

## Myth #7 Hercules-Labors 1-6

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**READ CLOSELY AND SHOW EVIDENCE OF THINKING BY ANNOTATING. Annotate all readings by highlighting the main idea in yellow; the best evidence supporting in blue, and any interesting phrases in green.**

The Twelve Labours of Heracles were a number of tasks that the mythical hero Heracles was told to complete by King Eurystheus. It all started when Hera, who loathed Heracles for he was a living example of her husband's infidelities, drove the hero mad, making him kill his wife Megara and his children. When he realised what he had done, he deeply regretted it and went to the Oracle of Delphi to ask for penance. There, he was told to serve Eurystheus, king of Tiryns, for twelve years; if he completed all tasks he would be given, he would become immortal. Although Heracles did not like this as he considered Eurystheus to be a lesser person than himself, he decided to follow the Oracle's advice.

When he arrived in Tiryns, Eurystheus initially asked Heracles to perform ten labours. These ten labours were:

1. to kill the Nemean Lion,
2. to kill the Lernaean Hydra,
3. to capture the Ceryneian Hind,
4. to capture the Erymanthian Boar,
5. to clean the stables of Augeas in one day,
6. to kill the Stymphalian Birds,
7. to capture the Cretan Bull,
8. to steal the Mares of Diomedes,
9. to steal the girdle of the queen of the Amazons, Hippolyta, and,
10. to steal the cattle of the monster Geryon.

### **Labour one: slaying the Nemean Lion**

The Nemean lion was a terrible monster that roamed in the region of Nemea, capturing women as hostages and luring brave men to save them. When someone entered the lion's den and tried to free the woman, she would turn into the lion and eat the warrior alive. When Heracles arrived in a town of the region, he met a boy who asked him to kill the lion. He also told him that if Heracles killed the lion within a month, a lion would be sacrificed to Zeus; otherwise, the boy would sacrifice himself.

Heracles eventually found the lion roaming, and shot many arrows against it. Only then did he realise that the lion's skin was impenetrable, and that his arrows would be of no use. So, he decided to follow it to its den. There, he blocked one of the two entrances to the cave and entered through the other. Fumbling in the dark, Heracles managed to find the lion; he stunned it with his club and then he strangled it with his bare hands.

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After he had killed it, he thought of taking the impenetrable skin of the lion and using it as an armour. So, he managed to skin it with the help of the goddess Athena, who advised him to use the lion's claw to remove the pelt. Wearing the lion skin, Heracles entered the city on the thirtieth day. Upon seeing him, Eurystheus was initially horrified, for he feared the lion was roaming in the streets of the city.

### **Labour two: slaying the Lernaean Hydra**

The Lernaean Hydra was a fearsome monster that lived in the swamp of the lake Lerna. It had been specifically raised by Hera to kill Heracles. The Hydra had nine heads, one of which was immortal and the rest were mortal.

The swamp was covered in a poisonous mist, so upon his arrival, Heracles put a cloth on his mouth and nose. To lure the Hydra out of its lair, the hero shot flaming arrows, achieving his intent. However, when he chopped one of the Hydra's heads, he realised in horror that two new heads would spring back.

At that point, the hero felt hopeless, so he asked for the help of his nephew, Iolaus. Iolaus, probably advised by the goddess Athena who favoured the hero, thought of an idea and put it in action; as soon as Heracles would chop one of the monster's heads, Iolaus would cauterise the stump with a firebrand. The plan was successful; no more heads would appear. Hera, angry that her side was losing the battle, sent a huge crab to distract Heracles, which he simply squashed under his foot. When it was time for the immortal head to be cut off, Heracles took a golden sword that Athena gave him, and using the same technique, the two heroes managed to kill the monster.

Before Heracles left, he dipped his arrows in the poisonous blood of the Hydra, one of which he later used to kill the centaur Nessus; this would later become Heracles' doom, as the hero died due to the Shirt of Nessus which was smeared in the centaur's blood containing some of Hydra's poison. Hera turned her slain monster into the constellation of the same name, while she transformed the crab into the constellation Cancer.

Eurystheus did not count the success of killing the hydra as one of the labours, using as an excuse the fact that Heracles was helped by Iolaus.

### **Labour three: capturing the Ceryneian Hind**

In their effort to mark an end to Heracles' successes, Eurystheus and Hera decided that the next task Heracles should do would be to capture the Ceryneian Hind. This was a sacred deer belonging to the goddess Artemis, and had golden antlers and hooves of bronze. It was believed that it was so fast that it could outrun a flying arrow.

Heracles made a real effort to track the animal. When he saw it, he followed it for a whole year through the lands of Greece, Thrace, Istria and the land of Hyperboreans. According to one version of the myth, he managed to capture the hind while it was sleeping. On his way back, Artemis and her twin brother Apollo appeared in front of Heracles. This task was given by Eurystheus, thinking that

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Heracles would cause the anger of the goddess and that she would punish him. However, when she appeared in front of him, Heracles asked for forgiveness, explaining to her that this was part of his penance for killing his wife and children. He also told her he would return the hind to her as soon as he showed it to Eurystheus. Artemis accepted his apology and let him go.

When he returned to the king's court, Eurystheus told Heracles that the animal now belonged to him. Not forgetting his promise to the goddess, Heracles tricked Eurystheus by telling him he should take the animal himself and bring it to the palace. When Eurystheus came out to take the deer, the hero let it go and the animal ran back to Artemis. Heracles simply replied to Eurystheus that he had not been quick enough.

### **Labour four: capturing the Erymanthian Boar**

The Erymanthian Boar was a giant animal living on Mount Erymanthos, which was dedicated to the goddess Artemis as well. Eurystheus thought that capturing this beast would be the perfect task that would lead to the hero's death. Heracles set forth on his journey to the mountain, but decided to stop by his friend's place, Pholus, a kind centaur. After eating together, Heracles asked his friend to open a jug of wine that he had, which attracted the other centaurs to Pholus' dwelling. Not knowing that wine was supposed to be watered down before being consumed, the centaurs quickly became drunk and attacked Heracles. The hero killed most of them by shooting his poisonous arrows against them; the centaurs that remained fled to Chiron's cave.

Pholus did not understand why these arrows were so lethal. Out of curiosity, he picked one up but it fell on his foot and poisoned him as well. Another version has it that one of the arrows mistakenly hit Chiron as well; although Chiron, being immortal, did not die, he could still feel an insufferable pain. Not able to withstand it, the wise centaur asked to be rid of the pain, exchanging his immortality as well as take the place of the Titan Prometheus, who was bound on the top of a mountain and his liver was being eaten daily by an eagle. Zeus accepted the exchange. Heracles then killed the eagle with one of his arrows, stopping the torture for Chiron.

Chiron advised Heracles how to catch the Erymanthian Boar; he told him that it would be very easy if the hero lured the boar into thick snow. Heracles followed Chiron's advice and captured the boar in no time. He then returned to Eurystheus, who upon seeing the creature was so scared that he hid himself in a large jar and asked Heracles to get rid of the animal.

### **Labour five: cleaning the stables of Augeas**

King Augeas of Elis had a large number of cattle in his stables. All of them were blessed with perfect health and immortality, and being so lively, created a huge amount of dung. The stables of Augeas had never been cleaned in thirty years, and Eurystheus asked Heracles to clean them within a day. This task was set to stain Heracles' reputation as it was quite humiliating.

When Heracles reached Augeas' court, he asked for one tenth of the cattle if he managed to clean the stables in a day; the king agreed. The hero managed to complete the task by diverting the rivers Alpheus and Peneus to pass through the stables and wash them out. Augeas refused to pay Heracles, and the hero took him to court, where he managed to win his claim, backed by Augeas'

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son, Phyleus. However, Phyleus and Heracles were both banished by Augeas before the court had ruled. Furious, Heracles returned to Elis, killed Augeas and handed the throne to Phyleus. This is when he was said to have founded the Olympic Games.

Although Heracles was successful, Eurystheus did not count it as a success, saying that it was the rivers that had done the work for him, and that he accepted payment for it.

### **Labour six: slaying the Stymphalian Birds**

Eurystheus' next task to Heracles was to kill the Stymphalian birds, large flying monsters that ate humans with their bronze beaks; their wings were made of metallic feathers that could be thrown against their prey, while their dung was highly poisonous. They belonged to the god of war, Ares, and lived in the area of the lake Stymphalia, where they destroyed all the surrounding area and the towns.

Heracles was unable to go too deep into the swamp as he would eventually drown. Athena helped him by providing him with a rattle; the sound the rattle produced scared the birds and made them fly from their hiding places. While in the air, they were an easy target for Heracles, who shot many of them down with his poisonous arrows. The remaining birds flew away to plague other lands; in fact, they were later encountered by the Argonauts.

**WRITE A REFLECTION-(3 paragraphs-5 sentences each)-This needs to be submitted through google classroom.**

**One paragraph that reflects on what the writer said**

- **Here's where you summarize the main points of the story**

**One paragraph that reflects on the writer's style**

- **How does the author use rhetorical devices (similes, metaphors, symbols etc.)**
- **What is the theme/author's message**

**One paragraph that reflects the reader's thoughts on the content of the Story**

- **Here's where you can discuss your reaction to the story, did it speak to you? Did you like it, why or why not?**