

# Greek and Roman Mythology

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## Ch9 The Great Heroes before the Trojan War Hercules

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The Greatest Hero of Greece

# HERCULES



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# Hercules

was a demigod, son of Zeus and the mortal Alcmene.

Hera, therefore, hated him.

was the strongest man on earth, never defeated by anything that lived in the air, sea, or on the land.



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# Early sign as destined to great things:



Baby Hercules caught snakes with his hands



In contrast with Theseus, Hercules was all about strength. Wisdom and intelligence were often conspicuously absent in things he did.



Theseus's wisdom made him more like the hero Iron Man.



Hercules, on the contrary, was more like Hulk.



Hera held a grudge against Hercules and sent him into frenzy, in which he killed all of his children and also his wife (Megara).

When Hercules regained his sanity, he sought out the Oracle at Delphi in the hope of making atonement. The Oracle ordered Hercules to serve Eurystheus, king of Mycenae, who sent him on a series of tasks known as **the Labors of Hercules**.



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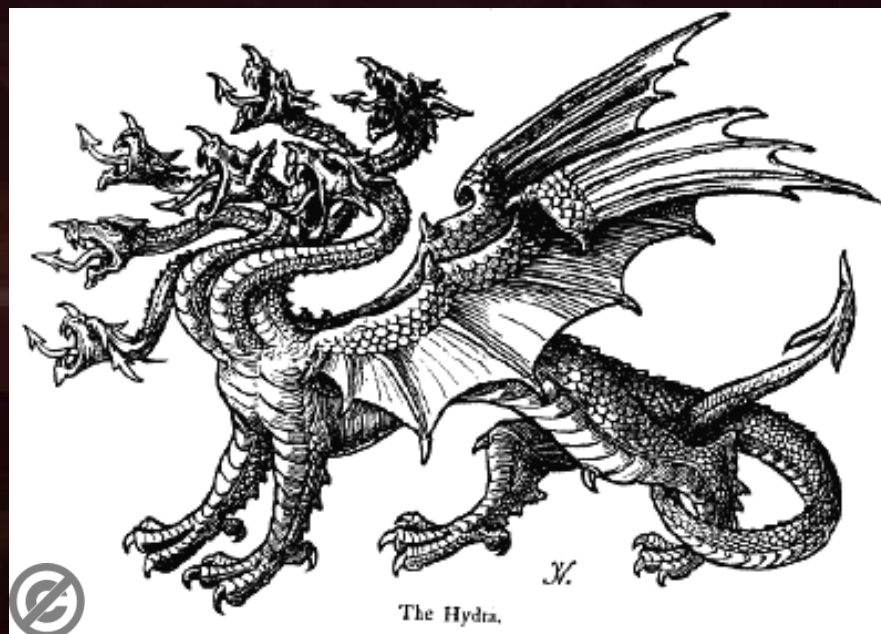
# 1. To kill the Nemean lion



The Nemean lion was a ferocious monster that could not be pierced by any weapon. Hercules managed to strangle the monster with his bare hands by using his unusual strength. After he had strangled the lion, he used one of its claws to skin the monster and he wore the hide, which retained its magical properties, until his death.



## 2. To destroy the Lernaean Hydra



The Lernaean Hydra was a monster that lurked in the swamps near a small settlement called Lerna and had nine heads.

This monster frequently terrorized the nearby countryside.





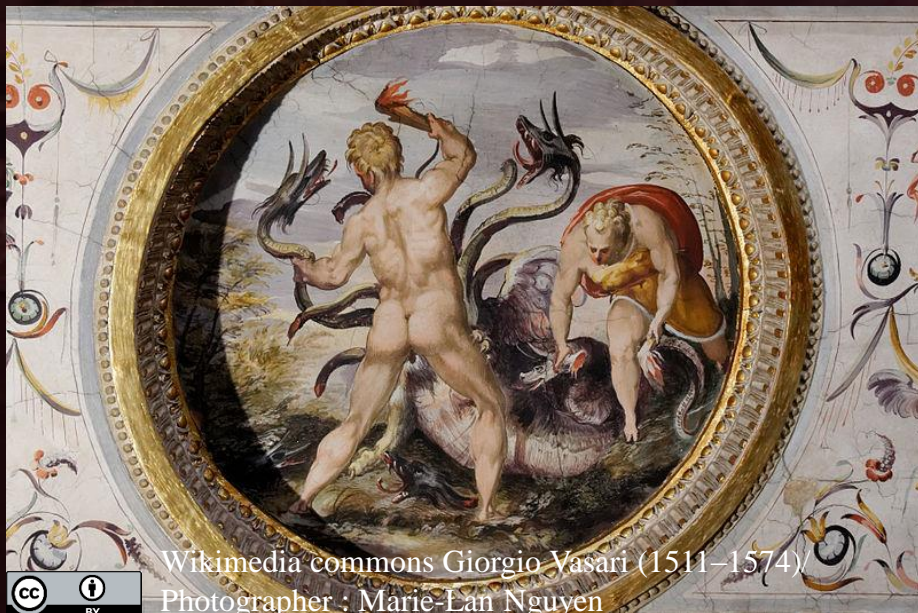
For this labour, Hercules was accompanied by his nephew Iolaus. When they found the Hydra, Hercules soon discovered that if he cut off one head, two more would grow back. Hercules managed to defeat the Hydra when Iolaus held a torch to each of the stumps so that the flames prevented new heads from growing. After he had slain the Hydra, Hercules dipped his arrows in its blood, which became poisonous.



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# Hercules destroying Hydra





### 3. To capture the Ceryneian Hind alive

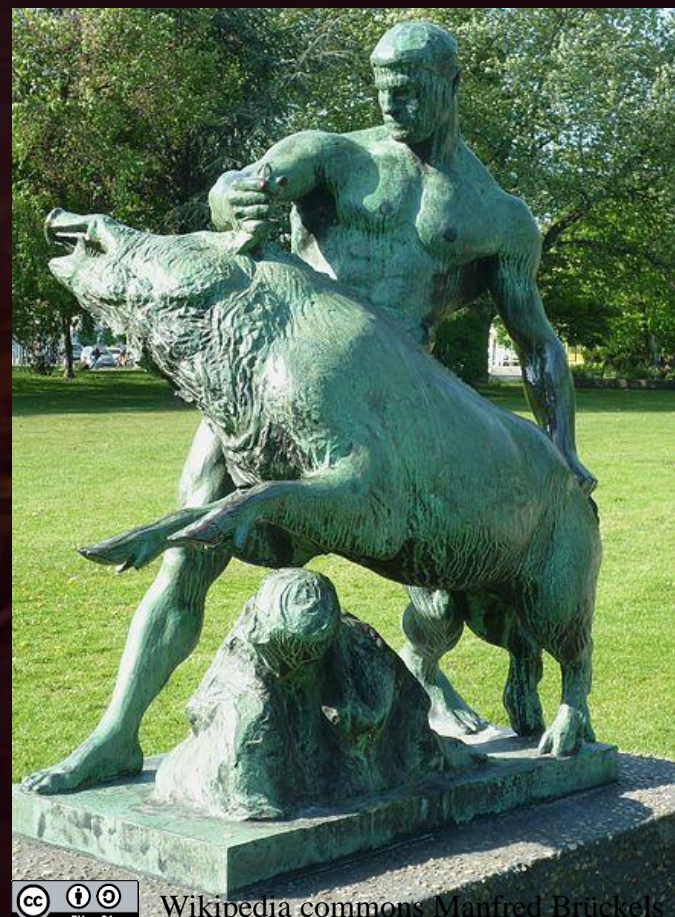


To bring back alive a stag with horns of gold.  
This animal was sacred to Artemis.





## 4. To trap the Erymanthian boar





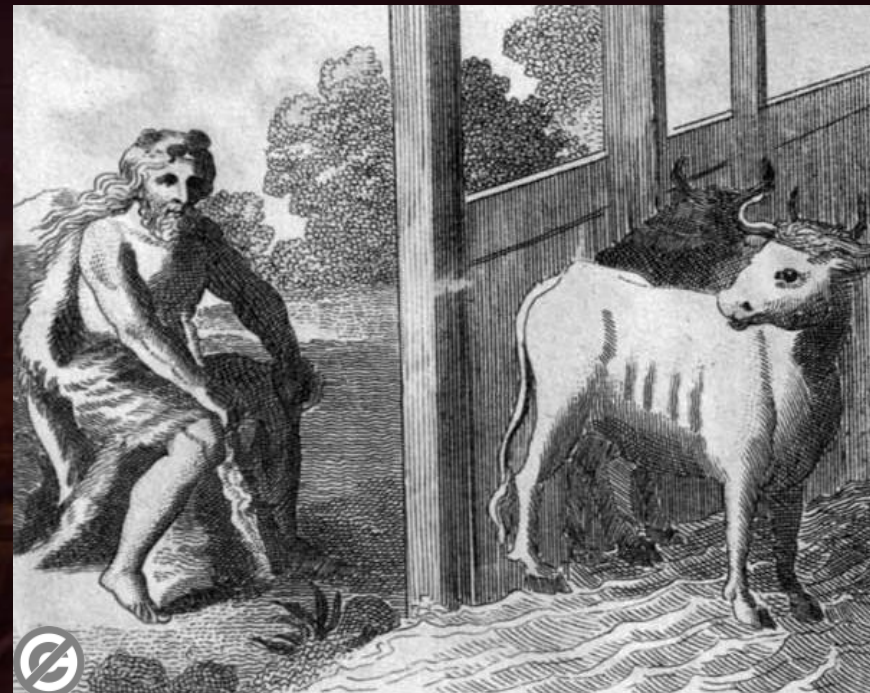
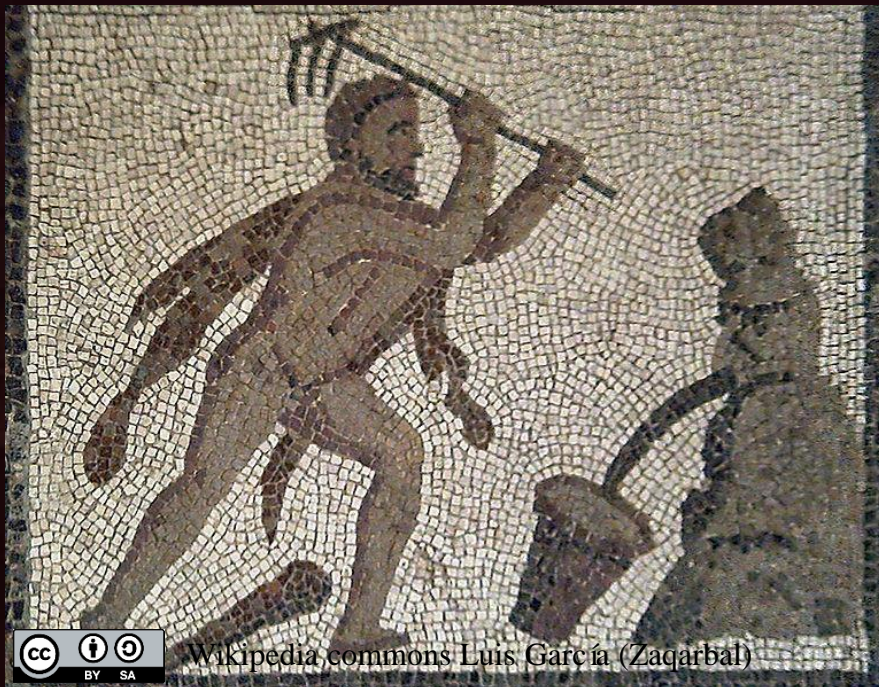
## 5. To clean the Augean stables

Augeas was king of Elis. His stables, which had gone unclean for over 30 years, contained over a thousand cattle. The task was that Hercules had to clean the stables in one day. Hercules went to Augeas and told him that he would clean the stables if Hercules could get a tenth of the cattle. Augeas was surprised but agreed.



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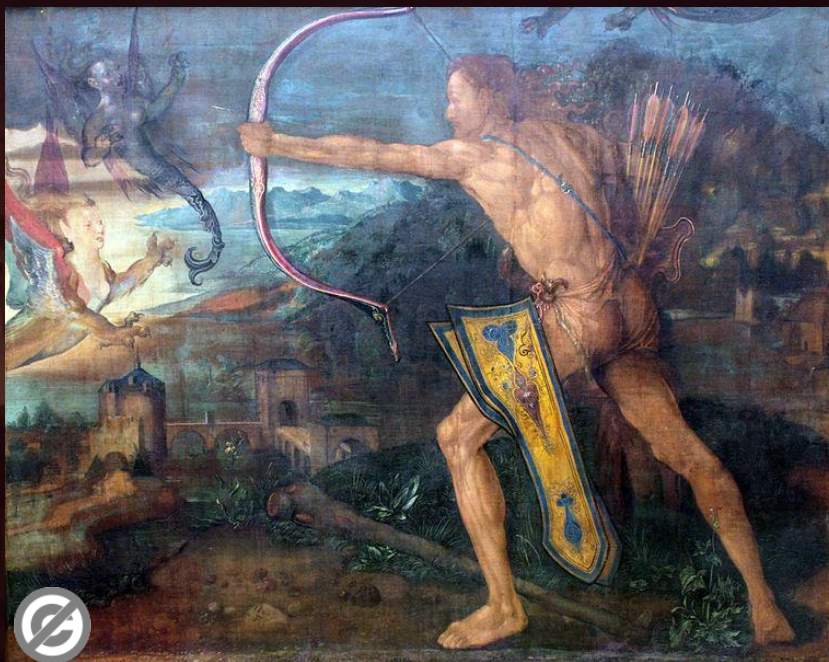


To have proof, Hercules brought Augeas's son with him. He then made two big holes in the walls of the stables that were opposite to each other. Hercules then cleaned the stables by rerouting rivers into the stables. The labor was done.





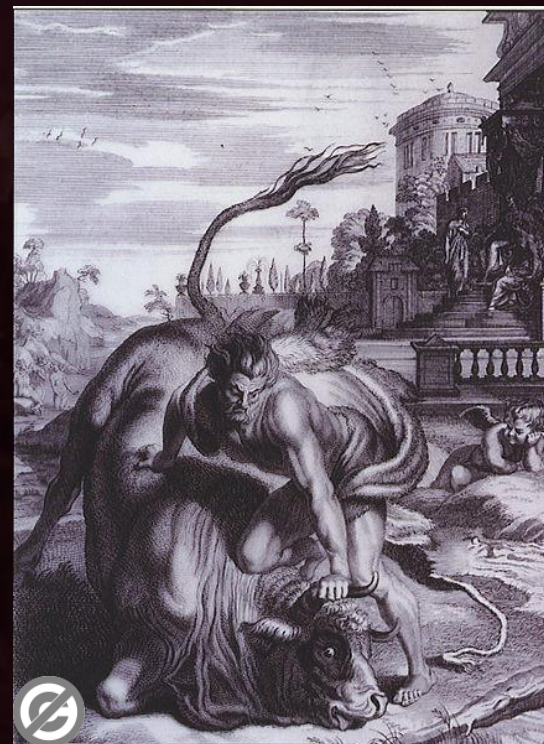
## 6. To butcher of the Stymphalian birds



Athena gave Heracles bells which Hephaestus had made especially for the occasion. Heracles shook the bells and frightened the birds into the air. Heracles then shot many of them with his arrows.



## 7. To capture the Cretan bull



To go to Crete and fetch from there a beautiful savage bull that Poseidon had given to Minos.





## 8. To round up the Mares of Diomedes



To get the man-eating mares of King Diomedes of Trace.





# 9. To fetch Hippolyta's girdle of gold



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To retrieve the golden girdle of Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons.



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# 10. To fetch the cattle of Geryon

To bring back the monster with three bodies living on Erythia, a western island.



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# 11. To fetch the golden apples of the Hesperides

Hercules did not know where to start searching for the garden so he traveled many countries in search of it. While he was searching he was stopped by Kyknos. After the fight was stopped by a thunderbolt, Hercules continued to Illyria where he met Nerus. Nerus knew where the garden was so Hercules grabbed on to him and did not let go till Nerus told him the location. As Hercules continued, he met Anteus, son of Poseidon. Hercules defeated Anteus in a wrestling match.





Then Hercules met **Prometheus**. When Prometheus told Hercules his predicament, Hercules killed the eagle that was eating Prometheus' liver. In turn, **Prometheus told Hercules that Atlas, the titan that was holding up the sky, would have to go get the apples. Hercules then reached the garden and convinced Atlas into getting the apples. Hercules took Atlas' burden while Atlas was fetching the apples. Once Atlas returned, Atlas offered to take the Apples straight to Eurystheus.**



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Hercules agreed but asked Atlas to hold the sky while he got supports for his shoulders. Atlas went back under his burden and Hercules ran away with the apples. However the Apples belonged to the gods and Athena took the apples from Eurystheus.





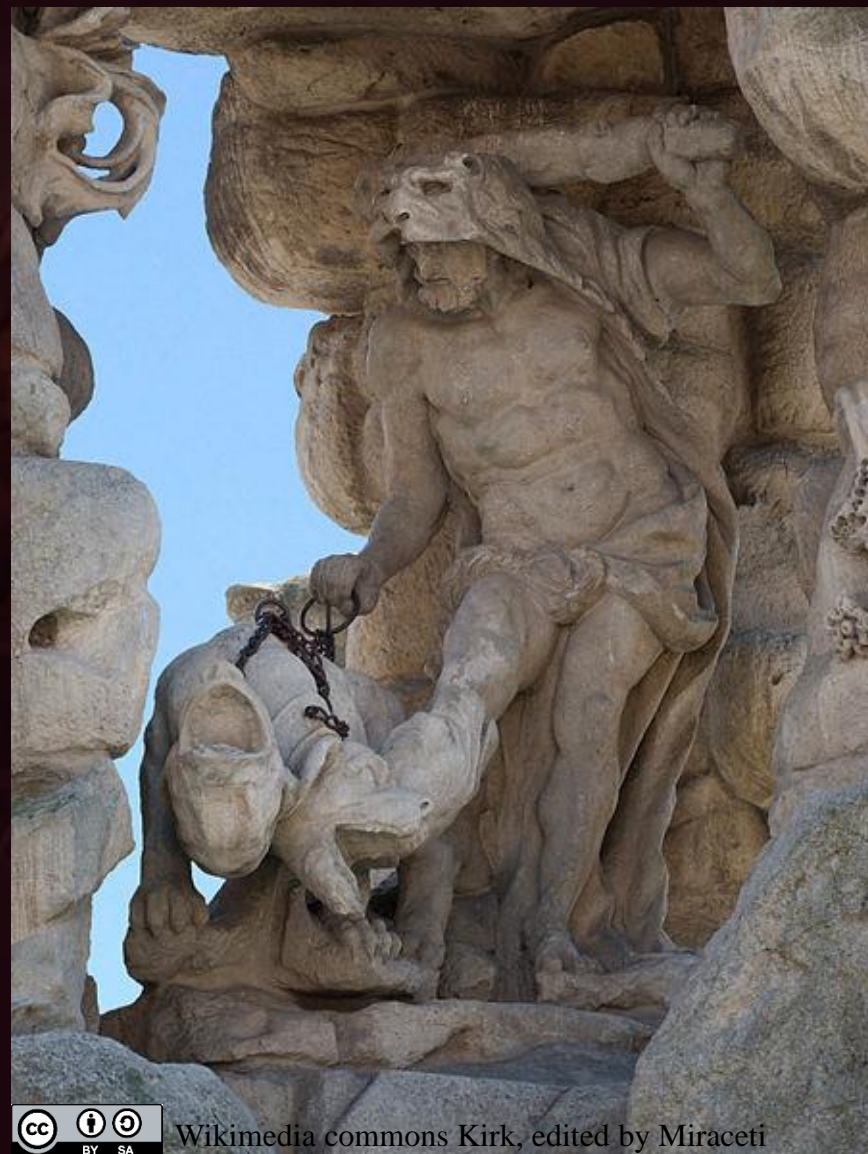
# 12. To bring Cerberus from Tartarus

Capturing Cerberus alive, without using weapons, was the final labour assigned to Heracles (Hercules) by King Eurystheus.

After Hercules succeeded in bringing back the Cerberus, Eurystheus was so terrified that he asked Hercules to bring it back to the Underworld.



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Whilst in the underworld, Heracles met Theseus and Pirithous. The two companions had been imprisoned by Hades for attempting to kidnap Persephone. Hades feigned hospitality and prepared a feast inviting them to sit. They unknowingly sat in chairs of forgetfulness and were permanently ensnared. When Heracles had pulled Theseus first from his chair, some of his thigh stuck to it (this explains the supposedly lean thighs of Athenians), but the earth shook at the attempt to liberate Pirithous, whose desire to have the wife of a god for himself was so insulting he was doomed to stay behind.



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## Hercules Fighting Death to Save Alcestis



The story that Hercules fought with Death in order to save his friend (Admetus)'s wife, Alcestis, best described his character as the Greeks saw it: **simplicity and blundering stupidity.**



# Death of Hercules

Hercules was married to Deianeira. One day, long after Hercules' marriage to Deianeira, the centaur Nessus offered to ferry them across a wide river that they had to cross. Nessus set off with Deianeira first, but tried to abduct her. When Hercules realized the centaur's real intention, Hercules chased after him and shot him with an arrow which was poisoned with Hydra's blood.



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Before he died, Nessus cheated Deianeira into taking some of his blood and treasure it, telling her that it was a very powerful medicine and: if she ever thought Hercules was being unfaithful, the centaur told her, the blood would restore his love. Deianeira kept the vial of blood. Therefore, when the rumor that Hercules had fallen in love with another woman. She smeared some of the blood on a robe and sent it to Hercules.



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# Nessus, Deianeira, and Hercules





- Hercules felt burning as soon as he wore the robe. Learning what happened to Hercules, Deianeira killed herself.
- Hercules also killed himself in the end.  
“This is rest. This is the end,” said Hercules.
- Hercules was taken to heaven, where he was reconciled to Hera and married her daughter Hebe.



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# The Great Heroes before the Trojan War

Atlanta



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A heroine

# ATALANTA



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# Atalanta



A girl who was first abandoned by father and was raised by a bear.

After growing up, she was found by hunters and brought back to the society.





Atalanta was the swiftest runner of her time, surpassing most men in racing. She was a woman way ahead of her time, she could defeat men in wrestling, got to voyage with Jason and the Argonauts in their Quest for the Golden Fleece, and played an active part in **killing the feared Calydonian Boar.**



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# Calydonian Boar hunt

The goddess Artemis grew furious at King Oeneus of Calydon and sent a boar of huge size and strength, which prevented the land from being sown, destroying and terrorizing both cattle and people. To get rid of this ravaging beast, King Oeneus sent out heralds all across Greece, inviting the bravest fighters to take part in the Calydonian Boar hunt. In the end, it was Atalanta that killed the boar.



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# Atalanta's killing of the boar



Atalanta was also a stunningly beautiful woman and had many princely suitors from all over Greece come to ask for her hand in marriage. However, **Atalanta had vowed to remain husbandless until she died**, and would challenge any potential suitor to a foot race - If she lost she would become his wife...if the man was defeated in the race he would lose his life! Needless to say, many suitors were killed by her, **until Aphrodite, the goddess of Love, got involved...**







Aphrodite gave Melanion three golden apples to distract Atalanta's attention while racing.

Therefore, he won the race and married Atalanta.



Melanion forgot to pay proper thanks to Aphrodite's help. The peeved goddess of Love decided to punish the ungrateful man, so while he was sacrificing on Mount Parnassus to Zeus to celebrate his victory, Aphrodite inflamed him with desire and made him lay with Atalanta in the temple while the sacred images turned away their eyes. Zeus saw this profane act in his temple and in his fury he turned them into **lion** and **lioness**.





# Q & A

- ① Among the heroes we introduced in these two weeks, which one do you admire the most? From whom you learned lessons from their stories?
- ② Is there any heroine in Chinese culture? Please specify.









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