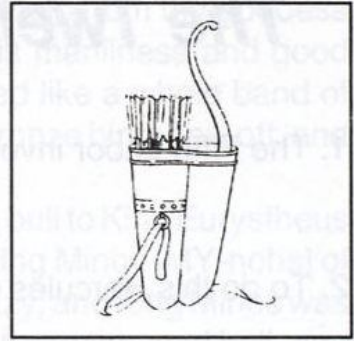


# The Twelve Labors of Hercules: Part Three



*Hercules = Heracles*

Labor Number Nine involved the beautiful belt of Hippolyta [hip-PAW-lit-uh], Queen of the Amazons, a tribe of women warriors who fought on horseback. Hercules [HER-kue-leez] raised another army of volunteers and led it across the Aegean Sea into Asia Minor. At first he tried tough diplomacy and simply demanded the belt. Surprisingly, Hippolyta seemed willing to give it up; she may have been impressed by this brisk and brusque young soldier. The other Amazons, however, thought their queen was being taken captive, so they attacked the Greeks. It was quite a battle: Europe against Asia, men against women! But Hercules' men won, and Hercules brought the broad belt back.

The Tenth Labor involved the longest journey, to an island, Erythia, located off the Spanish Coast, where there lived a dreadful monster, Geryon [GAIR-ee-on], who had three bodies joined at the waist. Another, lesser, monster guarded his cattle, along with a two-headed dog. These beasts were laying waste to all the lands in the area, creating a state of disorder without any effective government. Hercules' job was to bring back Geryon's cattle.

On his way to battle the monster, Hercules built two gigantic pillars, one on either side of the straits that are now called Gibraltar, where the Mediterranean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean. For thousands of years these pillars were called the Pillars of Hercules.

When he arrived on the island, he killed the two-headed dog with his club, then killed the guardian monster and shot the three-bodied Geryon with arrows. He drove the cattle back by a land route through Europe. He also taught the people of the island the ways of law and stable government—a great accomplishment for a man who had been



**Amazons were fierce women warriors who lived in Asia Minor.**

a slow learner in school!

The Eleventh Labor was to fetch the Golden Apples of the Hesperides, guarded by the three fair daughters of Atlas [AT-luhs] along with a great dragon. This task was even more difficult because he did not know exactly



where the Hesperides were, so he had to hunt all over the known world and even into the unknown world. At first, he went the wrong way, to the east, as far as the Caucasus Mountains, where Prometheus [pro-MEE-thee-uhs], the great Titan who gave fire to mankind, was still bound to the icy rock, still suffering terrible torments. Here the anger of Hercules at the Titan's unjust fate was a righteous anger, and here perhaps he did his greatest deed, though it is not officially ranked with the Twelve. He set Prometheus free. Only the strongest man in the world—not even a god—could have done that. Hercules even proved to be a successful diplomat—he persuaded Zeus to take Prometheus back again and treat him kindly and receive him well at Olympus.

Prometheus wished to return the favor as best he could. He counseled Hercules to find Atlas, his brother, and ask him where the apples were, since the Hesperides were his daughters. Hercules did so. He found the old Titan on his mountain in northwest Africa, holding up the sky. Hercules, in a friendly way, greeted him and asked directions. Atlas said, regretfully, that the exact location of the garden was a secret. "But," he said, "just hold up the sky for me, and I'll get the apples for you." Hercules agreed and took the skies on his shoulders, while Atlas, delighted to be free, ran off to fetch the apples. Holding up the heavens was a tough chore even for Hercules, and he began to wonder if perhaps he had made a mistake. But Atlas was true to his word; he brought the apples back. A little wistfully, he asked if he might deliver them to Eurystheus [yur-EES-thee-uhs]. But

**While Atlas went to find the Golden Apples of the Hesperides, Hercules held up the sky.**

Hercules was afraid that if Atlas went off with the apples he would never come back, and then Hercules would have to hold up the skies until the end of time. So he asked the giant to hold up the sky for just a minute while he eased his shoulders. "After all," he told him, "even strong men need to rest." Atlas was not smart like his brother, Prometheus—he had no foresight. So he agreed. Hercules put the sky back on the Titan's shoulders, picked up the apples, and took them back to Eurystheus.

Pluto = Hades

For his Twelfth Labor, Hercules was required to go down to Hades and fetch up Cerberus [SER-ber-uhs], the three-headed dog who guarded the door. Pluto [PLOO-toh] was willing to loan out his dog for awhile, but forbade Hercules to use weapons. So the hero grabbed the dog in his hands and gave him several good squeezes until he was tamed. Then he carried him to the upper world, showed him to Eurystheus, and brought him back. With that, Hercules' labors were done.



Summarize the story

1. How do the Twelve Labors of Hercules compare to the labors of Prometheus?
2. Compare Hercules' encounters with Prometheus.

Identify:  
 Hippolyta  
 Geryon  
 Atlas  
 Pillars of Hercules  
 Cerberus

Define:  
 busque  
 foresight

Locate on a map:  
 Aegean Sea  
 Mediterranean Sea  
 Caucasus Mountains  
 Spain  
 Atlantic Ocean  
 Africa  
 Asia Minor (Turkey)  
 Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar)  
 Atlas Mountain