

The Greek Myths Study Guide

The Greek Myths by Robert Graves

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Plot Summary

This is a classic work designed to provide a thorough introduction to the pre-Christian religion of Greece. It has been rigorously translated and carefully compiled. The edition used as the source for the production of this book summary is *The Greek Myths Complete Edition*, edited by Robert Graves. This was a 1955 Penguin edition. There is a brief description of the famous writer Robert Graves. After this is a brief survey of a few aspects of the culture. One is the prevalence of the worship of Dionysus the deity, rather than the two city leaders of the same name: one the son of the other. Dionysus was often symbolized by the goat - which is a very effective, inquisitive and outgoing creature by nature. These animals were important to the culture as sources of milk, cheese, meat, and if necessary also thread and skins. They were economically important in the culture in which they have prevailed as a symbol. This is brought up during the introduction. The other main creature brought up in the introduction is the centaur. Famed for its association with the constellation and astrological sign Sagittarius, the centaur is an important amalgam of man and horse. While incredibly wise and brilliant compared to the horse, the centaur is rather recalcitrant by the standards of a well civilized man. The centaurs were known to worship Dionysus, and had a mixed reputation. To this day there are arguments about whether the centaur is actually simply a cavalry soldier or if it is somehow a fairy tale animal or symbolic of a location which has both men and horses.

From that point forward, the book consists of extensive translations of Greek myths. The extent of information available about this religion, which is what it really was, is greater than that found for many other of the pagan world's religions. Perhaps because it became associated with literacy early on, or thanks to the magic of translation and good publisher support, the ancient Greek mythology continues to influence the minds of hundreds of millions of people worldwide. Various subject matters are taken up and addressed through the use of these special stories. A myth is a religious story that is not viewed as being necessarily true, but is credited with having some insight and bearing into the truth. They are normally intimately bound up with both religion and culture. At the same time, as story, they are so inspiring that even after generations of nonbelievers, people still cling to these tales as somehow glorious marks upon the psyche of humanity as a whole.



Chapter 1, Introduction to the Myths

Chapter 1, Introduction to the Myths Summary and Analysis

These stories are all creation tales. Prior to the enshrinement of the written word and even after it, there is a longstanding effort to answer the basic questions of where it all comes from - how did the world start, from whence has the human species emerged? Myth and science have both endeavored to answer this question. The answer is elusive. Amongst the first factors the editor explains is that in reality, there are thirteen lunar months to the year. This has associations with both women and with the Moon, since women's menstrual cycles tend to roll on a twenty-eight day long month, of which there are thirteen. These were used by Europeans as 'common-law months' for one thousand years after the Julian Solar calendar was introduced.

The editor addresses matriarchy. He seems to have a great respect for women that seeps through his writing. He writes of how the role of men in culture and religion changed when the role of father was cultivated; the other major factor was when women came to recognize and to acknowledge the male contribution to human reproduction. Prior to a certain point, in many locations, men received no credit whatsoever when a woman became pregnant. During the Introduction, he also explains that the women became dangerous when they were intoxicated from chewing live laurel leaves. Cyanide of Potassium is the chemists' name for the intoxicant. The danger was severe: rampaging groups of intoxicated women occasionally broke out and literally killed animals, and in the worst cases, a child or small number of children were murdered - the women would literally tear them to pieces. Anyone can see what a public horror and nuisance this really is, and as a consequence, eating laurel leaves was banned to protect the public; exceptions were made in the case of certain priestesses who could ritually use the same substance without becoming a danger.

Robert Graves explains how political and social changes occurred in stages and that the changes made were expressed through the myths. Athena began as a parthenogenic daughter of Metis during the matriarchal era. She was later reborn as the daughter of Zeus, from his head, with her mother treated as nonexistent but still somehow everyone knew it was Metis. Graves writes that this shows because the society changed: male deities and men became more prominent and powerful. However, Athena retained her power as a goddess - her temples were preserved and her worshipers allowed to stay as long as they acquiesced to the rulership of Zeus. They may not have predicted that the Olympians would be used as archetypal models for Jungian depth psychology by Jean Bolen in the twentieth century.



Chapter 2, Creation Myths

Chapter 2, Creation Myths Summary and Analysis

The Creation myths are well known in a number of religious traditions. These are part of the human approach to the question of gods. Today, physicists are among those who delve into the question of origins and who seek answers to how the universe what made, how life on planet Earth began, and finally, how human beings came about. These questions are faced by the Grecian religious traditions as well as the others. For pre-scientific people, or those who do not have the more ornate tools available to solve the riddle of origins, creation stories take the place of the physics of origins. They are clearly speculative in nature. While they tend to be a bit wild, they are nevertheless reasonable speculations within their limits. These myths have been subdivided by their type. These are listed in the Table of Contents as: 1) Pelasgian Creation Myth, 2) The Homeric and Orphic Creation Myths, 3) The Olympian Creation Myth and finally 4) Two Philosophical Creation Myths. In most, a consistent point is that the myth includes some embodiment of evident natural forces as having a great deal to do with it. The Ocean is credited with being the source of life on Earth in one creation myth. This is largely corroborated by organic chemistry and biological science. The other myths were on another level. Some told of how light broke up the Darkness and how life and order emerged from Chaos and Darkness. Another theory was that the winds did something to fertilize the land, and that this probably occurred in the dark.

Next, the author does his best to summarize the birth of the gods. As already mentioned there are numerous stories about the gods and their births. These have turned out to have some clear symbolism in political changes. One of these is that when Athena sprang forth from Zeus's head the city of Athens had come under different control. The temples to Athena remained, but Zeus, who had upgraded in status supplanted her mother Metis - the Sea, with being her primary parent. He writes of the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy, writing in terms of generations. Men never escaped the controlling influence, although one of benevolent love, of their mothers. This was only changed by a cultural shift wherein daughters left their mothers for their new husband's familial home. From such a location, the ways of his side might hold more sway, whereas when a young man goes to the home of his bride and her mother, he is apt to succumb to their combined dominance.



Chapter 3, Generations of Deities - Part 2

Chapter 3, Generations of Deities - Part 2 Summary and Analysis

There is also a recurring theme of incestuous relations among some of the gods. The relationship between Hera and her brother Zeus is a case in point. They are both offspring of Rhea and Cronos. Despite the fact that they are siblings, they come to be husband and wife to one another as well. There are versions of the story where their union is depicted as having been his raping her, but in other versions it is actually that she wants her brother for her husband, at least in part to consolidate power in the family and with love and passion. He does have other lovers during their marriage, but they never divorce—only his sister is his wife. In this edition, the marriage is viewed as only taking place because Hera is so ashamed of having been raped by Zeus. The other least palatable theme is that destruction of offspring by the father to prevent usurpation by the children. The mother often colludes with her young, which does lead to the downfall of the father, just as he feared. In fact, this is how Zeus was saved from destruction by Cronos - Time. Rhea gave birth to him and hid him. She then substituted a large rock for the baby and Cronos consumed it, just as he had her previous children. Later, having grown up in secret, Zeus returns. Vengeance is done. To everyone's amazement, Zeus' siblings are all released from Cronos unharmed. It is as if this story is a prophecy about the simple fact that, despite the demise that era of Grecian culture and religion, just as Greece is still a real nation with plenty of people, many living 2,000 years after Jesus Christ and 1,500 years after Mohammed, many people have still heard of the children of Cronos and Rhea, including Zeus and Hera.

At this point, for the sake of orderliness, the chapter titles will be listed as they appear in the Table of Contents up to the point which is currently covered. Forward, Introduction, 1. The Pelasgian Myth, 2. The Homeric and Orphic Creation Myth, 3. The Olympian Creation Myth, 4. Two Philosophical Creation Myths, 5. The Five Ages of Man, 6. The Castration of Uranus, 7. The Dethronement of Cronus, 8. The Birth of Athene, 9. Zeus and Metis, 10. The Fates, 11. The Birth of Aphrodite, 12. Hera and Her Children. 13. Zeus and Hera. These have been covered in the previous summary chapters. Please note that there are three common spellings for the god of Time: Cronus, Chronos, Cronos. There are two common spellings for the goddess of Athens: Athene, and Athena. The nation of Libya is featured as a source of these deities, especially of Athena. These will be delved into in greater detail during the rest of the summary.



Chapter 4, Olympians

Chapter 4, Olympians Summary and Analysis

Hermes is born to Maia. The little deity was quickly up to mischief, possibly because his ethical sense had not as yet developed. He stole a herd of cattle from the god Apollo, and he covered the tracks to disguise this fact. It worked, but Apollo sought the truth in this matter and eventually he found it. Hermes was called before Zeus because of this. The child god was in luck; he was chastised and the situation was corrected, but he was spared any harsh penalty for his actions. He exchanged musical instruments of Hermes's invention with Apollo in trade for the cattle. Hermes is also credited with the first animal sacrifices: he had to sacrifice enough to include himself among the divine, and this worked. Zeus insists that he give up lying. Hermes agrees, but admits that he won't give up what is later termed the 'forked tongue'. Hermes is pleased enough that he asks to be Zeus's herald. This wish was granted.

Aphrodite did not always play fair and sometimes turned to mischief. She also often regretted what she had done when things went quite bad, and did what she could to make the best of the situation, considering. It often began as an act of vengeance. She shared one of her lovers, Adonis, with Persephone, but did not abide by the sharing agreement until after Adonis was killed by Ares - another of Aphrodite's lovers. This occurred because another of the goddesses put Ares up to it by making him jealous - by advising him that Aphrodite preferred Adonis to him. This made what had been tolerable intolerable. So Ares killed him - which meant that Persephone was able to include her dear Adonis once again. This was the case, although Persephone was married to Hades. The marriage had been forced, but she relented, and so this medium was achieved. Ares is described. Robert Graves writes that there are only two other Olympian deities who are fond of Ares. These are his sister Eris and his lover Aphrodite. Aphrodite's marriage does not destroy their romance. He is what he is called and has the necessary disposition and set of abilities to go along with the position. He does not interfere with her other lovers at all until he is urged that he may be supplanted by Adonis, at which point, he hunts Adonis down and kills him.

Hestia is the virgin goddess of the hearth. She is known as having a wonderful disposition; being kind, protective and friendly. The hearth was the very center of the home life, as source of heat, the place for cooking and the source of much of the light indoors. Hestia was also great for children.



Chapter 5, Homosexuality and the Laurel Leaf - No Connection

Chapter 5, Homosexuality and the Laurel Leaf - No Connection Summary and Analysis

There are two men who captivated the love of gods. Narcissus and Hyacinth were renowned for their beauty. It was a known fact that there were some men, as well as many women who fell in love with each man. In the case of Hyacinth, the normally heterosexual god Apollo fell in love with him. Heracles, the hero, turns out to have been noticeably bisexual. He had wives and lovers who were women, and had sexually intimate involvements with more than one man as well during the course of his adult life. These variants on standard heterosexual practices are not elucidated.

Where Apollo is the Sun, Artemis is the Moon. In this pantheon, the two are viewed as siblings. From our current perspective, it would be closer to the truth to call both Earth and Moon children of the Sun, but it still doesn't look like that from the Earth's surface. During the crescent moon it is easy to see how it might be said that goddess Artemis asked her father Zeus for a silver bow which he granted. Zeus gave Artemis the opportunity to ask for what she'd like, and she did so. He gave her all that she asked for and then more, as he loved her so.

By this time in the exposition it has become evident that there is 'something going on with the laurel'. Control of the intoxicating laurel tree leaves, and the regulation of the use of this intoxicant was an actual cultural and political issue. While it was viewed as worthy of some legitimate usage, there were dangers, as depicted in stories of wild women tearing individuals to pieces. The text does not clarify whether the dangers were as prevalent as those associated with the use of alcohol - such as belligerence which is really rather common, or more akin to those previously mentioned rare but extreme occurrences.



Chapter 6, More Deities

Chapter 6, More Deities Summary and Analysis

In Hephaestus's Nature and Deeds, Graves observes that, "...the smith was something of a sorcerer," (p. 87) during the era. He further explains that there was a connection between the smith-god and sun worship, as well as to science, and as such, Hephaestus and Athena often shared their Temples in the city of Athens. Hephaestus has some basic disadvantages. He is ugly rather than beautiful and he was born a weakling. He ends up disfigured. He is the son of Zeus and Hera. Hera abandoned him because he was such a weakling, and he was taken in by those who viewed him as pathetic, but nurtured him and gave him access to metalsmithing equipment. It turned out he had artistic design abilities and was able to perform as an impressive jewelry smith as a result. This was so good that his mother found him through his artwork. Goddess Hera restored her son to Olympus and provided him with a superior smithy. Not only that, but she went so far as to arrange for him to marry the incredibly popular goddess of love herself, Aphrodite, with whom he naturally fell in love. He survived her chronic infidelity - but preferred it when he could be oblivious to it so he was not upset by it. He later thrown out of Olympus again, and is severely damaged. He survives using prosthetics after that but becomes once again able to produce the finest smithwork known to humanity and continues to have the goddess of love for his wife.

Demeter is not monogamous, nor does she marry in the myths. She has a goddess daughter by her brother Zeus. Her daughter is called Core, according to this Robert Graves version of the story. Zeus's brother Hades - next closest in age and King of Tartarus asks to marry Core. For political reasons, Zeus can neither refuse Hades nor can he sanction, or give permission to Hades to marry Core against Demeter and possibly also against Core's wills. Hades takes Core by force in a kidnapping. Persephone is a title, rather than actual name. Core is somehow tricked into eating a little food of the dead. Hades releases her because Zeus has warned that Demeter's reaction has been extreme and they have no hope unless Hades relents to Demeter. Nothing will grow and everyone will die otherwise. So, he does. It turns out that there was a cultural rite that went along with this. It involved how to preserve the generations of corn through the winter; and by rediscovering the miracle of the continuation of life with the new Springtime. This is the only case so far in the mythology when Zeus goes to his mother Rhea and begs her to sort the problem out with Demeter.



Chapter 7, Athena & Pan

Chapter 7, Athena & Pan Summary and Analysis

Athena was superior even to Ares in warcraft but was not able to enjoy making war the way that Ares and his sister Eris were. She frequently borrowed her military equipment and armor from Zeus. Zeus intentionally misled Hephaestus when Athena requested a suit of armor from the smith-god. He was deceived into believing that Athena desired him to be her impassioned lover. Having fallen under this delusion, he veritably assaulted her when she had come to check up on the armor. She managed to prevent him from violating her; nevertheless, the events went so far that the god orgasmed onto Athena's thigh. This disgusted her, and she wiped it off and cast it away.

There was another mystery involved. The child was reared by Cecrops during his reign as the King of Athens. In this era, monarchs were generally elected and could not presume to be able to pass on the right of office to their offspring. This king actually legislated or in some way advocated two major social changes: paternity and monogamy. These serve each other sociologically and hence, their conjunction. The extraordinary feature written of is that this king and Athena's offspring-like son from Hephaestus was that they were viewed as being part serpent-part man.

The editor begins this chapter by reminding readers of the fact that there are twelve Olympian deities, including both gods and goddesses. He then goes on explain that there were additional deities, not all of whom were welcome on Mount Olympus even when they were known. Mother Earth was viewed as lacking in interest, Hecate was not welcome, Hephaestus had experienced Olympus both as home and as a place from which he was banned. The god Pan is Arcadian. Pan is rural, yet strangely powerful. He is frightening, so much so that the word 'panic' is named after him. He is able to play beautiful music and is associated with goats. He is the patron deity of shepherds.



Chapter 8, Pan & Dionysus

Chapter 8, Pan & Dionysus Summary and Analysis

Somehow, through the long course of history, Pan has become interwoven with Dionysus. This is only signified in the text when Robert Graves reports that Pan claimed to have had sexual relations with many of the women also intimately associated with Dionysus. The way it is described that Dionysian women said 'Yes' to Pan. Pan does not claim that they switched from being worshipers of Dionysus to worshipers of Pan. However, during the preceding millennium and even more so over the last century the two have become melded together. This occurred in part in the education system where the majority are introduced to a hybrid of Grecian and Roman history. Pan and Dionysus are both associated with horns, with sexually vigorous men who may suffer from being ugly, making their sexuality none-the-less powerful but at times more frightening to the women. Both are closely tied to nature but also to revelry. Music, particularly the pan-pipes are also famed. In this complete guide, the two are treated with a greater degree of separation than such readers might be used to.

This god is rightly known as the harbinger of wine. Libya and Palestine are known to be the first homes of wine. However, the rise of Dionysus occurs at the same time as the improvement in humanity's ability to cultivate grapes and to make wine in far more places than had ever been previously known. The triumph of the vineyard and the adoption throughout much of the known world - at least the Middle East, North Africa and West Asia, including India as well the area within Greece, were all transformed by this. Dionysus nowadays is known casually mainly as a god of revelry, music and the mixture of goat and man. This assemblage often occurs in the countryside and can also be readily linked to the god Pan - especially when any given worshiper is intoxicated. The triumph of alcohol over chewing laurel leaves among humans was considered a rather major change. Orpheus is the ultimate bard. People claimed he had been given an instrument directly from Apollo and taught by the Muses themselves. Orpheus also served as a priest of Apollo. He retained this post even when followers devoted to Dionysus invaded and captured Thrace. Orpheus was ultimately killed/murdered by Wild Women in a targeted attack that followed upon a low level slaughter of husbands. Other deities deemed the murders unjustified. Surviving Thracian husbands had their wives tattooed as a strong social message against murdering priests. Dionysus was able to preserve his female followers, but only by transforming them into a grove of oak trees. Apollo and Dionysus are the primary gods in this chapter.



Chapter 9, The Wild Women

Chapter 9, The Wild Women Summary and Analysis

These chapters are among those that reveal the chilling truth that the people of the age and location were truly savage. The Wild Women committed group murders under the influence of laurel leaf. Human children actually were sacrificed in some towns, normally just one annually. The destruction of the cultural practices of ritualized murder and other socially acceptable forms of homicide outside of warfare has been an area where Europeans have made systematic and precious progress. This type of change has also taken place in the Middle East and in South America. Those who ate the flesh of gods through the Orphic temple were turned into vegetarians.

Descriptions of how to get to the Underworld are provided. Part of the funeral rite is to put a coin under the tongue of the corpse. They claim this is to pay the ferry man for escorting the soul to the Underworld. The majority of Underworld residents go to Hades but some are fortunate enough to go to Elysium. Elysium is a form of Grecian heaven. Not only is it really fun there, but all the souls there have the unusual freedom to reincarnate as living souls upon the Earth whenever they wish. This is one special power granted as a consequence of virtuous living. Hades rules the gems and metals and other types of dirt in addition to the souls of most of the dead. He is jealously possessive of his rights. His sexual behavior is known to fall on both sides - that of desirable and that of the rapist side. His wife, Queen Persephone, is genuinely loved by him, but it is also well known that he took her by force in a political deal with his more powerful brother Zeus.

There were fifty beautiful women of the sea. Echidne was one of many offspring who was also a mother. The nymphs and other amazing women in this chapter are mainly representatives of island people or of sea-faring tribes of Libya and other nations bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. Echidne, who is introduced in this chapter as half fair maiden and half serpent is the main subject of the next chapter. She is said to have been destroyed by a Ladon, who may have had a small armed force of one hundred. "One hundred handed" in this context normally meant the number of troops. Echidne is also the mother to Cerebus, the hound of Hades.



Chapter 10, Prometheus the Titan

Chapter 10, Prometheus the Titan Summary and Analysis

Prometheus is credited with being the divine "father" of humanity. Prometheus is a Titan rather than a god. Hebrew and Christian theology has sometimes claimed that Prometheus was actually Lucifer. In other cases he is simply dismissed as an error. Right or wrong, according to the Greeks, Prometheus is famous and powerful as a guardian of mankind. There are times when he was punished for this role. Prometheus, in a later story, was credited with having brought the power of fire making to humanity and was punished for this or some deed like it by being chained to a wall of rock and having his liver eaten out by a bird of prey daily; since Prometheus is immortal, this doesn't kill him.

More of the major figures found in the remnants of Grecian history are covered. Some of these are recognizable as constellations. These include Eos, who is an immortal woman. She has had Ares as a lover. Aphrodite caused Eos to fall in love with other men, many other men, and all of them mortals. This led to an obvious series of successful seductions by Eos of those same mortal men - every one of whom was noticeably not Ares the god of War who Aphrodite wanted to keep over an above her husband Hephaestus. Orion was a mortal - a Boetian hunter who just happened to also be the most handsome man alive. Oenopion had a serious problem in his region. He managed to secure Orion's help in this matter by telling the Hunter that he could marry the other man's daughter if he would solve this problem. Orion went about the complex and rather difficult task of clearing the hills of dangerous predatory animals. However, when he came to collect his victory prize, Oenopion sought means of keeping the prize woman as he was in love with the woman himself.

There are two sons of Poseidon. Helen was married to a mortal or high class human man. Her husband had threatened to divorce her if she did not get pregnant and have at least one of his children. She had an extramarital romance with the god Poseidon while her husband was away. Her husband was so oblivious that when she told him that Poseidon's sons were his, the husband accepted this without question. Later, she gave birth to a set of twins by her husband, but the deity's sons continued to be favored. Poseidon intervened and ordered the sons to rescue her - to not let her kill herself over this. They did so without hesitation.



Chapter 11, Sisyphus

Chapter 11, Sisyphus Summary and Analysis

Oracles are one feature of the ancient Mediterranean world. These were often priestesses who lodged at or near to temples. Temples were dedicated to one or more deities. Unlike Christ, who was not an oracle, priestesses and priests who were oracles used both trance states and ritualized forms of intoxication by eating laurel leaf. Oracles were dedicated to a given deity or deities. Sometimes oracles tended to fidget with the entrails of sacrifice victims prior to giving an articulate response to a query. The first oracle known in the region is to Dodonian Zeus. During these early chapters on the history of ancient Greece, it is very noticeable that Libya actually is mentioned as a source of much of the earliest cultural memories, myths and gods.

Alphabets get humans into incredibly important work which is mainly taken for granted except that it is carefully passed on from one generation to another - alphabets. The Pelasgian system is the first one mentioned here. Robert Graves explains that this alphabet was probably a simplified alteration of hieroglyphs. He provides a very brief summary of how the ancient Grecians formulated their 'alphabet'. Some of it came at one point, and then, further letters were added on later. The story is that the vowels were devised first, then came consonants. There is a brief analysis of how alphabets were devised among other peoples, including the druids who used trees and their names.

Sisyphus is introduced as a prestigious Corinthian. He is the son of a mortal named Aelus. He has a herd of cattle, a powerful wife called Merope - who is a daughter of Atlas, the Titan. They have three children together. Nearby are two men described as twins; this is symbolic of their intimacy since each man claims to have a different father. Both claim to have been sired by a deity. Autolycus has the gift for thievery. Hermes, being the patron god of thieves, is legitimately viewed as the father in this case. His twin brother is a son of Apollo. Sisyphus was fed up with being robbed by Autolycus without being able to prove who had done it, and therefore was disabled from taking any legal recourse. In an effort to do something about this, he devised a new tactic. He marked the hooves of his cattle with a special designation. Other accounts say he marked the hooves with a symbol that read, "Stolen by Autolycus." For the first time, there was a technique that worked. Autolycus certainly did return to take more of the other man's cattle. For the first time, Sisyphus was able to go to Autolycus and to provide evidence enough for the others in the community that this was the case. Once others began to see the truth, Autolycus felt much better.



Chapter 12, The Calydonian Boar

Chapter 12, The Calydonian Boar Summary and Analysis

A woman named Althea marries. Her husband murders her first child. She dares to have another one anyways and receives a strange message. In this case she is told that the child will live if she prevents a particular fire brand from being used. She takes this advice even though it makes no sense whatsoever at the time. The boy, Meleager does fine, growing up perfectly nicely and quite healthy. His father Oeneus made an error of omission many years later. He made offerings to the gods but he left out offerings to Artemis, the virgin huntress. The goddess found out and was offended. She set about to punish him as a direct consequence. She did this by sending wild boars. Earlier in the text, readers were informed that there were humans who had the gift for taming wild animals in Greece. This still exists, but in those areas of the world where human domination of the terrain has included the near eradication of anything resembling a genuine predator of another species, this ability has been forgotten or terribly neglected. There is at least one story about how a lion enters a town and goes about killing people. It is one of those times when the townsfolk failed to come forth and conquer the beast but rather died, fled, or hid until it went away. This reaction was evoked in another myth when Heracles killed his own children, went off by himself for a while, and then, when he asked for suggestions, was gently advised to 'leave for a while'. In this story of the Calydonian Boar, Atalanta the heiress becomes included at the time of the hunt. Oeneus determines to hunt down the boar, not realizing that he was supposed to make offerings to goddess Artemis to prevent something like this.

Atalanta joins the hunt. She is the fastest mortal there is. She was reared by a bear tribe, despite having been exposed by a father because she was a daughter and he had wanted a son. She faced opposition; in this case, the men hunters did not want to include her because she's a woman. She was known for being a chaste woman. Meleager, however married - and he was married, was attracted to her. Because of this, he wanted to help her to get her way and was able to make the other men allow her to participate in the hunt. She ended up endangered however, because two centaurs actually tried to ravish her. She killed them both. However, she did not succeed in killing or wounding the boar. Meleager did, but he dedicated the kill to Atalanta due to his 'crush'.



Chapter 13, Theseus

Chapter 13, Theseus Summary and Analysis

There are four myths dedicated to Theseus. Theseus's birth is attributed to his mother and to Poseidon, but Aegeus is recognized as the mortal she slept with the night she conceived the child. The woman Aethra dreamed of a sojourn to an island where she was overwhelmed by Poseidon and the shape of an actual island was changed. The god agreed to give the mortal man credit for siring the baby. However, when this 'love-child' was raised, the guardian somehow knew of this connection to Poseidon, and Graves informs readers that the guardian is known to have spread the rumor, or knowledge, that the boy's true father was the god Poseidon. Early indications of his courageous nature are given in an anecdote. Little Theseus found a weapon and made to prepare to fight a lion - the lion was really merely a lion's skin. Heracles the hero was present, and as a matter of fact, it was one of his skins. No harm comes of it, but it is used to show the boy's potential. Robert Graves explains that there seem to have been three separate characters named Theseus. One from Attica, one who united a region known as Troezen, the other from a territory associated with the Lapith people.

Theseus is credited with having destroyed the Cretan minotaur. However, Graves has also explained that the Cretans are known to be liars. Not only that, but the Cretans have consistently denied the existence of the Minotaur. What was brought up in close relation to this, was that there was a powerful man called Taurus - which in many cases is another name for 'the bull'. He was the leader of many in Crete and it is natural to speculate that the Minotaur was some combination of Minos and Taurus, or that Taurus did have a bull's head and skin, just as Heracles had a lion's skin. The Cretans stuck by their story that their labyrinth was a well guarded prison, but that there was no monster minotaur lurking there. The Cretans were known to have a matriarchal society, well into after the time when other areas of Greece had converted to patriarchy. It has often been found the case, at least among women, where there is less resort to violence there is sometimes an equal resort to deceit as an alternative. This alternative has often been associated with women or with whomever does not have the greatest access to dominant physical force. Deceit, like violence, has a mixed reputation as both a good and a bad trait. At least one woman fell in love with Theseus on sight. She had been in mortal fear of him, as he had come upon her family. When she discovered she was not going to be destroyed, her mind turned immediately to love. Finally, Theseus is credited with the invention of wrestling.



Chapter 14, The Cretan Bull

Chapter 14, The Cretan Bull Summary and Analysis

The Cretans are the people of the island of Crete. Many readers may have heard of the minotaur. There is more than one story about a bull. Over in India, which was a distant location but some had heard of it back then and there, the bull was a prominent symbol of a god. For the Greeks, including the Cretans, there were traditional rituals associated with leadership. One of these was that whoever was to become king had to ritualistically fight a bull. This may have been the case before or after the cessation of human and animal ritual sacrifices. These are practices which the majority in the present cultural context are deeply appreciated by many, while taken for granted. So, there are real bulls and real bull fights found in Grecian history. In 2009, the most internationally famous bull fighting is conducted by the Spaniards—they have a specialist elite who participate. For the most part, no one else dares to even try such a thing. Hence, it may well have been the case, that whoever was to be king in a Grecian city-state might fight a bull, but most people wouldn't dream of it, let alone even try it. However, there was also something - 'bulls that breathed scorching fire' referenced.

There was a Cretan General called Taurus, and Taurus is another word for 'Bull'. These animals are actually rather docile unless provoked. This is why, in modern day bull-fighting, the animals are provoked by puncture wounds while in the ring with the "torreador". Contemporary bull fighting is tightly controlled and highly ritualistic; the bull is essentially doomed and great precautions are taken to give the 'bull fighter' the upper hand. Even so, now and then, a human gets gored, and when the bull does get it right, it is hospitalization or death for the opponent. As the nature of humans and bulls may have remained largely the same during the past three to eight thousand years, this would give readers a reasonably accurate sense of what it is. There is some suspicion that the Minotaur was this man Taurus, or one or a team of his subordinates who had a bull skull and skin which was worn to give extra warmth and additional power to whoever wore it. Those who observed it would be naturally intimidated. However, the other theory, as mentioned earlier, is that the Minotaur was what the name suggests. It was King Minos using general Taurus. Together, they were the Minotaur of Crete. Robert Graves insists that the Cretans consistently denied that they had "a minotaur". It is also possible, that this is a term which cannot be properly translated due to the cultural differences.



Chapter 15, The Final

Chapter 15, The Final Summary and Analysis

This more thorough examination of the Greek Myths provides a reminder to those stories already well known, but includes information which many readers may not have realized. The circumstances surrounding Sisyphus are but one example. As already mentioned, readers may have some familiarity with many of the stories already due to their own prior education. The tales are written in a clear manner. The style may take some getting used to. Typically, the characters are prominent people within the world of Grecian city-states. Robert Graves includes methods for the best ways to interpret the stories as readers make their way through the body of myth. The stories normally have one literal component. The characters were real, living beings. The events actually took place. There is also another level; that of symbolism. Many of the characters referred to seem to have doubled as symbols. In many instances, when an individual goes from one location to another, there is also often a movement in at least one religious rite that goes along with it. Individuals double as representations of solar and lunar deities.

Mating has a puzzling aspect in these stories due to the prevalence of mating with divine beings. To the contemporary view, this is quite bizarre and assumed to be false. For most readers, this will be most familiar from a Christian frame of reference. There are stories in the Bible, mainly old Jewish myths, about a time in history when angels did cross breed with humans. In fact, it was rather prevalent and there were some odd results. Robert Graves walks readers through a realm in which this was in fact the case. Naturally, most readers will tend to assume this was code-language for the culture - just as most readers know that normally when people say they're going to kill someone, they do not mean this literally and are not going to take such drastic measures over their hostility. Likewise - readers will wonder: was 'son of the god' another way of saying 'born of a rape victim' or 'result of a one night stand' or 'some anonymous lover who's name was not revealed'? Robert Graves does not explain this in this book. The divine beings are like mortal men in that they may or may not respond to any given request of shows of desire on the part of a woman or man mortal. There is one story where a woman pining for love begins to seek the fulfillment of her desires from a river's prevailing spirit. The god Poseidon noticed her, however, and felt she was attractive. He determined to help and to fulfill her, and believed that she was going to be happier because this was going to be better than if she had succeeded with attracting a river-god. Artemis, the chaste virgin goddess was no more committed to monogamy than the women who married.



Characters

Robert Graves

This man is the editor for the Penguin classic edition of *The Greek Myths Complete Edition* used to generate the summary. This man was more than simply a scholar, although he was also that. He was famed as a poet of the English speaking world during the first half of the twentieth century. In addition to that, he writes an excellent introduction to the text and provides supplemental material to it. By doing so, he is able to properly contextualize the information so that readers can better understand it than they might otherwise. This enhances its ability to be used as a university textbook or something of this kind.

The writing is clear and good. He expresses a subtle bias of his own era and culture along with revealing what is or appears to be adept scholarship. He was born in 1895 in Wimboldon, England. He was the son of an Irishman who was also a writer. His mother was germanic: Amelia Von Ranke. He served in the Welsh arm of the British military and made it to Captain prior to the end of his service. He obtained a teaching post in English in Cairo, Egypt. This led to his staying in that country permanently. Later on, he migrated to Majorca where he lived to the end of his days, an English writer living in Egypt.

Cronos

This is Time named as a god. This deity is associated with the planet Saturn. This being comes up early on the book in the form of the Grecian god. The editor Robert Graves also refers to him as Father Time. Cronos has also been spelled as Chronos, which is where the term chronology comes from. Chronos is also known as the husband of Rhea, and as the father of the Olympian deities. Among his children and the pair who double as brother-sister, and as husband-wife, Zeus and Hera. Cronos devoured his children to prevent a prophecy from taking place—one that indicated that a male child would overthrow him. When his wife deceived him by hiding the baby Zeus, this prophecy was set into motion. Eventually, the grown Zeus would lead his brothers and sisters in a violent revolt against Cronos and his followers. The ensuing struggle would become known as the Titanomachia, and would end with the overthrow of Cronos and his Titans and the creation of a new pantheon headed by Zeus. Cronos and his followers would find themselves imprisoned in Tartarus- a particularly hellish place outside time- forever. The story is probably a metaphor for the overthrow and replacement of old systems of religious worship by the new.

Zeus

This entity appears very early on in the book. The editor explains that he is first heard of as a demi-god, and that only later on was he upgraded to the status of a deity. Zeus as



a god signifies a few important facts. One is that he is one of the first deities of a patriarchal rather than matriarchal outlook in the region's society. He is intimately associated with the city of Athens and with Mount Olympus. He is considered to be the father of the Olympian gods. He is the son of the gods Cronos and Rhea. He is known to have served as the husband of his sister. Some report this as having been a consensual arrangement, each is blamed depending upon the version of the story heard. Apparently, the two being spouses consolidated the power of the Olympians.

Zeus stars in numerous myths many of which have to do with his other love affairs.

Hera

This is a daughter of the deities Cronos and Rhea. She is also the mother goddess of the Olympian gods. She is known to have been both the wife and the sister of Zeus. There are various stories about how much of the activity within this relationship was consensual as it blatantly breaks the incest taboo.

This goddess is involved in numerous myths. Her sexual jealousy and her ways of interfering the other sexual relationships that her husband had are the source of substantial intrigue. There were times when she regretted her vengeful behaviors, but often enough she did not. Whether the other women were innocent or deserved their punishment for messing with a goddess's husband is a relevant issue that cannot be entirely cleared up here.

Hera had a number of powers. One of these was the ability to cause insanity. Her use of this power comes up primarily during a discussion of the god Dionysus's military activities. Goddess Hera intentionally drove at least two men crazy.

Agamemnon

This is a king of the ancient world. He was a warrior, husband, and father, and unfortunately he also doubled as a rapist. Within the context of this book, such behavior is viewed as a harsh but a mild alternative to death or dismemberment. Often it is a part of conquest. It also can but does not always enable women to retain political power and positions of wealth when they can recover from the psychological impact of it. The emotional effect has often been indicated by the number of murders of vengeance and lack of love towards husbands acquired in this manner. Agamemnon appears later in the book, in close association with the cities of Troy and Sparta.

Hephaestus

This deity is known to have not raped anyone. It is also true that he was not a warrior. He was born weak and he is ugly. He is a son of Zeus and Hera who was rejected shortly after birth because he was too feeble. He was rediscovered by his mother when she discovered one of his talents which had been nurtured by others. Once Hera



discovered that her son had a valuable skill she treasured him, restored him to Olympus and provided him with superior equipment to what he had been using before. His smithing skills continued to improve, and with superior tools he was able to make even better things.

Metal crafts, both for the creation of swords and of jewelry and furnishings, is one of the most profound skills to come to humanity.

Hephaestus also grew up to be the husband of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Although she was not monogamous, she was faithful in a number of other ways, and the two never divorced.

Clytemnestra

This woman appears later in the book. She comes to terms with Agamemnon and ends up conspiring with another male member of her family to kill him off when he returns from a ten-year-long absence. It seems that rather than healing and forgiving, or even with these forces, his murder of the previous king and the baby heir and the rape of Clytemnestra led some of the people in her palace to determine to kill him off. They did manage to do this, although anyone of sense can see how they might have felt intimidated by Agamemnon, the king by force of arms and leadership of other soldiers. Robert Graves expresses that there was doubt that she loved this particular husband.

Medea

This woman was high ranking enough in society to have a rather political marriage. She is given the option of having Jason of the Argonauts for her lover or not. In her case, accepting him as her lover and as her husband have been united, so this one decision are the two conjunct. She opts to marry Jason, to the delight of some and the disapproval of others. She appears during the stories about the Argonauts which come late in the book.

Heracles

This is one of the Grecian heroes. There are 9 myths devoted to him in the book. These are called the 9 labors. He spent part of his life in slavery, and some of it as a free man. He is reported to have offended many people when he refused to die as part of his royal duties. This was severely frowned upon by some in an age and location where something of that order to be expected. This took place in a culture where the other spouse, especially the wife might be expected to commit suicide if her husband died for any reason. In other locations, there were occasions when a King might be asked to kill himself in order to save his city's people from an invader's mercilessness or something of that kind.

Dionysus

This deity is associated with revelry and intoxication. While present-day readers have many other views in mind, Dionysian intoxicants were normally limited to laurel-leaf until the improved access to alcohol occurred. Dionysus is also well known for the satyrs who, while not necessarily handsome, are apparently well endowed with any needed stamina or other sexually advantageous characteristics. These same abilities can be perceived as a bad thing by anyone who doesn't want them in that form.



Objects/Places

Mount Olympus

Mount Olympus is a location deemed to be the home of the gods of a region of Greece centuries prior to the life of Jesus Christ. It is the home of Zeus, Hera and their children. It is first mentioned early in the book, within the first fifty pages and proceeds to be mentioned recurrently throughout the remainder of book. It is an actual mountain, as high places have typically been associated with the Divine particularly as it appears in close association with the sky and the extraordinary perspective that this gives.

Temple

This is a location used for worship of a deity. Here, offerings and sacrifices are made. Thanks are often given. Also, requests for assistance are made. There are many of these, of various kinds. Sometimes a temple is dedicated to only one deity but other times temple space has been shared by a small number of deities. Temples have also grown in their complexities over the centuries. Simple will still do, but ornate is more the fashion. The first temple in the book is described as having been made of beeswax and feathers. Centuries later, a great leap was made and mechanically formed bronze was used in the design.

Peloponnese

This is the southernmost region of Greece. This is a multiple peninsula that extends out into the Mediterranean Sea. It is typically referred to as a whole during legends and historical facts about the area.

Sacrificial Child

Sadly, but truly, there was one city in Arcadia where there was an established tradition of ritual sacrifice of a living boy child to Zeus. According to the book, Zeus at first liked this type of sacrifice but ceased to later on, and ultimately grew upset with the people of that area when he had ceased to want that type of sacrifice but they kept sending him some. Once they stopped giving him what he wanted no more of, the relationship between the deity and those people improved.

Sacrificial Bull, Ram, Goat or other animal

In some cases, the use of an animal was a successful change over from the human sacrifice. One instance referred to is the use a juvenile goat, a 'kid' instead of a human child for ritual murder. In other cases, an animal was not a substitute but an original



choice for an offering. There were sects and regions of Greece that developed which refused to kill either humans or animals as part of their religious practices. For readers in North America, this is an accepted norm in this century. Elsewhere in the world, and in rare cases of extremely abnormal cultural behavior in North America, such types of religious sacrifices are made by some, but the mainstream of society frown upon this.

Athens

This is one of the most powerful cities of the ancient Grecian world. The book does not clarify that Athens was restored as the nation's capital city in 1834. Presently, Athens is flourishing. The city is located centrally in the country, making it powerful and endangering it at the same time.

Golden Fleece

This is the famed Fleece that pertains to the stories of Jason and the Argonauts. It appears later in the book during those few stories that are devoted to the events surrounding this item.

Tartarus

This is an abyssal location beneath that region governed by Hades. It is reported to be controlled by Titans.

Underworld

Rather than the criminal or subdominant social systems, here is the classical meaning of the land of the dead. This includes the souls of the majority of the deceased, but also includes some of the Earth itself. This is mentioned repeatedly throughout the book. The Underworld is the domain of Hades, Zeus's brother. Hades' wife is also his niece by Demeter and Zeus.

Elysium

This is near Hades, and also above Tartarus. This is a preserve also for the dead, but this part of the Underworld is reserved for the souls of those who were virtuous while alive. Elysium is a fun place where the souls have a great deal of freedom and special privileges. Among these privileges is the right to reincarnate into living mortal forms whenever they like. Alive or dead, these souls are allowed to have a good time.



Delphi

This is a town in Northern Greece. It continues to be a human settlement thousands of years after becoming the site of one of the most popular temples in all the region. The temple there, perhaps most famous for its time when dedicated to Apollo, became famous for the precision of the oracular pronouncements. This location is mentioned during the first two hundred pages of the book.

Soil

While mentioned many times during the book, in this case it is the ground Agamemnon kissed when he finally arrived home after a sea voyage following a military campaign. He did this shortly before he was murdered by his wife, who wasn't glad to see him for any of the right reasons. Robert Graves takes the trouble to explain to readers that Agamemnon married her forcibly as an immediate side effect of successfully murdering her husband and their baby. Once this is properly understood, the readers can see how relinquishing her resentments and forgiving Agamemnon might have been wise but also difficult, even though she had the good fortune to be his wife instead of being killed. Agamemnon left for ten whole years.

Bridal Couch

In this case, this occurs late in the book when Jason of the Argonauts has the opportunity to see if he can marry Medea. There is the strong suggestion that she will definitely have free choice in the matter; at the same time, it is also noted that there are profound consequences of her decision for far more people than simply herself. She does; there are people who are happy about this and others who find the societal after effects to be disturbing - politics are affected.

Oracle

This is a religious position. Priests and priestesses could serve as an oracle when they received the proper training. This often included the combined use of trance, intoxication by laurel leaf, and other knowledge not necessarily specified. The most famous of these in the contemporary international scene is the Delphic Oracle. Oracles are able to transmit divine knowledge. Normally, this is done systematically. A priest or priestess serves a particular deity and is able to answer questions or riddles for the deity. Oracles are referred to in various parts of the text.

Laurel leaf

This is a plant that has great significance in the ancient cultures of Greece and Italy, at least. It was often used as a symbol of power and was highly valued. It is well known



nowadays through the way it was formed into crowns and other types of adornment. However, as readers make their way through this book, within the first one hundred pages it becomes clear that there is more going on with laurel leaf than might first appear to the uninitiated eye. Laurel leaf was used as a ritual intoxicant. The evidence shows that there were conditions in which it could be used safely. However, there were also savage social customs associated with variants on that ritual usage. While it seemed okay for the Oracle's trance state, it was a severe problem when Wild Women rampaged during laurel intoxication and literally tore victims to pieces and then washed themselves clean together in a river in their little troupe of group murder. For this reason, mainly, the laurel leaf became a controlled substance within Grecian society.

Helen

There are two main usages of Helen of Troy in this book. One is the living woman who was a Queen or princess-heiress of Troy. She is known to have run off to a Prince of Sparta. Much later in the same book, Robert Graves also explains that Helen is the name of a moon-goddess of Troy. This religious figure and practice was taken by the Spartans from Troy.

Griffon-vulture

This is the creature that was tearing out the heart of Prometheus every day. Zeus had not brought this to an end. It was Sagitta, the Archer, who ended the torment of Prometheus by killing the bird who was eating the Titan's liver. Zeus had long since forgiven Prometheus and had ceased to wish him further harm ever since the Titan gave the god some wise advice. However, the god had not stopped torturing the Titan even though he had stopped wanting to hurt Prometheus.

Rings

In this case, this is a reference to rings worn to honor Prometheus the Titan. Robert Graves redefines Prometheus as being the concept and use of foresight. This comes up much later in the text, in chapter 133, which includes the story of how Heracles founded Thebes. There is a direct reference to a technological development: the first jewel or stone setting is created in the hand adorning item - the ring.

Graves goes on to explain that he believes the release of Prometheus was actually a fable created much later, rather than a myth from the true tradition. This difference is somewhat like the distinction that can be made between a real druidic bard, and a minstrel. The former are part of a specific tradition and take many oaths to preserve truth and tradition. The latter have artistic license and are mainly for entertainment and opinion but not guardians of history.



Herald

These people are cited in diverse locations throughout the book. These are messengers and are mentioned as being protected 'sancrosant' from the normal operations of wars and other conversations between enemies. As such, in those rare instances when one of these is killed, it is viewed as unusually bad. This is mentioned in the middle of the text.

Troy

One of the cities of Greece, this one is famed for a battle fought over a woman or over rites to a Moon-goddess. It is referred to more than once in this book, but primarily is described in relation to the Trojan War with Sparta. It is also one of two cities cited as having had the land selected by a sacred cow.

Antioch

This is another Grecian city mentioned in the book. It is once mentioned for having been chosen by a sacred female bovine as the new location for a human settlement.



Themes

History of Religion

This book is devoted to the history of the Grecian pagan religion/s. It is treated as one religion, but by current standards this might be viewed as an abundance of religions. Within this great diversity a new unity emerged. It is this unity with its surprisingly consistent methods that the attitude towards the religious sects seems to have been a mixture of competition and mutual tolerance.

One of the basic methods for practicing religion was to create and to use a temple. The first one of these is described in the book as having been made of beeswax and feathers. The use of mountains and high places, as well as the journeys up and down them are also well known locations for making divine contact. Deserts have also been able to do this, when people survive. Temples developed in their complexity over the course of centuries. By late in the book, a good thousand years after the beginning, the metal bronze is described as being used to make a temple. Churches, synagogues and the rest are the modern temples.

The origin of the gods and of religion is touched upon briefly. Gods seemed to have derived from natural sources or to have been present the entire time but would only sometimes reveal them. The idea of gods and Titans being incarnate or anthropomorphized visions of abstract concepts is presented as the normal interpretation. This is dependent upon the Christian and post-Christian assumption that all the Grecian deities are false gods and dead deities. Here, they are presented as artifacts and cultural forces rather than as dynamic definitively real entities. There are also cases where they are considered to be a 'twist' on realities: that is - truth presented in a false form. There is a Moon, and she is real, but she is a Moon, not a goddess. There is such a thing as foresight- thinking ahead being able to draw conclusions, but foresight does not have the living form of Prometheus the Titan. Cronus is Time, which is extremely powerful but not, by modern standards, "a god".

The book reports about deities and how over the course of centuries a variety of truths are revealed, including that the god Pan was Arcadian; many of the deities emerged from Libya, that there are many offspring of deities, and that deification is a process. In short, during the course of The Greek Myths Complete Edition, various features of the history of religion become clear to readers. This perspective is very helpful in general, although it leaves a few new perplexities in its wake.

The Oral Tradition

The Greek Myths Complete Edition makes it clear that there is a separation between the authoritative versions of history and unauthorized versions. This is in part a scholarly pursuit, in that the need to preserve history accurately requires special care



after the manner of restoring ancient artworks found in museums. In referring to this, Robert Graves directs attention to something which we often take for granted, that our society has a set of systems in place for the preservation and perpetuation of knowledge through the generations. This is in addition to the systems designed for knowledge acquisition. While most of these have been institutionalized in one way or another, there are two simple categories which are of great value. One of these is the written tradition, the alternative is oral.

Greece and her ancient history has in part survived because the culture came up with a written language which was not only used but somehow preserved over the course of the millennium. However, one of the first events is that what was written down were stories viewed of great importance to the people. There is one major challenge, in that people have been forced to speculate, to some extent, on the best way to interpret the myths. Myths are known as special stories. They focus on the religious history of the local people. Myths are stories about the god/s - goddesses included, of a people. They contain an element of philosophy in them and are also often political. It is quite clear that there is an official set of myths, which together formed an unwritten tradition of sacred literature. These are known to have been taken into the written tradition and then preserved. The effort to maintain the standards of truth within the context of a given story or set of stories is now showing up whenever one reads about scholars ensuring that they have used the best sources of the classical material.

Robert Graves explains the difference in a few places between the official myths and other tales of a similar ilk. Later in the book there are stories of how Prometheus is rescued. Prometheus is foresight, according to Graves. What is typically overlooked is that the reason God, or the gods, or Zeus may have tried to deny humanity the use of fire is due to the deity's own far reaching foresight. This would be a natural reaction; most people know what it is like to be denied something they want in a short-sighted manner. No one likes this, especially when the denial does not seem justified. Even today, most humans would tend to agree with Prometheus. Christians grow uncomfortable when the suggestion is made that Lucifer brought fire to humankind - though in that later version of the story, the Devil did that as a servant of God prior to having fallen out of divine favor. Everyone is glad humans have fire, so the idea that this was a big mistake remains dubious but a surviving rumor to this day. Similarly, in her work on depth psychology, Jean Shidon Bolen has intentionally rewritten sad endings of old myths into happy endings. Her purpose is psychotherapy, but this is the kind of variant Graves' earlier work teaches that must not be confused for the 'true version' - that classical form of the myth. In mythology, especially in the oral traditions, there are key elements to the story which must be preserved for them to continue as 'true myths'.

Classical Literature

This work is part of the body of knowledge known as classical literature. This was done as a selection process and can be done repeatedly. Classical literature is a specialty of the Penguin publishing company, who put out the edition of the book used to create this summary. For many, the classics are introduced and proliferated through the society's

educational system. This is so self-evident, but within this context, as it is our topic, it is well worth mentioning.

It is possible for the classics selected to be changed. However, the Greeks have succeeded in having so much of their writings preserved, translated, and shared because of how well they developed written language and then used it extensively. Through their cultural conquests, they perpetuated the language and the official myths of the people. It still seems to be the case that the culture had relatively small sects devoted to deities. Today, serious religion tends to have one deity - often the same one, but different attributes are focused upon within a denomination or subsect. The Greeks would have competition over the deity itself. However, many had a polytheistic outlook and may not have assumed that the other gods were false, but simply, not local or not the favorite.

There are many casual observations that may be made today that reveal a continuing relationship between society and classical knowledge. Here is one example. Thanks to the educational system's encouragement of knowledge about the ancient Grecian religions, people today can look upon those who tend towards intoxication as followers of Dionysus of the Greeks or Bacchus of the Romans. This seems to be the case without anyone needing to mention the archaic deity by name, but thanks to the perpetuation of knowledge, many contemporary people are able to see it this way. In this manner, it can be viewed as a perpetuation or variation from the Dionysian religion of three thousand years ago.



Style

Perspective

The author Robert Graves functions more like an editor in the course of this work. The reason being that the compilation is an assemblage of traditional mythology. As historical artifact there is a pre-existing set of reliable source material that has been consistently used in modern representations and recreations of the Greek mythos. The author is an educated man. He was born in Wimbledon, England to mixed ethnic heritage. His father was an Irish writer. His mother was Amelia Von Ranke - of one of the Germanic tribes of Northwestern Europe. He was born prior to the first so-called World War. Most of the world was affected, even though not every country was compelled to participate.

The author accepted a teaching position in Cairo, Egypt where he was able to teach English. From 1926 onwards, Robert Graves lived in Egypt where he wrote extensively. The biography page at the front of the book describes him as predominantly as a poet and a novelist. He is the author of numerous historical novels. He also wrote a great deal of poetry, which came to be highly respected during his lifetime. Obviously, he picked up additional paying work by serving the field of classics as the author of this nonfiction work. The publisher used to disseminate this classical knowledge is Penguin; this publisher serves the niche market for classics.

The work has been generated by a nineteenth and twentieth century man. Born in 1895, he lived until 1985. The book is designed to be able to be used as a textbook, as a reliable source of accurate information. It can also provide entertainment and education for readers interested in history, the history of religion, and transformations in human culture and society. The work definitely stems from an individual greatly influenced by Christianity, including the change over from planet Earth prior to the re-establishment of a landed nation of Israel to the state of affairs, wherein the city of Jerusalem is under Jewish occupation, which is worth noting, as it has not been the easiest thing to achieve and continues to be a daily challenge.

Tone

The tone of the work is pleasant. It is evidently meant to be fun, and the author's natural enthusiasm for the work shines through. It is intended to be truthful in its presentation. This is quite clear. The main difficulty involves matters of truth. Religious and philosophical issues are quite relevant here. The author does his best to avoid confrontations regarding whether or not the gods really exist. He does show that it has become quite evident that stories proved to be an excellent way of making abstract conceptions more clear to the masses of people - however common or uncommon. As such, there have been many cases, particularly in the ancient where the gods were shown or believed to have been invented by mankind for the purposes of fostering



social order and to in fact clarify some abstract concepts. There are other cases where it is surmised that God was not merely an invention of humanity. However, there is a further difficulty in that Great Goddess and God, Brahma and Indra, are in fact also code words that simply mean "blanket answer to natural questions about the origins and nature of the universe that have so far defied adequate explanation". When Junior asks, "Where did the universe come from?" the idea here is that it is acceptable to just answer, "from God," even though in some cases it feels too similar to the pat justification, "Because Mommy said so."

The tone of the work is scholarly. This is shown by the conscientious manner in which original source material has been quite accurately referenced. The bibliography is extensive. The translations used are those that have been approved by those who keep and enforce high standards. The mere idea of a compendium of this type of information means to engage with history and in the preservation of knowledge and traditions of mankind.

The work is also surprisingly broad ranging in its coverage. By this is meant that a number of social and cultural factors are included. There is at least some effort to explain the situation within the greater context given the limitations caused by the radical difference in time. Overall, the tone of the work is informative with an underlying upbeat quality.

Structure

The book is presented all of one piece. That is: it is one book with a large number of chapters. In fact there are 171 chapters in this work. There are also an author biography, Foreword, Introduction, two maps, and an index. Naturally, there are also the publisher's notification page and a Table of Contents. Within the chapters there is another order. However, these are not expressed as overt divisions.

There are groups of chapters which are dedicated to particular aspects of the ancient Greek mythology and religion. There a few chapters designated to "Nature and Deeds" of specific, individual deities. Much later on, there are a number of chapters devoted to "the Labours of" and a few to "Heracles", "the argonauts" and so forth. The types of entities the myths focus upon are multiple. Deities, Titans, Giants, Fates, Kings, mothers, wives and daughters and sons of Kings, lovers of deities be they also gods or not, are those that receive the most attention.

The book is generally chronological in its order, but there are some inconsistencies here. This is especially the case when there is a given story that runs through at least some of the same time as one or more of the other stories. The first stories reach back into the proverbial mists of time - to prehistory. The first myths presented in the book are from approximately two millennium before Jesus Christ, which takes one back to very near to the beginning of the Judaic and possibly also the Chinese calendars but is already very late in the Mayan calendar - this last will run out in 2012. There may be at least one type of calendar in India that reaches further in both directions. With the right



mathematics, it is possible to predict and to describe the past events on the astronomical level. Given the nature of theory, it is not possible to determine whether or not the theory is correct, however without extensive efforts to corroborate the facts against the theory, or to readjust theories based upon the true nature of things. Calendars are discussed during the first section of the book because they are so relevant to daily life. The lunar calendar and the thirteen month year, still well known in China, was the norm for more than a thousand years among the Europeans.

The book also discusses both patriarchy and matriarchy. For those who had thought that feminism was born in 1960 America, the information herein serves as a rude awakening to just how false that notion is. The reality is that, at least in the regions surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, power has shifted to and from and to again - the male and female in politics, wealth and society in general. This has included traditions of naming lineages and the like.



Quotes

"The war lasted ten years but, at last, Mother Earth prophesied victory to her grandson Zeus, if he took as allies those whom Cronus had confined to Tartarus....The Cyclopes thereupon gave Zeus the thunderbolt as weapon of offence; and Hades, a helmet of darkness; and Poseidon, a trident." p. 40

"And the Cretans, who are liars." p. 41

"Cythera was an important centre of Cretan trade with the Peloponnese, and it will have been from there that her worship first entered Greece." p. 50

"Hera...is the pre-Hellenic Great Goddess....Hera's forced marriage to Zeus commemorates conquests of Crete and Mycenaean - that is to say - Cretanized - Greece, and the overthrow of her supremacy in both countries." p. 51

"Hephaestus, the Smith-god was...weakly at birth...Thetis and Eurynome...kept him...where he set up his first smithy and he rewarded their kindness by making them all sorts of ornamental and useful objects...[when Hera discovered he had developed this skill] At once she fetched him back to Olympus, where she set him up with a much finer smithy....and arranged that he should marry Aphrodite...Hephaestus is ugly and ill-tempered...and all of his work is of matchless skill." p. 87

"Agamemnon first made war against Tantalus, King of Pisa, the son of his ugly uncle Broteas, killed him in battle and forcibly married his widow Clytaemnestra, whom Leda had borne to King Tyndareus of Sparta." p. 413

"Heracles's Tenth Labour was to fetch the famous cattle of Geryon from Erytheia, an island near the Ocean stream, without either demand or payment." p. 494

"After spending four years in Pheneus, Heracles decided to leave the Peloponnese. At the head of a large Arcadian force, he sailed across to Calydon in Aetolia, where he took up his residence." p. 553

"...a hero shrine in Moschia on the Black Sea, 'where a ram is never sacrificed'...thus the Romans also built temples to Greek heroes and heroines fictitiously introduced into their national history." p. 606

"Among the Akan, the right hand still goes to the ruler." p. 377

"According to Homer, he died gloriously in battle." p. 376

"But when he tried to change these customs, Iocaste committed suicide in protest, and Thebes was visited by a plague." p. 377

"Hitherto it had been customary for women to commit suicide on the death of their husbands." p. 245

"At all events she married Menelaus, who became King of Sparta after the death of Tyndareus and the deification of the Discuri." p. 631



Topics for Discussion

Do you believe in the matriarchal pre-history of the Grecian region, or do you think it is an incorrect interpretation created by contemporary people in order to create support and belief for women's equality in society? Defend your answer.

Which of the myths is your favorite? Why?

Do you think that the myths are of real gods or false gods? Explain your answer.

Do you think God, or gods actually exist independently or are creations of the human mind? Support your answer.

Do you think myths are a good way to express abstract ideas through examples? Why or why not?

Which is your favorite Grecian city-state? Explain why if you can.

Do you prefer the lunar or solar calendar? Give reasons for your preference based upon the book.

Give some free speech on all these offspring of deities. Your answer must contain at least five sentences but no more than ten.