

Constellation

Legends

by

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Andromeda - The Chained Lady

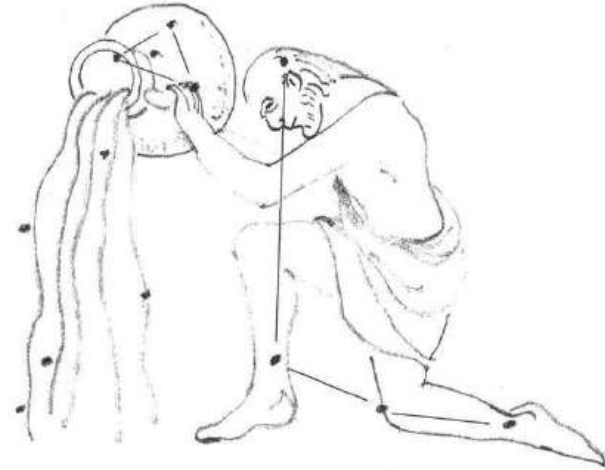
Cassiopeia, Andromeda's mother, boasted that she was the most beautiful woman in the world, even more beautiful than the gods. Poseidon, the brother of Zeus and the god of the seas, took great offense at this statement, for he had created the most beautiful beings ever in the form of his sea nymphs. In his anger, he created a great sea monster, Cetus (pictured as a whale) to ravage the seas and sea coast.



Since Cassiopeia would not recant her claim of beauty, it was decreed that she must sacrifice her only daughter, the beautiful Andromeda, to this sea monster. So Andromeda was chained to a large rock projecting out into the sea and was left there to await the arrival of the great sea monster Cetus. As Cetus approached Andromeda, Perseus arrived (some say on the winged sandals given to him by Hermes). He had just killed the gorgon Medusa and was carrying her severed head in a special bag. When Perseus saw the beautiful maiden in distress, like a true champion he went to her aid. Facing the terrible sea monster, he drew the head of Medusa from the bag and held it so that the sea monster would see it. Immediately, the sea monster turned to stone. Perseus then freed the beautiful Andromeda and, claiming her as his bride, took her home with him as his queen to rule.

Aquarius - The Water Bearer

The name most often associated with the constellation Aquarius is that of Ganymede, son of Tros, King of Troy. Ganymede was an extremely handsome young man, the most handsome the gods and goddesses had ever seen.

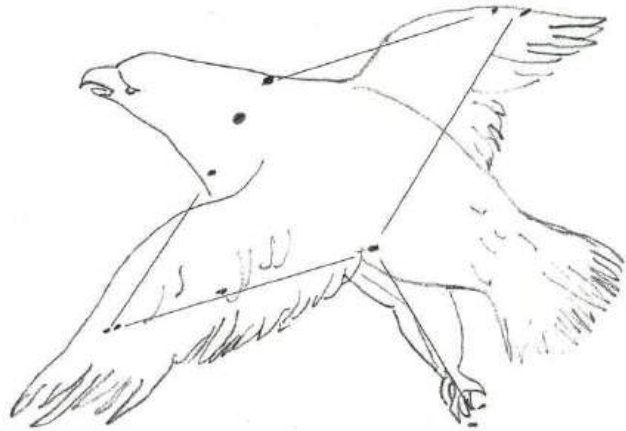


While attending to his father's flocks on Mount Ida, Ganymede caught the attention of Zeus. Zeus sent his messenger eagle, Aquila, down to earth with instructions to bring Ganymede back up to Mount Olympus.

On Mount Olympus, Ganymede served the gods by bringing them water whenever they needed it. He also served as cup bearer to Zeus. He was honored for his service by Zeus, who placed a constellation called Aquarius, which means water carrier, among the stars.

Aquila - The Eagle

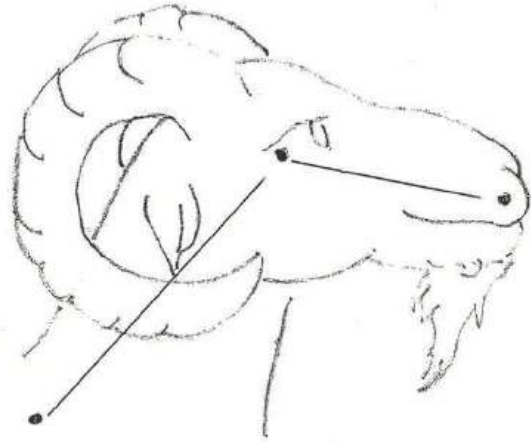
In Greek mythology, the eagle was associated with Zeus (Jupiter), either as a servant who carried Zeus' messages down to humans on Earth or as a disguise taken by Zeus in order to avoid his wife Hera when he was up to some mischief.



One story of Aquila's service to Zeus was that of Ganymede, who was a very gentle, kind shepherd and the most handsome mortal the gods and goddesses had ever seen. One day, the great eagle Aquila swooped down from the sky and, landing near the startled Ganymede, told him that Zeus had sent him to carry Ganymede to Mount Olympus. And so, climbing up on the eagle's broad back, Ganymede was taken up to Mount Olympus where he served the gods by bringing them water.

Aries - The Ram

Athamas, the legendary king of Thessaly, had two children, Phrixus and Helle. He had remarried and Ino, the children's stepmother, began to treat them very badly. They were treated so cruelly that Hermes took pity on them and sent a magical ram to take them away and escape their stepmother's wrath.



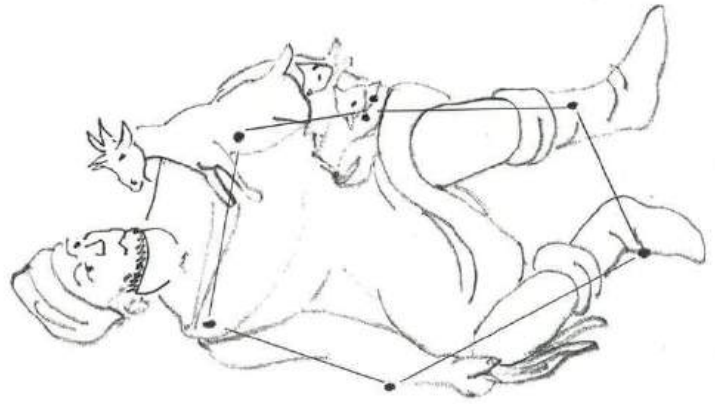
Mounted on the ram's back, the children flew over land and sea to the east. Unfortunately, Helle failed to get a good hold on the fleece of the ram and as they flew over the strait that separates Europe and Asia, she fell off and was drowned in the sea far below. That sea is called Hellespont to this day in honor of her memory.

Phrixus landed safely at Colches, which is on the edge of the Black Sea. In gratitude for his safe deliverance, Phrixus sacrificed the ram and gave its Golden Fleece to the king of that country.

In honor of the ram's great sacrifice in saving the children, Zeus placed the ram's constellation, Aries, in the night sky.

Auriga - The Charioteer

The constellation Auriga is mentioned in two ancient stories. The first, relating to a charioteer, is that of Auriga, the crippled son of Vulcan and Minerva, who invented a four-horse chariot in order to get himself around. This became such an important invention that Zeus placed the first chariot into the skies with the other constellations.



The second story, which is the older of the two, referred to Auriga as a gentle shepherd who, after finding one of his pregnant goats missing, went out into the hills and searched until he found her stranded on a rocky ledge with her two new kids. Placing her across his shoulders and carrying the two kids in his left arm, he returned to the rest of the herd. Some stories relate how the two kids commemorate the two daughters of the king of Crete who fed and cared for the infant Zeus.

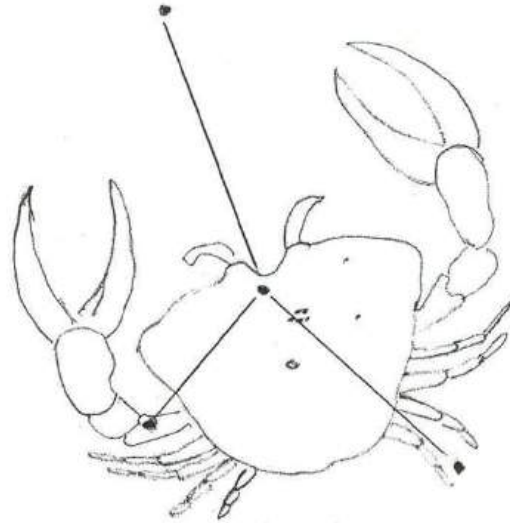
Bootes - The Bear Driver

According to the Greeks, Bootes was pictured as a mighty man. In his right hand he holds a spear, and with his left, two hunting dogs. Since he appears to be pursuing the Great Bear (Ursa Major) around the North Pole, Bootes was called "The Bear Driver." The 'key' star, Arcturus, can be easily found by following the curved line formed by the handle of the Big Dipper outward to the first bright star. Without doubt, Arcturus was one of the first stars to be named. It was one of the few stars mentioned in the Bible, where it is referred to in the book of Job, thus giving it the name "Job's star."



Cancer - The Crab

According to Greek mythology, Hercules, Zeus' son, was given 12 labors by Hera, Zeus' wife, which would each test his strength and courage. Hera hoped these 12 labors would prove to Zeus that Hercules was unworthy of his love. The second of these 12 labors was to kill the Lernean Hydra, which had a long snake or dragon-like body and nine heads. If anyone succeeded in cutting off one of its heads, it would grow another one in its place.



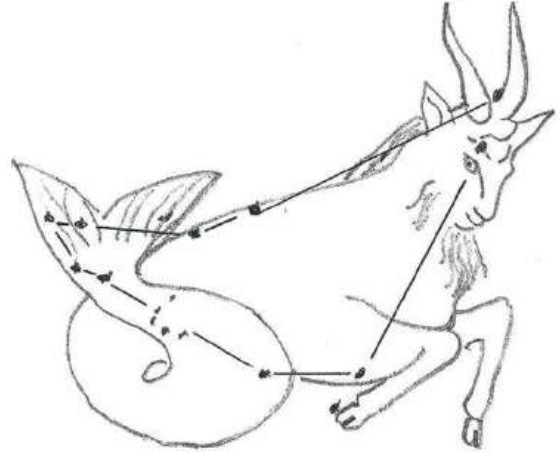
In order to make sure that Hercules failed at this task (Hera was very jealous of Zeus' love for Hercules), Hera sent a large crab to grab Hercules by the heel and distract him while he was fighting the Hydra.

During the fight with the Hydra, Hercules, who took his nephew Iolas along, would cut off one of the Hydra's heads and Iolas would sear that neck with a torch so that no new head could grow back. Fearing that Hercules might indeed defeat the Hydra, Hera sent in the crab to grab Hercules' foot. However, as the crab grabbed his foot, Hercules stomped down with his other foot and crushed the crab. He then cut the final head of the Hydra off and Iolas seared it, thus defeating the Hydra, and Hera.

To honor Hercules' great victory and to remind Hera of her failure, Zeus placed the constellation of Cancer the Crab in the sky.

Capricorn - The Sea Goat

Capricorn is one of the earliest constellations and has passed through the ages virtually unchanged, depicting the front half of a goat and the tail of a fish. It is also referred to in Greek and Roman mythology as the "Gateway of the Gods" through which the souls of men released at death would pass to the life hereafter.



According to ancient Greek legends, Cronus was told by the oracle that one day one of his sons would grow up to be stronger than he and would eventually kill him in battle. In order to keep this from happening, Cronus had every baby boy born to him as a son killed. Some legends say he would swallow them when they were born.

Knowing of this curse, Zeus' mother gave him to some sea nymphs with instructions to take him to a far-away place where Cronus could not find him and raise him there. However, sea nymphs cannot produce milk, and so they brought a very special goat, Amalthea, to nurse him.

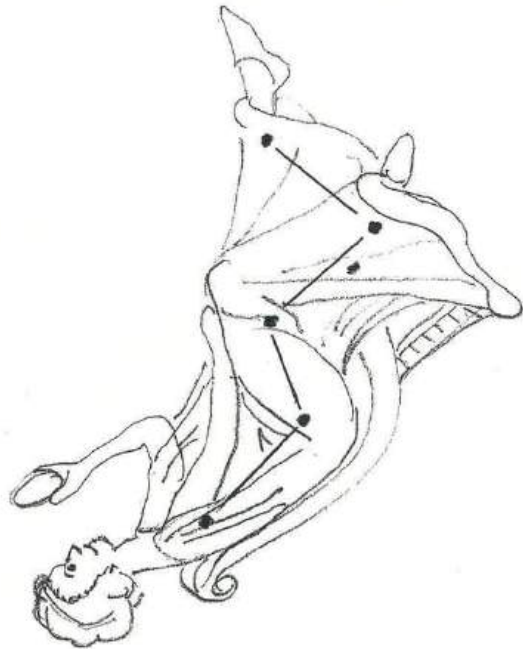
As Zeus grew older, Amalthea also became his playmate. One day, Zeus was playing with Amalthea and broke off one of her horns. Zeus took this as a sign that he was supposed to break off his relationship with Amalthea and the sea nymphs and go to fight his father, Cronus.

Zeus gave the horn to the sea nymphs and Amalthea telling them that as they had always provided for his needs, so now this horn, which was now a magic horn, would always provide all the food and drink they would ever need. Zeus then left them to go and fight Cronus, his cruel father. Zeus defeated Cronus and, according to one legend, as Cronus fell to the ground, his head split open and out stepped the brothers of Zeus that Cronus had swallowed.

Zeus was now the king of the gods and one of his first acts was to place the constellation Capricorn in the heavens in honor of Amalthea and the sea nymphs who had hidden and taken such good care of him.

Casseopia - Queen of the Night Sky

Queen Casseopia, wife of King Cephus and mother of Andromeda, was very beautiful. She boasted that she was the most beautiful woman in the kingdom. As time went by, she began to say that she was the most beautiful woman in the world. Eventually, her boasting proclaimed that her beauty even exceeded that of the gods. Poseidon, the brother of Zeus and the god of the sea, took great offense at this statement, for he created the most beautiful beings ever in the form of his sea nymphs.



In his anger, he created a great sea monster, Cetus (also described as a great fish or whale), to ravage the seas, sinking ships, killing the sailors, and destroying towns and villages along the seacoast. This created great fear among the people of Casseopia's country. In an effort to stop this tremendous destruction, the people when to Poseidon and asked what could be done to stop this monster. Poseidon replied that if Casseopia would admit that his sea nymphs were indeed more beautiful than she, he would stop the monster. But Casseopia refused. The people asked Poseidon if there were any other way to stop the destruction. He replied that if the beautiful Andromeda, Casseopia's only daughter, were to be sacrificed to Cetus the destruction would stop. The people took Andromeda and chained her to a rock which projected out into the sea to be sacrificed to Cetus. However, she was saved by Perseus, and Cetus was turned to stone.

Poseidon and his brother Zeus decreed that Casseopia be placed in the sky as a constellation, and as punishment for being so conceited about her looks, she would suffer the humiliating position of being upside down in the sky during the fall of the year when her constellation is best seen.

Cephus - The King

Cephus, the legendary king of Ethiopia, was placed in the night sky just ahead of his wife, Cassiopeia, as they rotate around the North Star, Polaris. He must have been a weak king allowing his wife to continually boast of her beauty and in the end be willing to let Cassiopeia sacrifice their own daughter, Andromeda, to Cetus the sea monster.

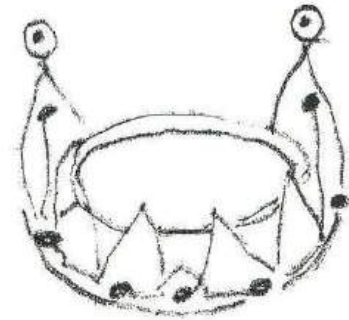
Since he did not stop Cassiopeia from her continual boasting of her beauty, Cephus was placed next to her in the sky where he must listen for all time to her boasting. His constellation was given faint stars which are somewhat difficult to see.

Another story relates that Cephus was one of the Argonauts, the valiant band of heroes that sailed the ship Argo in quest of the Golden Fleece. According to this legend, Cephus was changed into a constellation at his death.



Corona Borealis - The Northern Crown

Minos, the second king of Crete, had a great labyrinth built to confine the ferocious Minotaur. The maze was so complex and confusing that even the designer, Daedalis, was almost unable to find his way back to the entrance. Each year, King Minos exacted, as part of his tribute from Athens, twelve of the most handsome or beautiful young people to be placed in the labyrinth as food for the monster.



In the third group to be selected was Theseus, King of Athens. Minos' daughter Ariadne, fell in love with Theseus and offered to help him if he would take her away with him when he escaped. He agreed. She gave him a ball of magical thread to unwind while he was in the labyrinth so that when he killed the Minotaur he could follow the thread and find his way out again. Theseus attacked and killed the terrible monster and then followed the magical thread and was able to find his way out of the labyrinth. Theseus sailed away from Crete taking Ariadne with him and went to the island of Naxos where he deserted Ariadne and sailed to his home.

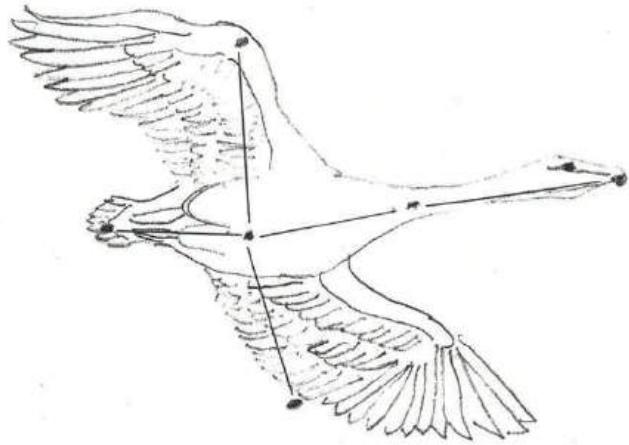
Ariadne had nowhere to go and was extremely sad when Bacchus, the god of wine and parties, came to her aid. Bacchus had fallen in love with the beautiful Ariadne and treated her with great tenderness. He had a crown made for her with one each of the seven most beautiful jewels to be found mounted in it. Some stories say that there were seven diamonds. When Ariadne died, Zeus placed her crown in the sky and changed the jewels to seven stars, which can still be seen today as the constellation Corona Borealis, Ariadne's Crown.

Cygnus - The Swan

or

The Northern Cross

One story based in Greek mythology told of two close friends, Cygnus and Phaeton, who were continually competing. One day, they each challenged the other to a race across the sky, around the Sun, and back to Earth. In an effort to gain the advantage, they both cut too closely to the Sun and their



chariots were burned up. They both fell to the Earth and were knocked unconscious. Upon recovering, Cygnus began looking for his friend, Phaeton, and discovered his body trapped by the roots of a tree at the bottom of the Eridanus River. In an effort to retrieve his friend's body and give it a proper burial, Cygnus repeatedly dove into the river, but could not reach his friend's body. While he sat grieving on the bank of the river, Cygnus begged for Zeus to help him. Zeus replied that if he gave Cygnus the body of a swan, he would be able to dive deeply enough to retrieve his friend's body. However, if Cygnus did take on the body of a swan, he would also be giving up his immortality and would only live as long as a swan would normally live. Cygnus readily agreed to this in order to retrieve his friend's body and give him a proper burial, allowing his friend's spirit to travel into the afterlife. In honor of this great unselfish act, Zeus placed Cygnus' image (that of a swan) into the night sky.

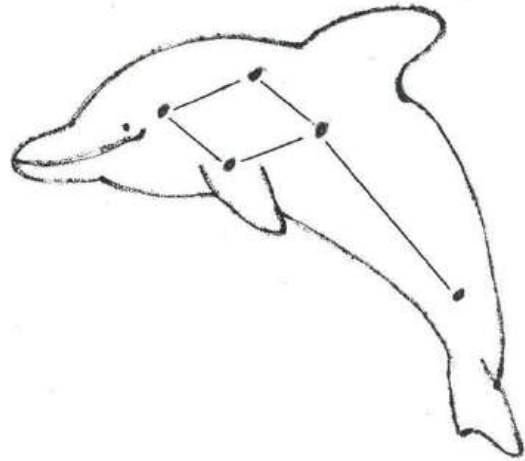
Delphinus - The Dolphin

Delphinus is an interesting little constellation in the part of the sky which contains several other sea creatures nearby: Cetus the sea monster or whale, Pisces the fish, and Capricorn the sea goat. Several stories are told to account for this constellation, but the story that seems to be the most prevalent is the one involving the famous lyric poet Airon.

Airon, a native of Lesbos, an island in the Archipelago, went to Italy with Periander, king of Corinth. While he was there, he became quite famous and quite wealthy. After some time, he decided to return to his home for a visit and boarded a ship going that way. The sailors on the ship, jealous of his talent and hoping to get his great wealth, planned to kill him. When Airon learned of this plot, he asked if he might play a song for them on his lute, a stringed musical instrument much like a guitar, before he was put to death. As he played, the music attracted a number of dolphins to the ship. Airon immediately realized that these dolphins might be able to save him if he were in the sea, for he was surely going to die if he stayed on the ship. So he threw himself overboard into the sea, and one of the dolphins did come to his aid by carrying him safely to shore.

When Airon got to the shore, he quickly went to tell King Periander what had happened. The rebellious sailors were ordered executed upon their return to port.

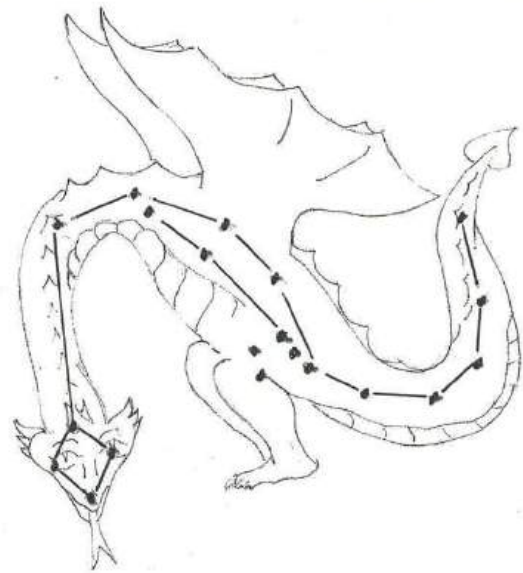
To commemorate not only this one act by the dolphins, but the many times dolphins have helped save lives, Zeus placed their constellation, Delphinus, in the night sky.



Draco - The Dragon

There are several ancient stories which could be about Draco the Dragon, but the one which best seems to fit with Greek mythology is the story about Cadmus and the Dragon of Thebes.

According to this story, Zeus had stolen the young woman Europa from her home country of Phoenicia. Her father ordered her brother Cadmus to go and search for her, and not return until he had found her and brought her back with him.



Cadmus wandered over the whole world looking for Europa, but could not find her. He knew he would never find her because no one can find someone that Zeus has hidden. He decided to look for a country in which to build his city, Thebes, because he knew he could never return to his home in Phoenicia.

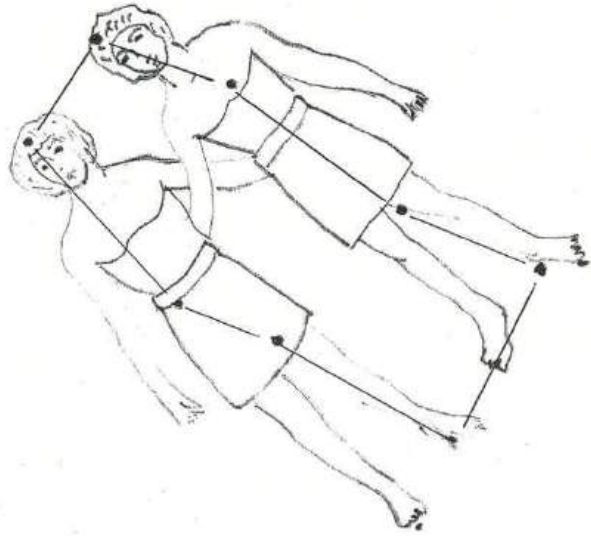
Following Apollo's advice, Cadmus found a suitable site to build his new city. However, while searching for water, Cadmus' attendants were killed by a large dragon. Cadmus went to fight this dragon, and upon finding the dragon in a cave, was able to kill it with his spear. Cadmus was told by Minerva to plant the dragon's teeth in the ground. From these teeth grew warriors who fought each other until only five were left. With these five, Cadmus was able to build his city of Thebes, and they became its first residents.

Because Draco had been so faithful in guarding the caves and their contents, Zeus placed his constellation in the northern sky, where, because his constellation never sets, he can guard all the treasures of Zeus.

Gemini - The Twins

Castor and Pollux were twin brothers, the sons of Zeus and Leda, the wife of Tyndarus, king of Sparta. They sailed with Jason and the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece. They were invincible fighters with unparalleled courage. Pollux distinguished himself as a great boxer or fighter and Castor as a great wrestler. Some stories say Castor was a great horseman.

These two were inseparable companions and fought their best when they were near each other.



Because of the help they gave their fellow Argonauts during a storm which threatened to sink their ship, the constellation Gemini was considered a favorable sign to sailors when they saw it.

To commemorate their great feats and the help they gave to the sailors, and because of their great love for each other, Zeus placed their constellation, Gemini, in the sky after their deaths.

Today, Gemini can be seen between the constellations of Orion and Cancer, near Leo.

Hercules - The Strong Man

Hercules was the son of Zeus and Alcmene. He was the favorite son of Zeus, who had made special preparations for Hercules' birth so that he would be the mightiest of all the heroes. In keeping with this plan, Hercules would spend the first part of his life living among, and even serving, mortals. He would learn how they lived and what was important in their lives. Then, he would be brought up to Mount Olympus to join the Olympians there, and having lived among the mortals, could help the gods in their discussions and plans.



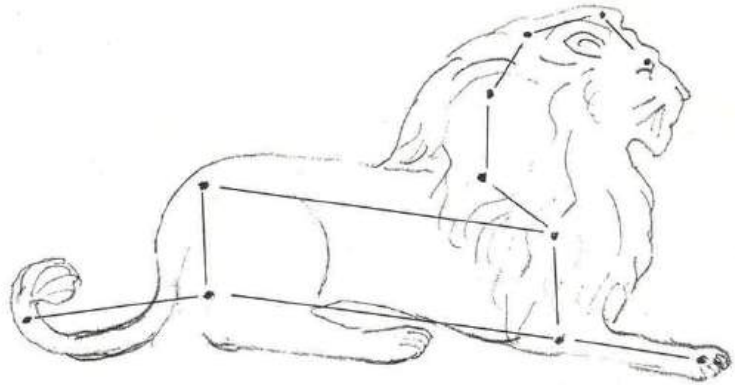
Hercules was known for his great strength, courage, and agility. He was also known for his Twelve Labors, which he undertook as a result of Hera's scheming. Hera tried many times to get Hercules to fail at some task, and as a result, fall out of favor with his father Zeus. However, Hercules not only completed these twelve tasks, but did them in such a way as to win even more favor from his father, and at the same time make Hera look bad.

In addition to these famous Twelve Labors, he also sailed with Jason and the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece, took part in the war between the gods and the giants, and still had time to sack Troy.

Zeus commemorated all the mighty acts of Hercules by placing his constellation in a very prominent place in the sky.

Leo - The Lion

According to Greek mythology, Leo was a ferocious lion who fell to the earth in the forests of Nemeaea. He feasted on the animals of the forest and also caught and ate many human beings. Many brave men lost their lives trying to kill this giant lion, for its skin was so tough that no arrow or spear could pierce it.



Hercules was given the first of his Twelve Labors, that of killing the terrible lion, by Hera the jealous wife of Zeus. She hoped that he would fail and thus lose the love of his father, Zeus. Knowing that no spear or arrow could pierce the lion's skin, Hercules entered the lion's cave and was able to strangle the terrible lion. Hercules then reappeared at the cave's entrance wearing the lion's skin as a robe. Hercules had saved the people of Nemeaea. This great act of heroism was commemorated by Zeus, when he placed the picture of the defeated lion (Leo) in the night sky.

Libra - The Scales

Libra is the only zodiacal constellation that represents an inanimate object. Libra, the scales, represents the equality of the days and nights at the equinoxes. It has more recently come to be associated with Virgo, the goddess of justice, who used these scales as a symbol of her office. Libra is represented in the heavens next to the hand of Virgo.



Lyra - The Lyre (Harp)

Lyra is the celestial harp invented by Hermes, and given to Orpheus by Apollo. It is said that when Orpheus played on his harp, usually love songs to his bride Eurydice, that people and animals would stop what they were doing just to listen. Some stories relate how even the trees would cease movement when he played. One day, Eurydice died suddenly which broke Orpheus' heart. In his loneliness,

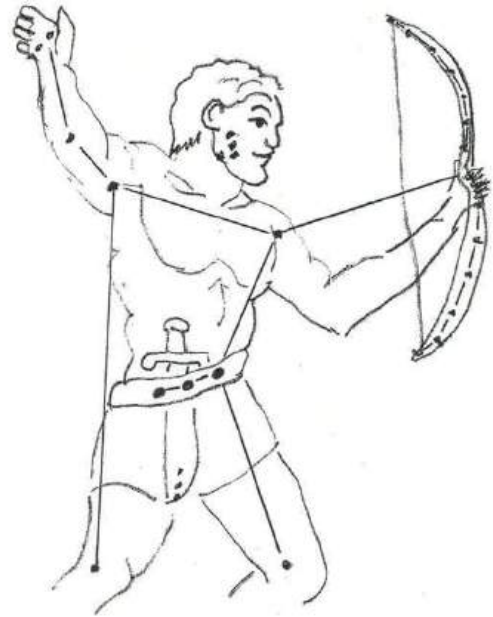


Orpheus attempted to win her back from Hades, ruler of the underworld. Orpheus began his descent into the underworld playing his lyre. As he approached Hades, he was pleased to see that Hades greatly enjoyed his music. After a while, Orpheus stopped playing his music. Hades asked him to resume playing the beautiful love songs on his lyre. Orpheus agreed on one condition: that when he had finished, Hades would release his beloved Eurydice to him. Hades agreed, and Orpheus again began to play. At the conclusion of his music, Orpheus asked Hades for his wife. Hades replied that she would indeed be released on one condition: that Orpheus would trust Hades to keep his word and would return to the upper world playing his music, not ever looking back to see if she were following. If Orpheus doubted or did not trust Hades and looked back, Eurydice would be taken back by Hades into the underworld. So Orpheus began his return trip playing his music. Behind him he could hear the footsteps of Eurydice, which thrilled him greatly. However, to test Orpheus' trust, the return route Hades insisted on lead through a pine grove. As Orpheus approached the upper world he passed through this pine grove, but he could not hear the footsteps of his beloved Eurydice. Unable to endure the quiet any longer, Orpheus glanced over his shoulder to witness Eurydice fade before his gaze, taken by Hades back to the underworld.

Upon Orpheus' death, Zeus placed the constellation Lyra into the heavens in honor of his beautiful music and also to honor the great love Orpheus had for Eurydice.

Orion - The Great Hunter

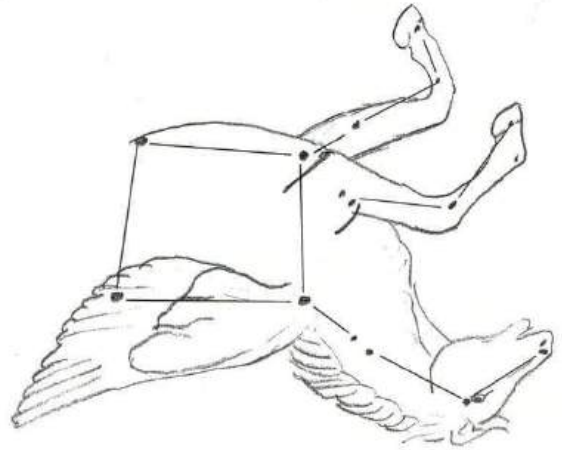
With his great skill as a hunter, Orion provided meat each day for the gods' meals. One day, Artemis (Diana), the moon goddess and goddess of the hunt, asked if she could accompany Orion on his daily hunt. He readily agreed. The next day as they were hunting in the woods, they saw a deer. Orion carefully fitted an arrow to his bow and shot. So sure was his shot that the deer died instantly, which pleased Artemis greatly. At dinner that evening, Artemis told everyone, even Zeus, of Orion's great ability with the bow. All of the praise extremely pleased Orion, who vowed to impress Artemis even more the next day.



Arising at dawn, Orion proceeded again to the forest where he shot every animal he found. He then made a large pile of these animals near the door to Artemis' house. Then, knocking on her door, he asked her to come outside and see the great surprise he had for her. Upon seeing the great pile of dead animals, Artemis was horrified! For you see, Artemis was also the protector of animals and punished those who killed more than they could eat. In her anger, she stomped her foot on the ground and out of the dust came a great scorpion which stung Orion on the heel causing him to die in great pain. But in honor of his great service to the gods, Zeus placed his constellation in the sky.

Pegasus - The Flying Horse

In mythology, Pegasus sprang from the spilled blood of the Medusa, which dripped into the ocean after she was slain by Perseus. Pegasus then flew off into the sky. Returning to earth later and eventually tamed by Minerva, Pegasus was given to Bellerophon to aid him in conquering the monster Chimera.



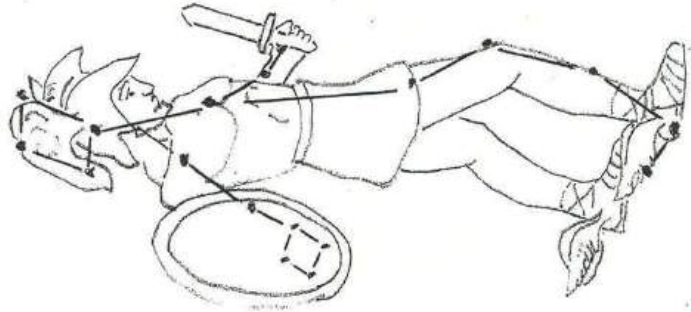
Bellerophon was successful in destroying the monster. He then attempted to fly, riding Pegasus, up to Mount Olympus to live with the gods. Zeus, angered by the presumption of Bellerophon, made an insect sting Pegasus causing him to buck Bellerophon off, who fell to his death.

Pegasus continued his flight up to Mount Olympus and was used in several missions to defeat evil aggressors.

In honor of his great service, Zeus placed his constellation among the stars.

Perseus - The Hero

The story of Perseus is probably one of the best known of the old Greek myths. This hero was the son of Zeus and Danae. His mother and he were locked in a wooden box by his grandfather,



Acrisius, and thrown out into the sea to perish. However, the box did not sink, but floated to the shore of another land. When the lid of the box was opened, golden sunlight filled the box and Danae, holding the baby Perseus, stepped out of the box. The king of that country, Polydectes, immediately fell madly in love with her and wanted her to marry him. However, she would not marry him, for she wanted to spend her full time taking care of Perseus.

When Perseus had grown into a young man, Polydectes tricked him into agreeing to go on a mission for him. The mission was so dangerous that Polydectes was sure that Perseus would be killed. With Perseus out of the way, Danae would be forced to marry him. In order to prove himself, Perseus would have to go to the cave of the gorgons and kill the Medusa by cutting off her head and bringing it back as proof.

The next morning, Perseus went up to the top of a mountain and sang songs to welcome the rising sun. This so pleased the gods that several of them came to Perseus and gave him several gifts to aid him in his fight with the gorgons. Athena gave him her shield of polished gold to look into so he would not have to look directly at the gorgons. Hermes (Mercury) gave him a pair of winged sandals that would allow him to travel seven miles at one stride. Hermes also gave Perseus a new-moon sword of pale gold, the only one that was sharp enough to cut off Medusa's head. Hades came to give him a helmet that would turn Perseus invisible when he put it on. With these gifts and a special sack to put Medusa's head in, Perseus went to the cave of the gorgons.

When Perseus entered the gorgon's cave, he placed the helmet of invisibility on his head and, using the polished shield as a mirror, he examined the head of each sleeping gorgon until he came to the Medusa with her hair of hissing snakes. Being careful to keep looking only into his shield Perseus slashed downward with his new-moon sword and the Medusa's head was cut off.

Quickly, he scooped up the Medusa's head, placed it in the sack, and ran from the cave.

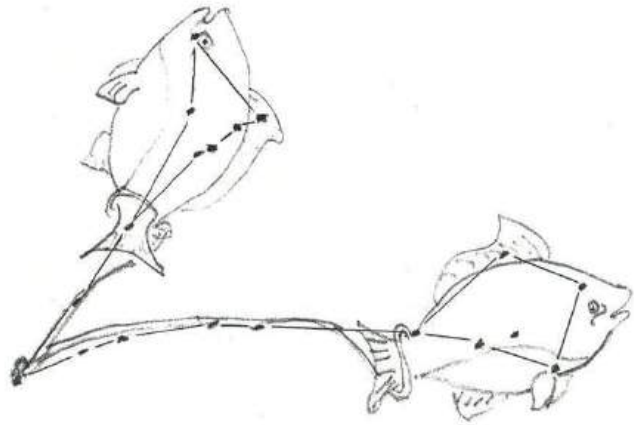
On his way home, Perseus was able to use the head to help rescue Andromeda from the sea monster Cetus. Taking the beautiful Andromeda, who became his wife, he returned home just in time to stop the forced marriage of his mother Danae to Polydectes. When Perseus proved his mission a success by showing Polydectes the Medusa's head, Polydectes and his wedding guests all turned to stone.

It is said that Perseus gave the Medusa's head to Athena, who attached it to the front of her shield. Perseus lived to a great old age and became the king of Mycenae, which he founded. After his death, Zeus gave Perseus a place among the constellations next to his beloved Andromeda.

Pisces - The Fish

One day as Aphrodite and her son Eros (in Roman mythology Venus and Cupid) were in the woods they heard the monster Typhon crashing through the woods towards them. Aphrodite took Eros' hand and they ran away as fast as they could. As they ran, the noise of Typhon's approach got closer and closer.

Finally, Aphrodite and Eros had run so far that they reached the shores of the Great Sea.



Knowing that the terrible Typhon would soon be upon them, Aphrodite and Eros changed themselves into two fish and swam away to safety.

Zeus later immortalized this great escape by placing the figures of the two fish, Pisces, among the constellations.

Other stories say that Poseidon sent two fish (dolphins) to save Aphrodite and Eros, and these were the two fish that became Pisces.

The Pleiades - Seven Sisters

Of all the constellations in the sky, no group of stars has been known longer nor had more different stories, legends, or myths told about it than the Pleiades. There are at least 43 different stories or names for them. However, there are only two that are closely related to the Greek heroes or gods.



The Pleiades, according to the first Greek myth, were the seven daughters of Pleione and Atlas, the giant who bears the world upon his shoulders. These seven maidens, along with their sisters the Hyades, (these are the small stars forming the face of Taurus) were transformed into stars because of their "amiable virtues and mutual affection" and because of their great sorrow at the burden imposed upon their father, Atlas.

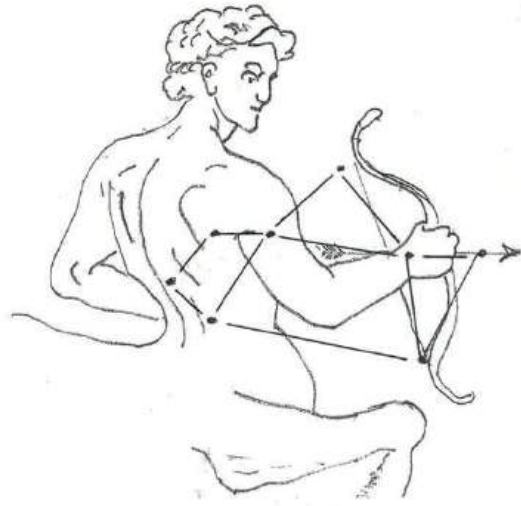
The second myth concerning the Pleiades tells how they were so beautiful that Orion was constantly chasing them, which caused them a great amount of discomfort. They appealed to Zeus for help and in pity for them he changed them into doves. As doves they then flew up into the sky and found a hiding place among the stars.

Sagittarius - The Archer

Sagittarius is usually described as a centaur, horse from the waist down and man above the waist. The constellation was placed in the night sky by Zeus to honor Chiron, the king of the centaurs.

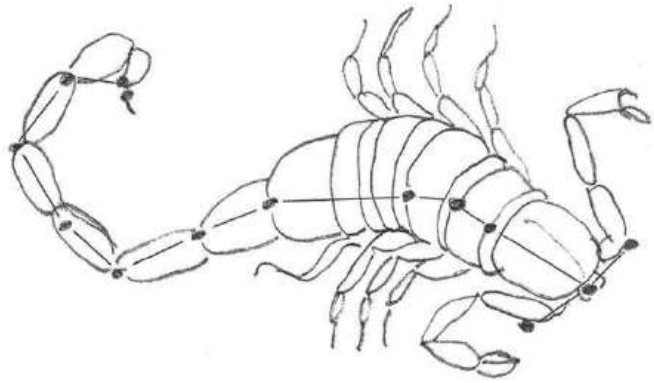
Chiron had galloped into a battle where some bad centaurs were attacking Hercules, and a good centaur, Pholus. Hercules was defending Pholus from the bad centaurs by shooting poison-tipped arrows at them. Not knowing that Chiron was there, Hercules shot one of his poison-tipped arrows at him by mistake and hit him. When Chiron fell to the ground, all of the other centaurs galloped away.

Because he had been made immortal long before, Chiron did not die. He would have to live in horrible pain forever. Zeus took pity on him and ended Chiron's great pain by allowing him to die.



Scorpio - The Scorpion

This is the famous Scorpion, which came up out of the ground and was commanded by Artemus to sting Orion, the mighty hunter, and caused him to die. That was the punishment Orion received because he had killed so many animals for no reason, except to try to impress her.

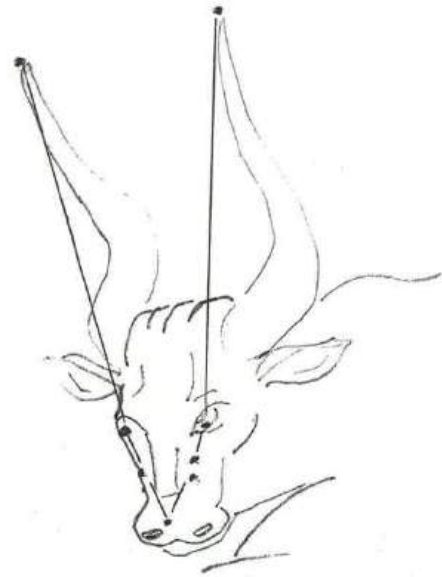


Scorpio was then placed into the sky on the opposite side of the world from Orion so as to avoid any further conflict. It was also placed in the sky to remind all of us that it is okay to kill animals for food, but it is wrong to kill them just for the fun of it.

Tarus - The Bull

According to Greek mythology, Tarus is the bull that carried the beautiful Europa over the seas to the region of the world that now bears her name.

Europa was the beautiful daughter of Agenor, King of Phoenicia. It is said that Europa was so beautiful that Zeus fell madly in love with her. So Zeus changed himself into a snow-white bull and mingled with the herds of Agenor for which Europa was caring.



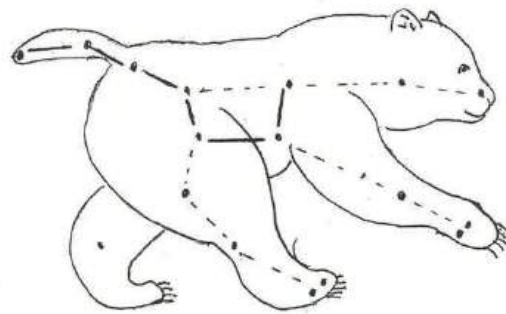
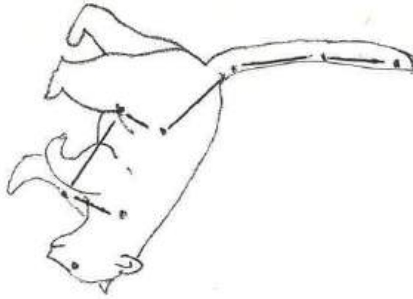
Europa was charmed by the beauty of this great white bull and she began to stroke its neck and pat its shoulders. Finally, she climbed onto its broad back. The bull immediately began to move out across the sea to Crete where he (Zeus) reassumed his divine form right before Europa's startled eyes. Zeus had successfully kidnapped Europa. To commemorate his feat, he placed the picture of Tarus among the constellations, and on earth a continent was named for Europa.

Ursa Major - The Big Bear (Dipper)

and

Ursa Minor - The Little Bear (Dipper)

Ursa Major is one of the oldest known constellations and has more named stars in it than any other constellation. It has been known by many names, but the form of the bear has become the most common, even though it's quite difficult to see this image in the stars.



In Greek mythology, Zeus had many human girlfriends, but his favorite was the beautiful nymph Callisto. His secret visits to earth to meet with her only added to Hera's jealousy and determination to get revenge against these women.

One day, as Zeus was walking through the forest with Callisto, he saw his wife Hera coming. Unable to hide Callisto in time, he turned her into a large brown bear. When Hera arrived, she saw only Zeus walking by himself through the forest. She looked around, searching for someone with Zeus, but saw only an old brown bear. She still did not trust Zeus and insisted that he return to Mount Olympus. Zeus did not want to go because he wanted to change his girlfriend Callisto back into her human form before leaving. But Hera insisted. So Zeus went with Hera, leaving Callisto as a large brown bear.

Unknown to Zeus, Arcas, Callisto's son who was a great hunter, was out in the woods hunting that day. As chance would have it, he saw this great big brown bear. He put an arrow to his bow, took careful aim, and shot that great bear through the heart. Right before his startled eyes, Arcas watched the bear as it died change back into the form of his mother Callisto with an arrow through her heart.

Arcas began to cry loudly for his mother and what he had done to her. When he realized that it was Zeus that had changed her into the bear, he grew

even angrier. Zeus, fearing that Hera might hear the cries, went down to earth to try to appease Arcas. In order to hide what he had done, Zeus changed Callisto back into a bear and placed her form, as a constellation, into the northern sky as the Big Dipper. He then changed Arcas into the small bear (the Little Dipper).

As Arcas was being placed into the sky, he turned to look at his mother Callisto (now the Big Dipper). That is why the Little Dipper is curved toward the Big Dipper, so that Arcas can watch over his mother Callisto for all eternity.

Virgo - The Virgin

There seems to be at least two ancient myths, with variations of each, that are most commonly associated with the constellation Virgo.



The first was that Virgo was Persephone, the beautiful daughter of Zeus and Demeter, goddess of the fertility of the earth. One spring day as Persephone was wandering out in the fields, Hades, god of the underworld, grabbed her and took her down into the underworld to become his wife. But this stubborn young goddess refused to accept her captivity, refusing to eat or even to speak to Hades. He tried to give her jewels, fancy clothes, and even slaves to entertain her, but she still would not speak to him.

When Demeter found out that Hades had abducted her daughter and that Zeus (who had been bribed by Hades) would not intervene, she became so angry that she refused to care for the crops and plants of the earth. A great famine followed, crops failed, animals and people began to die. Finally, Zeus gave in and told Demeter that she could have her daughter back. However, under the ancient Law of Abode, if Persephone had accepted food, she would have to be considered a guest, not a captive, and would have to stay in the underworld as Hades' bride.

Demeter immediately sent Hermes on his winged sandals to fetch Persephone. But before Hermes could get there, an evil man who hated Demeter took a sweet red pomegranate and broke it in half and offered some of it to Persephone who had grown very hungry by this time. Before she could stop herself, she had eaten six of the sweet juicy seeds. When Hermes arrived, Hades claimed Persephone as his bride under the Law of Abode because she had eaten the six pomegranate seeds. When Demeter heard this, she declared that no crops or flowers would ever grow if her daughter became the bride of death. Zeus declared a compromise. Each year, Persephone would have to spend six months with Hades because she had eaten the six seeds. The other six months she could spend with her mother. Both Hades and Demeter

had to agree because Zeus was the King. But Demeter also kept her promise. During the six months when her daughter had to be in the underworld with Hades, no crops would grow. In the spring, when Persephone returned, the flowers and the crops in the fields would grow again.

The second myth associated the constellation Virgo with Astraea, goddess of Justice, when the gods lived among men on earth during the Golden Age. The increasing iniquity of the humans, however, began to drive the gods, one by one, to leave the humans on earth and go to heaven. Astraea was the last of the gods to leave. When she left she took the scales of justice with her, which you can see beside her in the sky today.