

### The Twelve Labors of Herakles

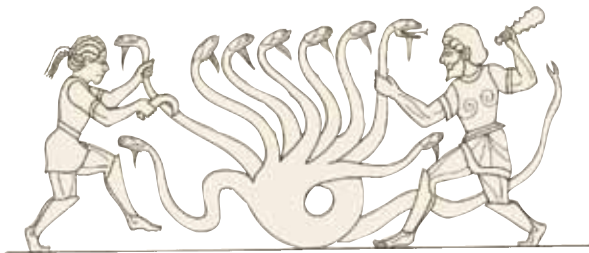
Herakles was a universal hero, celebrated by the Greeks, the Etruscans (who called him Herclé), and the Romans (who knew him as Hercules). He was the son of Zeus (king of the gods) and a mortal woman, Alkmene. Ironically, his name means “the glory” (kleos) of Hera (queen of the gods), his jealous stepmother, who drove him mad and caused him to kill his wife and children. As penance, the hero was bound to serve King Eurystheus of Mycenae and Tiryns. The king sent him on a series of difficult tasks, or labors, twelve of which became standardized in art and literature.

#### 1. The Lion of Nemea



The Lion of Nemea had an impervious hide and could not be killed with traditional weapons. Herakles strangled it and then used its own claw to skin it. Afterward he wore its pelt as a talisman.

#### 2. The Hydra of Lerna



The Hydra of Lerna was a serpentlike, multiheaded monster. Every time a head was cut off, two more grew in its place. With the aid of his nephew Iolaos, Herakles killed the beast by cauterizing each wounded neck with a torch.

#### 3. The Hind of Keryneia



The Hind of Keryneia was sacred to Artemis (goddess of the hunt and wild animals). Herakles was ordered to bring the deer, or its golden horn, back to Eurystheus without harming it.

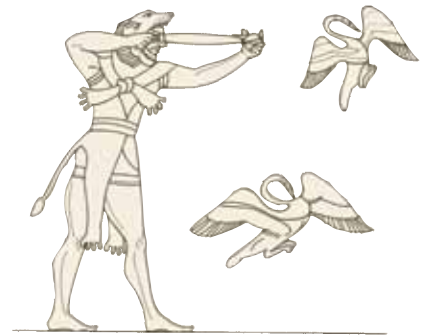
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## 4. The Boar of Mount Erymanthos



The Boar of Mount Erymanthos, the largest and fiercest of its kind, was ravaging the surrounding land. Herakles caught it and returned it to King Eurystheus, who was so frightened that he hid in a large storage jar.

## 5. The Birds of Lake Stymphalos



The Birds of Lake Stymphalos created a great disturbance. Herakles caused them to take flight with bronze castanets that were made by Hephaistos (god of metalworking) and given to him by his patron goddess, Athena. He then killed the birds.

## 6. The Stables of King Augeas



The Stables of King Augeas were filthy after many years of neglect, and Herakles had to clean them in a single day. He ingeniously washed away the accumulated dung by shifting the course of a nearby river.

Education



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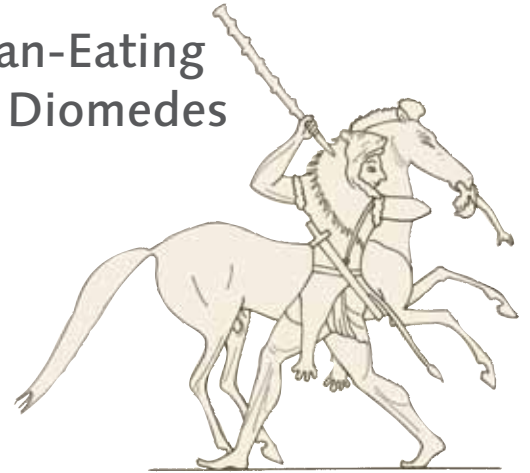
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## 7. The Bull of Crete



The Bull of Crete was terrorizing the island until Herakles caught it and brought it back to Eurystheus. According to some ancient writers, Eurystheus let the bull go, and it had to be recaptured by the hero Theseus.

## 8. The Man-Eating Mares of Diomedes




The Man-Eating Mares of Diomedes of Thrace were a menace. Herakles fed them with their master, Diomedes, before bringing them back to Eurystheus.

## 9. The Girdle of Hippolyta



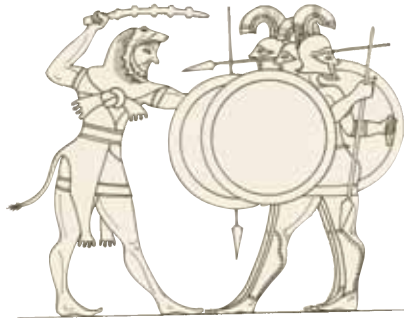
The Girdle of Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons (a race of women warriors), had to be retrieved. In one version of the tale, Herakles charmed the queen into surrendering her belt; more commonly, he fought her for it.

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## 10. The Cattle of Geryon



The Cattle of Geryon—a fearsome, triple-bodied warrior—had to be captured. To accomplish this, Herakles killed not only Geryon but also his herdsman and dog.

## 11. Cerberus




Cerberus was the triple-headed guard dog of the Underworld. Herakles negotiated with Hades (god of the Underworld), who consented to loan the monster, provided that Herakles did not use weapons to master it.

## 12. The Golden Apples of the Hesperides



The Golden Apples of the Hesperides grew in a garden at the end of the world. They were tended by maidens and guarded by the serpent Ladon. Herakles had to fetch the apples to gain immortality.

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