

The Twelve Labors of Hercules: Part Two

The Fifth Labor, the chore of cleaning out the Augean stables, was less dangerous than some of the others, but in its way even more arduous. Augeas [oh-JEE-uhs] was king of neighboring Elis. His stable, with thousands of cattle, had not been cleaned for thirty years, so it was incredibly filthy. Hercules [HER-kue-leez] was told to clean it all up in a single day. Hercules for once was shrewd. He said he'd do the job, but Augeas would have to give him one-tenth of the cattle. Augeas agreed.

Hercules = Heracles

Now Hercules proved himself to be a clever engineer, a master of hydraulics. There were two rivers nearby, one on each side of the stable. Hercules knocked out parts of the stable walls at either end and diverted the course of both rivers toward the upper end of the barn. Following the natural line of gravity, the rivers ran downhill, converged, and ripped through the stalls, washing away all of the dirt and filth.

Augeas, however, went back on his promise of the cows. Hercules did not argue; he was still consumed with working out his penance. But later he took his revenge by seizing riches from Elis, which he used to found the ancient Olympic games.

The Sixth Labor was to eliminate the Stymphalian birds. These were man-eating birds with claws, beaks, and wings of bronze. They came out of Lake Stymphalus in Arcadia, swarmed down on the fields, and destroyed

**Hercules watches
as the rivers
clean the Augean
stables for him.**

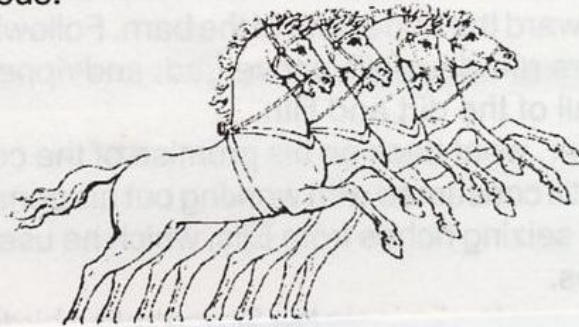


Athena = Minerva**Athena**

crops like locusts. For this task, Hercules received help from the goddess Athena [uh-THEEN-uh], who respected him for his manliness and good heart. She gave him a big brass rattle that sounded like a whole band of cymbals. Assaulted by the tremendous noise, the bronze birds flew off, and Hercules shot them with his poisoned arrows.

The Seventh Labor was to deliver the Cretan bull to King Eurystheus [yur-EES-thee-uhs]. The Cretan bull belonged to King Minos [MY-nohs] of Crete. It was a beautiful creature, but it had gone crazy, and King Minos was anxious to get rid of it. Hercules went to Crete, captured the mad bull, and took it back to Mycenae.

The next Labor, the Eighth, was to capture the wild mares of Diomedes [die-oh-MEE-deez], a barbarian king of Thrace. His horses were man eaters and so wild that Diomedes had to tether them to their brass mangers with chains of iron. Hercules organized a troop of young men and led them to Thrace, where they made a massive assault on Diomedes' citadel, which soon fell. They captured the cruel and savage king, and the horses, no longer threatened by this evil man, calmed down and were easily led to Eurystheus.

*Beyond the Myth*

1. What is the broader context of the myth? How does it relate to the larger story of Hercules' labors?

2. How does the myth of the wild mares of Diomedes relate to the myth of the Cretan bull?

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Ere

Aeada

Cade

Mycenae

Thrace