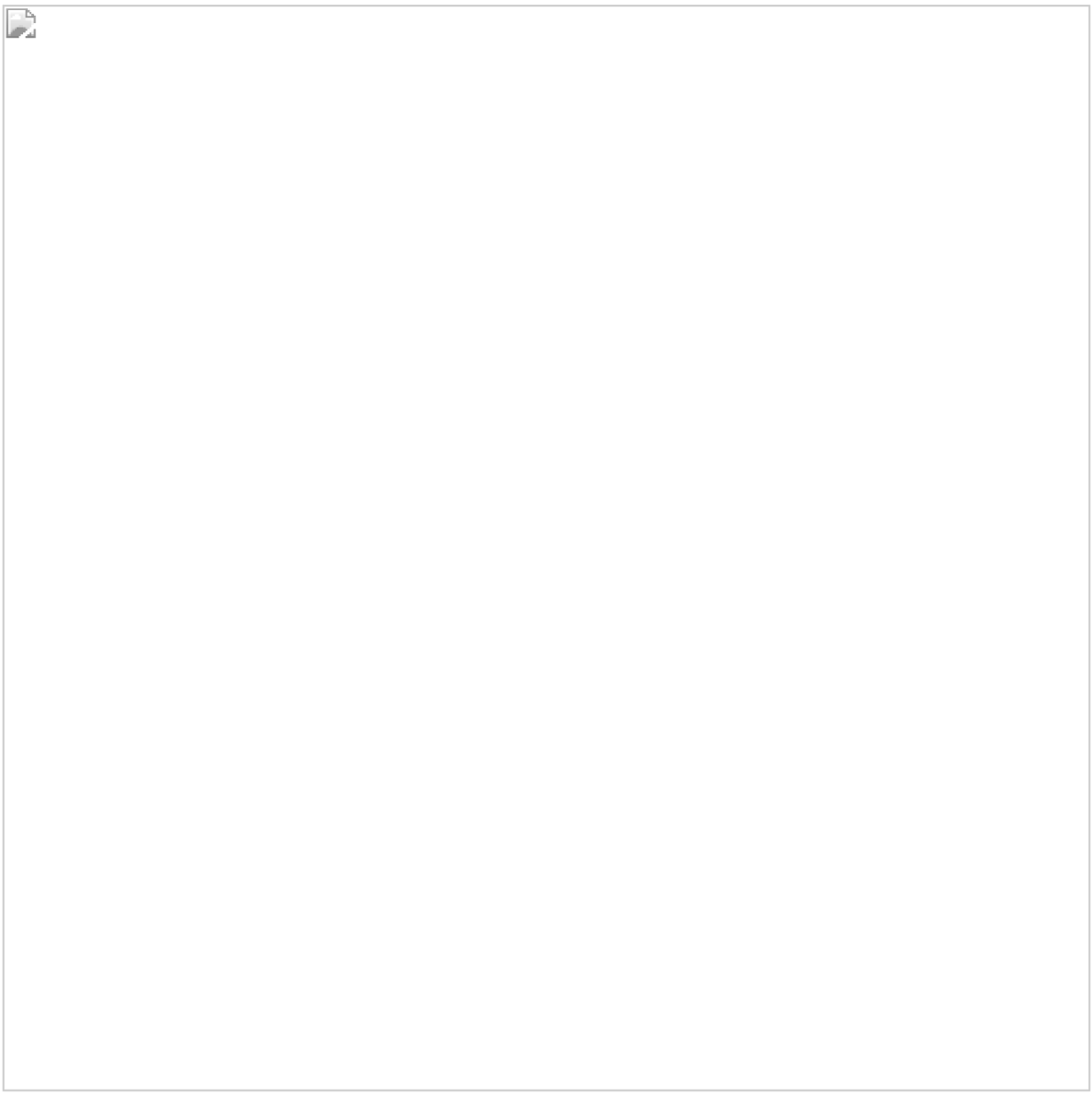
COLORING THE CLASSICS

Hercules

A Hero of Greece



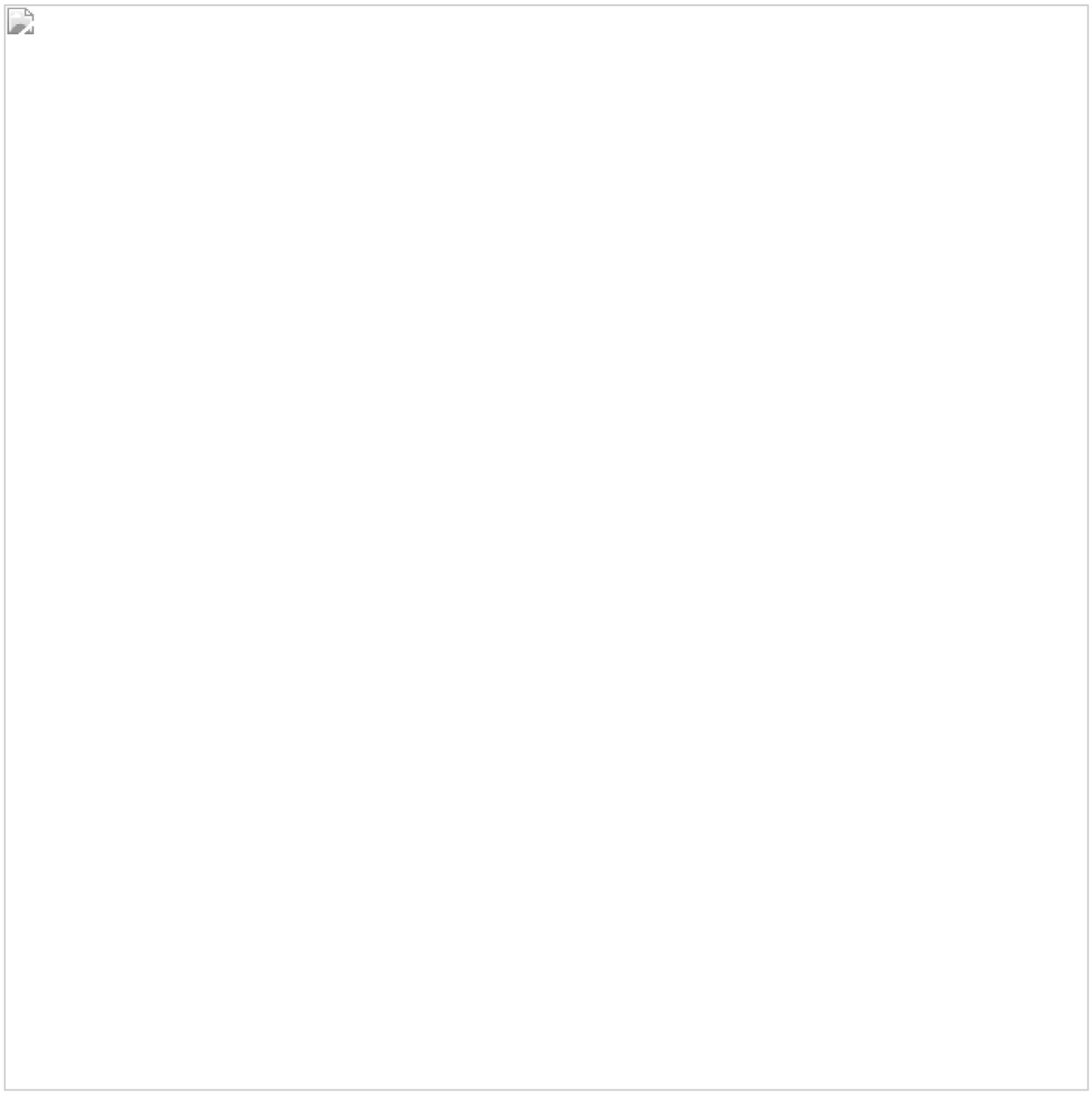
Hercules was the son of Jupiter, the king of the gods, and of Alcmene, who was a mortal. But Juno, Jupiter's wife, hated Alcmene and her baby. When Hercules was only a baby in his cradle, Juno sent two enormous serpents to bite him. He seized them with his own hands, and that was the end of the serpents.

TALK ABOUT IT

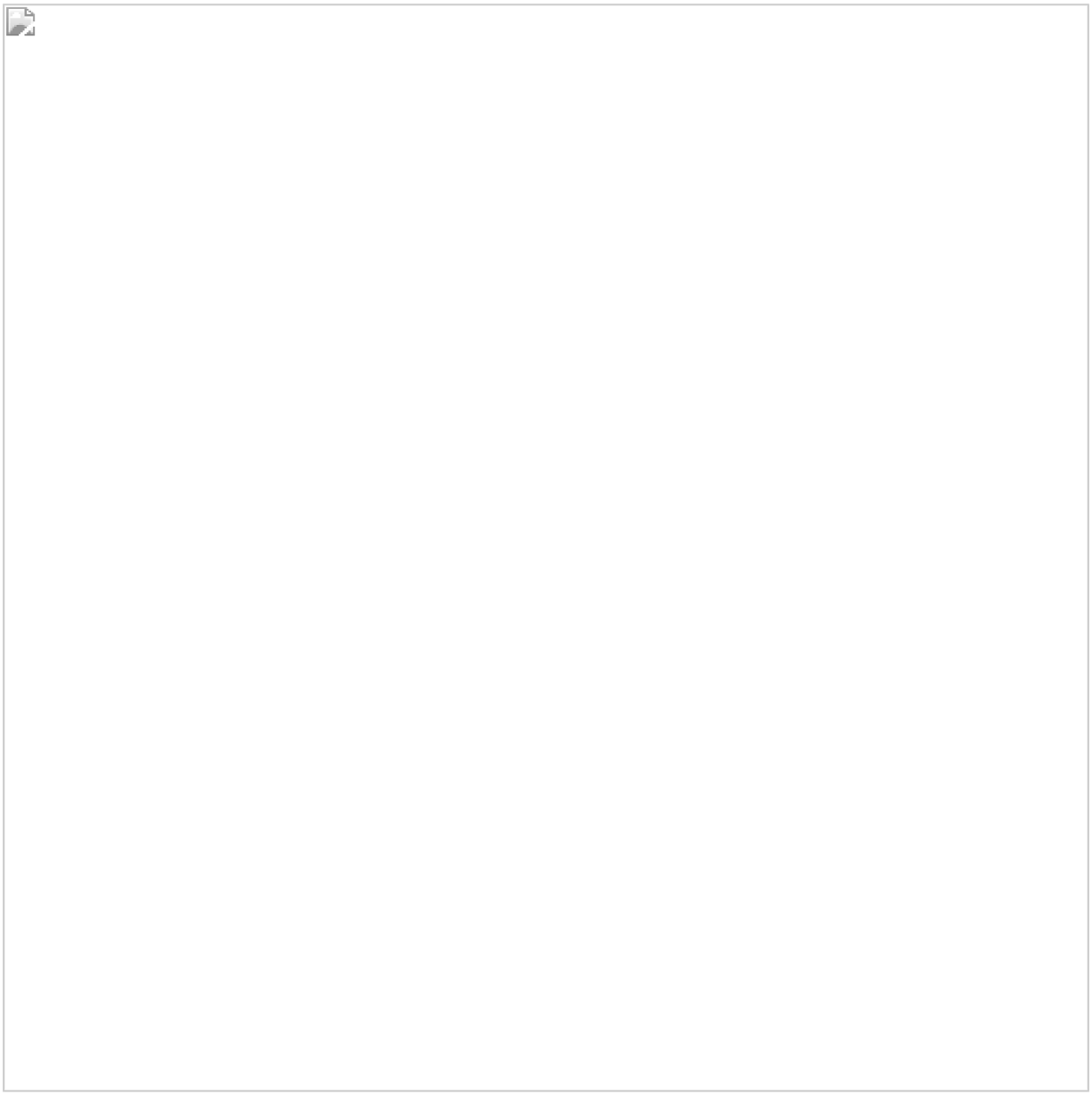
Hercules was only a baby, and already he was strong. What is something you are strong at?

This book belongs to _____

Hercules · another picture



Twelve Years of Service



Hercules grew up and did many mighty deeds. Juno still did not forgive him.

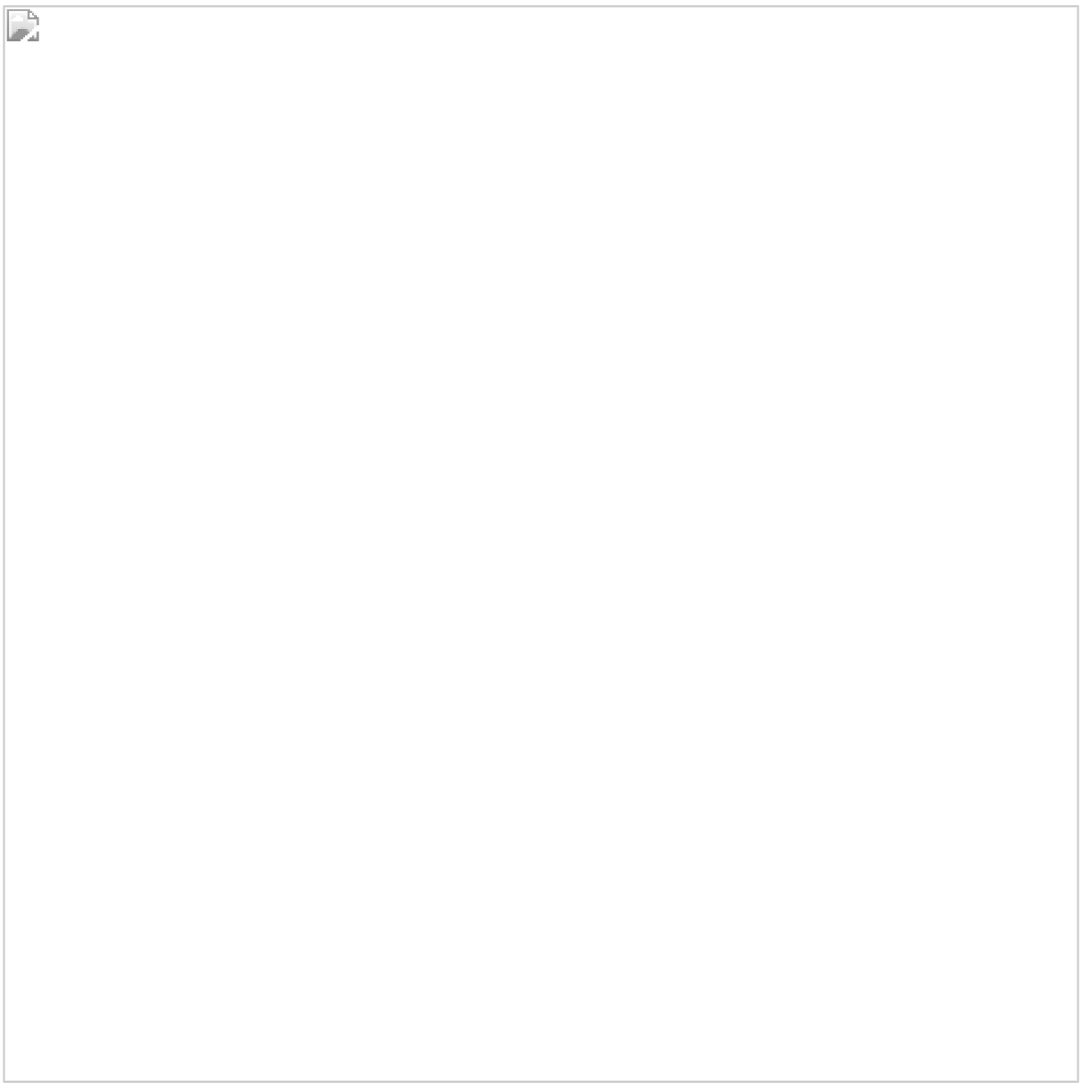
Hercules asked the oracle at Delphi what he should do. The answer was that he must serve his brother Eurystheus, a harsh and pitiless king, for twelve years. After that, he would become one of the Immortals.

Eurystheus was afraid of Hercules' strength. So he planned tasks so hard that Hercules would surely not come home. Those tasks are called the twelve labors of Hercules.

TALK ABOUT IT

Hercules agreed to serve a king who was not kind to him. Why do you think he did?

Twelve Years of Service · another picture

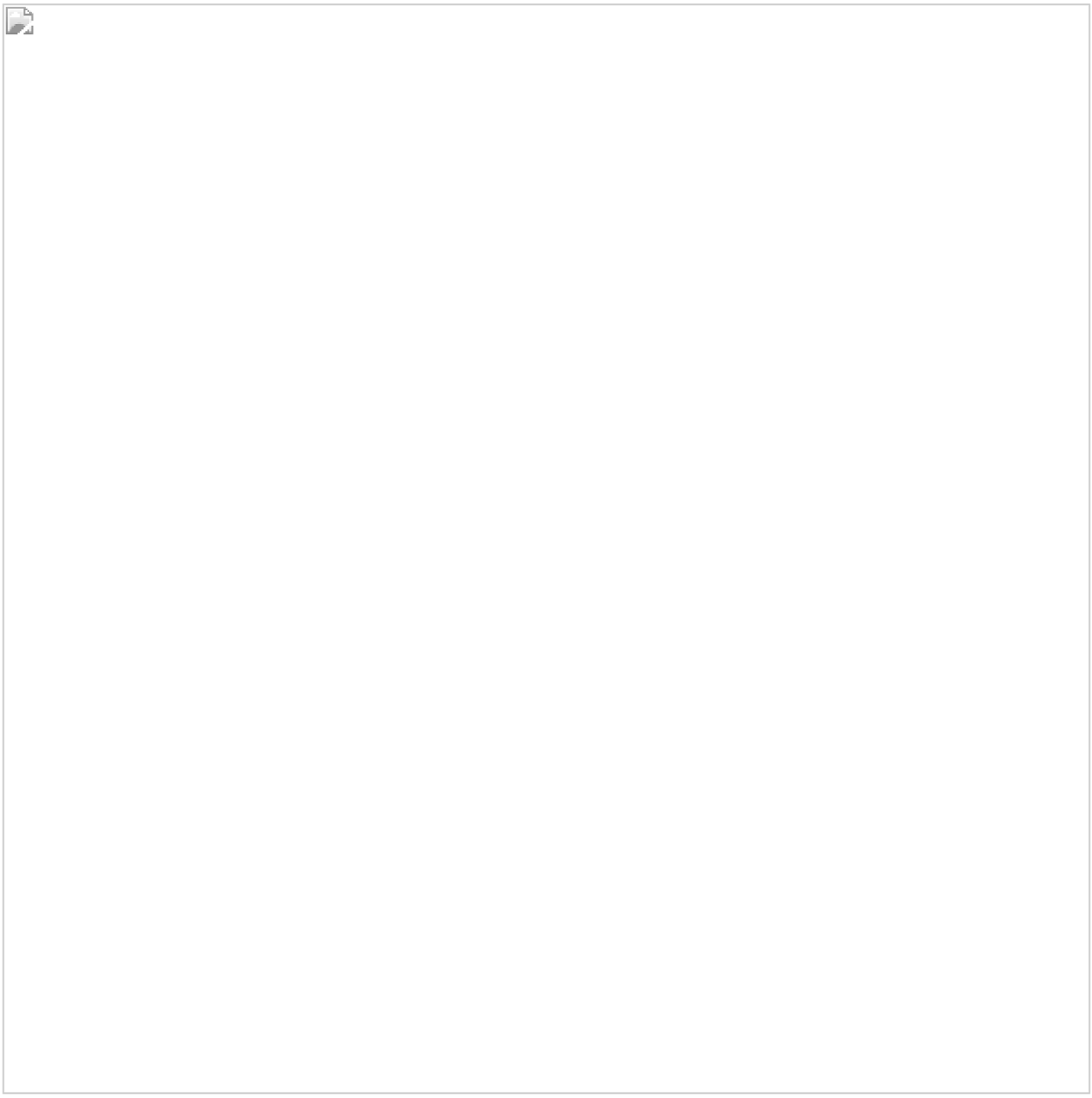


Think about it

1. How many years did Hercules have to serve Eurystheus?

- ○ Two
- ○ Twelve
- ○ A hundred

The Lion of Nemea



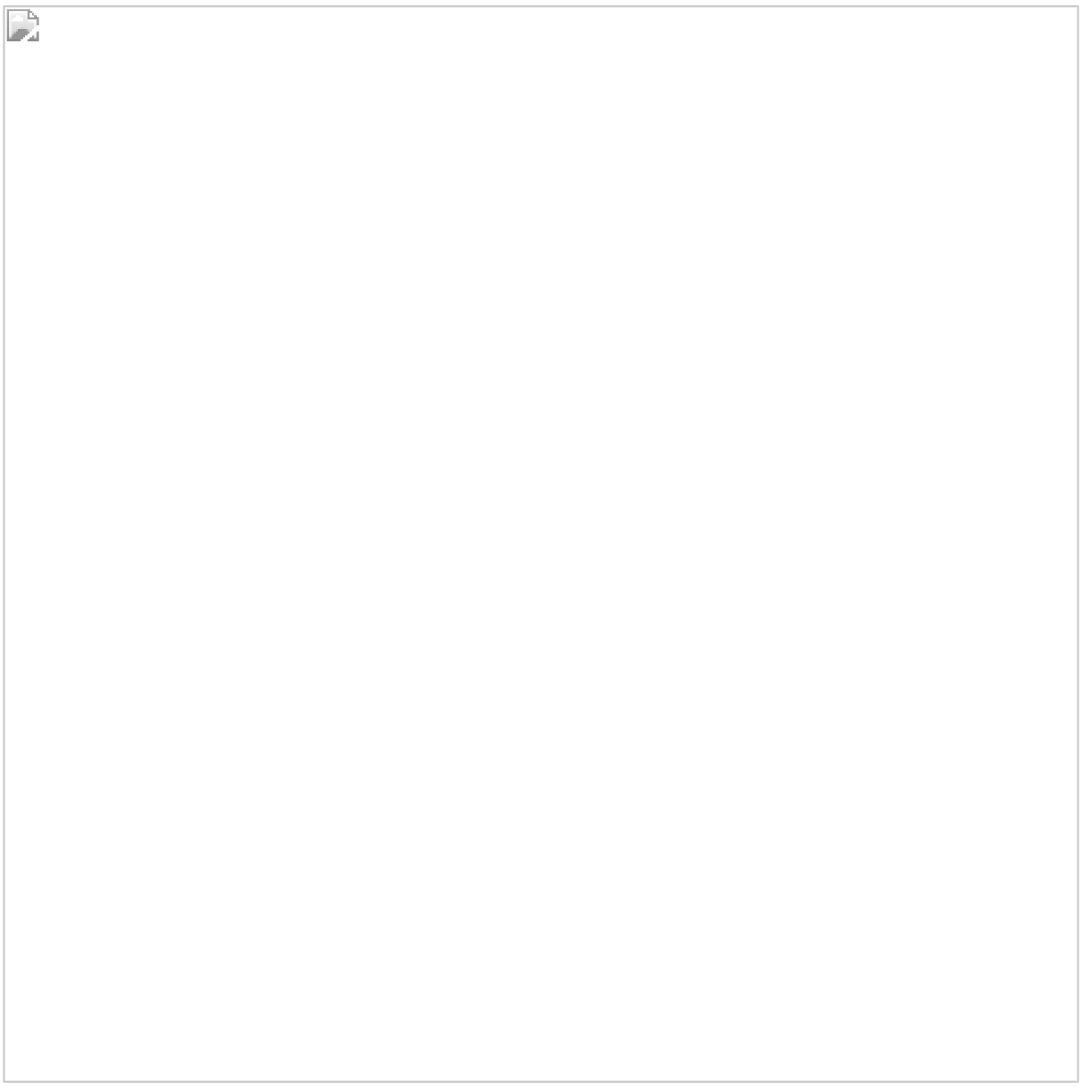
The first task was to keep the king's sheep at Nemea, and to deal with the lion that kept carrying off the sheep, and sometimes the shepherd too.

Hercules took a heavy club, a bow and arrows, and went to find the lion's den. But the lion's skin was so thick that arrows and club did nothing.

So Hercules trusted to his own arms, and he overcame the lion just as he had overcome the serpents in his cradle. After that, he wore the lion's skin as a cloak.

TALK ABOUT IT

The lion had been taking the shepherds' sheep. Who was Hercules helping?

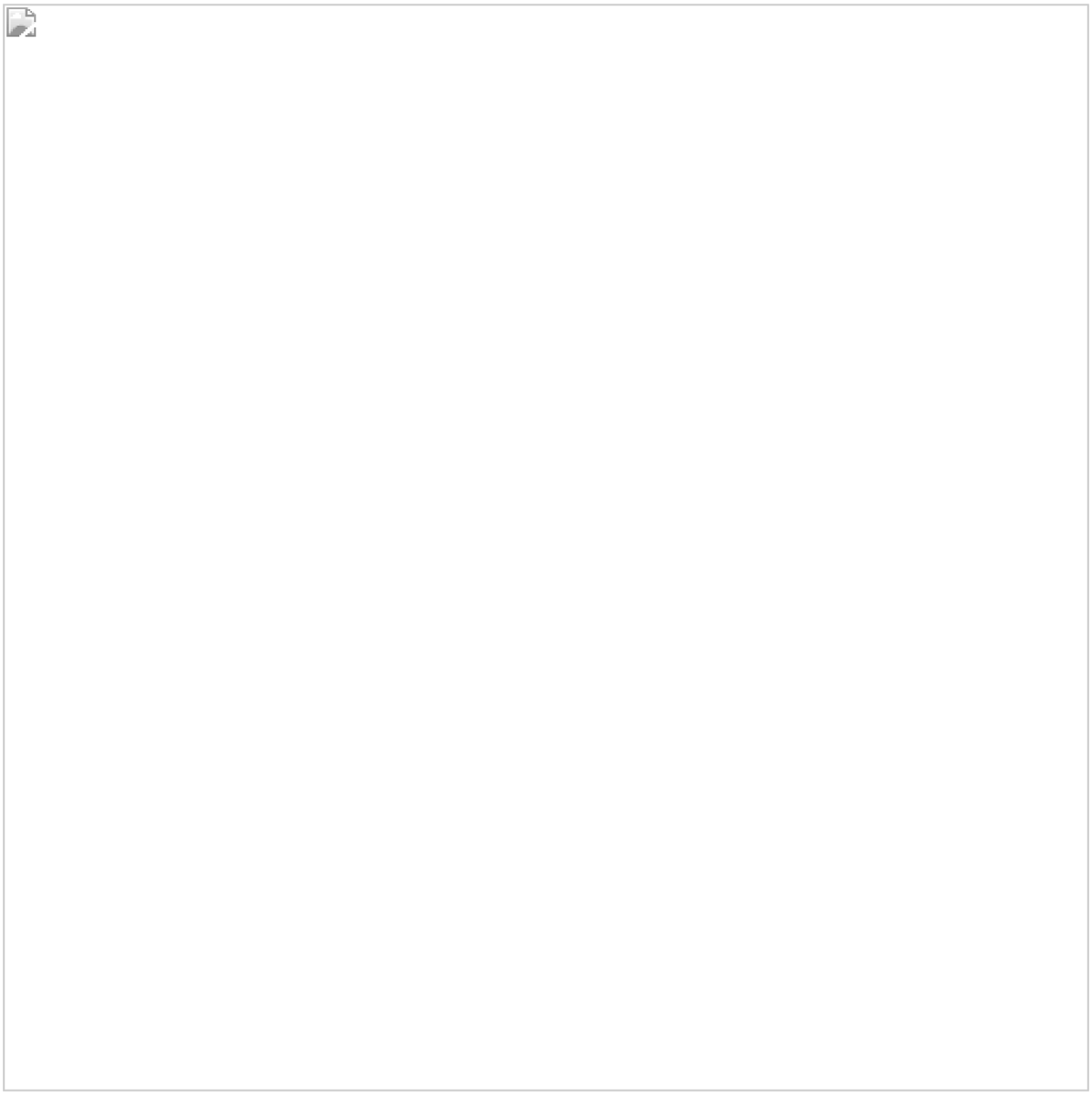


Think about it

1. What did Hercules wear after the lion was gone?

- ○ A golden crown
- ○ A sheep's wool
- ○ The lion's skin

The Hydra



In a marsh at Lerna lived a monstrous serpent called the Hydra. It had nine heads. When Hercules cut off one, two more grew in its place!

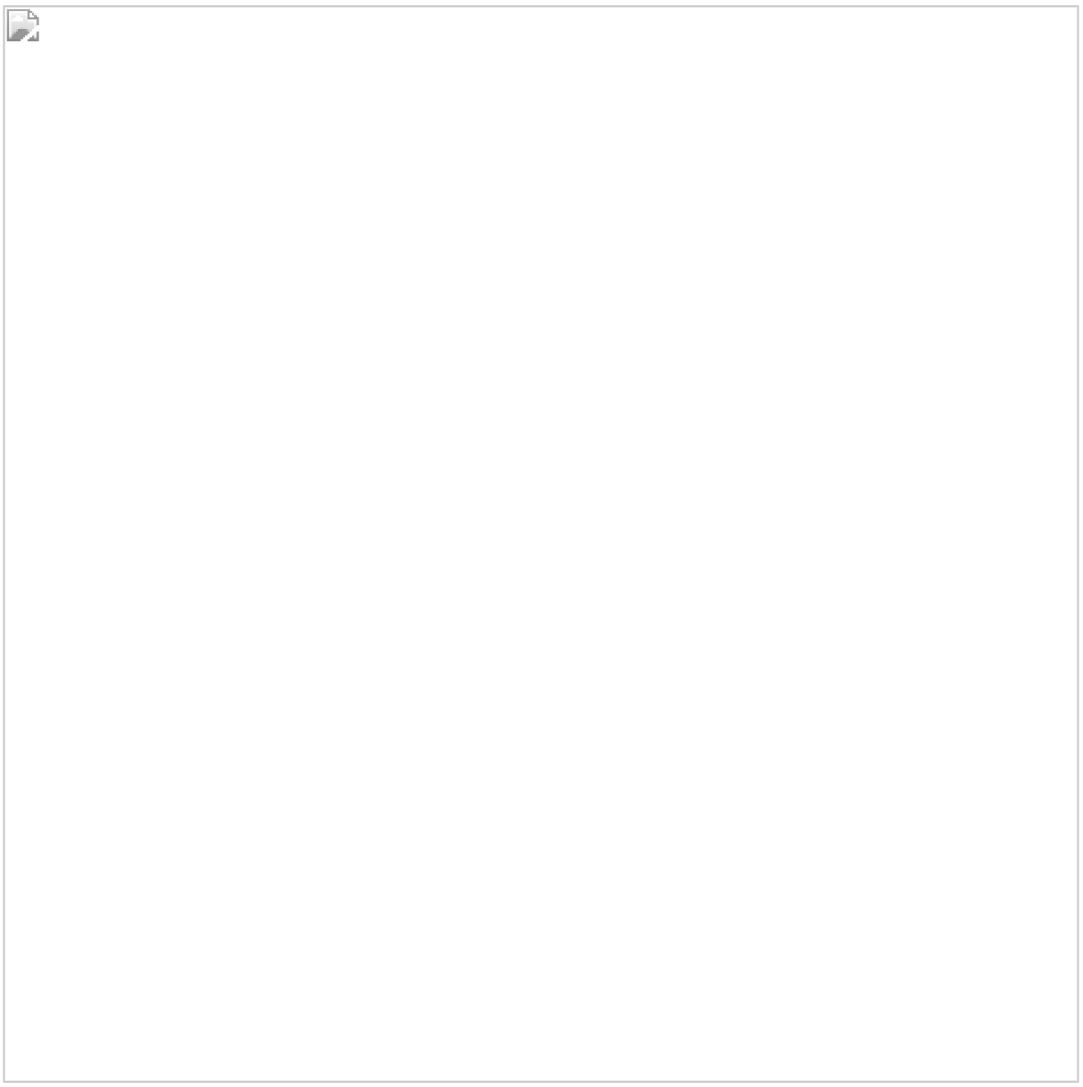
But Hercules had a servant to help him, and together they burned the heads away. The last head, the one that could never die, Hercules buried under a huge rock.

The Hydra's blood was a poison so strong that Hercules dipped the points of his arrows in it. After that, no arrow of his could be taken lightly.

TALK ABOUT IT

Hercules did not do this one by himself. He had a servant to help. Who helps you when a job is too big?

The Hydra · another picture

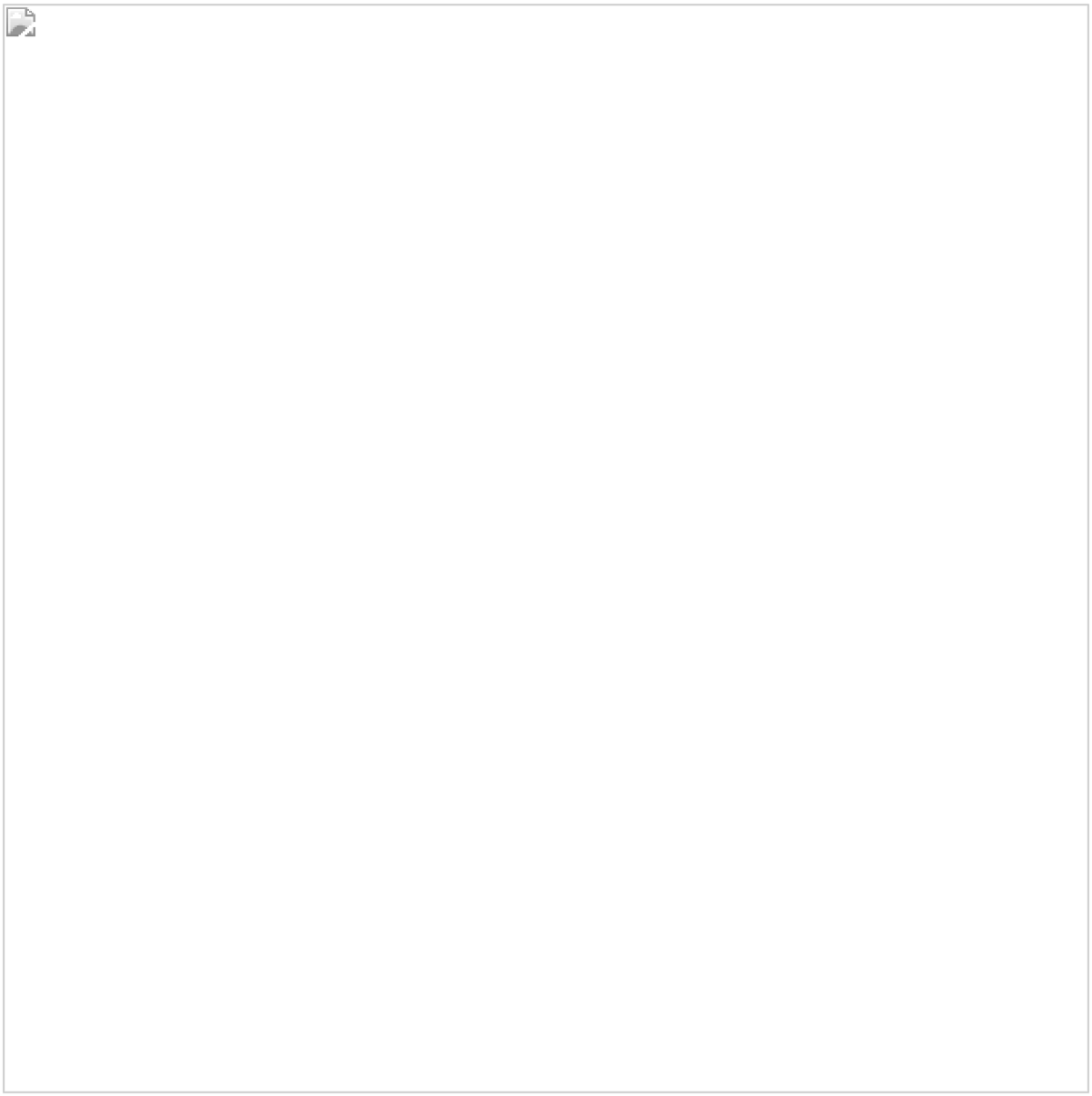


Think about it

1. How many heads did the Hydra have?

- ○ Nine
- ○ Three
- ○ Twelve

The Stag and the Boar

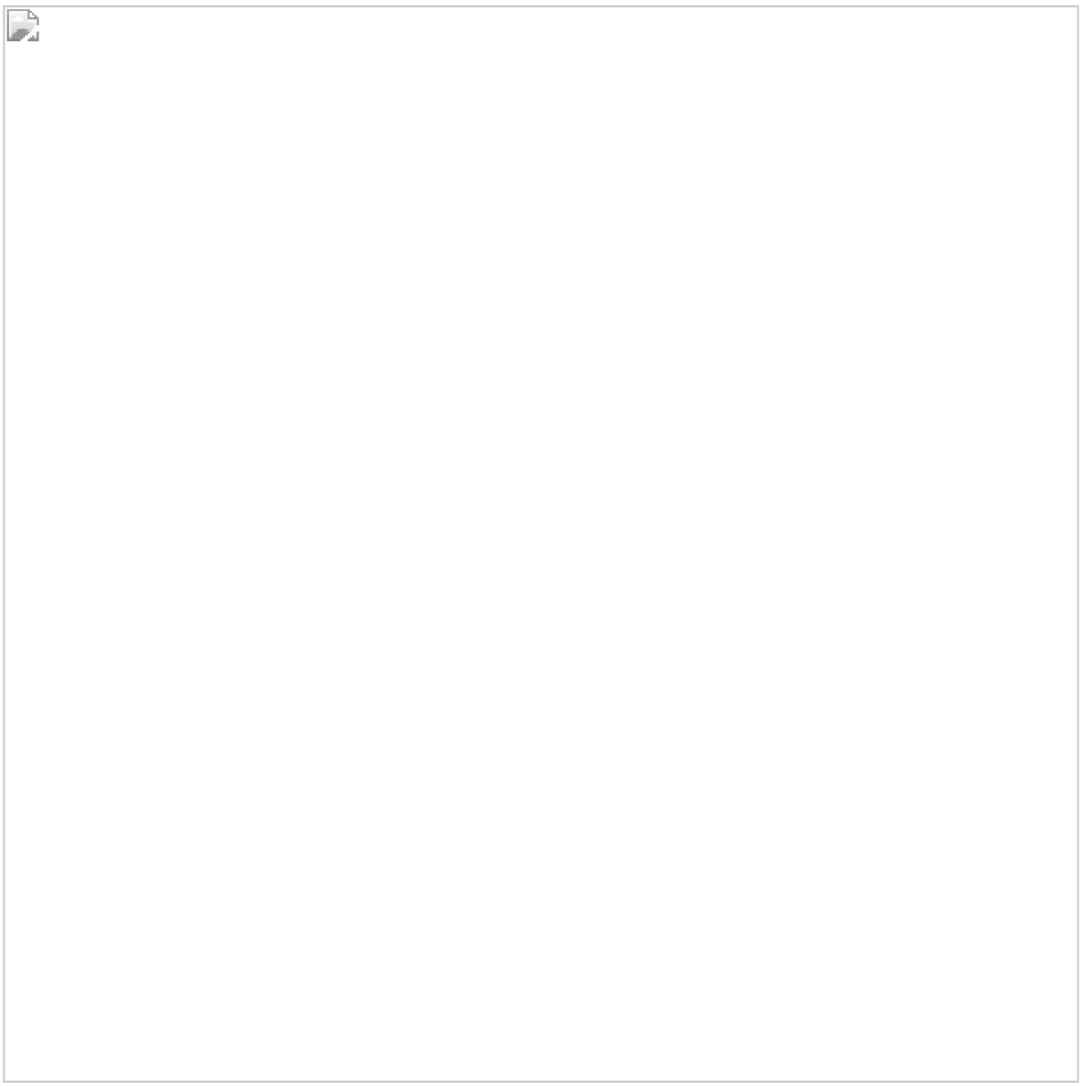


The third task was to catch a stag with brazen feet and golden antlers, alive. It ran so fast that nobody had ever come near it. For more than a year, Hercules followed it over hill and dale before he could catch it. Then he carried it on his shoulder to his brother.

The fourth task was a wild boar on Mount Erymanthus, which tore up the country all around. Hercules tracked it through the deep snow, caught it in a net, and carried it to Eurystheus on his shoulders.

TALK ABOUT IT

Hercules followed the stag for over a year. What is something you worked on for a long time?

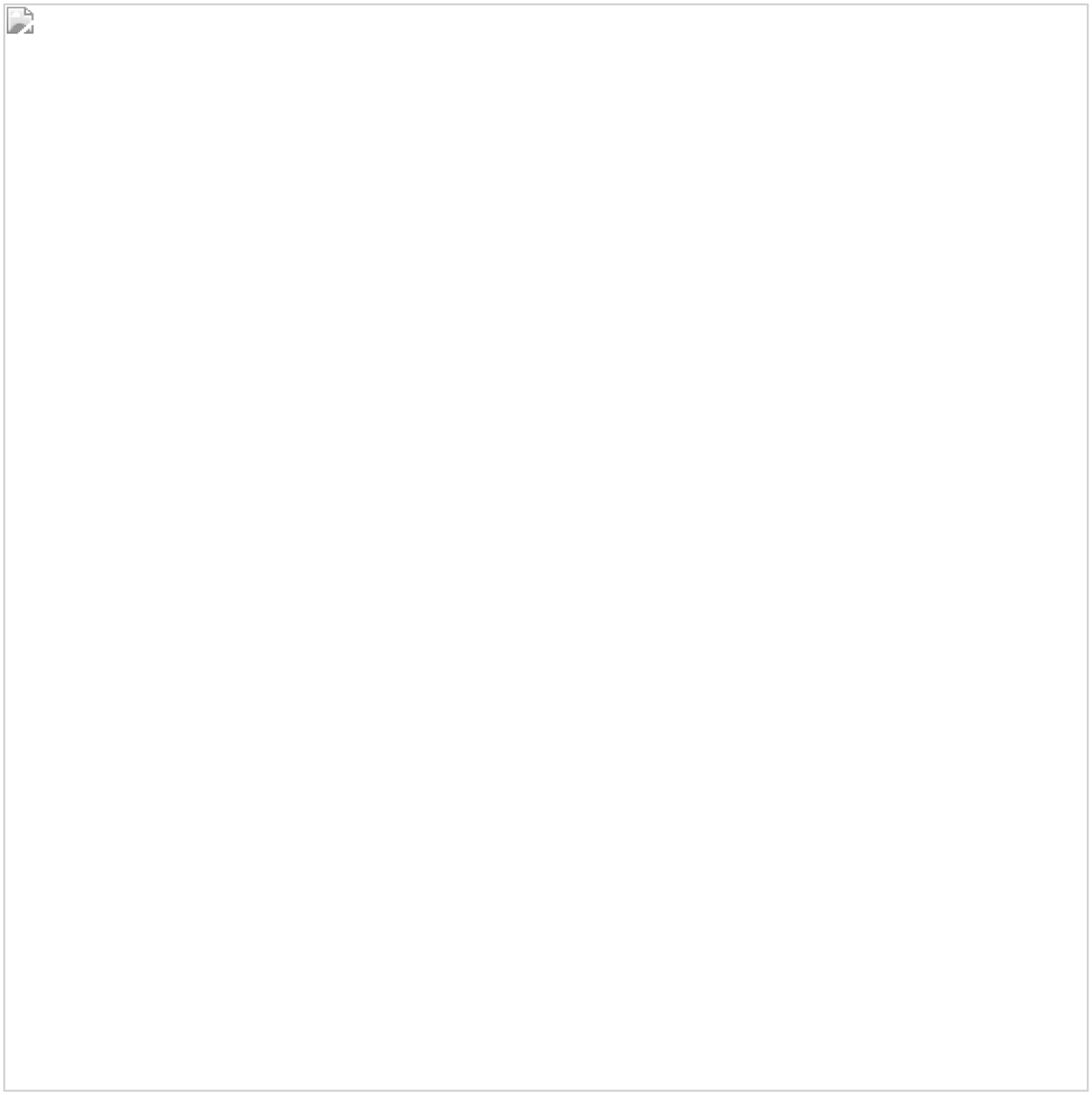


Think about it

1. What did Hercules do with the stag?

- ○ Let it go
- ○ Carried it to his brother alive
- ○ Hid it

The Stables of Augeas



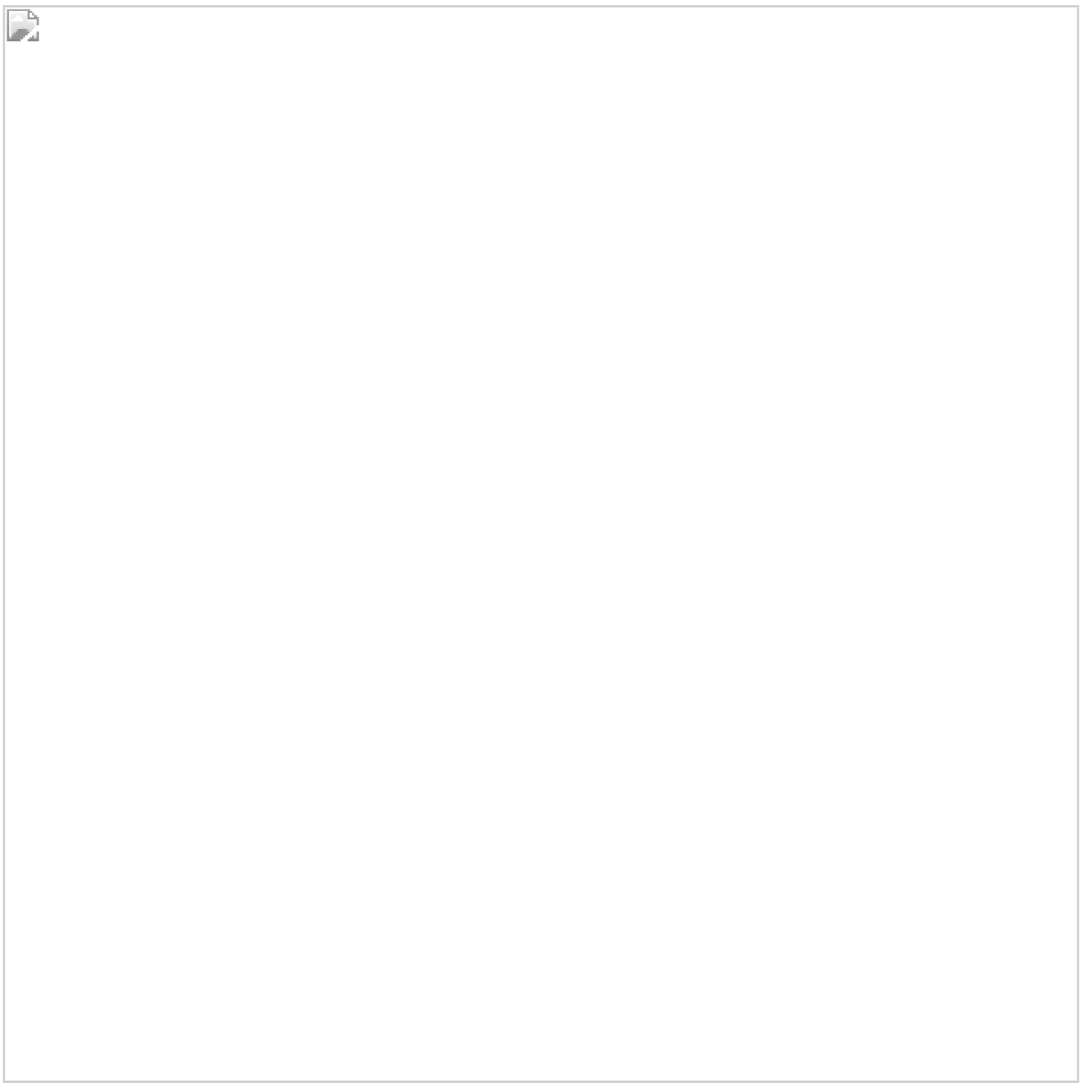
King Augeas had three thousand oxen, and their stables had not been cleaned in thirty years. The smell made the whole land unhealthy. Eurystheus told Hercules to clean them all in a single day!

Hercules did not use a shovel. With his great strength he turned two rivers aside, so that they ran right through the stables. And lo! thirty years of dirt were gone.

TALK ABOUT IT

Hercules used his head as well as his strength. What problem did you ever solve in a clever way?

The Stables of Augeas · another picture

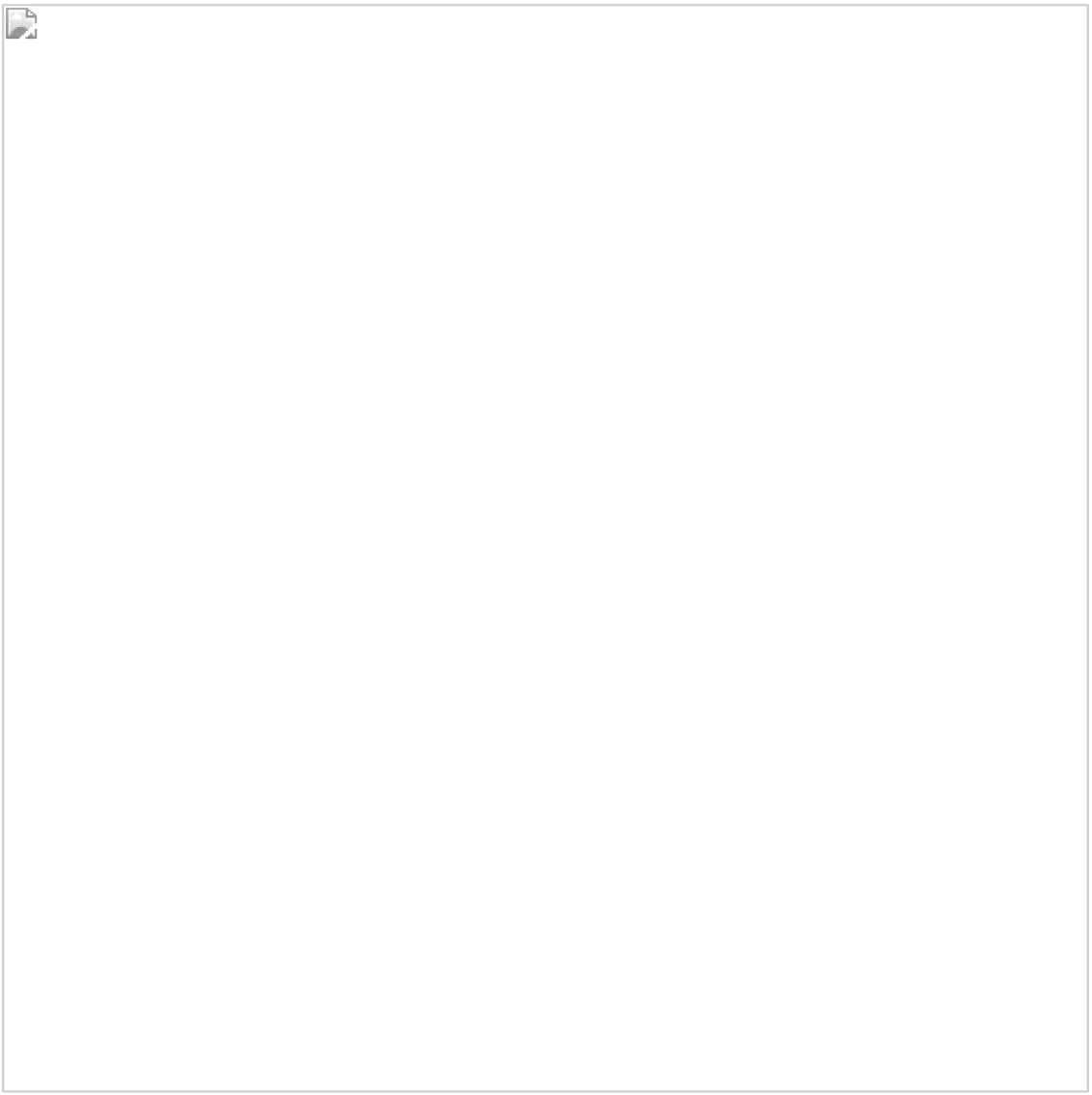


Think about it

1. How did Hercules clean the stables?

- ○ By making two rivers run through them
- ○ With a broom
- ○ With a hundred helpers

Birds, a Bull, and Horses



Next, on an island in a lake, were terrible birds with brazen claws, wings and beaks, who attacked everyone who came near. Minerva lent Hercules a brazen rattle. He rattled it, and the birds flew up from their nests, and troubled the lake no more.

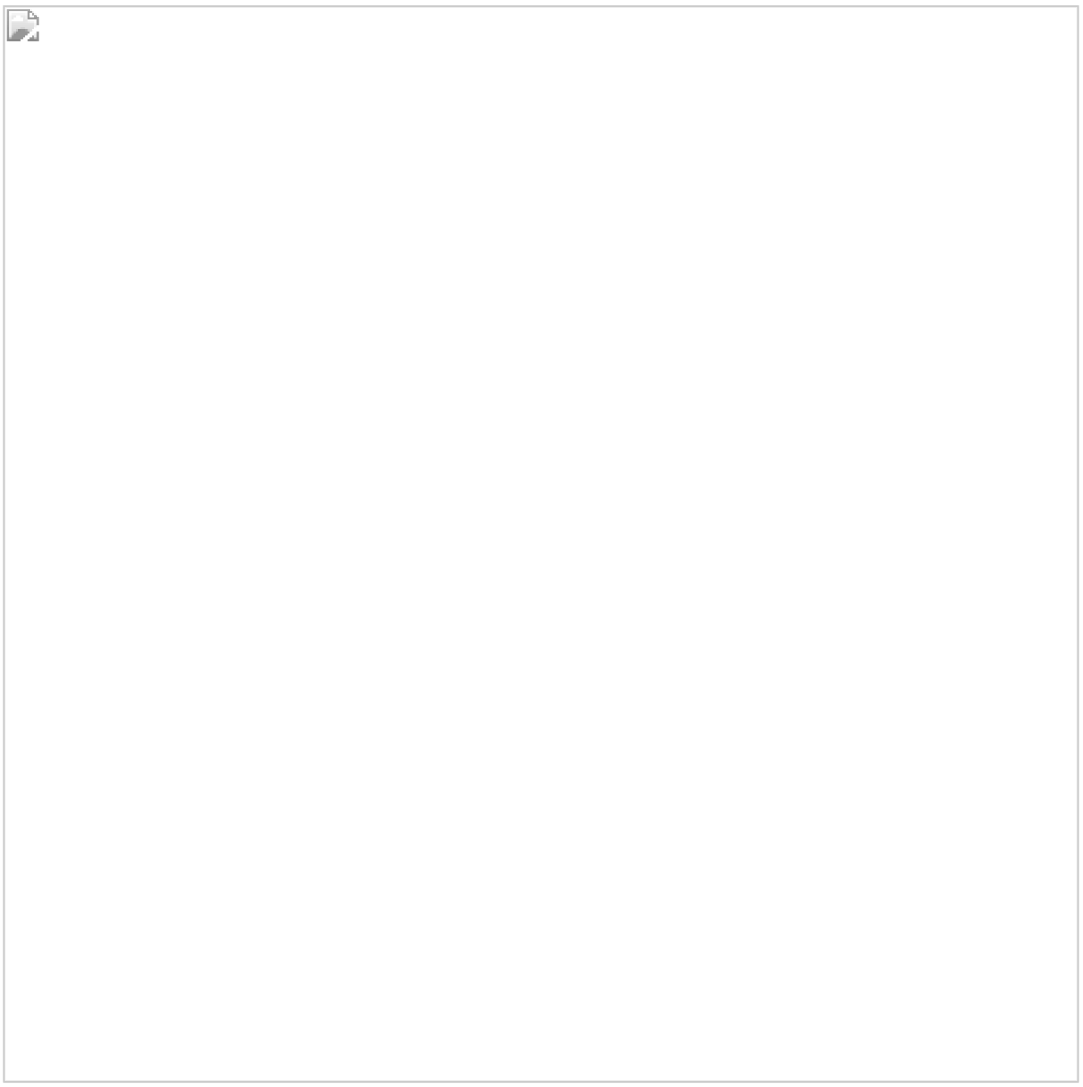
The seventh task was a wild bull in Crete that breathed fire. Hercules not only caught it, he tamed it, and carried it home on his shoulders. Eurystheus was at a loss to think of a task that Hercules could not do.

The eighth was the wild horses of Diomedes. This time, Hercules asked friends to help him, and together they caught them.

TALK ABOUT IT

Hercules asked friends to help this time. When is it good to ask?

Birds, a Bull, and Horses · another picture

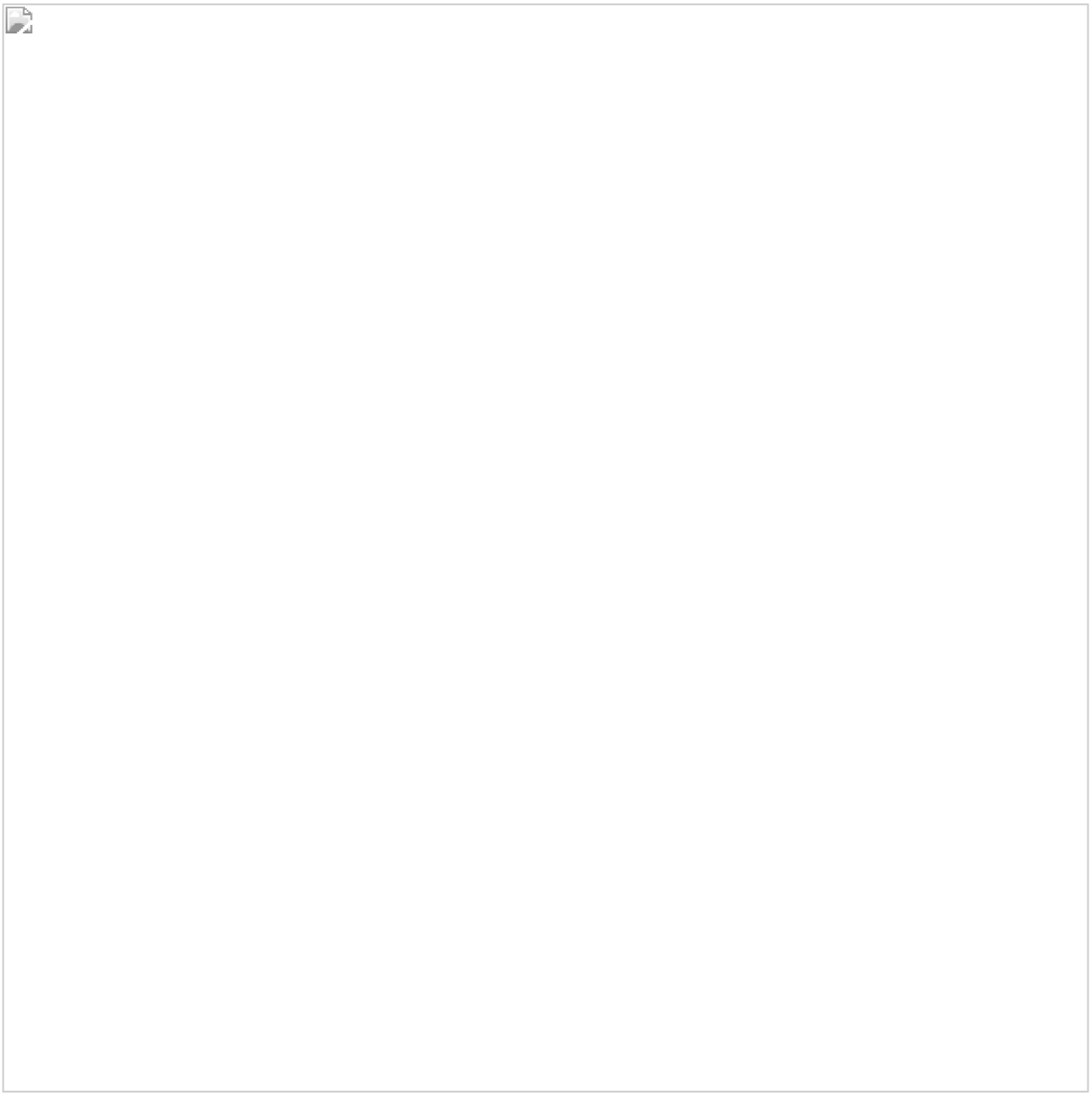


Think about it

1. What did Minerva lend Hercules?

- ○ A golden net
- ○ A magic horse
- ○ A brazen rattle

The Far-Off Oxen

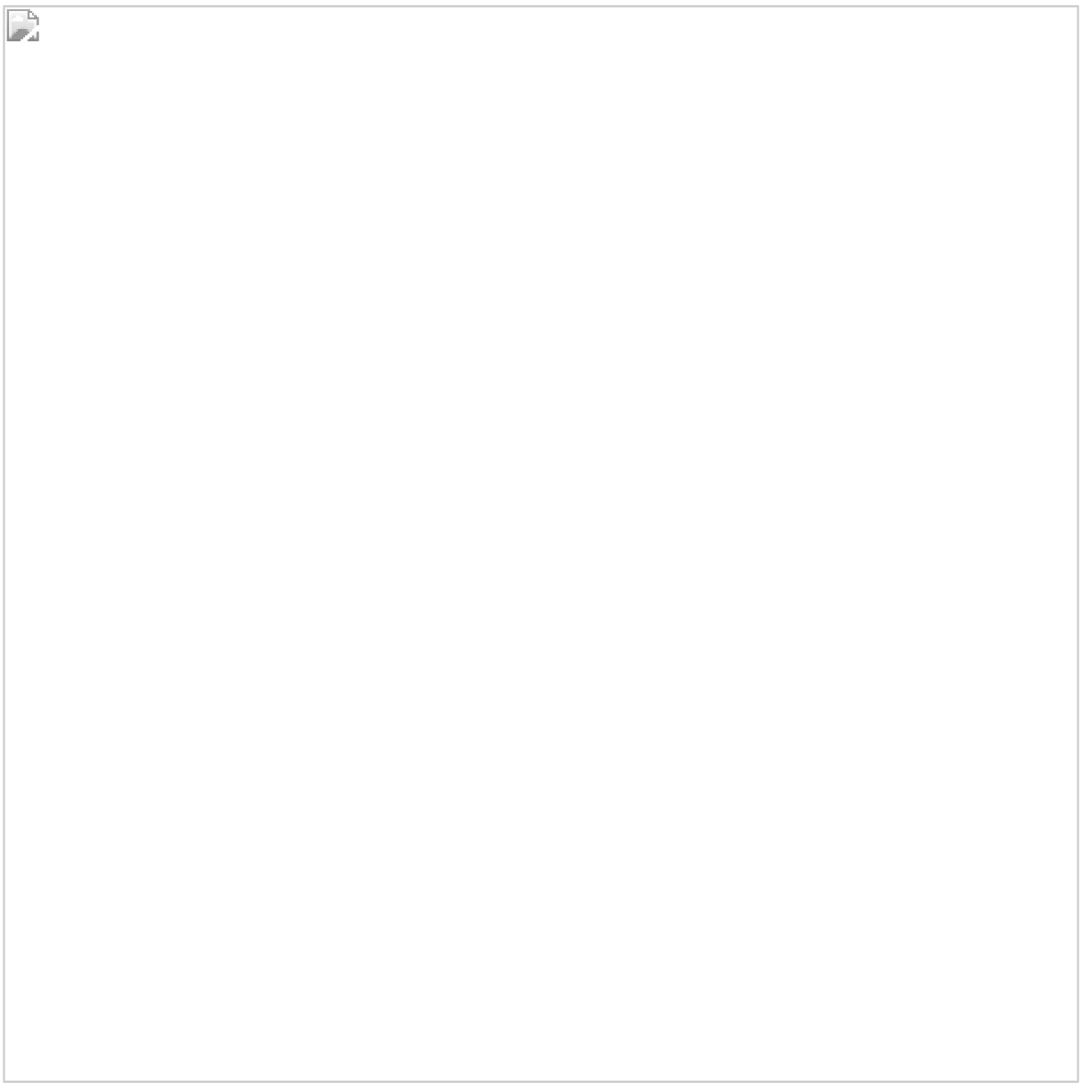


The tenth task was to bring the oxen of Geryon, a three-bodied monster, from a faraway land. Hercules journeyed a long way. Some say that, on the way, he split a great mountain in two, and that those two rocks, at the Straits of Gibraltar, are called the Pillars of Hercules.

In the end, he brought the oxen home to Eurystheus.

TALK ABOUT IT

Which labor do you think was the hardest for Hercules so far? Why?

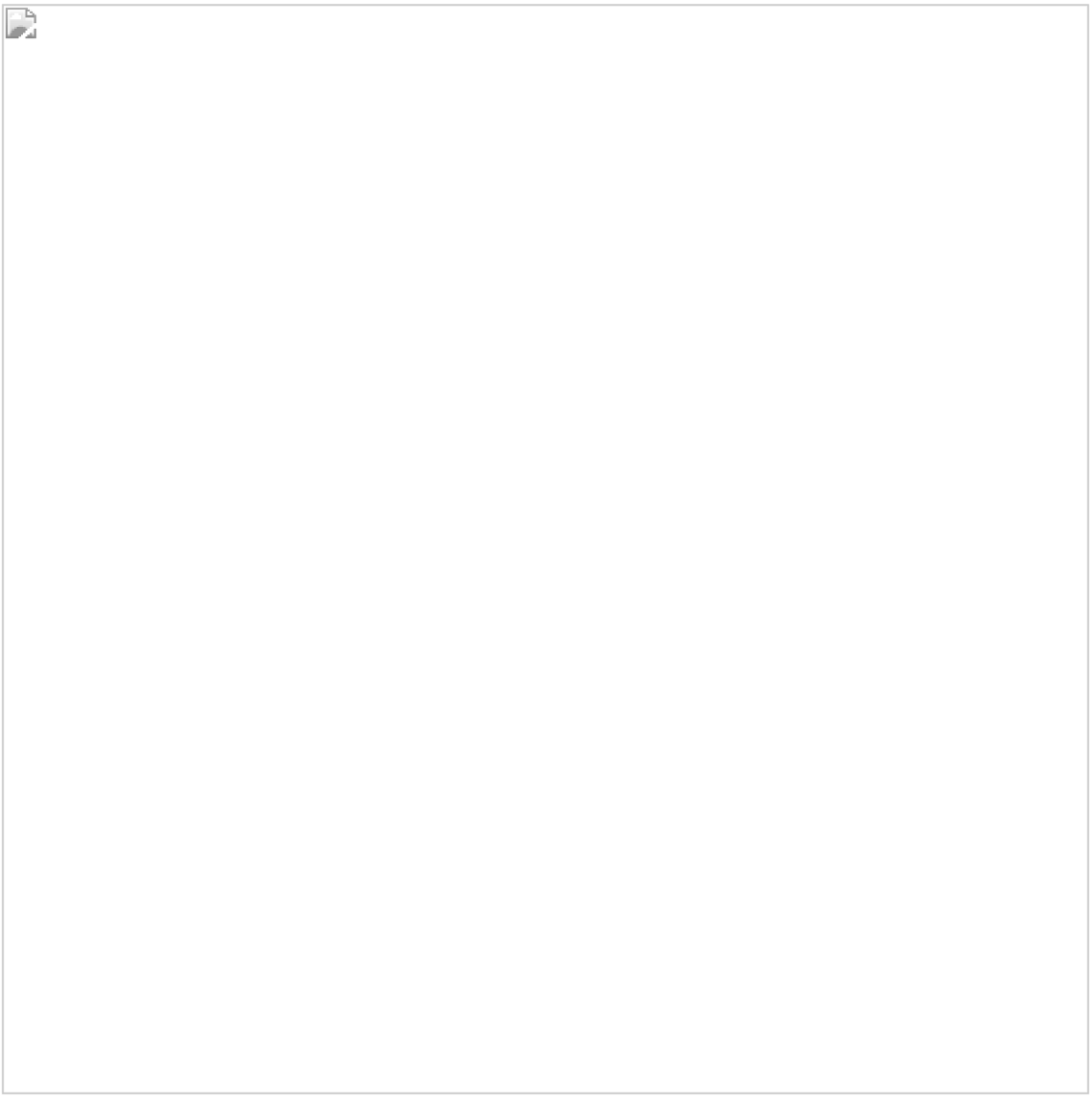


Think about it

1. What are the two rocks called, that Hercules is said to have made?

- ○ The Lion's Teeth
- ○ The Giant's Steps
- ○ The Pillars of Hercules

Atlas and the Golden Apples



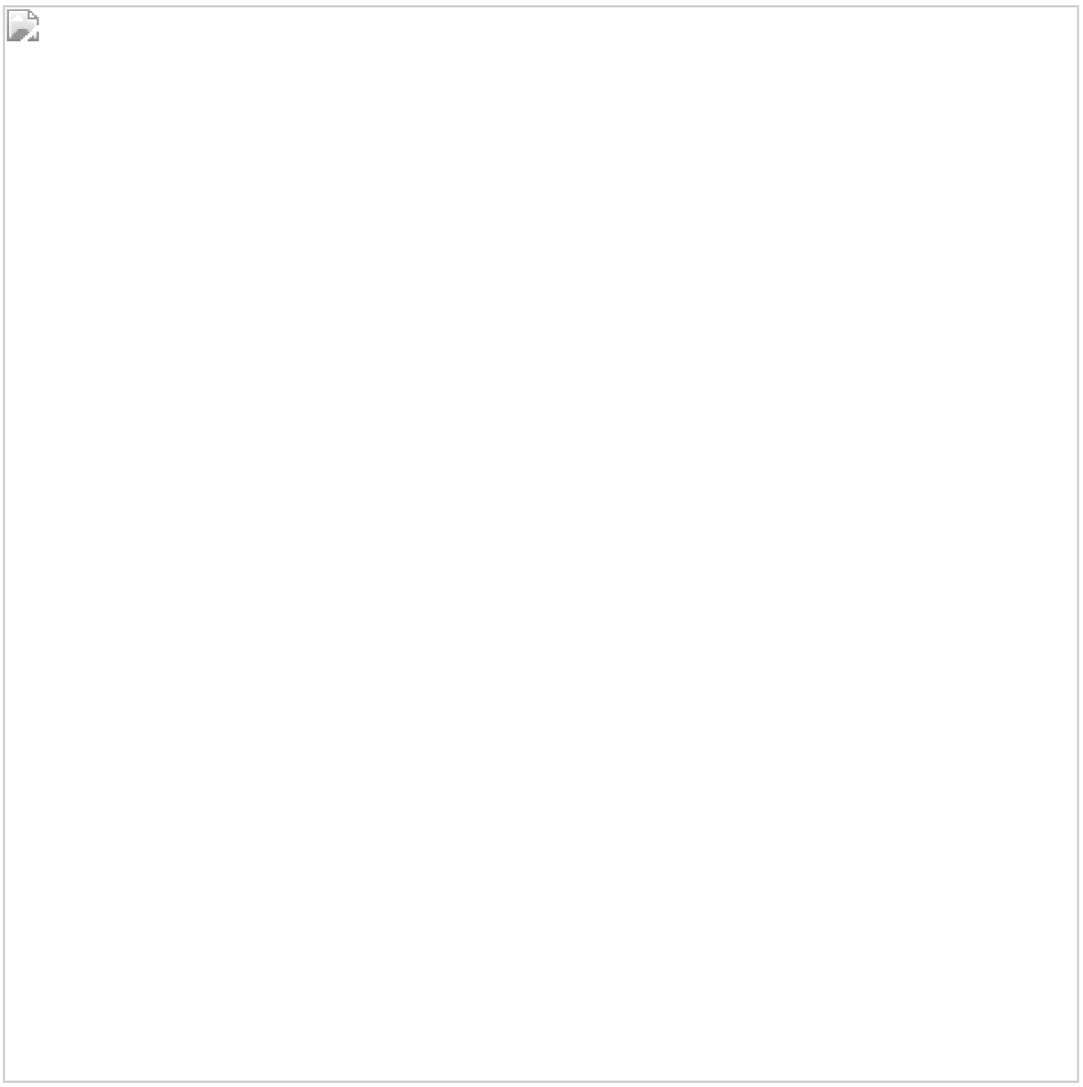
Next, Eurystheus wanted golden apples from a far-off tree. Hercules did not know where it grew, but he heard that Atlas, a king in Africa, might know.

Atlas was holding up the starry sky on his shoulders. Hercules offered to take the load if Atlas would tell him where the tree was. Atlas agreed, and for days Hercules held up the sky and the earth on his own back.

Then Atlas opened the gate of the Garden of the Hesperides, his daughters, who guarded the golden apples with a dragon. Hercules got past the dragon and took the apples. But afterwards Minerva put them back.

TALK ABOUT IT

Hercules took on a heavy load that was someone else's. “Bear ye one another's burdens” (Galatians 6:2). Who could you help with a heavy load this week?

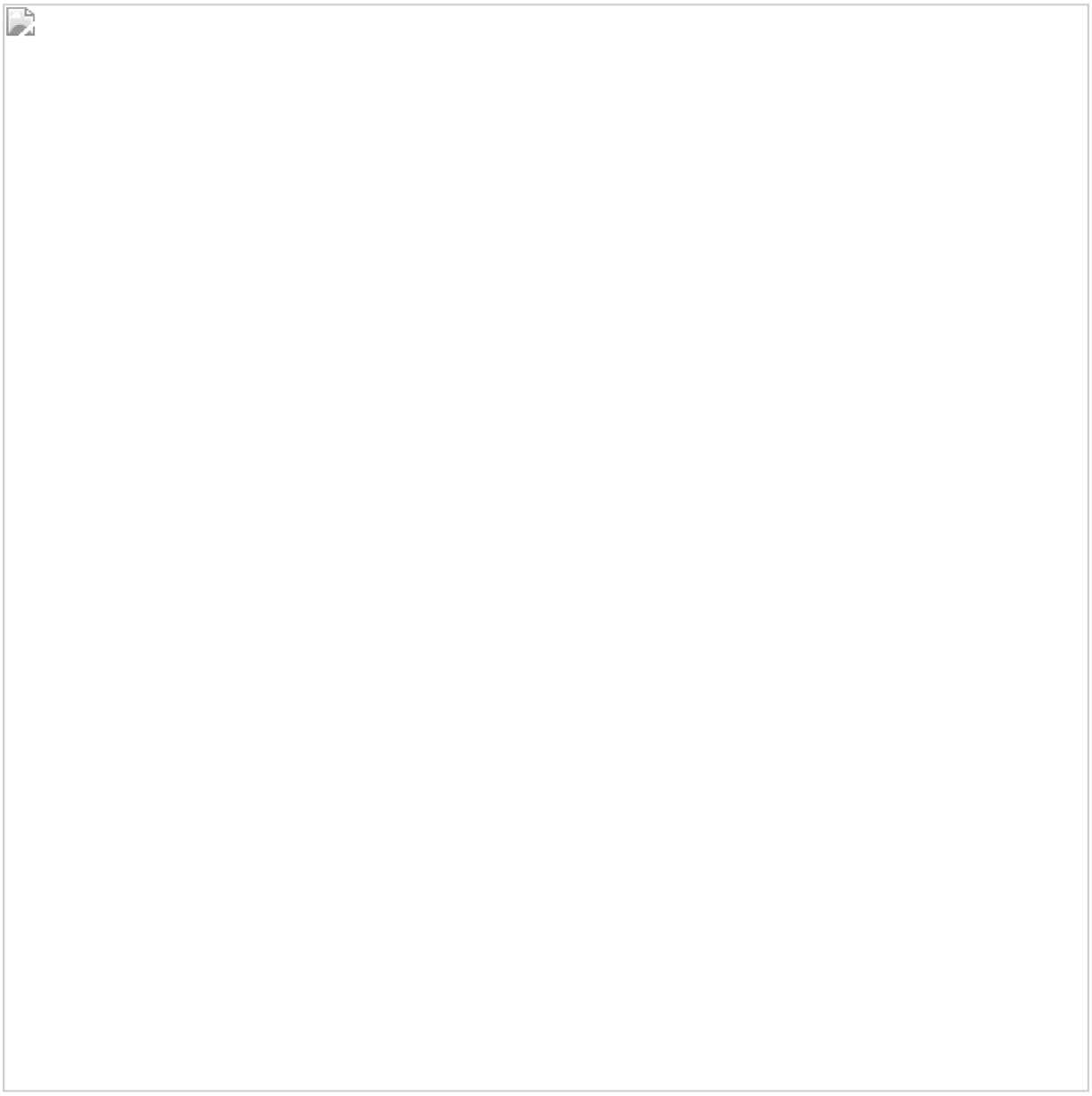


Think about it

1. What did Hercules hold up while Atlas helped him?

- ○ A mountain of gold
- ○ The starry sky
- ○ A castle

The Last Labor



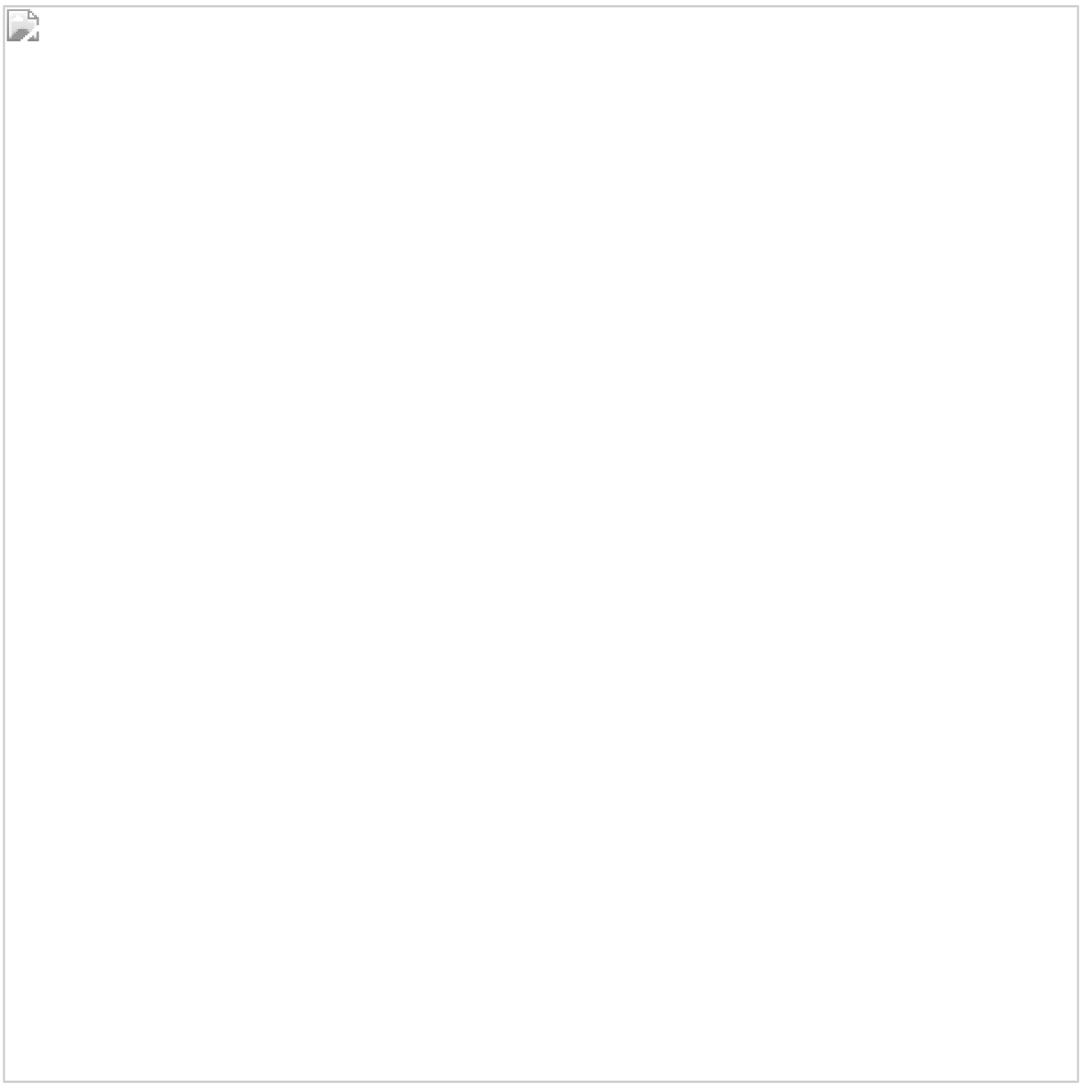
The twelfth labor was the hardest. Hercules had to bring up Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guarded the land of the dead.

Pluto, the god of that land, said Hercules could take the dog if he could do it without club or spear. Pluto never dreamed he could.

But Hercules put forth his strength, and he did it. He carried Cerberus to Eurystheus, and so the twelve labors were done. Hercules was set free from his cruel brother.

TALK ABOUT IT

Hercules finished all twelve labors. What do you think he felt when he was free?

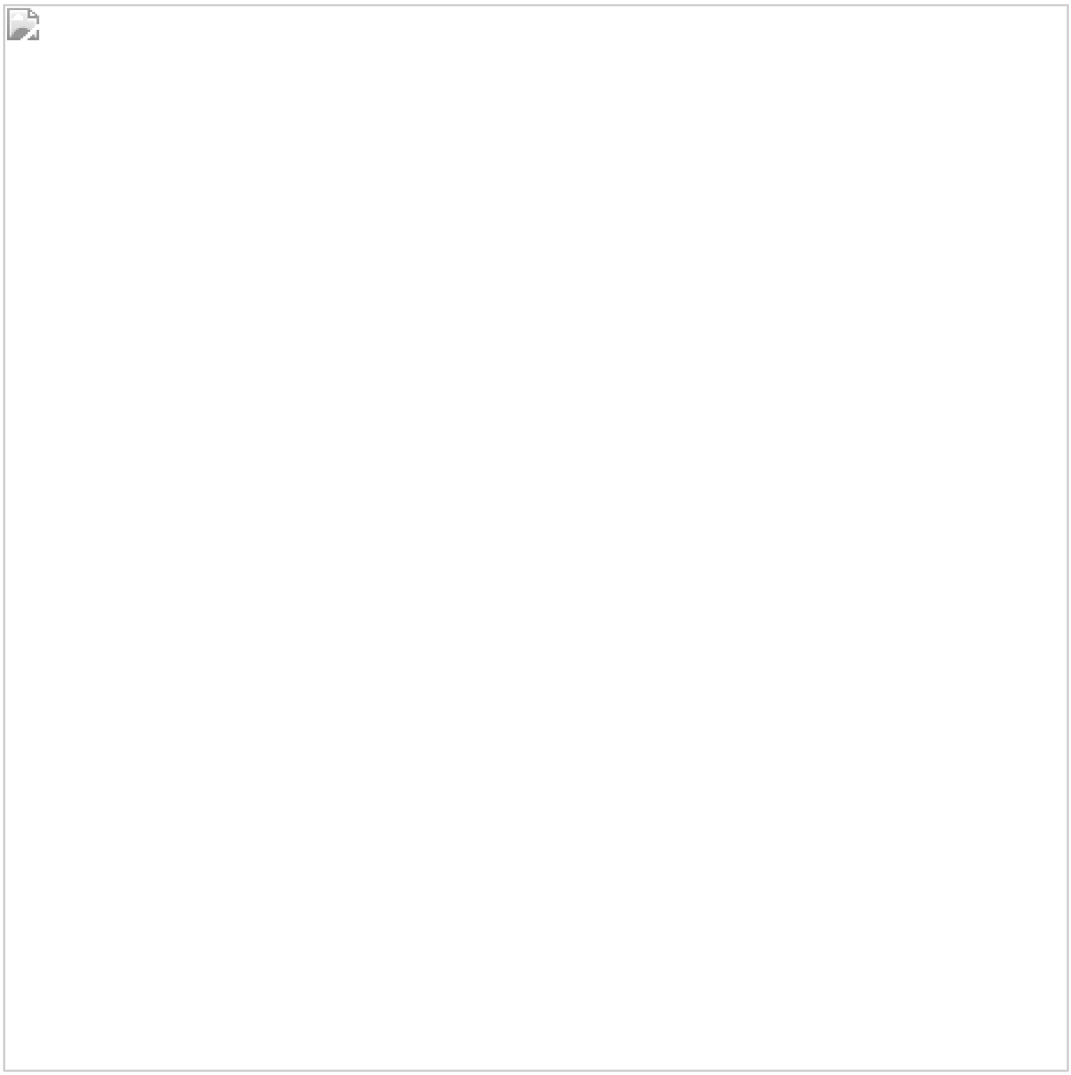


Think about it

1. What could Hercules not use to capture Cerberus?

- ○ A club or a spear
- ○ His hands
- ○ A rope

A Friend in the Dark



Hercules did not stop doing good deeds when the twelve years were over. His friend Theseus was caught in the land of the dead, and Hercules went down there to bring him home.

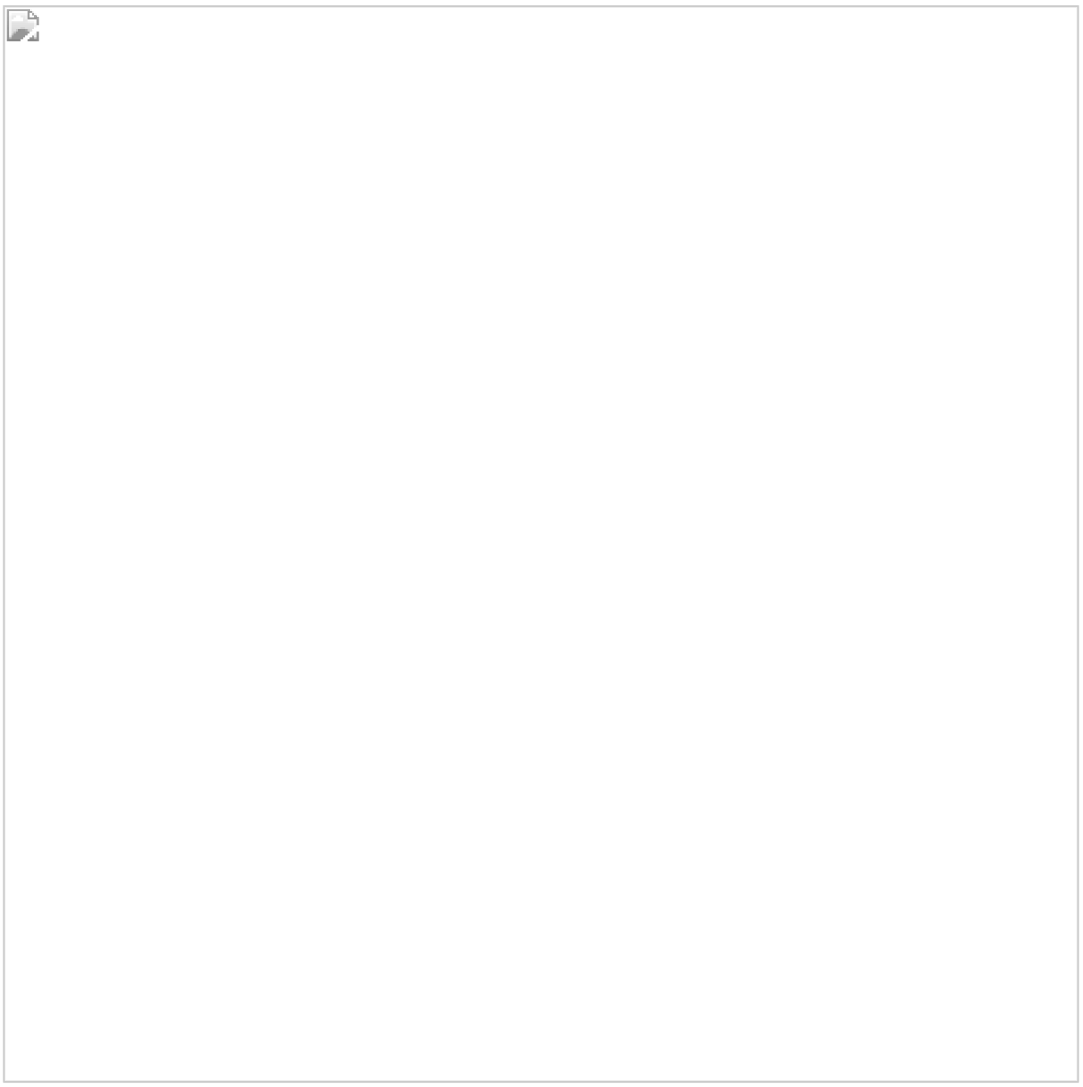
He crossed the river Styx with the ferryman Charon, to Pluto's dark palace, where Pluto sat on an ebony throne with his beloved Proserpina. Hercules asked for Theseus, and Pluto agreed.

On the way, Hercules saw the green and lovely Elysian Fields, where the people lived who “had loved and served their fellow men.”

Then the two friends left the land of the dead by an ivory door. What stories they had to tell!

TALK ABOUT IT

Hercules went a long way for his friend. Who would you go a long way for?



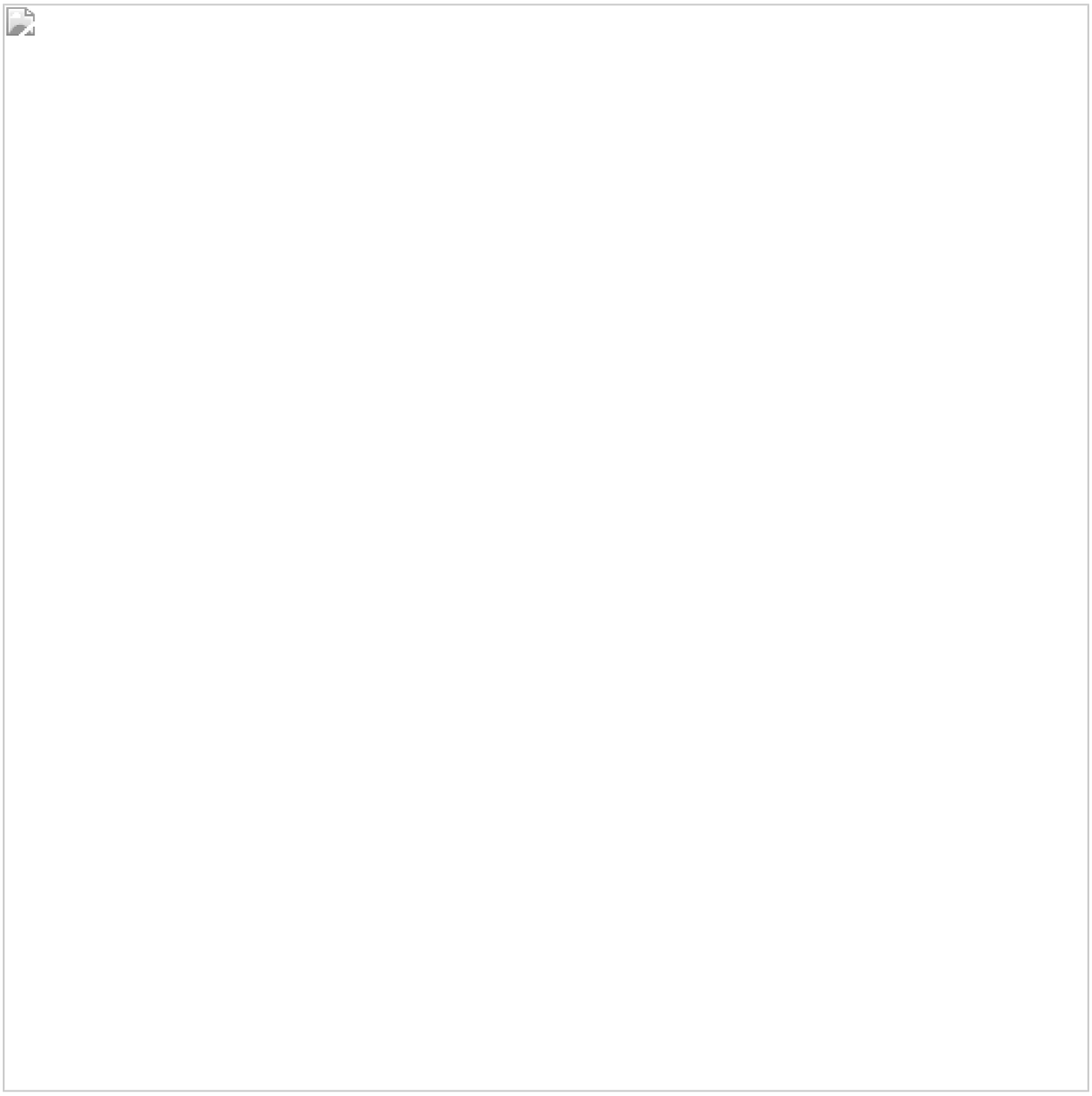
Think about it

1. Who did Hercules go to find in the land of the dead?

- ○ King Augeas
- ○ His friend Theseus
- ○ The golden stag

2. Who do you think lived in the Elysian Fields? What kind of people were they?

A Friend of Mankind



One of Hercules' last great deeds was for Prometheus, who was said to be the great friend of mankind.

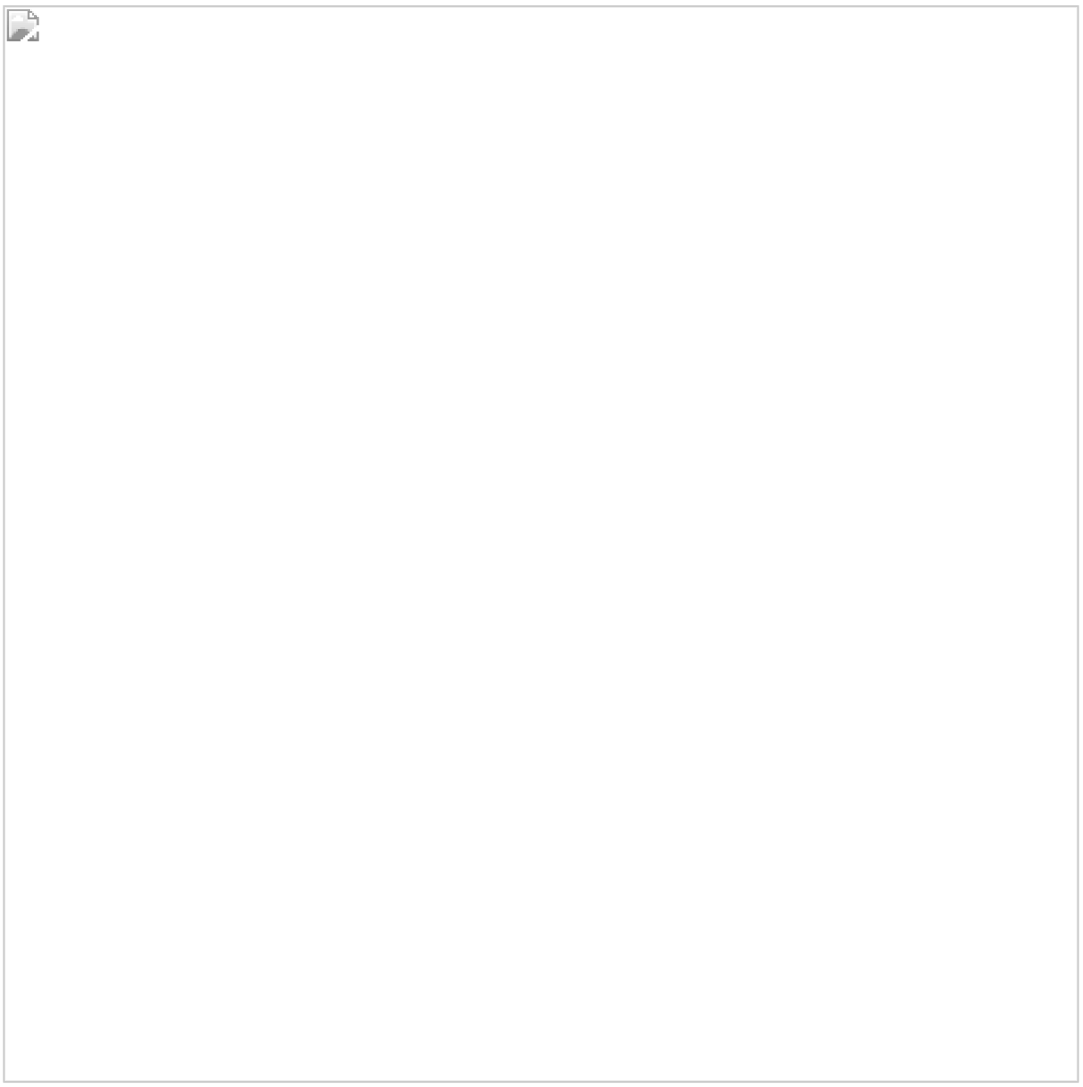
Prometheus had stolen fire from heaven and given it to people as a gift. Jupiter chained him to a rock on Mount Caucasus, and sent an eagle to trouble him every day.

Hercules stopped the eagle and broke the chains, and set the friend of mankind free.

TALK ABOUT IT

Prometheus gave people fire. What does fire help us do?

A Friend of Mankind · another picture

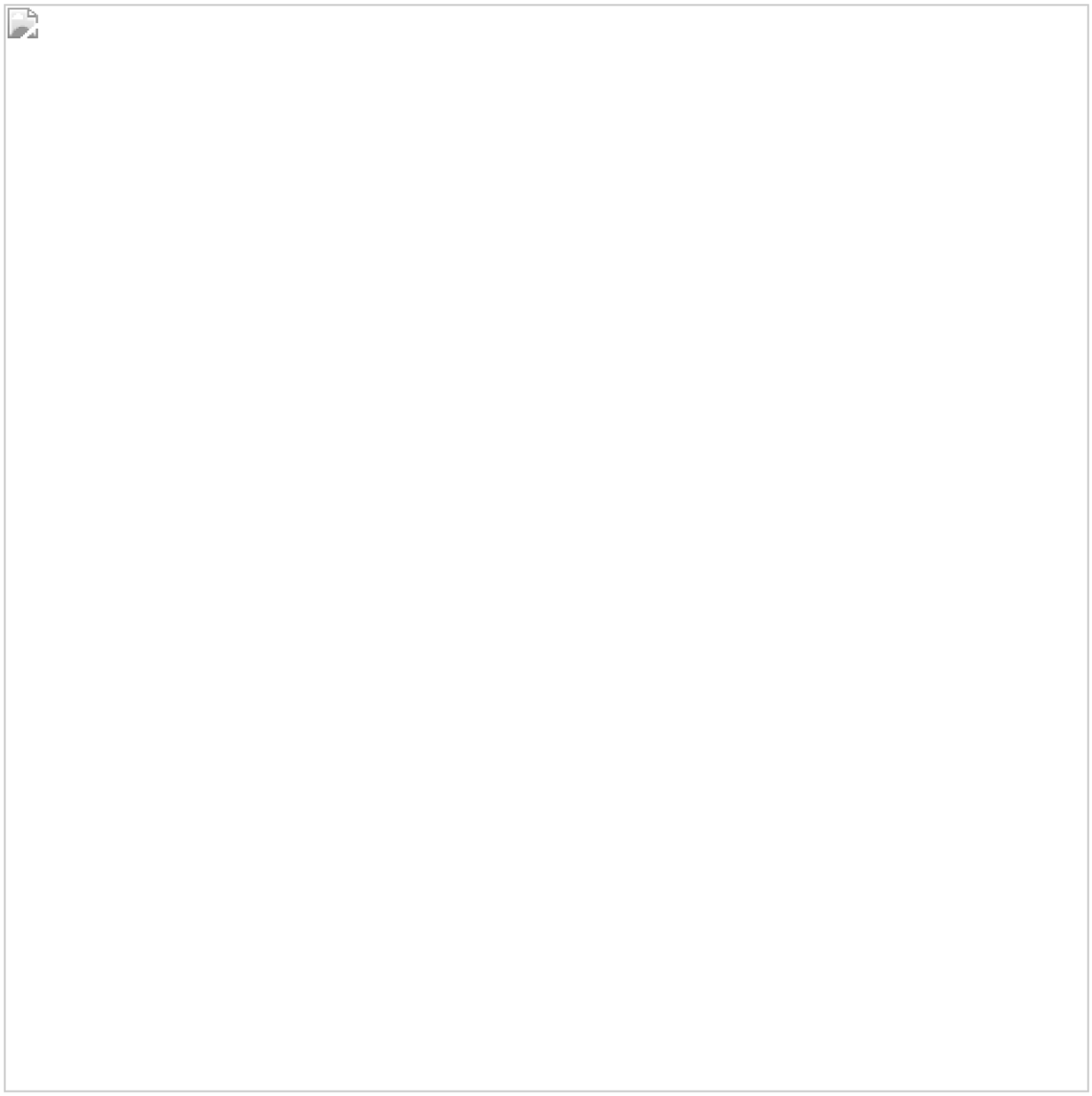


Think about it

1. What did Prometheus give to people?

- ○ Gold
- ○ Bread
- ○ Fire

The Shirt of Nessus



Hercules married Deianira. On the way home they came to a river, and a Centaur named Nessus offered to carry her across. But Nessus ran off with Deianira! Hercules shot him with a poisoned arrow, and the Centaur fell.

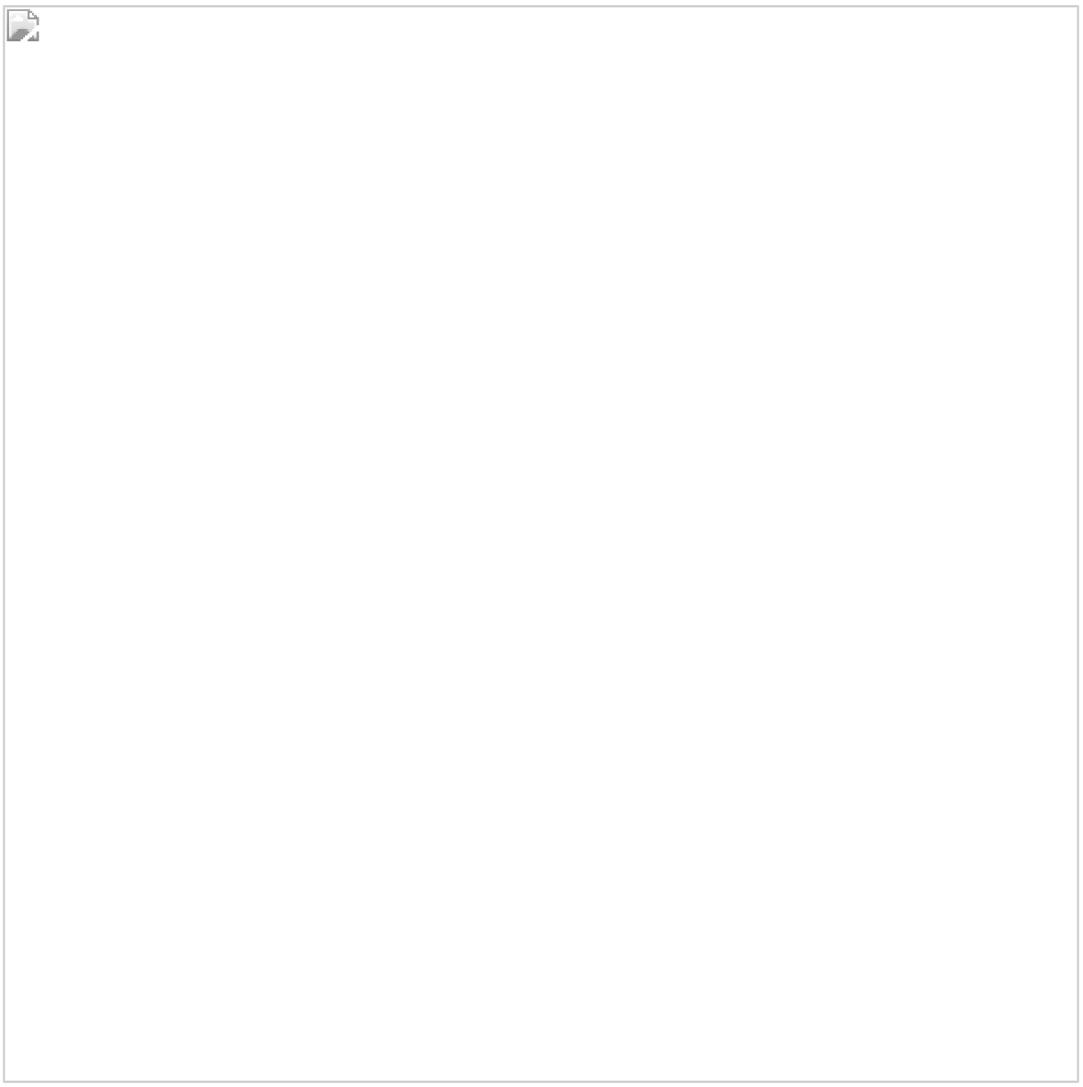
Before he died, Nessus told Deianira a trick: if she ever feared her husband's love was fading, she should give him Nessus's shirt to wear.

Some time later, Deianira was afraid, and she sent Hercules the shirt. But the arrow's poison was still in it. When Hercules put it on, it hurt him terribly, and he could not take it off.

TALK ABOUT IT

Deianira thought she was doing something loving. Can you do the wrong thing when you are trying to love someone? What helps?

The Shirt of Nessus · another picture

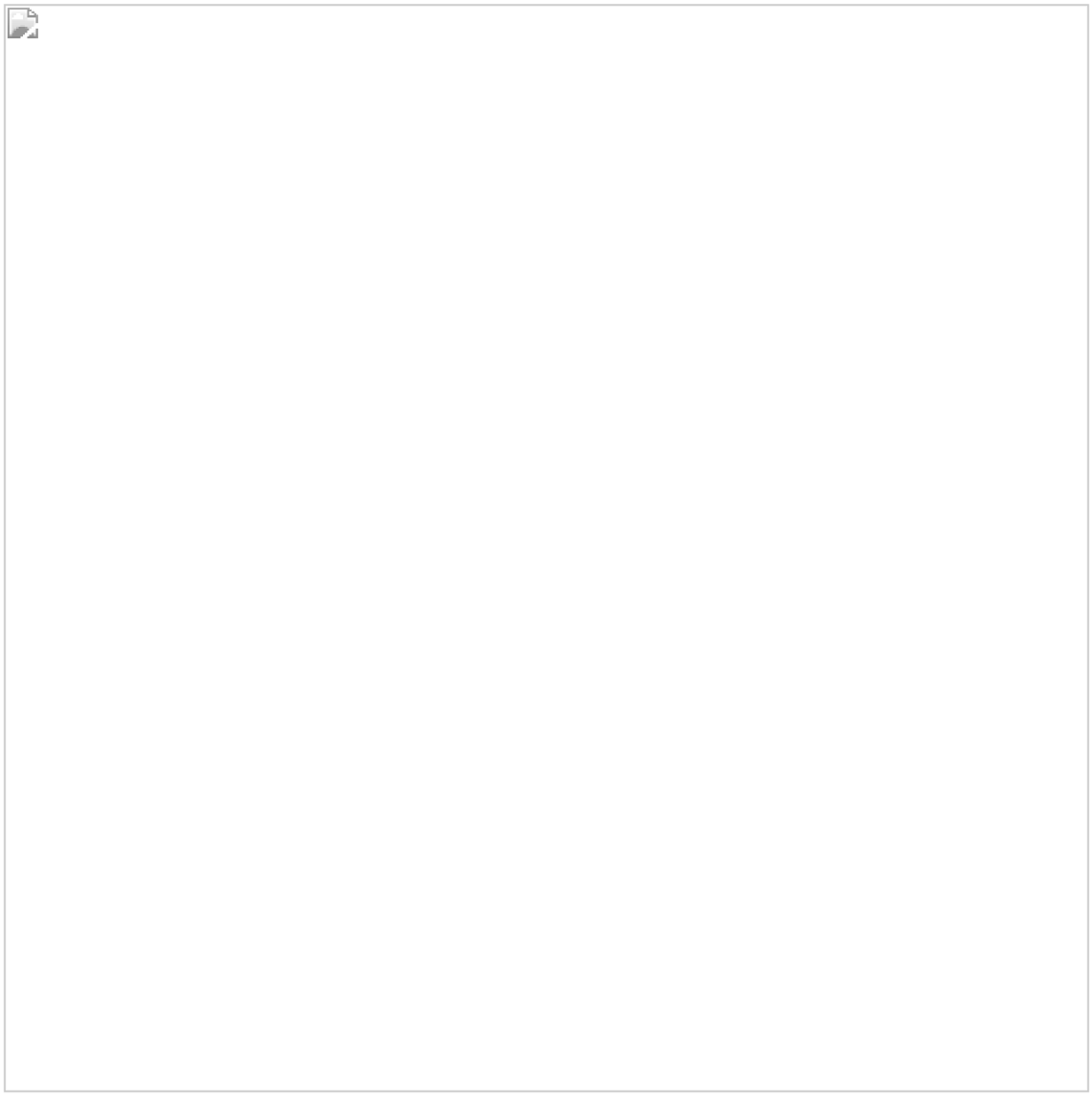


Think about it

1. What did Nessus tell Deianira to do?

- ○ Give Hercules his shirt
- ○ Run away
- ○ Hide the arrows

Farewell, Hercules



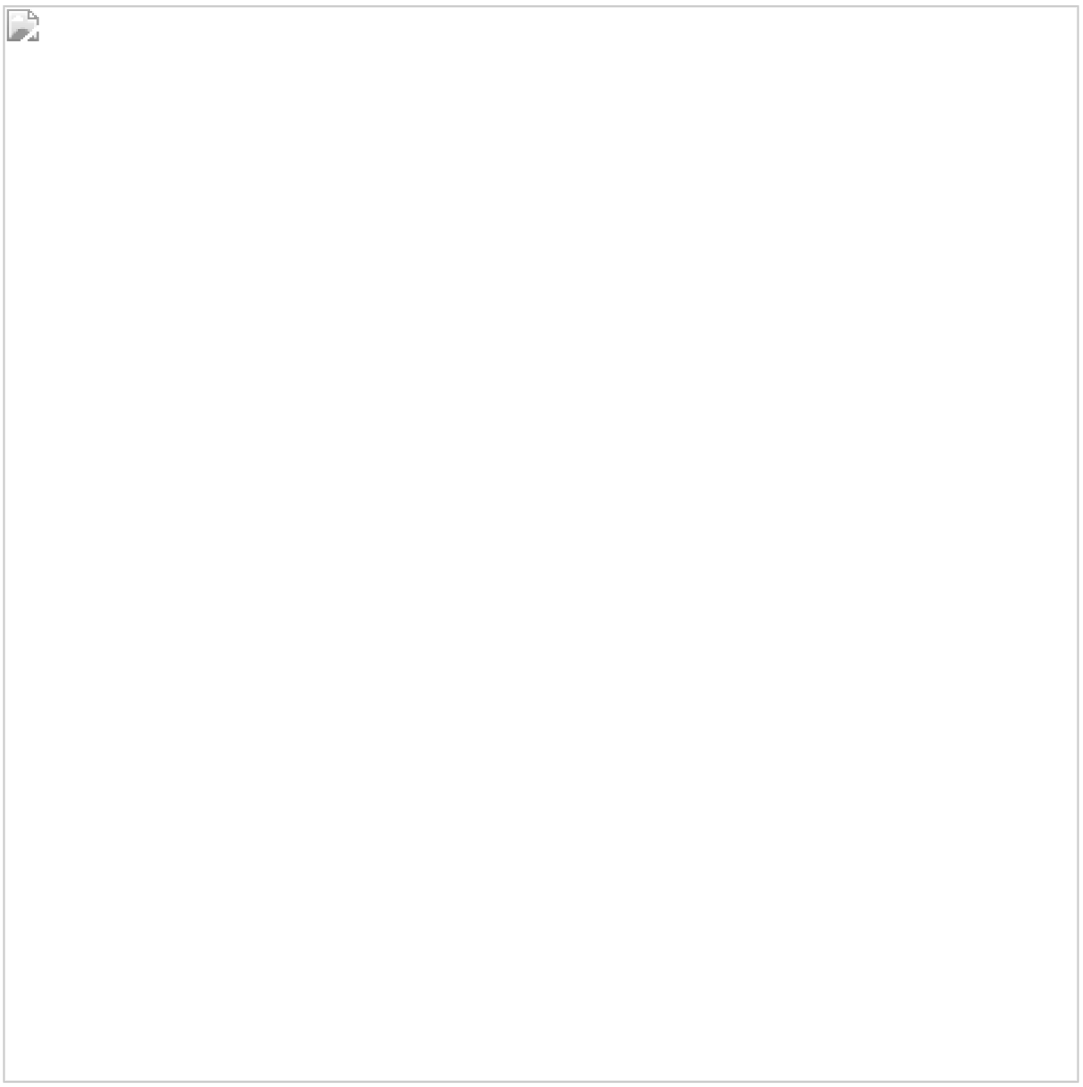
At last his majesty and courage came back to him, though he was still in pain. He called his friend Philoctetes to embrace him once more, but feared the poison would harm him too. “Alas, I am not even permitted to embrace thee!” he cried.

Hercules piled up the uprooted trees and asked Philoctetes to kindle the fire. To thank him, he gave him a quiver full of his arrows. He asked him to tell no one he was gone, so fear of Hercules would keep monsters and robbers away.

So Hercules died, and the gods received him among the Immortals on Mount Olympus, as had been promised.

TALK ABOUT IT

Hercules had so much strength, and at the end, he used it to keep his friend safe. What do you think that says about him?



Think about it

1. What did Hercules give his friend Philoctetes?

- ○ A golden crown
- ○ A quiver full of arrows
- ○ The lion's skin

2. Of everything Hercules did, which deed do you think was the most loving? Why?

“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

— Yeshua HaMashiach

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