

Mythological Stories

- Prometheus
- Demeter and Persephone
- The Judgment of Paris
- Daedalus and Icarus
- Pandora
- Midas
- Heracles (Greek name for Hercules—you may choose a single Heracles story)
- Psyche and Eros
- Orpheus and Eurydice

The Story of Prometheus

- Prometheus was a Titan, the son of Iapetus and brother of Atlas. According to one tradition he created the first men and always defended them from the anger of gods. Once he stole for mankind the sacred Olympian fire. To punish mankind Zeus send them Pandora. To punish Prometheus, Zeus ordered him to be chained to a rock in the Caucasus and sent an eagle every day to consume his liver, which grew again each night. Zeus swore that Prometheus would never be released. Heracles, however, traveling through Caucasus, shot the eagle and released Prometheus. Zeus did not protest against Heracles' deed. Prometheus possessed the power of prophecy and in his turn helped Heracles in his next labor.



Prometheus
Brings Fire to
Mankind
by Heinrich Fueger:
1817

Statue of Prometheus at Rockefeller Center, by Paul Manship





*Chained
Prometheus,*
by Peter Paul
Rubens:
1611-1612

Greek Stamp, 1973



Demeter and Persephone

- Persephone (Latin Proserpine) was a daughter of Demeter, Mother Goddess of the Earth, the goddess of vegetation and agriculture. Hades fell in love with Persephone and abducted her when she was playing on a meadow with her nymphs. Hades made her his wife, the Queen of the Underworld. Demeter was in grief, and the earth froze. Zeus ordered Hades to return the daughter to her mother, but this was no longer possible, as Persephone unintentionally ate a seed of pomegranate. This was enough to tie her to the Underworld. Since then she spends half a year with her mother, and the earth blossoms, and half a year with her husband, and the earth becomes barren.



Rembrandt.
*The Abduction
of Proserpine.*
1631. Oil on
panel. Gemälde-
galerie, Berlin,
Germany.

Gian Lorenzo Bernini. *The Rape of Proserpina* (The Abduction of Persephone by Hades). Galleria Borghese, Rome.



The Judgment of Paris

- At the marriage banquet of Peleus and Thetis, the uninvited goddess of discord, Eris, appeared and threw an apple engraved with the words "for the fairest". Zeus sent the three goddesses who claimed the apple to be judged by the mortal Paris, Prince of Troy. Paris was living in exile at the time on an island because it had been prophesied that he would bring about the destruction of the Trojans. Each Goddess offered a bribe: Hera, with rule over Asia and Europe, Athena, with a crushing defeat of the Greeks, and Aphrodite, with the most beautiful woman in the world. He chose Aphrodite to get the apple. The fairest woman in the world was Helen, a daughter of Zeus and Leda, sister of Castor and Pollux. Unfortunately for the fate of Troy, she was married to Menelaus, King of Sparta.



The Wedding of Peleus and Thetis

by A. Bloemaert:
1564-1651

Angelica Kauffman. *Venus Persuades Helen to Fall in Love with Paris*. Oil on canvas, 102 x 127.5 cm. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.



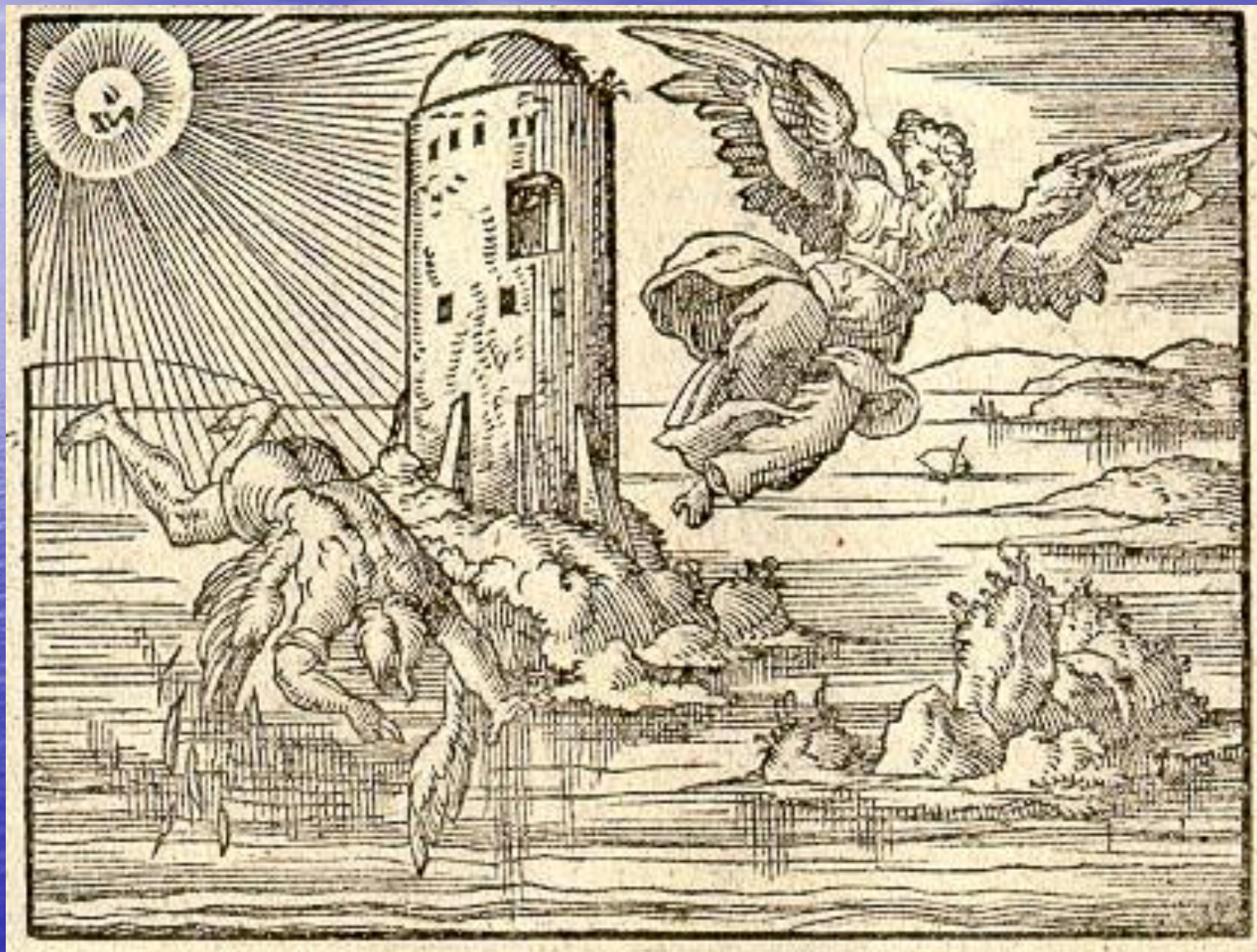
Daedalus and Icarus

Daedalus was an architect who designed the Labyrinth for King Minos. After he built it and he divulged a way to get out of it to Ariadne, King Minos imprisoned him, along with his son Icarus. Daedalus made two pairs of wings from wax and feather for them to use to escape, and warned his son not to fly too low to the sea or too close to the sun. Intoxicated with the thrill of flight, however, Icarus flew too close to the sun, melting the wax that held the feathers to his wings. He plunged to his death into the sea.

Daedalus and Icarus



The Fall of Icarus



The Fall of Icarus



The Story of Pandora

In Greek mythology, Pandora (meaning "all gifted") was the first woman, fashioned by Zeus as part of the punishment of mankind for Prometheus' theft of the secret of fire.

To punish mankind for their acquisition of fire, Zeus ordered the other gods to make Pandora as a poisoned gift for man. Pandora was given several traits from the different gods: Hephaestus molded her out of clay and gave her form; Athena clothed her and adorned her with necklaces made by Hephaestus as well as taught her manual dexterity and how to spin; Aphrodite gave her beauty; Apollo gave her musical talent and a gift for healing; Demeter taught her to tend a garden; Poseidon gave her a pearl necklace and the ability to never drown; Zeus made her idle, mischievous, and foolish; Hera gave her curiosity; Hermes, along with giving her cunning, boldness and charm, then gave Pandora a box. The name Pandora, thus, derives from the fact she's received gifts from all deities: "all gifts".

Pandora' Box

Before he was chained to the rock, Prometheus had warned Epimetheus not to take any gifts from the gods. Epimetheus did not listen to his brother, however, and when Pandora arrived, he fell in love with her. Hermes told him that Pandora was a gift to the titan from Zeus, and he warned Epimetheus to not open the box, which was Pandora's dowry.

Until then, mankind had lived a life in a paradise without worry. Epimetheus told Pandora never to open the box she had received from Zeus. However, one day, Pandora's curiosity got the better of her and she opened it, releasing all the misfortunes of mankind (plague, sorrow, poverty, crime, etc.). Once opened, she shut it in time to keep one thing in the box: hope. The world remained extremely bleak for an unspecified interval, until Pandora "chanced" to revisit the box again, at which point Hope fluttered out. Thus, mankind always has hope in times of evil, but Hope has a great deal of catching up to do.

**Pandora –Painted
by John William
Waterhouse**



Midas

Midas or King Midas is popularly remembered in Greek mythology for his ability to turn everything he touched into gold. This was called the Golden touch, or the Midas touch. It didn't quite work out as Midas had intended when he asked for the gift.



Heracles

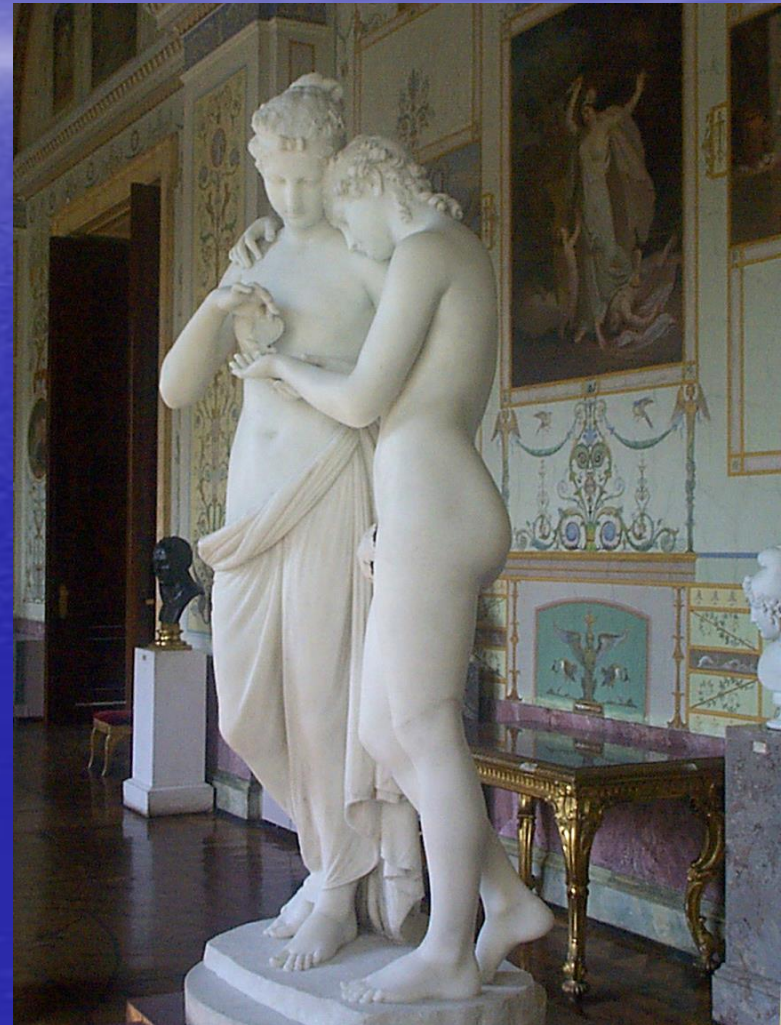
Heracles was a divine hero in Greek mythology, the son of Zeus and Alcmene, foster son of Amphitryon and great-grandson (and half-brother) of Perseus. He was the greatest of the Greek heroes, a paragon of masculinity, the ancestor of royal clans who claimed to be Heracleidae and a champion of the Olympian order against chthonic monsters. In Rome and the modern West, he is known as Hercules, with whom the later Roman Emperors, in particular Commodus and Maximian, often identified themselves. The Romans adopted the Greek version of his life and works essentially unchanged, but added anecdotal detail of their own, some of it linking the hero with the geography of the Central Mediterranean. Details of his cult were adapted to Rome as well.



Psyche and Eros

In Greek mythology, Psyche was the deification of the human soul. She was portrayed in ancient mosaics as a goddess with butterfly wings. The Greek word psyche literally means "spirit, breath, life or animating force".

Psyche was originally the youngest daughter of the king and queen of Sicily, and the most beautiful person on the island. Suitors flocked to ask for her hand. She eventually boasted that she was more beautiful than Aphrodite (Venus) herself, and Aphrodite sent Eros to transfix her with an arrow of desire, to make her fall in love with the nearest person or thing available. But even Eros (Cupid) fell in love with her, and took her to a secret place, eventually marrying her and having her made a goddess by Zeus (Jupiter).



Orpheus and Eurydice

The most famous story in which Orpheus figures is that of his wife Eurydice. While walking among her people, the Cicones, in tall grass at her wedding, Eurydice was set upon by a satyr. In her efforts to escape the satyr, Eurydice fell into a nest of vipers and suffered a fatal bite on her heel. Her body was discovered by Orpheus who, overcome with grief, played such sad and mournful songs that all the nymphs and gods wept. On their advice, Orpheus travelled to the underworld and by his music softened the hearts of Hades and Persephone, who agreed to allow Eurydice to return with him to earth on one condition: he should walk in front of her and not look back until they both had reached the upper world. He set off with Eurydice following, and, in his anxiety, as soon as he reached the upper world, he turned to look at her, forgetting that both needed to be in the upper world, and she vanished for the second time, but now forever.



The End