Myth Summaries

**Jason**

Jason was sent by Pelias to return the Golden Fleece to him. He began by assembling a great group of heroes known as the Argonauts to aid him, consisting of other heroes such as Heracles and Atalanta. Along the way to Colchis, they stopped at the island of Lemnos, which inhabited solely by women cursed by Aphrodite. Whilst the Argonauts lodged here, Jason fathered twins. Once they’d set off again, they next encountered King Phineus, who’d been set after by Harpies, birds directed by Helios to kill Phineus. The Argonauts gave Phineus the ability to fly, and in his gratitude, explained the location of Colchis and how to pass between the clashing rocks (Symplegades). Upon arriving in Colchis, Jason is answered yes by King Aietes to return the Fleece. With the aid of Medea, Jason is able to complete the one condition of Aietes: to complete the tasks he names. Unsurprisingly, however, the king backtracks on his word and plans to kill Jason, but is failed as he indicates this plan to his daughter. She helps him recover the Fleece and escape Colchis with the rest of the Argonauts. On the return journey, Orpheus played his lyre to pass the Sirens and escape their enchanting music. Additionally, they happened upon Talos on the island of Crete, though they were saved by Medea’s knowledge of Talos’s one weak blood vessel. Once they’d returned to Lolcus, they discovered the murderous actions of Pelias. In spite, Medea used witchcraft to kill Pelias. Later, however, Jason married another woman, and died under the hull of the Argo. Prior to this, Medea kills his new wife and the children he fathered. (*Discussion: This seems to be punishment from the gods as a typical act that warrants it [unfaithfulness] was committed. This also demonstrates the thematic concept of the sharp edge of betraying those whom you commit to. Medea is angered by Jason’s actions and thus acts with intense ferocity and vengeance.)*

**Theseus**

Aegeus’s wife, Medea, recognized Theseus was no idle threat to her son’s receiving the throne. She convinced her husband to serve Theseus poisoned wine, which he would’ve drank, had he not been asked to carve the dinner. Aegeus threw the wine to the floor. When it came time for Athens to pay its sacrifices to King Minos and the gods (through the Minotaur), Theseus was selected to be one of the fourteen to enter the Labyrinth. On the tribute ship, Minos made advances towards an Athenian, and Theseus defended her. Minos questioned Theseus’s divine lineage, and said the gods would not side with him in retrieving the ring he’d just thrown overboard. Upon diving, he was indeed aided, being given not only the ring but a crown as well. Minos’s daughter, Ariadne, instantly fell in love with Theseus, and gave him a clew (ball of yarn.) As he was put in the maze, he began threading it out, and approached the Minotaur while it was asleep. Many versions of the story from this point describe him choking him to death, though all agree he of course killed him. Now, with his fellow liberated Athenian tributes, he escaped with Adriane, ensuring Minos could not follow by crafting holes in his ships. In his haste, Theseus not only abandoned Adriane on the island of Dia, but neglected to change the color of the ship’s sails. Because the flags were left black, as was part of the plan between Aegeus and Theseus to switch them, Aegeus committed suicide in frustration. *(Discussion: The irony of Theseus, or moreover, the hero, accomplishing an “impossible” task, yet neglecting the ones he loved [or loved him], is a common theme in Greek myths. From this, we can gather one of the goals of the tale was to evoke the thought to never leave our loved ones behind, though in smaller contexts than slaying a bull.)*