

GREEK MYTHOLOGY-

These legends are inherent in human nature and are the basis of philosophy, literature, and art throughout the age. The following are nine of the most loved myths.

1. **The Odyssey-** The long poem written by Homer is divided into two parts covering the mariner Odysseus's absence from home and his travels from Troy back to his home in Ithaca. When he begins his travels he is captured by a goddess and released by Zeus. He then builds a raft and encounters the sea god Poseidon. The White Goddess rescues him from the angry waves only to leave him ship wrecked on an unknown beach. A pretty maiden comes upon him and gives him instructions on how to find his way home. After his return to Ithaca he has to reclaim his family, palace and kingdom. He first disguises himself as a beggar and tests the loyalty of his kingdom. He reveals himself to his son and a few servants who help him kill off his enemies, reunited with his family and once again rule his kingdom.
2. **Pandora's Jar-** In her beginnings Pandora was the Great Goddess, provider of the gifts that made life and culture possible. Pandora was taught not to open a clay vessel bestowed upon her as a dowry after her marriage to Epimetheus. She was inquisitive and rebellious and could not resist opening the lid. When she does so all evils are released and proceed to torture mankind in eternity.
3. **Hercules-** The hero and glory of Hera is known as Hercules. Hera was the goddess wife of Zeus who was extremely jealous of her consort's affair with Queen Alcmena of Thebes, mother of Hercules, and avenged herself by making life miserable for the demi-god. Hercules was conceived by Alcmena, queen of Thebes, while her husband was away on an expedition. The father was Zeus who disguised himself as Alcmena's husband and impregnated her. Hera's vengeance took the form of inflicting Hercules with madness which caused him to kill his own children. He was sentenced to serve Eurystheus for twelve years during which time he had to perform twelve labors. They included, slaying the Nemean Lion, slaying the nine-headed Lernaean Hydra, capturing the Erymanthian Boar, cleaning the Augean stables in one day, slaying the Stymphalian birds, capturing the Cretan Bull, and stealing the Mares of Diomedes. Hercules became known for his strength as well as his far-ranging adventures.
4. **Jason & the Argonauts-** Jason was a prince who showed up in his hometown of Iolcus with a plan to regain the throne stolen from his father by his uncle Pelias. King Pelias says he will give up the throne if Jason brings him the Golden Fleece. Jason accepts the quest and sets sail with several Greek heroes, known as the Argonauts, aboard the magical ship, the Argo. Jason and the Argonauts have many adventures of battle on the way to Colchis. When they finally arrive in Colchis, King Aeëtes says that Jason can have the Fleece just as long he completes three nearly impossible tasks. With the help of Medea, the daughter of Aeëtes, Jason completes the tasks, grabs the Fleece and Medea, and sails back to Greece. A few adventures later, Jason and the Argonauts marched into Iolcus with the Golden Fleece and regain the throne.
5. **Halcyon-** The goddess Halcyon was a seabird and the daughter of Aeolus, the ruler of the winds. Zeus ordered that Halcyon would lay her eggs only in winter. Her nest was near the shore and the stormy waves kept sweeping away her eggs. Crying and praying endlessly, Halcyon finally managed to touch Zeus's heart. Encouraged by the other Gods as well, Zeus decided to give her 14 days of good and calm weather in the middle of winter. During these days Halcyon's father would keep the winds calm on the sea.

6. Pygmalion and Galatea- Pygmalion was a gifted Greek sculptor from Cyprus. He began a new project, in which he was sculpting a woman, whom he named Galatea, out of ivory. As he progressed, and his chisel strokes became softer and more precise, he realized that Galatea was perfect, and that he was falling in love. When he finished, Pygmalion began to bring the statue gifts of glass beads, fine cloth, seashells, and pretty flowers. One day, at a festival for Venus, Pygmalion prayed at the altar for the gods to give him a wife like his ivory statue. When he returned home, Pygmalion kissed the statue, and it turned into a woman with the exact same likeness. Later, when Pygmalion married Galatea, Venus presided over the rituals, ensuring a long and happy marriage for the two of them.

7. King Midas and the Gold- After doing a good deed for a Satyr, Midas was granted a wish by the God of Wine, Dionysus. Midas asked that all he touched be turned to gold. His wish was hesitantly granted. Midas proceeded to change many items around him to gold. Soon Midas became hungry. When he picked up a piece of food he could not eat it for it had quickly turned to gold in his hand. His daughter came to comfort him and when she put her arms around her father she immediately turned to gold. "The golden touch is no blessing," cried Midas. He went to the river and wept. The sand of that river turned as yellow as gold for it is there that King Midas washed away the curse of the golden touch with his own tears.

8. Orpheus And Eurydice- Orpheus was a musician, poet and prophet. Orpheus' music and singing could charm the birds, fish and wild beasts, coax the trees and rocks into dance, and divert the course of rivers. When his wife Eurydice was bitten by a snake and died, Orpheus decided to claim her back from the Underworld. He made it to the throne of Hades and the power of his music persuaded the King of the Dead to release Eurydice. The only condition was that Orpheus should not turn to look back until they both set foot under the sun and out of the dark kingdom. Orpheus was hasty, turned his head and Eurydice sank once again into the darkness. Orpheus roamed the wilderness singing sorrowful songs about his lost love. One of his excursions ended tragically. He was attacked by raging Maenads and shred to pieces. His head and lyre were thrown into river Hebrus, still singing mournful songs. He was sent to the Underworld, where he and Eurydice remain forever.

9. Demeter And Persephone- Persephone was the daughter of Demeter, Olympian goddess of Vegetation, Agriculture, and Grains. She was the light of her mother's eyes, treasured by humans too—for she was a personification of the sprouting crop that would sustain their lives. One day, as she was out in the fields of Sicily gathering flowers with her girlfriends, she was abducted by Hades, the sinister lord of the Underworld. Demeter neglected her crops as she mourned her daughter. Eventually Zeus heard tell of the situation and send his son Hermes to work out a deal with Hades. No one liked the deal, but it was agreed that if Persephone would marry Hades, she would live as queen of the Underworld for six months each winter. In the spring, Persephone would return to earth and live there for six months. Every spring, Demeter makes sure flowers are blooming and crops are growing and the fields are green. Every fall, when Persephone returns to the underworld, Demeter ignores the crops and flowers and lets them die. Each spring, Demeter brings everything to life again, ready to welcome her daughter's return. Soon the seasons developed into winter, spring, summer and fall.