



WORLD STORYTELLING DAY

March 20



THE APPLE OF DISCORD

This story begins with the wedding of the great mortal Peleus and the goddess Thetis. It was one of the most celebrated events in all of Ancient Greece. This union was an important occasion, as these two would later give birth to the legendary Achilles

Held on Mount Pelion, the wedding was attended by numerous gods and goddesses including Hera, Poseidon, Athena, Aphrodite, and Apollo. Even Zeus himself attended the event. This was one of those rare times when gods and humans could actually be all together and have a great celebration.

All the gods were invited to the wedding except Eris the Goddess of Discord. Out of revenge, she threw a golden apple into the crowd with an inscription reading "To The Fairest". Normally, such a thing would be harmless. But Aphrodite, Hera, and Athena were all in that same place. All looked down on the apple and claimed it belonged to them and so began a dispute on who was the most beautiful.

They took this dispute to Zeus that refused to participate in this debate and move this problem to the Trojan prince "Paris". The tree goddess all appear in front of Paris and asked him to choose the most beautiful but he couldn't choose so the goddess tried to bribe him.

Athena offered him fame & desire. Hera offered political power. Aphrodite offered the most beautiful mortal woman as his bride. Paris choose Aphrodite's offer which happened to be Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Sparta. — This story is also known as the judgment of Paris.

As a result, Paris raids Menelaus's home and steals Helen from him. In certain accounts, it is stated that Helen fell in love with the Trojan prince and chose to leave voluntarily.

This rivalry led to a huge war between the Greeks and Trojans that lasted for ten years.



ACHILLES' HEEL

Achilles' father was Peleus, king of the Myrmidons, and his mother was Thetis, a sea nymph. After Achilles was born, his mother wanted to protect him from harm. She held him by the heel and dipped him into the river Styx. In Greek Mythology, the river Styx was located in the Underworld and had special powers. Achilles became invulnerable everywhere but at his heel where his mother held him.

Because Achilles was a half-god, he was very strong and soon became a great warrior. However, he was also half human and wasn't immortal like his mother. He would get old and die someday and he could also be killed.

When Helen, the wife of the Greek King Menelaus, was taken by the Trojan Prince Paris, the Greeks went to war to get her back. Achilles joined the battle and brought along a group of powerful soldiers called the Myrmidons. During the Trojan War, Achilles was unstoppable. He killed many of Troy's greatest warriors. However, the battle raged on for years. Many of the Greek gods were involved, some helping the Greeks and others helping the Trojans.

At one point during the war, Achilles captured a beautiful princess named Briseis and fell in love with her. However, the leader of the Greek army, Agamemnon, became angry with Achilles and took Briseis from him. Achilles became depressed and refused to fight.

With Achilles not fighting, the Greeks began to lose the battle. The greatest warrior of Troy was Hector and no one could stop him. Achilles' best friend was a soldier named Patroclus. Patroclus convinced Achilles to lend him his armor. Patroclus entered the battle dressed as Achilles. Thinking that Achilles was back, the Greek army was inspired and began to fight harder.

Just when things were improving for the Greeks, Patroclus met up with Hector. The two warriors engaged in battle. With the help of the god Apollo, Hector killed Patroclus and took Achilles' armor. Achilles then rejoined the battle in order to avenge his friend's death. He met Hector on the battlefield and, after a long fight, defeated him. Achilles continued to battle the Trojans and it seemed like he could not be killed. However, the Greek god Apollo knew his weakness. When Paris of Troy shot an arrow at Achilles, Apollo guided it so that it struck Achilles on the heel. Achilles eventually died from the wound.



SISYPHEAN TASK

Sisyphus was the first king of Ephyra, now known as Corinth. He was a tyrant who killed visitors to show off his power. This violation of the sacred hospitality tradition greatly angered the gods. But Sisyphus may still have avoided punishment if it hadn't been for his reckless confidence and prosperous city.

The trouble began when Zeus kidnapped the nymph Aegina, carrying her away in the form of a massive eagle. Aegina's father, the river god Asopus, pursued their trail to Ephyra, where he encountered Sisyphus.

In exchange for the god making a spring inside the city, the king told Asopus which way Zeus had taken the girl. When Zeus found out, he was so furious that he ordered Thanatos, or Death, to chain Sisyphus in the underworld so he couldn't cause any more problems.

But Sisyphus lived up to his crafty reputation. As he was about to be imprisoned, the king asked Thanatos to show him how the chains worked — and quickly bound him instead, before escaping back among the living.

With Thanatos trapped, no one could die, and the world was thrown into chaos. Things only returned to normal when the god of war Ares, upset that battles were no longer fun, freed Thanatos from his chains.

Sisyphus knew his reckoning was at hand. But he had another trick up his sleeve. Before dying, he asked his wife Merope to throw his body in the public square, from where it eventually washed up on the shores of the river Styx.

Now back among the dead, Sisyphus approached Persephone, queen of the Underworld, and complained that his wife had disrespected him by not giving him a proper burial.

Persephone granted him permission to go back to the land of the living and punish Merope, on the condition that he would return when he was done. Of course, Sisyphus refused to keep his promise, now having twice escaped death by tricking the gods.

There wouldn't be a third time, as the messenger Hermes dragged Sisyphus back to Hades. The king had thought he was more clever than the gods, but Zeus would have the last laugh.

Sisyphus's punishment was a straightforward task — rolling a massive boulder up a hill. But just as he approached the top, the rock would roll all the way back down, forcing him to start over ...and over, and over, for all eternity.

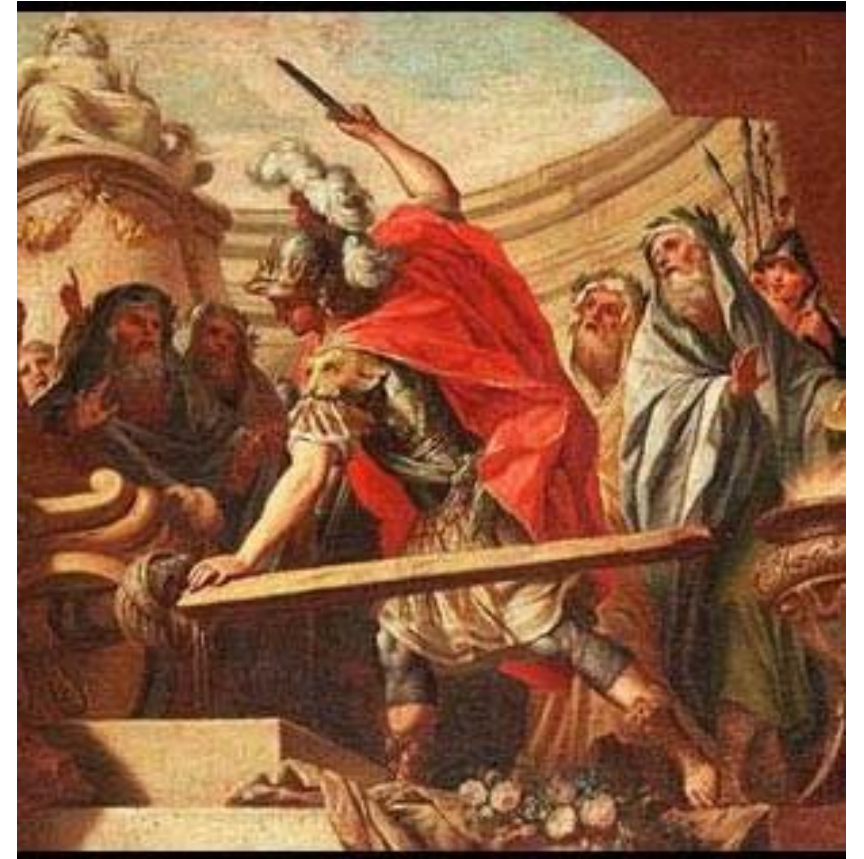


GORDIAN KNOT

In ancient times there was a kingdom named Phrygia in what is now modern-day Turkey. The king of Phrygia had died without a successor, so the people went to the oracle of the gods and asked for advice. The oracle declared that the next man who entered the city driving an ox-cart should be made king, and when Gordias, a peasant, drove his ox-cart into the city, the people of Phrygia chose him as their king. To show his gratitude to the gods, Gordias placed the ox-cart in a temple, tying it to a pillar in the temple with a complicated knot. The city was renamed Gordium in honor of the king.

Over the years, many stories were told about the ox-cart and the "Gordian knot" that tied it to the temple's pillar. It was believed that the man who could undo the knot would rule all of the lands to the east. Many men came to the temple in Gordium and attempted to untie the knot, but they were baffled. Over time, the knot had grown tighter and tighter, and it appeared that there was no man on earth who could undo the knot.

When Alexander the Great learned about the legend, he went to Gordium and entered the temple. He stood and stared at the knot, examining it from every possible angle. Then, all of a sudden, he drew forth his sword . . . and cut right through the knot! Thus, with a single stroke of his sword, Alexander undid the knot that had baffled all others before him. He then went on to conquer many lands to the east, just as the prophecy foretold: Persia (modern Iran), Bactria (modern Afghanistan), and India, eventually extending his kingdom all the way east to the Indus River in modern Pakistan.



TO RISE LIKE PHOENIX FROM THE ASHES

One day a long time ago, the Sun looked down and saw a large bird with shiny red and gold feathers. The Sun was impressed with the brightness and beauty of the bird. The Sun called out, 'Glorious Phoenix, you shall be my bird and live forever!'

The happy Phoenix lifted its head and sang, 'Glorious Sun, I shall sing my songs for you alone!'

When people saw the Phoenix they chased it, desperate to take its beautiful feathers for themselves and to hear its song. This made the Phoenix very annoyed.

'I cannot live here,' thought the Phoenix. And it flew off to the far eastern desert to praise the Sun in peace. Day and night, through all the four seasons, the Phoenix sang praises of the Sun.

After five hundred years, the Phoenix was old and tired. It wanted to soar high in the sky and fly fast like it did when it was young.

So the Phoenix flew west, and on its journey it collected cinnamon twigs and fragrant leaves, tucking them in its feathers. It picked up a ball of resin in its claws.

Then it flew to Heliopolis in Egypt, the 'City of the Sun.' It built a nest on top of the Temple of the Sun out of the spices and resin it had collected on its journey.

The phoenix sat in its nest and sang, 'Sun, glorious Sun, make me young and strong again!'

In a flash of flame the Sun ignited the nest. The Phoenix was ablaze and died in the fire.

The flames died down. Then something wonderful happened. The ashes trembled and a new, young Phoenix rose up. It sang to the Sun and as it sang it grew. When its song ended, it was the same size as the old Phoenix.

Then, just like the previous bird, it spread its wings and flew back to its lonely desert. It lives there still. But every five hundred years, when it feels old, it flies west to be burnt by the Sun at the Temple.

And each time, the Phoenix rises from the ashes, young again.



THE TROJAN HORSE

Once upon a time many years ago there was a city called Troy on the Turkish coast, over the sea from the Greek city of Sparta. Troy was surrounded by a tall thick wall so that, when the giant gates were closed, the people who lived in the city were safe.

At one time, Troy and other Greek city-states were friends, but during the Trojan War, the Greeks and Trojans became enemies. The conflict started after Helen, the queen of Sparta, was kidnapped by Paris, the Trojan prince, and brought to Troy.

For ten years Greek warriors had been trying to get into the city but could not find a way. And although the Trojans rained arrows onto the Greek army from the top of the walls, they could not drive them away.

Then one day a famous Greek General called Odysseus had a cunning idea. His plan was to build a beautiful giant wooden horse to leave outside the city gate. The army would pretend that they were leaving and that they had left the horse behind as a parting gift. The Trojans would not know that thirty soldiers were hidden inside the horse.

The people of Troy watched the ships sailing away from the land and threw open the city gates in joy. They found the horse and pulled it into the heart of the city for everyone to see as a reminder that the city had not fallen to the Greeks. The Trojan people went to bed believing they were safe at last, but while they slept the men hiding inside the horse climbed down and opened the gates. The Greek army had come back under cover of darkness and rushed into the city. That was the end of the Troy and the Trojan War.



PANDORA'S BOX



Pandora was, according to the myth, the first woman on Earth. She was created by Gods; each one of them gave her a gift, thus, her name in Greek means “the one who bears all gifts”.

Pandora was created as a punishment to the mankind; Zeus wanted to punish people because Prometheus stole the fire to give it to them. Hephaestus created her from clay, shaping her perfectly, Aphrodite gave her femininity and Athena taught her crafts. Hermes was ordered by Zeus to teach her to be deceitful, stubborn and curious.

Pandora was given a box or a jar, called “pithos” in Greek. Gods told her that the box contained special gifts from them but she was not allowed to open the box ever. Then Hermes took her to Epimetheus, brother of Prometheus, to be his wife. Prometheus had advised Epimetheus not to accept anything from the Gods, but he saw Pandora and was astonished by her beauty, thus he accepted her right away.

Pandora was trying to tame her curiosity, but at the end she could not hold herself anymore; she opened the box and all the illnesses and hardships that gods had hidden in the box started coming out. Pandora was scared, because she saw all the evil spirits coming out and tried to close the box as fast as possible, closing Hope inside.

Hope stayed inside because that was Zeus’ will; he wanted to let people suffer in order to understand that they should not disobey their gods. Pandora was the right person to do it, because she was curious enough, but not malicious. Ever since, humans have been able to hold onto this hope in order to survive the wickedness that Pandora had let out.

THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES



Damocles was a member of the court of Dionysius the Younger, ruler of the Sicilian city of Syracuse in the 4th century BC. Damocles constantly flattered the king, in the hopes that he would be given a position of greater power in the court. Apparently, Dionysius was tired of constant flattery, and he asked Damocles if he would like to switch places for a day, to see what it would be like to be a ruler.

Damocles eagerly assented and spent a day being waited on by the king and other attendants. Towards the end of the day, while seated at the dinner, Damocles looked up to see a heavy sword suspended directly over his head, hanging by a hair. In a panic, he asked Dionysius about the meaning of the sword, and the ruler explained that he wanted to show what it was like to be in a position of power, which might seem privileged from a distance to the casual eye but was actually quite dangerous.

The sword terrified Damocles into fleeing the court, with no more thoughts of power in his head and the parable of the Sword of Damocles became a symbol of the hidden dangers of power.

PYRRHIC VICTORY

Pyrrhus was king of Epirus and cousin of Alexander the Great, known for his many battles.

When the Greek colony Tarentum asked Pyrrhus for help against the Romans, the king gladly accepted. According to legend, he asked the philosopher Cineas for advice. The philosopher asked the king what he would do after conquering Italy, and got the answer "Then I will take Carthage". Cineas asked what then, and got the reply "then we will take Macedonia, Egypt and Asia". "Then what", Cineas asked, "then we will celebrate and enjoy the pleasures of life", replied the king. The philosopher then said "why can't we do that immediately without challenging our destiny?"

At Heraclea Pyrrhus defeated the Romans with 25000 men and 20 elephants in 280BC. The decisive factor for his victory was the elephants, an animal the Romans had never seen before. The horses ran away, terrified, and the Roman soldiers lost their courage. A year later Pyrrhus again defeated the Romans at the battle of Asculum.

The victories cost him so much, though, that the expression Pyrrhic victory has become an expression for a bitter victory. After this he went to help the Sicilian Greeks against the Carthaginians, now allies with the Romans, but became unpopular with them because of his despotic attitude.

In 275 BC he was defeated by the Romans at the battle of Beneventum, and returned to Greece with only one-third of his original force.

Pyrrhus was also involved with battles in Greece, and extended his kingdom into parts of Macedonia and Thessaly. Lysimachus, king of Thrace and consequently of Macedonia, later drove Pyrrhus out of his new lands. Pyrrhus again managed to conquer part of Macedonia in his defeating of the Macedonian king Antigonus II Gonatas in 276 BC. He was defeated by the Spartan army the year after, and fled to Argos where he was killed in a streetfight. His tactics and use of elephants was later to influence Hannibal.



THE MIDAS TOUCH

There was once a king named Midas who did a good deed for a Satyr (a half man, half goat) and was granted a wish by the God of wine, Dionysus. For his wish, Midas asked that whatever he touched would turn to gold. Although Dionysus tried to dissuade him, Midas insisted that the wish was an excellent one, and it was granted!

Excitedly, Midas went about touching all sorts of things, turning them into gold.

Soon Midas became hungry. He picked up a piece of food, but he couldn't eat it, for it had turned to gold in his hand! "I'll starve," moaned Midas, "Perhaps this was not such a good wish after all!"

Midas' beloved daughter, seeing his dismay, threw her arms about him to comfort him, and she too turned to gold! "The golden touch is no blessing," cried Midas. He went to the river and wept. The sand of that river turned as yellow as "fool's gold" for it is there, they say, that King Midas washed away the curse of the golden touch with his own tears.



1 GUESS THE PHRASE

1 something that creates a lot of new problems that you did not expect

2 anything that causes unhappiness, trouble, jealousy, , anger, rivalry or argument

3 the ability to succeed at whatever you do, esp making money

4 a small problem or weakness in a person or system that can result in failure; a vulnerable point

5 a person or thing that joins and deceives a group or organization in order to attack it from the inside

6 a victory that is not worth winning because the winner has lost so much in winning it

7 a pointless, fruitless, and unrewarding task that must be repeated over and over again; an endless task

8 a very complicated and difficult situation or problem

9 to make a comeback after a disaster, start to exist again

10 a situation in which something very bad could happen at any time

2 COMPLETE THE SENTENCES WITH THE CORRECT PHRASE

- 1 She won the court case, but it was a _____ because she had to pay so much in legal fees.
- 2 The use of the car was _____ between Joe and his wife.
- 3 They are defeated only because of the _____ in their country.
- 4 Money brings us happiness but sometimes it is a _____
- 5 The enemy had an _____ somewhere, if only he could find it.
- 6 All his firms are extremely profitable. He has _____
- 7 Trying to completely eliminate doping from sport is a _____
- 8 The president hoped that his bold new anti-inflation plan would cut the _____
- 9 After his startup company went bankrupt, he vowed to _____. Now, his new company has a \$20 million valuation.
- 10 As a Grand Prix driver, you have the _____ hanging over your head at every moment.