

## ORIGINAL SOURCES

At some point during the study of mythology, as you read different versions of the myths, someone is bound to ask, But which version is the real story? In addition to giving your own opinion on the matter, it might be fun to introduce the children to some original sources.

For the story of Heracles, there are two authors who can readily provide the children with some conflicting information. When you read the different authors, make a comparison of the birth dates of these authors to give the class an opportunity to see which is the older version. The children can also formulate theories about which authors information is liable to be most accurate. Help the children decide which ancient authors the modern authors might have consulted before they wrote their contemporary versions. Use the details included in the modern authors works as the deciding factors.

In the original source books listed below and on the following page, there is always an Introduction, which gives the background of the author. In addition, these books frequently print the words of the author in the original language on the left page of the open book and the English translation on the facing page. Children love to compare the languages.

The books I would recommend that you request from the library are in bold print. Both of them are volumes in the Loeb Classical Library.

**Apollodorus. *The Library, Volume I.* (English translation by Sir James George Frazer) London William Heineman, 1990.**

**Diodorus Siculus. *Volume II.* (English translation by C. H. Oldfather) Cambridge, Massachusetts Harvard University Press, 1979.**

The story of the Nemean lion is located in Apollodorus in Book II, paragraph V. (page 185 of the book listed above) The rest of the labors follow. There are extensive footnotes to help you if you or a student should want to explore further.

The story of the Nemean lion is located in Diodorus Siculus in Book IV, section 11, part 3. (page 377 of the book listed above) The rest of the labors follow although not in the same order as in Apollodorus.

## THE RATTLE TRICK

Athena, goddess of wisdom, gave Heracles the rattle with which he scared the Stymphalian birds. Once again, Heracles relied on brains to complete the labor assigned to him.

How else could Heracles have scared the birds? How do farmers rid their fields and gardens of birds and insects? What are some tricks that fruit growers employ to keep the birds from eating their cherries and other fruit?

## ARMORED BIRDS

Pausanias, in his *Description of Greece*, reports on the Stymphalian birds. He says . . .

The Arabian desert breeds among other wild creatures birds called Stymphalian, which are quite as savage against men as lions or leopards. These fly against those who come to hunt them, wounding and killing them with their beaks. All armor of bronze or iron that men wear is pierced by the birds; but if they weave a garment of thick cork, the beaks of the Stymphalian birds are caught in the cork garment, just as the wings of small birds stick in bird-lime. These birds are of the size of a crane, and are like the ibis, but their beaks are more powerful, and not crooked like that of the ibis.

Apollonius of Rhodes, in *The Argonautica*, describes an attack on Jason and the Argonauts by these same Stymphalian birds. He says . . .

. . . when they touched the island and clashed upon their shields, then the birds in countless numbers rose in flight hither and thither. And as when the son of Cronus sends from the clouds a dense hailstorm on city and houses, and the people who dwell beneath hear the din above the roof and sit quietly . . . so the birds sent against the heroes a thick shower of feather-shafts as they darted over the sea to the mountains of the lands opposite.

## MONSTERS IN THE MYTH

When Heracles pursued the cattle of Geryon, he encountered not only Geryon, a three-bodied monster, but he also found himself up against Orthus, the two-headed watchdog.

### FIND OUT

1. Who are the parents of Geryon? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who are the parents of Orthus? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How was Orthus killed? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How was Geryon killed? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How could Heracles be sure that Geryon was dead? \_\_\_\_\_

The origin of the Pillars of Hercules is described in nearly every version of the Heracles legend, from ancient to modern.

1. What is the name of the strait where the Pillars of Hercules are found?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How many miles long is this strait? \_\_\_\_\_