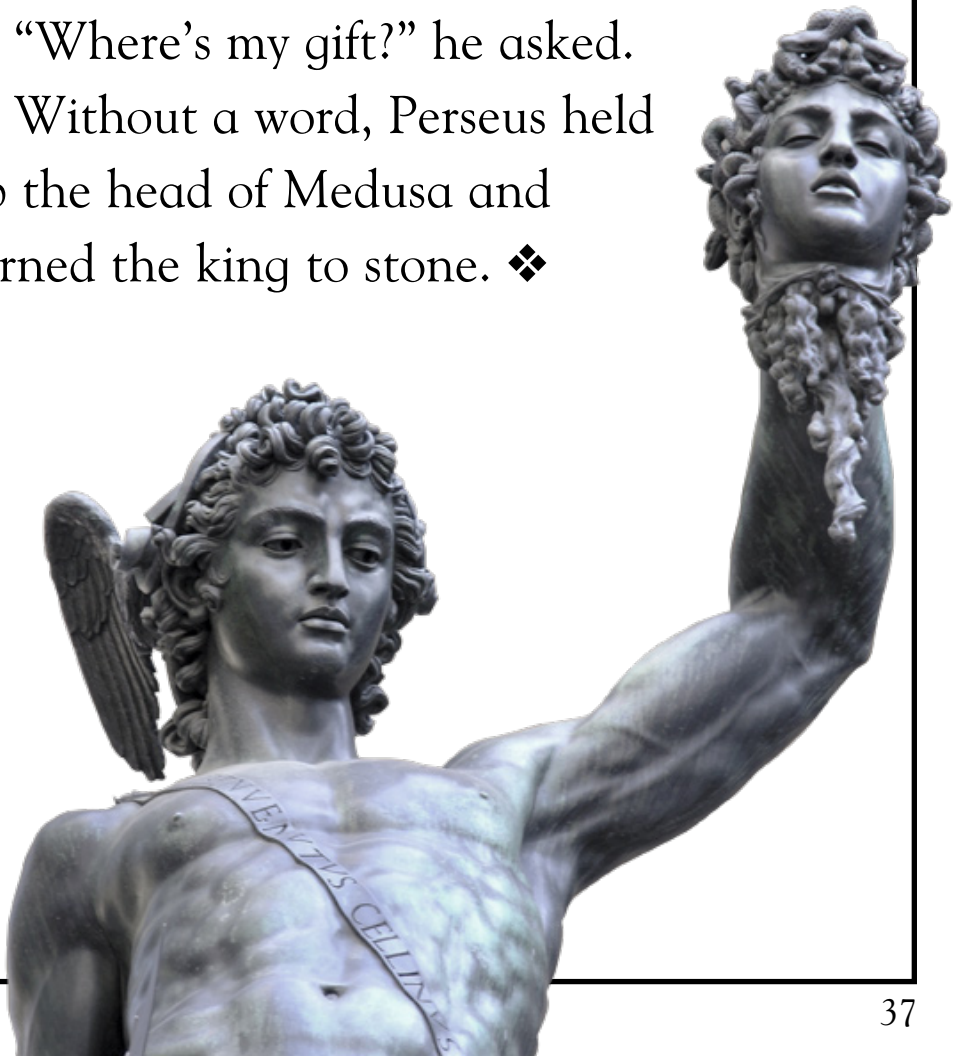


As the monster rose from the waves, Perseus held up Medusa's head and turned the monster to stone. Perseus married Andromeda and took her back to Seriphos.

King Polydectes had made Danae a slave and was surprised to see Perseus.

“Where's my gift?” he asked.

Without a word, Perseus held up the head of Medusa and turned the king to stone. ❖



# The foolishness of Midas

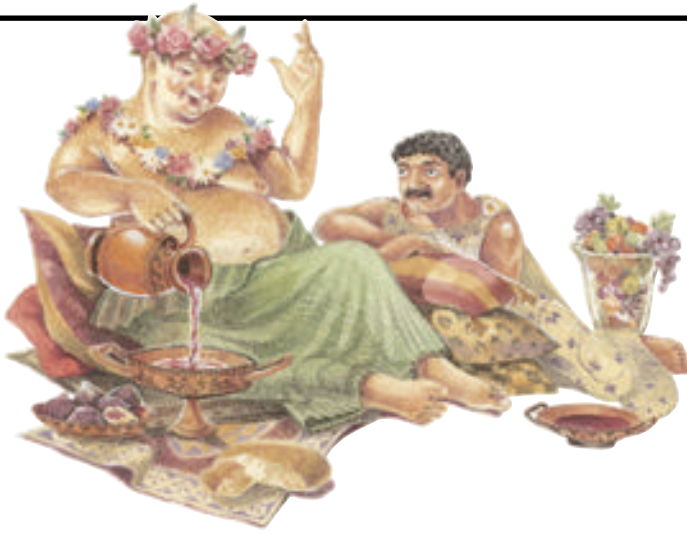
Not all myths are about heroes.

Some tell of very foolish mortals who misused gifts from the gods. One such person was King Midas.

One day, Midas found an old satyr called Silenus in his garden. Silenus was drunk after feasting with the god Dionysus [die-on-EYE-sus].







King Midas looked after Silenus very well and then returned him to Dionysus, who lived by the banks of the River Pactolus. In thanks, Dionysus promised Midas any gift he wanted.


“Let everything I touch turn to gold,” replied Midas, greedily.

His wish was granted.

### **Mischievous satyrs**

Satyrs were roguish male spirits of nature who roamed the woods and mountains. They were half-man and half-goat, and had horns, hooves and tails.





With delight, Midas turned his palace and all the trees and flowers in his garden to gold.

However, his pleasure was short-lived. As he picked up food and drank his wine, they also turned to gold. Then he hugged his daughter. To his horror, she turned to gold, too.



Midas returned to Dionysus and begged to be freed from his gift.

“Wash away your greed in the spring of the River Pactolus,” Dionysus told him.

As Midas bathed in the river, the water turned to gold.

However, Midas had not learnt from his foolishness.

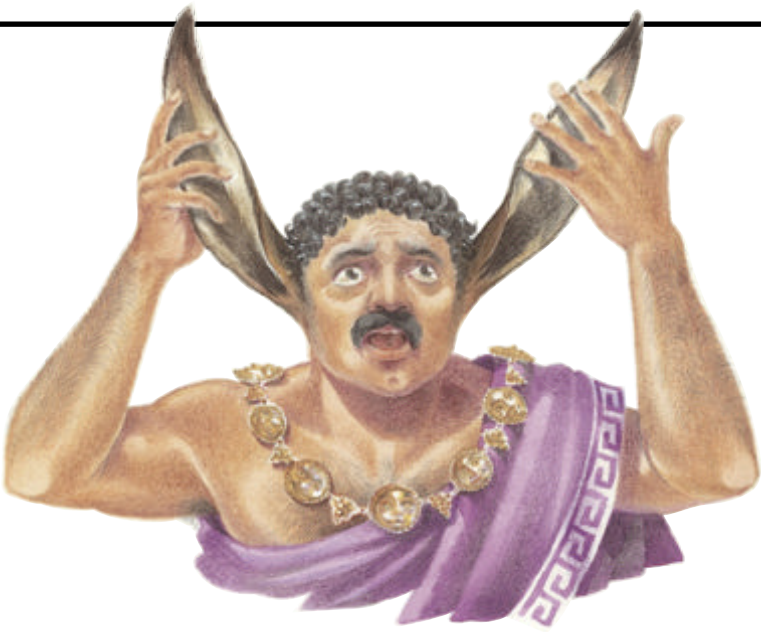


Midas was a worshipper of Pan, the mischievous goatlike god of wild places. He enjoyed listening to Pan play country tunes on his reed pipes.

One day, Pan boasted that he was a better musician than Apollo, the god of music, and challenged him to a contest.







The contest was to be judged by the river god Tmolus [MO-lus]. Midas came along to listen and judge for himself.

Pan's merry tunes were no match for Apollo's lilting lyre music and Tmolus awarded the prize to Apollo. However, Midas said he preferred Pan's playing. In anger, Apollo gave Midas a pair of long, hairy donkey ears. Midas covered his ears in a turban, but people found out about them and he died of shame. ❖

# Orpheus and Eurydice

The myths claim that the most gifted musician who ever lived was Orpheus [OR-fee-us]. Orpheus was married to the beautiful Eurydice [you-RIH-dih-see], but their happiness was cut short when she was bitten by a serpent and died.



Filled with aching sorrow, Orpheus took his lute and travelled to the Underworld to try and get her back. On the shore of the River Styx, he met the ferryman who rowed dead souls to the gates of Hades' kingdom. Orpheus played a sad song that charmed the ferryman into taking him across the river. At the gates, the watchdog, Cerberus, stood guard. Orpheus lulled the creature to sleep with a lullaby.



## Music in his blood

Orpheus was the son of Apollo and the muse Calliope [CAL-eye-oh-pee]. There were nine muses, or goddesses of art, who were said to inspire poets, musicians, artists and writers.





As Orpheus made his way through the dark kingdom to see Hades, the sweet music he played soothed the screaming pain of the tormented souls.

Hades was angry that a living person had entered his realm, but when Orpheus played his music, Hades wept iron tears.





“Eurydice may follow you to the upper world,” Hades said, “on the condition that you don’t look at her until she has reached the sunlight.”

Orpheus made his way to the

surface, playing joyful tunes. But, as he reached the sunlight, he looked back.

For a moment, he saw Eurydice nearly alive again, almost at the entrance to the Underworld. Then she faded once more into a pale ghost and disappeared. Orpheus had lost her forever. ❖



# Glossary

**Excavate**

To dig up something of historical interest.

**God**

A male immortal with power over nature and human affairs, who is believed in and worshipped by people.

**Goddess**

A female immortal with power over nature and human affairs, who is believed in and worshipped by people.

**Gorgons**

Three frightening female creatures with snakes for hair and golden wings.

**Hero**

A mortal who is known for doing great deeds.

**Immortal**

A supernatural being that lives forever.

**Labour**

A task that requires great effort.

**Labyrinth**

A difficult maze big enough for people to walk through.

**Lute**

An ancient stringed instrument similar to a guitar. It has a wooden body shaped like half a pear.

**Mortal**

A person who will die someday.

**Mount Olympus**

The highest mountain in Greece. The ancient people believed their gods and goddesses lived on the peak.

**Muses**

Nine sister goddesses who were said to inspire writers, poets, musicians and artists.

**Myth**

A traditional story about supernatural beings and heroes.

**Nymphs**

Minor goddesses of nature written about in myths.

**Pegasus**

A winged horse that sprang from the body of Medusa.

**Pomegranate**

A hard, red fruit about the size of an orange, containing many large seeds within a juicy, red pulp.

**Satyr**

A half-human, half-animal woodland god.

**Superhuman**

Having greater abilities than a normal person.

**Temple**

A place where gods and goddesses are worshipped.

**Titans**

A family of giants featured in Greek myths.

**Underworld**

The place where ancient Greeks believed they would go when they died.

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