

# Greek & Roman Mythology A TO Z



REVISED EDITION

KATHLEEN N. DALY  
REVISED BY MARIAN RENGEL

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**Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z, Revised Edition**

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS MYTHOLOGY?

From earliest times, humans have had a need to explain the origins and wonders of the world: the mountains and the oceans, the changing seasons, the earthquakes and storms, volcanoes, floods, the existence of animals, including humans. Early humans, in every culture on Earth, made up stories about these phenomena and invented gods and supernatural beings to provide comfort and instruction. Sometimes people such as the Greeks made up stories just for entertainment; for example, the story of PYGMALION and GALATEA explains nothing in nature or science, but it's a good story. It is the story in George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* (1913) and the musical and the movie *My Fair Lady*.

As the ages passed, and tribes shifted from place to place, broke up, regrouped, increased in size, and migrated to different lands, they took their stories with them. As the stories were passed on, they changed with the language, climate, and local folklore of the people. Eventually people built shrines and temples to their gods and heroes. They prayed to them for help, made sacrifices to them and celebrated them with festivals. In some countries, such as Rome, rulers took on the status of gods. In Greece, we find temples built in honor of ZEUS, ATHENE, APHRODITE, and other gods and goddesses. Their names live on in place-names, in people's names, and in history, for the people who worshiped the divinities firmly believed that they had once lived upon Earth.

In the early mythologies of most cultures, women were the supreme gods. The EARTH MOTHER was the creator of new life. She was also the moon or sun goddess who ruled the skies, the seasons, and the harvests. As eons went by, people discovered that the male, as well as the female, was necessary for the procreation of the species. The Earth Mother and moon goddess were gradually replaced by male sky gods, and sun gods, often typified by BULLS or rams. The queen mother's decline is typified in Greek mythology by the attitude of Zeus toward his sister-wife, HERA. He was a mischievous, unfaithful, and disrespectful husband. His indiscretions and Hera's anger may reflect the conservative religious feeling (personified by Hera) against marriages or other liaisons (those of Zeus) between the new Hellenic chieftains and the local moon priestesses and nymphs.



Other stories were invented to explain new developments such as the introduction of grain cultivation, the making of bread and of wine, and the breeding of domestic goats, pigs, and cattle.

#### THE GREEKS: WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

Greek mythology is extremely old. The Great Mother was worshiped in 2000 B.C., in the land that we now call GREECE. Early invaders from ASIA MINOR brought with them an early form of Indo-European language and the worship of Aryan sky gods. They settled peacefully in Thessaly and central Greece and intermarried with the natives.

Next came the more destructive and aggressive waves of what Homer called the Achaeans and Dorians, tribes from the north. These people were not peace-loving. In Sparta, in the southern Peloponnesus, they enslaved the entire native population, using them to perform menial tasks. The Achaeans called these slaves Helots. The Achaeans spoke a dialect of ancient Greek and used a simple type of picture-writing scholars now call Linear B.

While savages and barbarians inhabited what we now call Greece, there was already a flourishing civilization on the island of CRETE, which lies to the south of Greece. Crete had long been trading with the even more ancient civilizations of Egypt and the East. It had reached its height in about 1600 B.C., and was known as the Minoan culture. In 1400 B.C., the Minoan civilization collapsed, probably due to a natural phenomenon such as an earthquake, whereupon the Greeks took over Crete.

We find many instances of Cretan myths in Greek stories, such as those of the upbringing of the god Zeus in Crete, the story of EUROPA and the bull, and the MINOTAUR who was vanquished by THESEUS. However, the ancient divinities gradually took on the aspect of the invaders from Greece.

The Greek myths, as we know them, came from all over the ancient Balkan Peninsula: Thrace, Boeotia, Attica, the Peloponnesus, Argos, and Mycenae, and many of the islands, including, of course, Crete, and also from Asia Minor and places farther afield, such as Babylon and Sumer. HOMER, whose work may be that of several poets writing between 750 and 700 B.C., is considered the "supreme source" of the stories of Greece.

#### GREEK MYTHOLOGY

Greeks were the first people to create gods and goddesses that looked like real human beings: beautiful men and women, old people with humor and dignity, splendidly natural animals (as well as a few monsters). All the art and all the thought of Greece centered on human beings and human feelings.

The Greek gods and goddesses usually interacted with humans in towns and countries that are still familiar: Mount Ida, on the island of Crete, where the god Zeus was brought up, exists to this day; the hero HERACLES had his home in the city of Thebes; the exact spot where the goddess Aphrodite is said to have emerged from the sea can be pointed out near the island of Cythera.

Greek mythology was peopled by heroes who defeated their enemies by superior wit. ODYSSEUS, for example, was said to have thought of the wooden Trojan horse, inside which were hidden invading Greek soldiers. Greek intelligence went much further than clever strategy. The Greeks had a clear-eyed curiosity about themselves and all creation. The playwright SOPHOCLES (496–406 B.C.) said, “Wonders are many and none is more wonderful than man.” And Herodotus (c. 480–425 B.C., the Greek historian) said, “Of old, the Hellenic (Greek) race was marked off from the barbarians as more keen-witted and more free from nonsense.”

#### THE GREEK CREATION MYTH

All creation myths the world over have a certain similarity to one another, in that they explore the efforts of early human to explain the origin of the Earth, the Sun, the Moon and the stars, and the creatures of Earth, including men and women.

The best-known Greek creation myth is the one told by the renowned poet HESIOD (some time around 800 B.C., after Homer). It tells of the original CHAOS, a swirling, formless mass, from which came GAIA, Mother Earth, and her son-consort, URANUS, the heavens. These two created all the animals and vegetation that covered the Earth. They also created the TITANS, the one-eyed CYCLOPES and other monsters that Uranus banished underground.

Uranus was eventually ousted by his son, CRONUS. From Cronus and RHEA were born the 12 who would become the Olympians, the great Greek pantheon of gods and goddesses.

#### THE ROMANS

ROME, which became one of the world’s largest and most successful empires, famous for law-giving and material and cultural achievements, was a small, pastoral community when Greece was at its height.

The Romans’ forbears, called Latiums, were simple folk, living in close-knit clans, but trading and intermarrying with other clans. For centuries they had been overrun by tribes from the north. First were the Ligurians, who originally came from North Africa and settled around the land still called Liguria, near Genoa. In the third millennium B.C. came the *terramara*, people who lived in stilt houses and brought with them the art of making bronze artifacts and weapons, which ensured them military supremacy. In the 11th century B.C. came the Villanovans, named after a small town, Villanova, near Bologna, in northern Italy.

The next invaders were more civilized than the earlier ones. They were the Etruscans, who arrived early in the first millennium B.C. They could not only write, a skill hitherto unknown in Italy, but they were also skilled in metalwork, sculpture, painting, and good living. Nobody knows exactly where the Etruscans came from. They may have come from Asia Minor, but it seems certain that they had had contact with Greek culture.

Historians note with interest that the people of Rome were already sophisticated and discerning enough to adopt only those Etruscan morals and values that they thought would be useful to them. For instance, they eagerly embraced the idea of building temples to the deities; for an increasingly urban population, a temple was the logical place to worship, much better than the rocks and turf traditionally set up in a field. They also accepted the idea of DIVINATION, that is, the art of foretelling the future, often by means of animal sacrifice. The Romans were already a superstitious but cynical people; the idea that the future could be influenced by magic rituals, including sacrifices, and the casting of spells, fit in very well with their shrewdness and practicality.

The Romans, like all peoples, already had their gods: three chief gods—JUPITER, MARS, QUIRINUS—and lots of “household gods,” such as TERMINUS and Cloacina. The Romans were practical people, not given to fantasizing about the family lives of their gods. The Romans paid homage to their gods, in return for which they expected protection, prosperity, fertility, good health, and so on.

Jupiter started out his mythological life as a lump of stone, known as Jupiter Lapis. The worship of stones goes back to the Stone Age or earlier, when knives and ax heads were made from flint. Even in the Bronze Age, Jupiter continued to be worshiped as a terrifying flint figure.

Mars, who became associated with the Greek god of war, ARES, was at first worshiped as a god of fields and crops as well as a god of war. In early societies, the time for war was when the crops had been harvested and next year’s growth did not need tending. The men were free to go to war between autumn and spring. In the temperate Northern Hemisphere, March, named after Mars, was the ideal month for war.

Quirinus, the third god of this early Roman triad, was also a war god, but eventually became known as the patron of citizenship. There were household gods, LARES and PENATES, who presided over the hearth and pantry.

Greek gods were different from Roman gods. Greek gods were like human beings, only bigger and better and more beautiful. Roman gods were often thinly sketched characters such as VULCAN, who was feared and placated as the god of fire.

By borrowing mythologies from the Greeks and using the stories and beliefs for their own purposes, the Romans brought personalities and vividness to their religions. Jupiter took on the glory of the Greek Zeus, and was worshiped in Rome as Optimus Maximus (the best and greatest). Temples and statues were built to Jupiter and his consort, JUNO, and MINERVA, a goddess with no apparent relationship to Jupiter but important to the Romans. Juno, originally a very ancient moon goddess, became assimilated with Hera. Minerva became assimilated with the Greek Athene. No Roman counterpart was found for Apollo, so he retained the same name in both Greek and Roman mythologies.

<b>Roman Names</b>	<b>Greek Names</b>
Gods:	
Jupiter	Zeus
Neptune	Poseidon
Mars	Ares
Apollo	Apollo
Vulcan	Hephaestus
Mercury	Hermes
Goddesses:	
Juno	Hera
Minerva	Athene
Diana	Artemis
Venus	Aphrodite
Vesta	Hestia
Ceres	Demeter

#### HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The entries in this book are in alphabetical order and may be looked up as in a dictionary. A list of the chief characters of Greek mythology follows below, with their Roman counterparts indicated in parentheses. If you search out the entries concerning these characters, you will get a general overview of Greek and Roman mythology. Some topics with entries in this book are known by more than one name. Alternate names are given in parentheses after the entry headword. Those given in full capital letters are variations of the names from the original language; those appearing in upper and lower case letters are English translations. Cross-references to other entries are printed in SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS. The index at the end of the book will also help you find your way around this book.

**THE OLYMPIANS** The gods and goddesses who lived atop Mount Olympus, in Greece, were called the Olympians. The king and queen of these gods were Zeus and Hera.

**ZEUS** (Jupiter) Zeus was the son of Titans: He was primarily a sky and weather god, with the thunderbolt as his emblem, but his presence was inescapable throughout Greek mythology.

**HERA** (Juno) An ancient goddess, existing long before the time of the migrations and the new gods, including Zeus. She was the protector of women, children, and marriage. Her cult was so strong that the newcomers had to acknowledge it and absorb it into their own mythology by making Hera the consort of Zeus.

**POSEIDON** (Neptune) The god of seas and of horses, and the cause of earthquakes ("The Earthshaker"). In ancient times, long before the

appearance of Zeus, Poseidon was worshiped as a god of fertility and of herdsmen. His symbol, the three-tined trident, was also a symbol for the thunderbolt.

**DEMETER** (Ceres) The goddess of fertility and the mother of PERSEPHONE, who was carried off to the UNDERWORLD by HADES. The winter months were dark and unfruitful, for that was when Persephone went underground. (See *Demeter and Persephone*, under DEMETER.)

**HADES** (Pluto) The ruler of the dead and of the underworld. Since he did not live in Olympus, his status as an Olympian is in dispute but as a brother of Zeus and Poseidon, he was a powerful force among the Olympians.

**ATHENE** (Minerva) A goddess of war, but also a patroness of the arts and crafts; she was the goddess of wisdom and the patron goddess of the city of Athens.

**APOLLO** The only god to have the same name in both Greek and Roman mythology. He has many functions: He was the god of poetry, music, archery, prophecy, and the art of healing. He was a sun god of great antiquity, just and wise and of great beauty.

**ARTEMIS** (Diana) The sister of APOLLO, goddess of the hunt and of beasts, of childbirth and of chastity. She is usually depicted with a bow and arrow.

**HEPHAESTUS** (Vulcan) The god of fire and of craftsmen, especially the smiths who worked in metal. He was known as “the divine artificer.”

**APHRODITE** (Venus) The goddess of love, Aphrodite was born of the sea foam that swirled around the flesh of URANUS that had been cast in the sea.

**DIONYSUS** (Bacchus) A Greek fertility god of very ancient origin. He was famous for his frenzied festivities.

**HERMES** (Mercury) The winged messenger of the gods, Hermes was also the god of merchants and thieves, of roads, of flocks, and of luck.





# A

**ACHELOUS** In Greek mythology, a river god who turned himself into a serpent to overcome his rival, HERACLES, for the hand of DEIANIRA. Heracles finally subdued Achelous and won the maiden. Rivers and their gods were worshiped by the Greeks, who believed them to be the offspring of the gods OCEANUS and TETHYS.

ALCMAEON, one of the SEVEN AGAINST THEBES, cursed by his mother, finally found refuge on an island newly formed from silt carried down by the river Achelous.

**ACHERON** (River of Sadness) In Greek mythology, the “woeful river” of the UNDERWORLD into which flowed the Phlegethon and the Coctus. Acheron was the son of GAIA. He had quenched the thirst of the TITANS during their war with ZEUS, who then changed Acheron into a river. To cross the river Acheron, it was necessary to seek the help of CHARON, the ancient ferryman of the underworld.

Acheron is sometimes used as a synonym for HADES, the underworld.

**ACHILLES** In Greek mythology, the son of PELEUS and THETIS; married to DEIDAMIA; father of NEOPTOLEMUS. Achilles is the central figure of HOMER’S *ILIAD*, the story of the TROJAN WAR, a 20-year battle between the Greeks and the Trojans after the abduction of HELEN by PARIS. Writers after Homer further developed the story of Achilles and around this figure grew a series of great legends. A soothsayer prophesied that without the aid of Achilles the Greeks would never defeat the Trojans. Achilles went bravely into battle and indeed the Greeks won the war. Achilles was a hero in battle, and he has become a symbol of the fighting man doomed to die in war but glorying in the fulfillment of heroism and achievement. He is a vivid



Achilles, the great hero of the Trojan War. (New York Public Library Picture Collection)



character, given to rages and revenge, such as his barbarous treatment of the body of the slain Trojan hero HECTOR.

**The Childhood of Achilles** Thetis, the mother of Achilles, was a sea nymph who had been wooed by ZEUS and POSEIDON. She reluctantly married Peleus and left him soon after the birth of Achilles. Knowing that Achilles was destined to be a hero who would win glory but also die in battle, she bathed the infant in the river STYX, trying to make him invulnerable to wounds. But the heel by which she held the child remained dry, and it was from an arrow wound in the heel that Achilles eventually died. The arrow was shot by either APOLLO or Paris, in a battle near the end of the Trojan War.

As the child Achilles grew, Thetis put him in the care of CHIRON, the gentle and wise CENTAUR. Chiron fed the lad the entrails of lions and the marrow of bears to make him brave, and taught him the arts of riding and hunting as well as of music and healing.

When the Greek leaders began to prepare for war with TROY, Peleus, knowing that Achilles faced certain death in Troy, hid his son in the court of Lycomedes, king of Scyros, and disguised him as a girl. However, since the seer CALCHAS had prophesied that without Achilles the Trojans would never be defeated in the war, the Greeks were determined to seek out the young man. ODYSSEUS, another Greek hero, sent presents to the "girl," among them a superb spear and shield. When Achilles promptly and expertly took up these objects in a battle alarm, the Greeks recognized him for the man that he was and they led him off to the battlefield.

**Achilles at War** Achilles had had early training in the arts of war (as well as of music and healing) from Chiron. When he went to war against the Trojans, Achilles led his own army, unlike the rest of the Greeks, who acknowledged AGAMEMNON as their leader. It had been prophesied that without Achilles the Trojans would triumph over the Greeks. Therefore there was much dismay when Agamemnon and Achilles quarreled over the beautiful captive BRISEIS, who had been stolen away from Achilles by Agamemnon. In a fury, Achilles withdrew his army from the war, with disastrous results for the Greeks. This is the quarrel from which the events described in the *Iliad* commence.

When the Greeks began to lose ground in the battle against the Trojans, Achilles finally sent his troops back into war under the leadership of PATROCLUS, his dearest friend. Patroclus was killed by the Trojan hero HECTOR. Achilles then went back into the war and routed the Trojans. He slew Hector. Despite the anguished pleas of PRIAM (king of the Trojans and father of Hector), Achilles dragged the body around the wall of Troy and the tomb of Patroclus. Achilles finally gave the mutilated body of Hector to Priam in return for the warrior's weight in gold.

**ACTAEON** In Greek mythology a hunter and the son of Autono and grandson of CADMUS. He aroused the anger of the goddess ARTEMIS when he saw her bathing naked in a river. Artemis changed Actaeon into a stag. His own dogs set upon him and tore him to pieces.

**ADMETUS** In Greek mythology, king of Phera in THESSALY; one of the ARGONAUTS. Admetus was a kind master to APOLLO, who had been his slave as a punishment for killing the CYCLOPES. When Apollo heard that Admetus was soon to die, Apollo went to the FATES and persuaded them to prolong Admetus's life. They agreed, on condition that someone else should be sent in his stead. Not even the parents of Admetus would give up their lives. His faithful wife, ALCESTIS, agreed to do so. She took a drink of poison and went down to HADES, but PERSEPHONE refused to let her stay. She sent her back to her husband and children. Another version of the story says that HERACLES went to the UNDERWORLD and wrestled with Hades for the life of Alcestis. The story is the subject of a play, *Alcestis*, by EURIPIDES, and an opera, *Alceste*, by the German composer Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787).

**ADONIS** In Greek mythology, the beloved of APHRODITE and the personification of masculine beauty. His mother was the beautiful Myrrha or Smyrna); his father, King Cinyrus of Cyprus, who was the father of Myrrha. The strange parentage of Adonis came about because Aphrodite was jealous of Myrrha's beauty and caused the girl to unite with her own father. When Cinyrus found out that he had been tricked, he chased Myrrha with a sword, intend-

ing to kill her and her unborn child. Aphrodite, repenting of her deed, quickly turned the girl into a myrrh tree. The king's sword split the tree and out stepped the beautiful child Adonis. Aphrodite hid the baby in a box and gave it to PERSEPHONE, queen of death, to look after. Persephone reared Adonis in the UNDERWORLD. He grew to be a handsome young man, whereupon Aphrodite claimed him back. Persephone refused to give him up. Appealed to by the two goddesses, ZEUS decreed that each should have him for half of the year. When he stayed in the underworld, it was winter. When he returned, the Earth blossomed into spring and summer.

In some versions of the story, when ARES hears that Aphrodite loves the youth Adonis, he changes himself into a wild boar and gores the boy to death. Anemones spring from the blood of Adonis and his spirit returns to the underworld. In response to the two tearful goddesses, Zeus determines that Adonis should stay with each of them in turn for half the year.

According to scholars, the death and resurrection of Adonis represents the decay and revival of the plant year. He was worshiped as a corn god, a god of grain crops, which were much more important to the ancient inhabitants of the Mediterranean lands than the berries and roots of the wilderness that nourished their primitive, pre-agrarian ancestors.

**ADRASTIA** (Inescapable One) In Greek mythology, daughter of Melisseus, king of CRETE; sister of IDA (1). With Ida and the goat-nymph AMALTHEA, Adrastia tended the infant god ZEUS on Mount IDA (2), in Crete. Later mythology identified Adrastia with NEMESIS, the goddess of vengeance.

**ADRASTUS** In Greek mythology, king of ARGOS; the leader of the warriors known as the SEVEN AGAINST THEBES according to the tragedy written by the Greek poet AESCHYLUS. The attack on THEBES by rebels who supported Polynices in his attempt to force his brother, Eteocles, off the throne of Thebes was a disaster. Of the seven champions, only Adrastus lived, escaping on his winged horse, ARION. Later, Adrastus made another attempt to gain Thebes, when the children of the Seven, called the EPIGONI, were old enough to become warriors. This time the battle was a success, but it was a sad victory

for Adrastus because his only son, Aegialeus, was killed in the conflict.

**AEGEUS** In Greek mythology, king of ATHENS and father of the hero THESEUS, with Aethra, daughter of King Pittheus of Troezen. Some say that the sea god, POSEIDON, was the father of Theseus, and that possibly Aegeus and Poseidon were one and the same.

When Aegeus left Troezen, Aegeus told Aethra that if a child should be born of their union, it was to be reared quietly in Troezen, with King Pittheus as guardian. Aegeus then hid his sword and sandals under a rock, telling Aethra that she was to lead the child, when it became old enough, to the hiding place so that he or she could recover the tokens of its identity.

When Aegeus thought that Theseus had been killed, he threw himself into the sea that today bears his name—the Aegean Sea.

**AEGINA** An island in the Saronic Gulf, south of ATHENS; in Greek legend, named after Aegina, a lover of the god ZEUS. When plague struck the island, Zeus reseeded it by turning the ants of the island into humans, who were known as MYRMIDONS. The ancient Cretan deity BRITOMARTIS took refuge here from the attentions of King MINOS. The Aegeans called her DICTYNNA. Aegina was the birthplace of PELEUS, son of King Aecus.

**AEGIS** (Goat Skin) In Greek mythology, the shield of ZEUS made by the smith-god HEPHAESTUS and covered with the skin of the goat-nymph AMALTHEA. The shield had the power to terrify and disperse the enemy. When Zeus shook it, the shield produced tremendous thunder and lightning storms. It also had the power to protect friends. The aegis was also worn by ATHENE, when it bore the head of the GORGON, MEDUSA, in its center. The aegis is a symbol of divine protection.

**AEGISTHUS** In Greek mythology, son of Pelopia and THYESTES. Aegisthus became the lover of CLYTEMNESTRA, the wife of King AGAMEMNON, after the king had gone off to the TROJAN WAR. Aegisthus and Clytemnestra killed Agamemnon when he returned from the war, and were in turn murdered by ORESTES and ELECTRA, Agamemnon's children.

Aegisthus was one of the descendants of PELOPS and a victim of the curse laid upon the family by the murdered charioteer, MYRTILUS (see *Pelops and the Charioteer*, under Pelops).

When Pelopia realized that Aegisthus was the son not of her husband Atreus but of her own father, Thyestes, she placed the infant on a mountainside to die. But the baby survived, suckled by a goat, and grew up to play his part in the tragic story of the house of Pelops. (See ATREUS AND THYESTES.)

Eventually Aegisthus killed his supposed father, Atreus, and acknowledged Thyestes as his real father.

It was only at the death of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra that the FURIES were satisfied and put an end to the tragedies and atrocities that had stained the house of Atreus (the Atreids) and the descendants of Pelops with generations of bloodshed.

There are several versions of the genealogy of this accursed family, involving further incest, murder, and intrigue.

**AENEAS** Trojan hero of both GREECE and ROME. Aeneas appears in the Latin epic poem the *AENEID*, by VIRGIL. Aeneas was the son of ANCHISES and the goddess VENUS (APHRODITE), and the nephew of King PRIAM of TROY. In HOMER'S *ILIAD*, Aeneas is an ally of Troy during the TROJAN WAR and a gallant warrior, frequently aided by the gods.

After the fall of Troy and many travels, Aeneas eventually established himself on the banks of the river TIBER, in western Italy, married LAVINIA, daughter of LATINUS, and built the town of Lavinium.

Aeneas was worshiped by the Romans as the founder of their race.

**AENEID** The epic poem composed by Latin poet VIRGIL between 30 and 19 B.C. It is divided into 12 books and was considered unfinished by Virgil when he died. Nevertheless, the *Aeneid* is one of the cornerstones of world literature. It had enormous influence on Roman thought, for here at last was a genuinely Roman myth, glorifying ROME and foretelling its future glory. It became the bible of Rome. People of all classes knew it by heart and often quoted it.

Virgil was greatly admired in his own lifetime, for his contemporaries at once understood his greatness and the relevance of his epic to their own culture.

Like the *ODYSSEY*, written by Greek poet HOMER between the eighth and the ninth centuries B.C., *The Aeneid* is the tale of a hero who fought in the TROJAN WAR. AENEAS fought on the Trojan side. He fled the burning city carrying his father, ANCHISES, on his back. Part of his story is told in flashback to Queen DIDO of CARTHAGE, who falls in love with him. Ever the favorite of the gods, Aeneas learns from JUPITER (via his messenger, MERCURY) that the hero must leave Dido, for his destiny is to establish an empire on the west coast of Italy. When Aeneas deserts her, the lovelorn Dido kills herself with his sword. When Aeneas reaches the kingdom of LATIUM, at the mouth of the river Tiber, King LATINUS gives him the hand of his daughter LAVINIA in marriage. Aeneas founds the city of Lavinium in her honor. However, Lavinia has already been promised to Turnus, king of the RUTULI. War is declared between the rivals. Helped by EVANDER, leader of the Arcadians, and the goddess VENUS (who brings Aeneas a shield crafted by VULCAN) Aeneas and his troops soundly defeat Turnus. Turnus and Aeneas agree to end the war in single combat. Despite the aid of the warrior maiden CAMILLA, Turnus is defeated and Aeneas is victorious.

**AEOLUS** Greek god of the winds, also their king. In HOMER'S *ODYSSEY*, Aeolus helped the hero ODYSSEUS by imprisoning the winds in a huge leather bag, leaving only the west wind free to blow the ships of Odysseus homeward to ITHACA. When the ships were near home, Odysseus fell asleep from exhaustion. The restless, curious crew of the ship opened the bag. The winds escaped and blew all the ships away from Ithaca and back toward the island of Lipara, where Aeolus lived. Aeolus was angry and refused to help Odysseus further.

**AEROPE** In Greek mythology, wife of Atreus, a member of the PELOPS family, mother of AGAMEMNON and MENELAUS, and possibly of Anaxibia and Pleisthenes. Atreus threw Aerope into the sea for her adultery with his brother. (See *The Golden Fleece*, under ATREUS AND THYESTES.)

**AESCHYLUS** (525–456 B.C.) Greek poet and dramatist, held by many to be the founder of Greek

tragedy. Aeschylus was the first dramatist to introduce a second actor onto the stage; before him, drama had only one actor appearing at a time. The innovative use of dialogue between the actors brought vividness to the stage. Aeschylus also developed the use of costumes and special effects. Only seven of his many plays survive, among them *The Seven Against Thebes*, *Prometheus Bound*, and *The Oresteia*, a trilogy that tells the epic drama of King AGAMEMNON and how his murder was arranged by his son ORESTES.

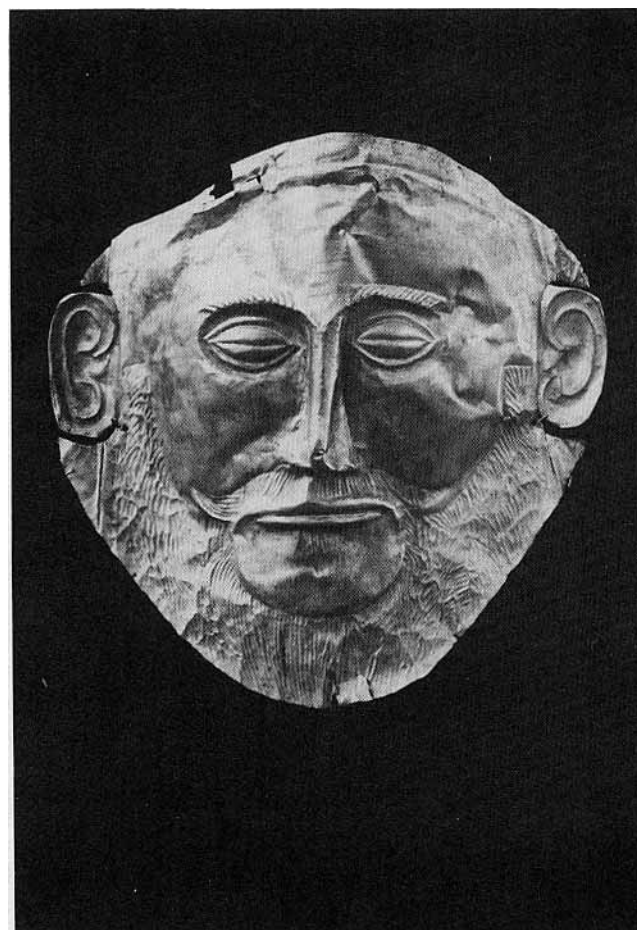
**AESON** In Greek mythology, King of IOLCUS (in THESSALY); with Queen Alcimede, father of JASON; half-brother of PELIAS, who usurped the throne of Iolcus.

**AETES** In Greek mythology, king of Colchis; father of the witch MEDEA and of her brother APSYRTUS. Aetes was the guardian of the GOLDEN FLEECE, which JASON sought.

**AETOLIA** District of the southern Greek mainland. One of its chief towns was CALYDON, site of the CALYDONIAN BOAR HUNT. It was named after Aetolus, son of ENDYMION.

**AGAMEMNON** In Greek mythology, king of ARGOS and MYCENAE, regions in the northern Peloponnesus; son of Atreus and AEROPE. He was the grandson of PELOPS and the last member of a family doomed to one tragedy after another. He was the brother of MENELAUS and Anaxibia; and the husband of CLYTEMNESTRA, with whom he fathered Chrysothemis, ELECTRA, IPHIGENIA, and ORESTES. King Agamemnon was the leader of the Achaean (Greek) forces in the TROJAN WAR. He was eventually killed by Clytemnestra and AEGISTHUS.

Driven from Mycenae after the murder of their father, Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaus fled to SPARTA. There Agamemnon wed Clytemnestra, and Menelaus wed HELEN. Agamemnon was chosen to lead the Greeks in the expedition to rescue his sister-in-law, Helen, after PARIS abducted her. The expedition was stalled when Agamemnon offended the goddess ARTEMIS. A soothsayer, CALCHAS, said that only the sacrifice of Iphigenia would appease Artemis



Agamemnon, king of Argos and Mycenae, led the Greek troops against the Trojans. For many years this beautiful gold mask was thought to be the death mask of Agamemnon. (*Scala/Art Resource*)

and AEOLUS, the wind god. Agamemnon tricked his wife into sending their daughter to her death.

In another act of treachery, Agamemnon stole BRISEIS, the beloved of the hero ACHILLES, who then laid down his arms and withdrew from the Trojan War (though he later rejoined it).

When Agamemnon returned in triumph from the war, 10 years later, accompanied by the princess CASSANDRA as booty, both he and she were murdered by Clytemnestra and her lover, Aegisthus. Agamemnon was trapped in a net and drowned in a bathtub, an ignoble end for a hero.

Agamemnon was one of the principal characters in HOMER'S *ILIAD*. He was a brave and successful warrior but a selfish and treacherous man.

Historians believe that there was a real King Agamemnon in Argos or Mycenae, since Agamemnon appears often in Greek mythology and there were many cults of Agamemnon in various places in ancient Greece.

**AGDISTIS** In Greek mythology, a Phrygian mother-goddess, sometimes known as *CYBELE*, goddess of fertility, and associated with *RHEA*, Greek *EARTH MOTHER* and mother of the *OLYMPIAN GODS*.

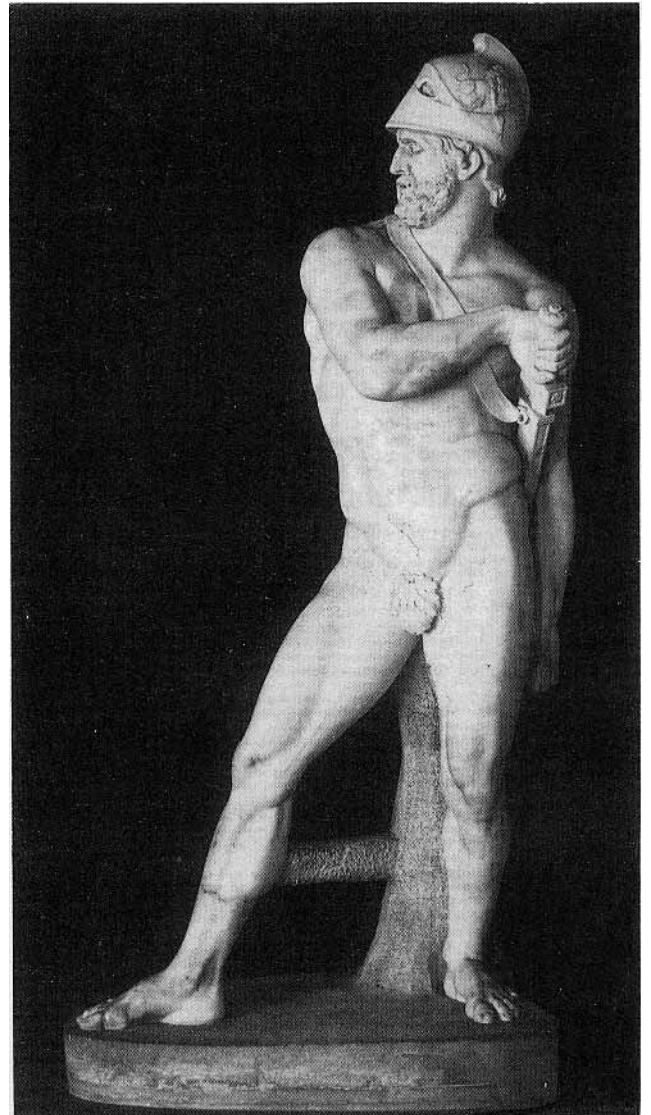
**AGENOR** In Greek mythology, king of Tyre (in *PHOENICIA*); son of the sea god *POSEIDON* and *LIBYA*; father of *EUROPA*, *CADMUS*, *PHOENIX*, and *CILIX*; husband of Telephassa. After the god *ZEUS* carried off Europa, Agenor sent his three sons in search of their sister. The sons did not find her, and settled down elsewhere to found new nations. Phoenix was the ancestor of the Phoenicians; Cilix of the Cilicians; and the celebrated Cadmus, who settled in Boeotia and built the Cadmea (a fortress), was the founder of the city of *THEBES*.

The dispersal of Agenor's sons seems to refer to the westward flight of the Canaanite tribe (early Phoenicians) in the second millennium B.C., under pressure from Aryan and Semite invaders.

**AJAX (1)** Son of Telamon, king of Salamis. He was one of the heroes who sailed with the Greeks to the *TROJAN WAR*. He is represented in *HOMER'S ILIAD* as second only to *ACHILLES* in bravery. Ajax is described as tall and strong, though perhaps slow-witted, prone to rages and madness. He lost the contest for the armor of Achilles and in a fit of despair took his own life.

**AJAX (2)** ("The Lesser") Son of Oileus of *TROY*; Greek warrior in the *TROJAN WAR*. Unlike *AJAX (1)* he was a small man, but swift-footed and a skilled spearman. Ajax the Lesser drowned on his way home to Greece after the fall of Troy; some say he was a victim of the sea god, *POSEIDON*; some claim that he was the victim of the goddess *ATHENE*.

**ALBA LONGA** A city of ancient *LATIUM*, southeast of *ROME*. It is the site of the modern Castel Gondolfo. According to Roman legend, *AENEAS*, a



Ajax, son of Telamon, was one of the heroes of the Trojan War. (New York Public Library Picture Collection)

Trojan hero, or his son, *ASCANIUS*, was the founder of Rome. Tradition has it that *ROMULUS AND REMUS* were born in Alba Longa, thus making it the mother city of Rome.

**ALCESTIS** In Greek mythology, the daughter of *PELIAS*. Married to *ADMETUS*, she was the symbol of wifely devotion. She willingly gave up her life for Admetus so that he could live a little longer. But *PERSEPHONE*, queen of the *UNDERWORLD*, refused to admit Alcestis and sent her back to Earth. In another version, *HERACLES* wrestles with *HADES* for the life of Alcestis, and wins the battle. Alcestis and Admetus

are the subjects of a play by EURIPIDES, *Alcestis*, and an opera by the German operatic composer Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787).

**ALCINOUS** King of the Phaeacians on the island of Scheria. In HOMER'S *ODYSSEY*, Alcinous and his daughter, NAUSICAA, entertain the Greek hero ODYSSEUS, who has been shipwrecked on his way home from the TROJAN WAR.

**ALCIPPE** In Greek mythology, daughter of the war god ARES and the NYMPH Aglauros. Halirrhothius, a son of the sea god POSEIDON, ravished Alcippe. Ares killed Halirrhothius for this crime. (See *The Children of Ares*, under ARES.)

**ALCMAEON** In Greek mythology, the son of AMPHIARAUS (one of the SEVEN AGAINST THEBES) and of ERIPHYLE; brother of Amphilochous. The sons of the seven fallen champions who had fought at THEBES were called the EPIGONI (descendants). They swore to avenge their fathers, and Alcmaeon rather reluctantly became their leader. He had been persuaded by his mother, Eriphyle, who in turn had been bribed with the coveted magic robe and amber necklace of HARMONIA.

When he learned that his mother had been similarly bribed to send his father off to war, Alcmaeon killed Eriphyle. Her dying curse was that no land would ever shelter Alcmaeon. Alcmaeon wandered from place to place, pursued by the FURIES, who gave him no rest. Finally, he found an island newly formed from silt brought down by the river ACHELOUS. Since the island had not existed when Eriphyle uttered her curse, Alcmaeon was able to find peace, at least for a while. He married CALLIRHOË, the daughter of OENEUS, king of CALYDON. Callirhoë heard about the fabulous role and necklace that had been given to Eriphyle, as the wife of Alcmaeon, and demanded that the treasures be given to her. She did not know that in his unhappy wanderings her husband had married Arsinoë, daughter of an Arcadian king, and given the treasures to her. Alcmaeon returned to ARCADIA and begged King Psophis to give him the treasure, as he wanted to place it in the shrine of APOLLO at DELPHI. The king could not refuse such a request; but when he heard the truth from one of the

unfortunate Alcmaeon's servants, he had Alcmaeon killed.

Princess Arsinoë witnessed the death of her husband and, knowing nothing of his treachery, vowed vengeance on her father. The king sent the treasure to Delphi, in the hope that no further harm would come of it, but the treasure of Harmonia was accursed. Eventually King Phegeus and all his family died at the hands of the vengeful sons of Alcmaeon and Callirhoë.

This story of the folly of men and the greed and vanity of women has few mythic elements, but has been described by scholar Robert Graves, (1895–1985), as “a popular minstrel tale . . . with a strong moral flavor” that stressed the inescapable curse visited on anyone who committed the dreadful crime of matricide.

**ALCMENE** In Greek mythology, daughter of Electryon, king of MYCENAE; granddaughter of the hero PERSEUS; wife and cousin of AMPHITRYON; mother of HERACLES (by ZEUS) and of Iphicles (by her husband).

While her husband was at war, the god Zeus disguised as Amphitryon, visited Alcmena. According to HESIOD, Alcmena was a most virtuous woman and would not have entertained Zeus had he appeared as himself. Zeus realized this, and wanting to sire a champion for both gods and humans, he wooed Alcmena as if he were her husband. It is said that the experience was so enjoyable that Zeus, with his magic, made one night last the length of three. The next morning, Amphitryon returned from war and mated with his wife, who then also conceived a mortal son, Iphicles. Alcmena bore the hero HERACLES, son of Zeus on one day and his twin brother the next day.

When Alcmena died, many years later, Zeus had her taken to the Islands of the Blessed, where she married RHADAMANTHUS.

**ALOEIDS (ALOADAE)** In Greek mythology, giant sons of Iphimedia by POSEIDON. Their names were Ephialtes and Otus; they were called the Aloeids after ALOEUS, the husband of Iphimedia. The brothers grew at an enormous rate. By the time they were nine years old they were 36 feet tall. These giants declared

war on OLYMPUS, the home of the gods. Ephialtes determined to capture HERA, wife of the great god ZEUS; Otus swore he would capture ARTEMIS, goddess of the hunt. But first they seized ARES, god of war, and confined him in a bronze vessel, where he remained for 13 months until he was rescued by HERMES. Then their siege of Olympus began: The giants piled Mount PELION atop Mount OSSA (in THESSALY) to create a ladder to the heavens. They were not afraid of the gods, for it had been prophesied that neither gods nor men would kill them. Artemis tricked them by turning herself into a white doe and prancing before them. The brothers threw their spears at the doe, who skillfully darted away, and they accidentally killed each other with their spears. Thus the prophecy was fulfilled, for neither gods nor humans had killed them; they had killed each other. The souls of the Aloeids went down to TARTARUS, where they were tied back to back on either side of a pillar, with cords that were living vipers.

The story of the Aloeids symbolizes the revolt of the GIANTS against the gods. The imprisonment of Ares may symbolize a 13-month truce between two warring tribes of ancient Greece, when warlike tokens of both nations were sealed into a bronze jar to ensure peace.

In another version of the myth, in HOMER'S ODYSSEY, it is said that the twins would have successfully stormed Olympus if the god APOLLO had not slain them with his arrows.

The Aloeids were worshiped on the island of NAXOS (where Artemis had appeared to them as a doe) and in the city of Ascra, in BOEOTIA, where they were regarded as founders of the city.

Myths of the Aloeids also appear in Homer's *Odyssey* and in VIRGIL'S *AENEID*.

**ALOEUS** In Greek mythology, son of POSEIDON; husband of Iphimedia. Iphimedia had two sons, Otus and Ephialtes, by Poseidon. After she married Aloeus, the sons were known as the ALOEIDS (sons of Aloeus).

**AMALTHEA** (Tender) In Greek mythology, the goat-nymph that suckled the infant ZEUS on Mount IDA (2) in CRETE. Zeus was grateful to the goat-nymph. When he became lord of the universe, he set

Amalthea's image among the stars as CAPRICORN (the goat). He also borrowed one of her horns, which were as large and full as a cow's and gave it to ADRASTIA and IDA (1), the ash nymphs who, with Amalthea, had tended the infant Zeus as a CORNU-COPIA, horn of plenty. The horn would always be filled with food and drink for its owners. The AEGIS, the shield worn by Zeus, was covered with the skin of Amalthea.

**AMAZONS** In Greek mythology, a legendary race of female warriors, supposed to live in ASIA MINOR or possibly Africa, or, as Greek navigators explored farther, "at the edge of the world." The Amazons were sometimes associated with ARTEMIS, goddess of the hunt, but no close connection exists except that the name of one Amazonian leader was Artemis. Some scholars say that the legend of the Amazon warriors may be connected with the invasion of the beardless nomads from the Russian steppes.

The Amazons appear in several legends, including those of the hero HERACLES. The most famous queen of the Amazons was HIPPOLYTA, whose girdle was stolen by Heracles, and who was vanquished by Theseus, to whom she bore a son, HIPPOLYTUS. PENTHESILEA, an Amazon queen, fought valiantly for the Trojans in the TROJAN WAR. She was slain by ACHILLES.

The Greeks cited the conquest of the Amazons as a triumph of civilization over barbarism. Scholars have cited it as a triumph of male dominance over female independence.

Spanish explorers in the Americas in the 16th century claimed to have seen tall female warriors on the banks of the great river that they named the Amazon, after the Greek myths. Other sources say that the Amazon river was named after a tidal phenomenon, *amassona*, "destroyer of boats," a tidal bore.

Some say that the Amazon warriors cut off one breast in order to facilitate use of the bow. However, there are no known depictions of this phenomenon in ancient art.

**AMPHIARAUS** Known as the seer of ARGOS in Greek mythology, he was the brother-in-law of King ADRASTUS, leader of the SEVEN AGAINST THEBES. Amphiaraus foresaw that the war would be a disaster

but was reluctantly persuaded to join the warriors by his wife, ERIPHYLE, the sister of Adrastus. Amphiarus would have been killed by the Thebans but for the intervention of the ZEUS. He vanished into a cleft in the earth made by Zeus. The spot became famous as a shrine and oracle.

**AMPHION** In Greek mythology, son of ZEUS and Antiope; twin brother of Zethus; husband of NIOBE. The twin brothers captured THEBES and decided to build a wall around it. Zethus found the stones and Amphion, who had been given a lyre by the messenger god HERMES, played so sweetly that the stones assembled themselves into a wall. Amphion married Niobe, with whom he had many children. Niobe made the mistake of boasting about her numerous offspring and was punished by another set of formidable twins, the gods APOLLO and ARTEMIS.

**AMPHITRITE** An ancient Greek sea goddess; daughter of NEREUS or OCEANUS; wife of POSEIDON; mother of TRITON, Rhode, and Benthescyme. She was a female personification of the sea.

Amphitrite was not pleased when Poseidon tried to woo her. She fled into the Atlas Mountains, in North Africa. Poseidon sent DELPHINUS to win her and eventually she consented to become Poseidon's wife. She bore him three children.

Amphitrite discovered that Poseidon was a faithless husband. One of his lovers was the beautiful nymph SCYLLA, whom Amphitrite changed into a terrible monster.

**AMPHITRYON** Grandson of the Greek hero PERSEUS; husband of ALCMENE; father of Iphicles and foster father of the hero HERACLES, who was the son of Alcmene and the supreme god ZEUS. His brother, Electryon, was the father of Alcmene, and king of MYCENAE. The brothers quarreled and Amphitryon accidentally killed Electryon. Amphitryon and Alcmene fled to THEBES and were given refuge by King Creon. In gratitude, Amphitryon helped to rid Thebes of a monster known as the Teumessian vixen, a fox that had terrorized the country by demanding the sacrifice of a child every month. With the help of Zeus and the marvelous hound LAELAPS, which could

catch anything it hunted, Amphitryon rid the country of the dreaded fox.

**ANAXARETE** (Excellent Princess) The central villain in a popular love story from Greek mythology. Anaxarete was a rich and beautiful but cruel maiden who lived in a city on the island of Cyprus. The handsome young man Iphis loved Anaxarete, but she only laughed at his pledges of devotion. In final desperation, Iphis hanged himself in her doorway. Even that act brought no feelings of sadness to Anaxarete. The citizens of her city, though, were so touched by his unfulfilled love and his sad ending that they gave him a huge funeral procession. The crowd wound through the streets and passed the home of Anaxarete's family. Curious, and believing the crowd was honoring her, Anaxarete leaned out of the window. When she realized the people honored Iphis, she only laughed and scoffed at the dead young man.

APHRODITE, goddess of love, watched the procession, too. She knew of Iphis's unrequited love and shared the pity the crowd felt for him. When Aphrodite heard Anaxarete's callous laughter, the goddess grew furious and turned the maiden to stone in the very position of leaning out of the window. Discovering Anaxarete, the people of Cyprus placed the statue in a temple at Salamis, where it stood as a reminder of the girl's cruelty.

**ANCHISES** In Greek mythology, a Trojan prince or king loved by the goddess APHRODITE, who bore him a son, AENEAS. When Anchises boasted that a goddess had loved him, the great god ZEUS struck him blind or lame (stories differ). His son, Aeneas, carried him away from the burning city of TROY on his shoulders. This story is told in VIRGIL'S *AENEID* and is the subject of works of art by Italian artists Giovanni Bernini (1598–1680) and Raphael (1483–1520).

**ANDROGEUS** In Greek mythology, son of MINOS and PASIPHAË; brother of ARIADNE and PHAEDRA. Androgeus was a great athlete. He beat all his opponents at the OLYMPIC GAMES in Athens, whereupon the jealous King AEGEUS had him assassinated. Subsequently, King Minos of CRETE declared war on Athens.



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