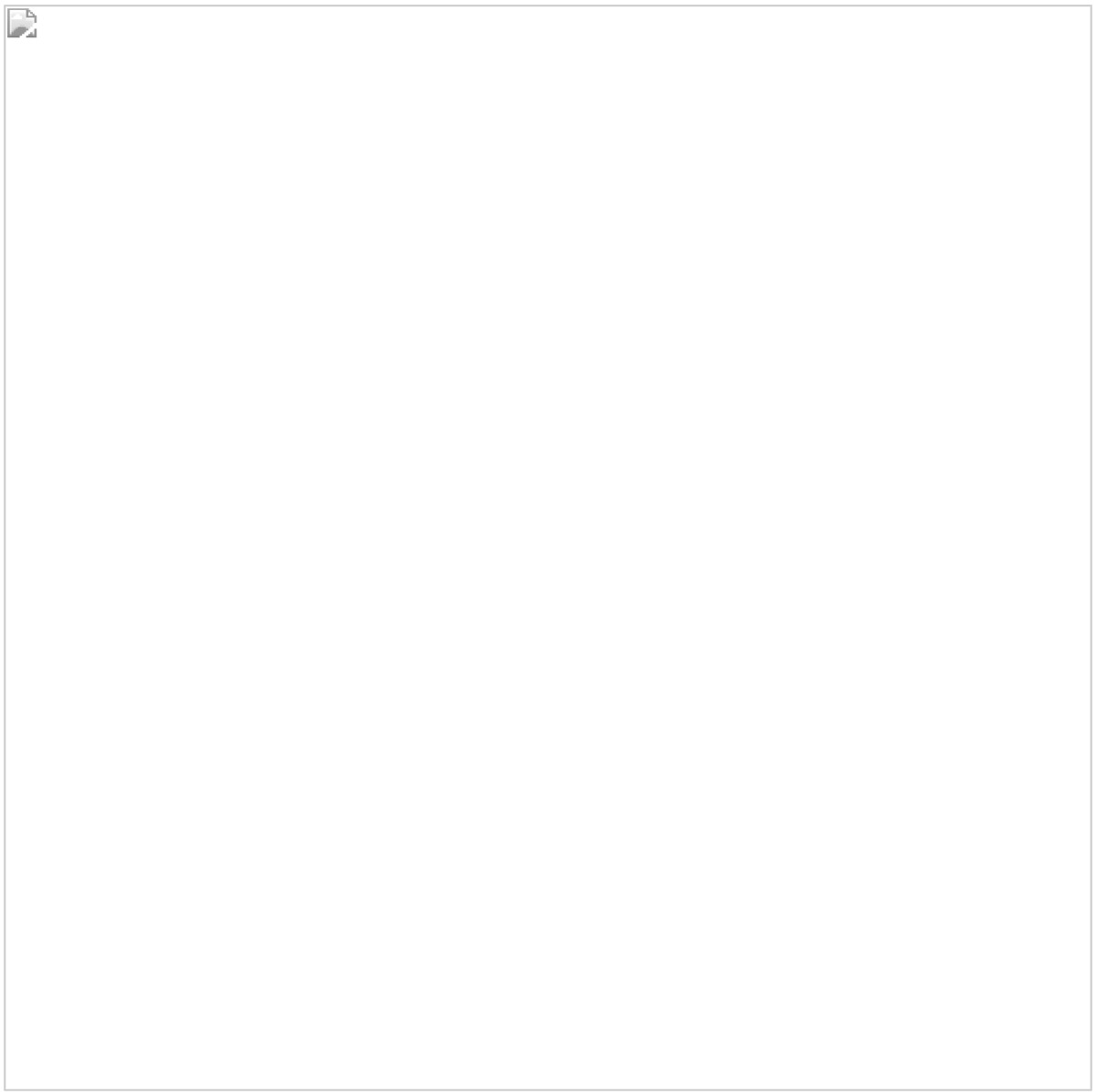
COLORING THE CLASSICS

The Argonauts

A Hero Tale of Greece



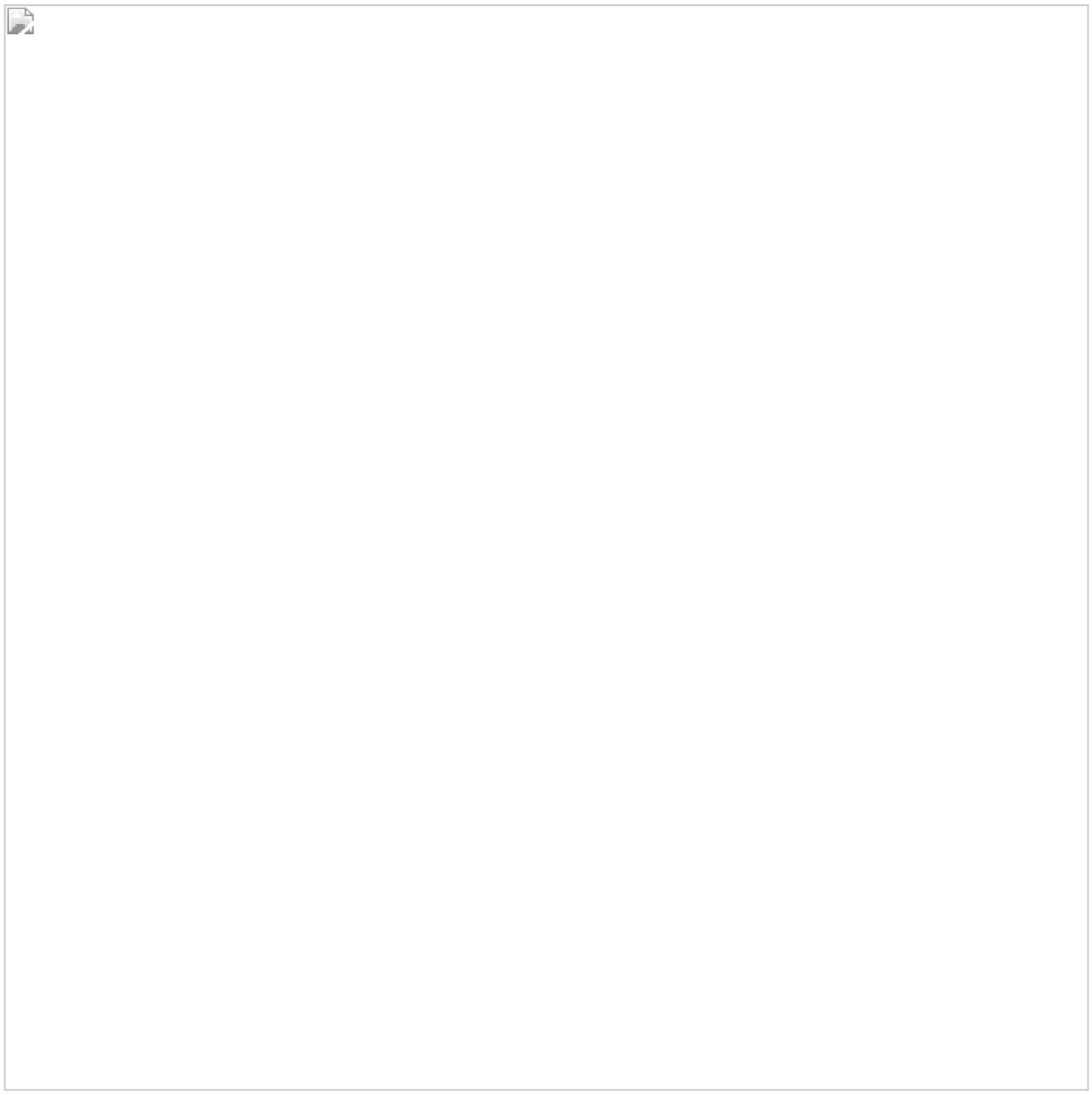
A long time ago, a wonderful ram with a fleece of gold came flying out of the clouds. It took a boy named Phrixus and a girl named Helle on its back, and it carried them far away over land and sea.

TALK ABOUT IT

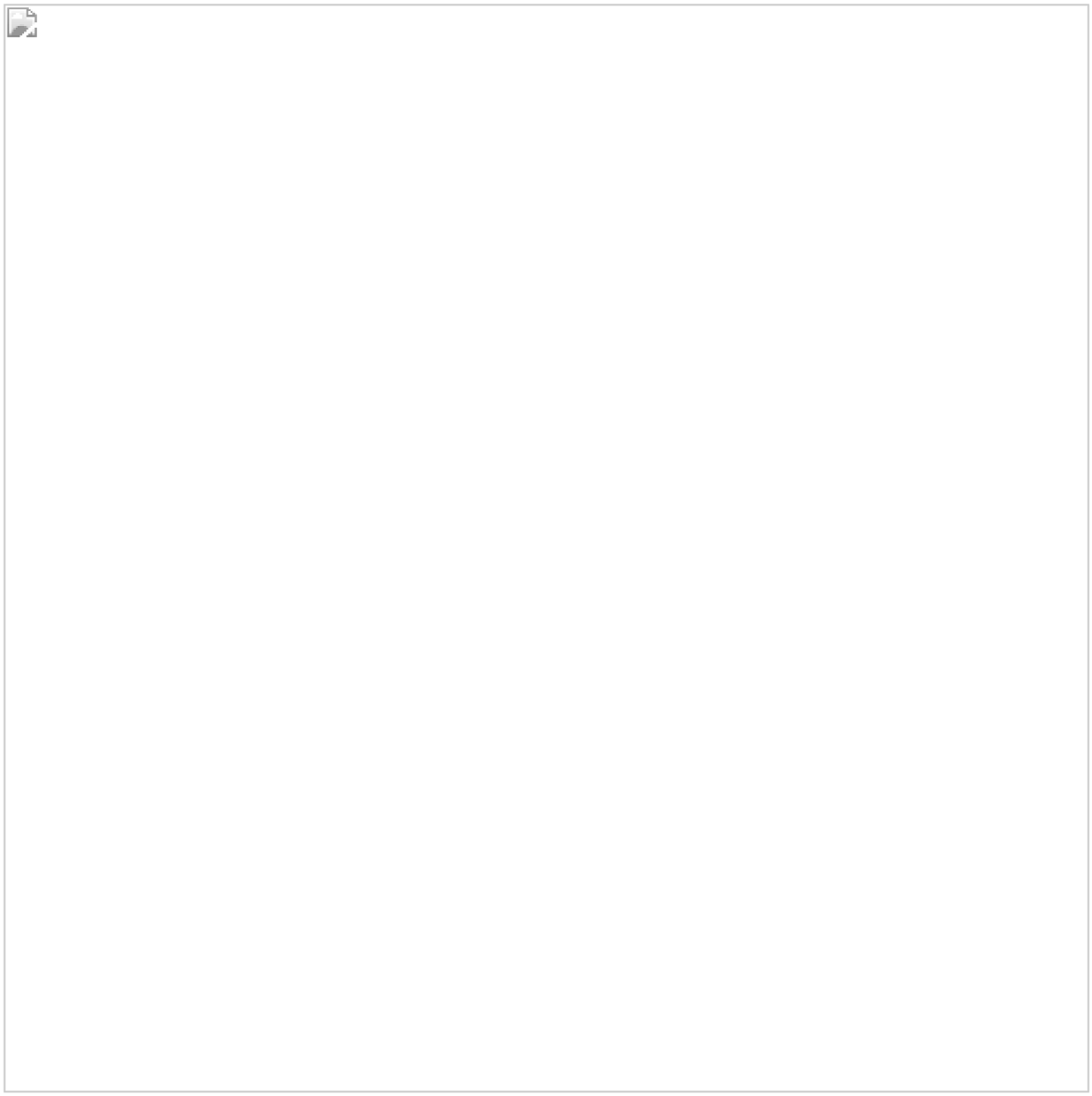
A flying golden ram! Where do you think it was taking the children?

This book belongs to _____

The Argonauts · another picture



The Golden Fleece



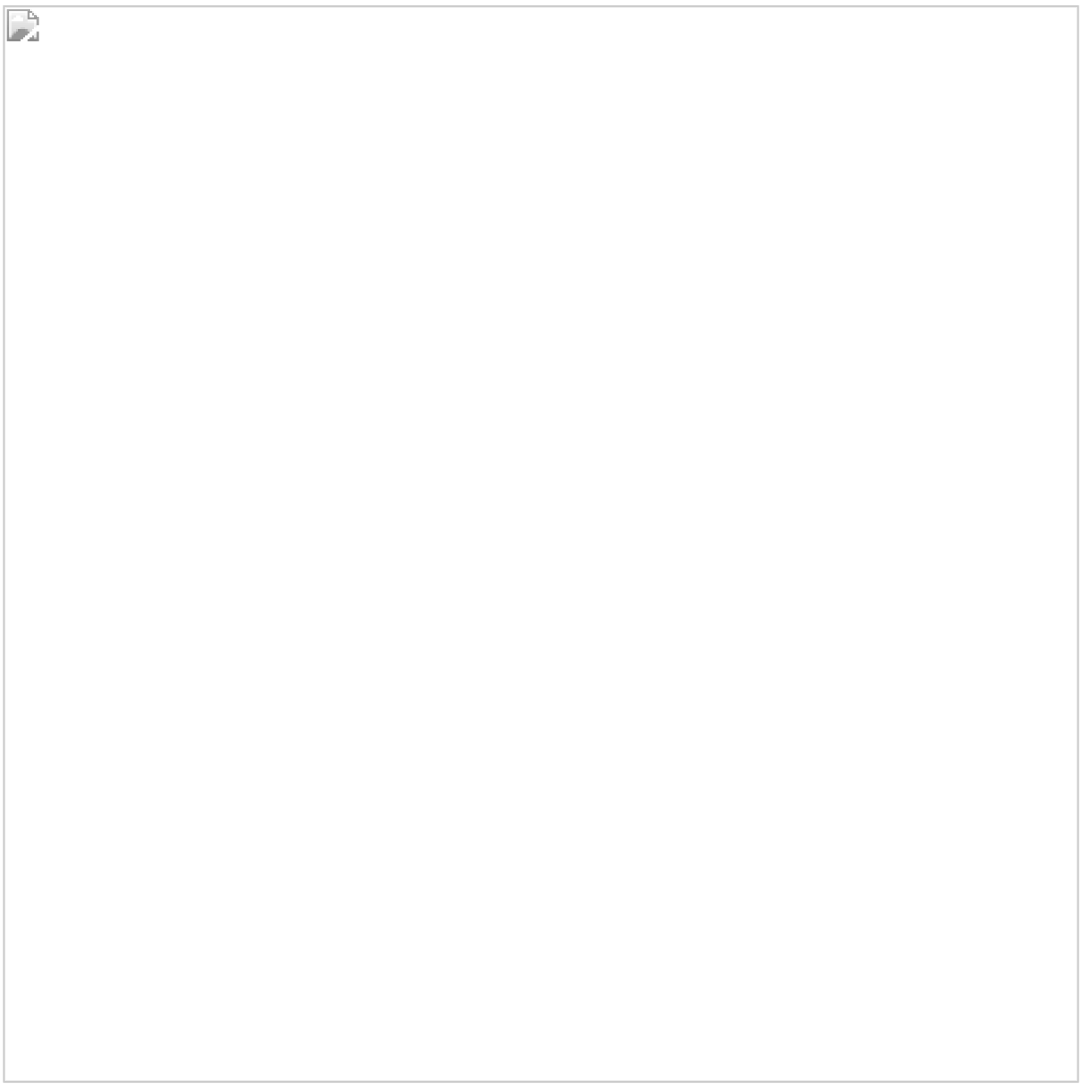
The ram was rescuing them, because their cruel stepmother wanted to harm them. Helle fell into the sea at a narrow strait, which is called the Hellespont after her to this day.

Phrixus rode on, all the way to a land called Colchis. There the golden fleece was nailed to a tree in a wood.

After many years Phrixus died far from his home, and his spirit could not rest. He came in dreams to the heroes of his country: “Come and set my spirit free, that I may go home to my fathers and to my kinsfolk.” But no one dared to go.

TALK ABOUT IT

Phrixus wanted to go home. Why do you think home matters so much, even to a spirit?

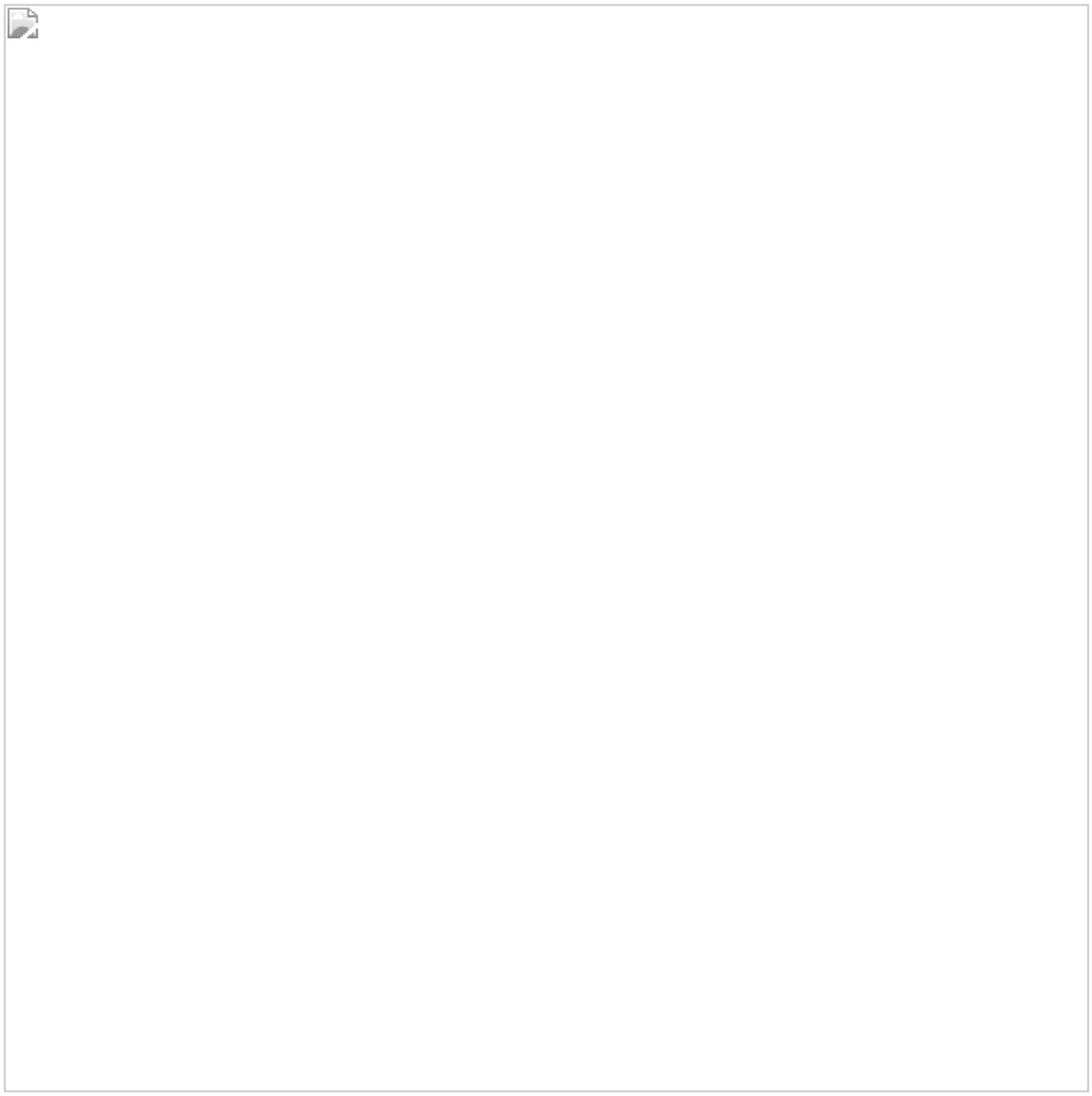


Think about it

1. What was the Golden Fleece?

- ○ A golden crown
- ○ The wool of a magic ram
- ○ A magic sword

The Boy on the Mountain



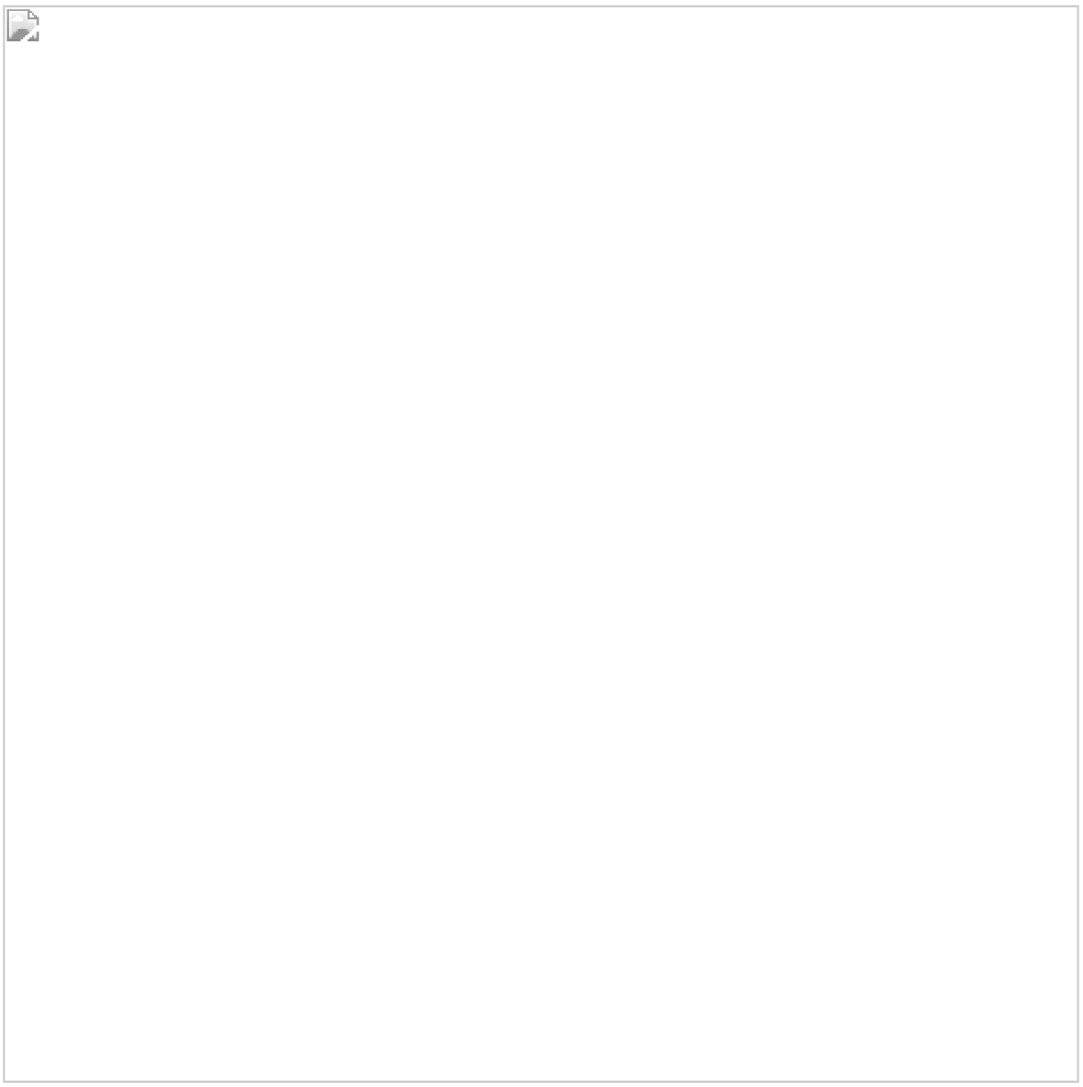
Now a king named Aeson had lost his kingdom to a fierce, lawless stepbrother. He led his little son up a snowy mountain, to hide him.

At the mouth of a cave they heard music. Inside lived Cheiron, the wisest of all, a Centaur who was a man down to the waist and a noble horse below. He sat playing a golden harp.

“Will you be my pupil from this day?” Cheiron asked the boy. And the boy stayed. He learned to wrestle, to hunt, to play the harp, and to ride. He learned how to heal wounds with herbs, so Cheiron named him Jason the Healer.

TALK ABOUT IT

Jason's father had to leave him with a stranger to keep him safe. What do you think that was like for his father?

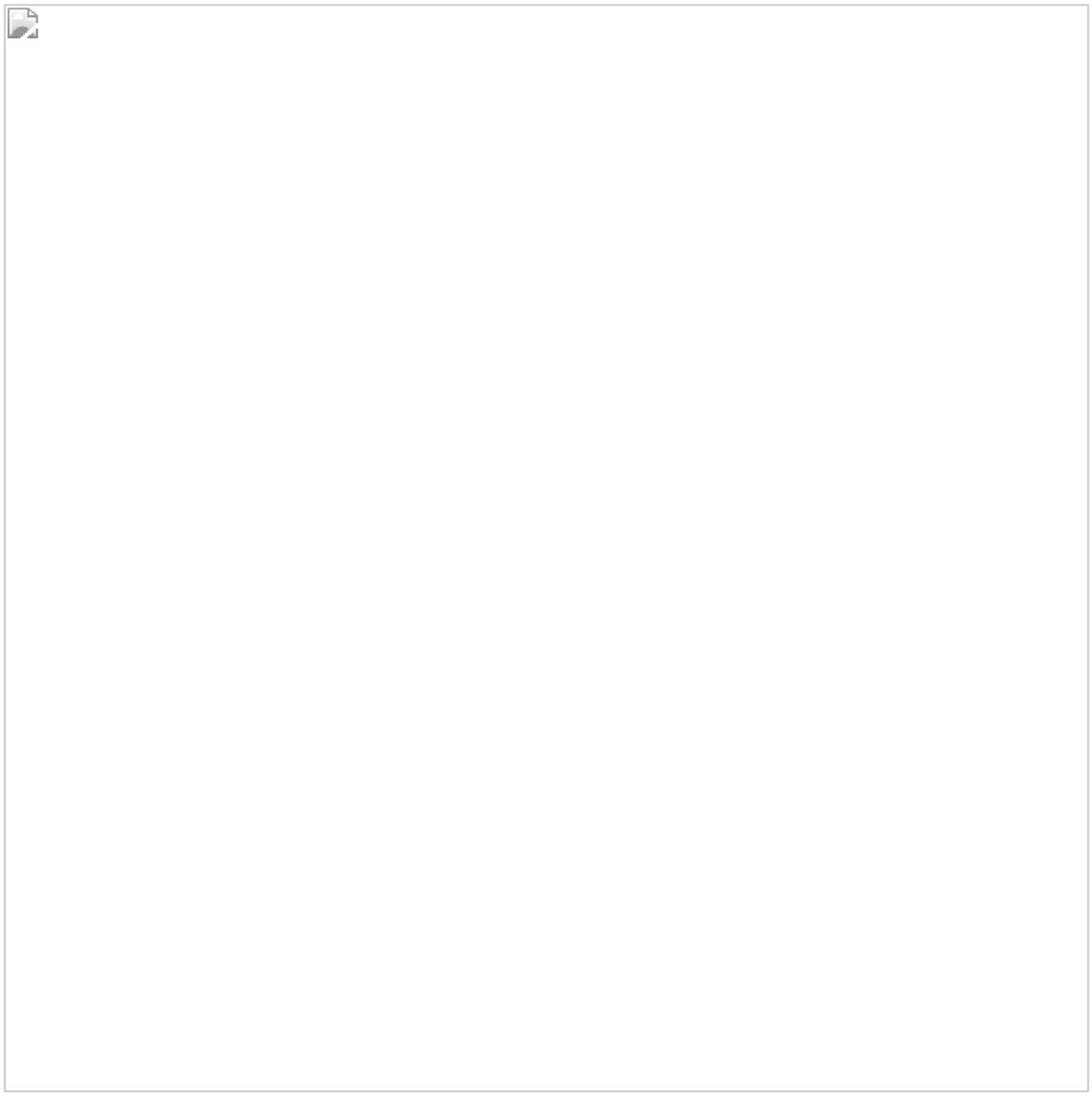


Think about it

1. Who taught Jason?

- ○ A king
- ○ A sailor
- ○ Cheiron the Centaur

The Old Woman at the River



Ten years went by, and Jason was a man. Cheiron asked him for two promises: “Speak harshly to no soul whom you may meet,” and to keep his word.

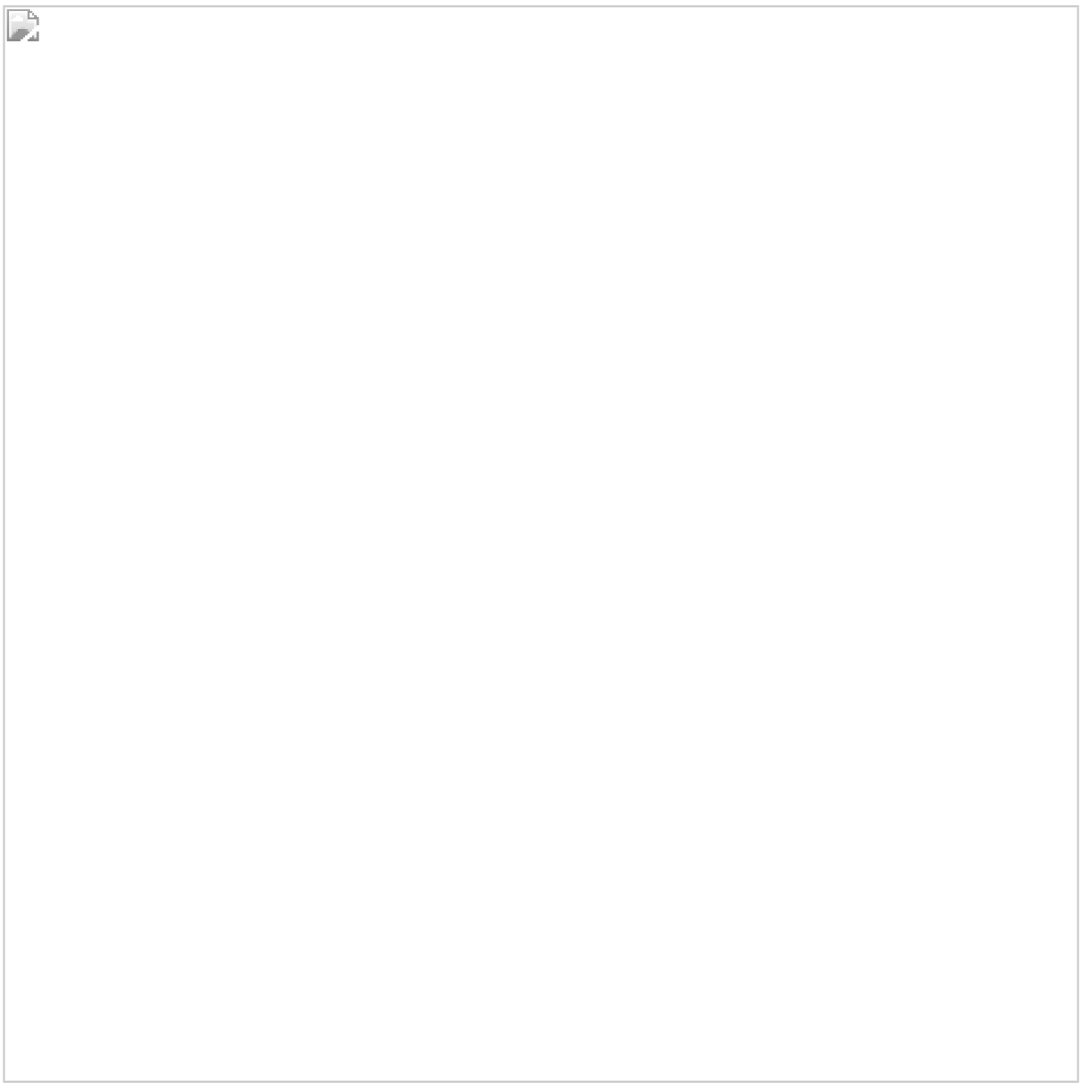
Down at a roaring river sat a wrinkled old woman. “Who will carry me across the flood?” she whined. Jason was about to answer scornfully, but he remembered his promise.

He carried her through the cold water. She complained all the way, but he only said, “Patience, mother, the best horse may stumble some day.” On the other side, he lost one of his sandals in the flood.

TALK ABOUT IT

“A soft answer turneth away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1). Why do you think Jason stayed gentle even when the woman was grumpy?

The Old Woman at the River · another picture

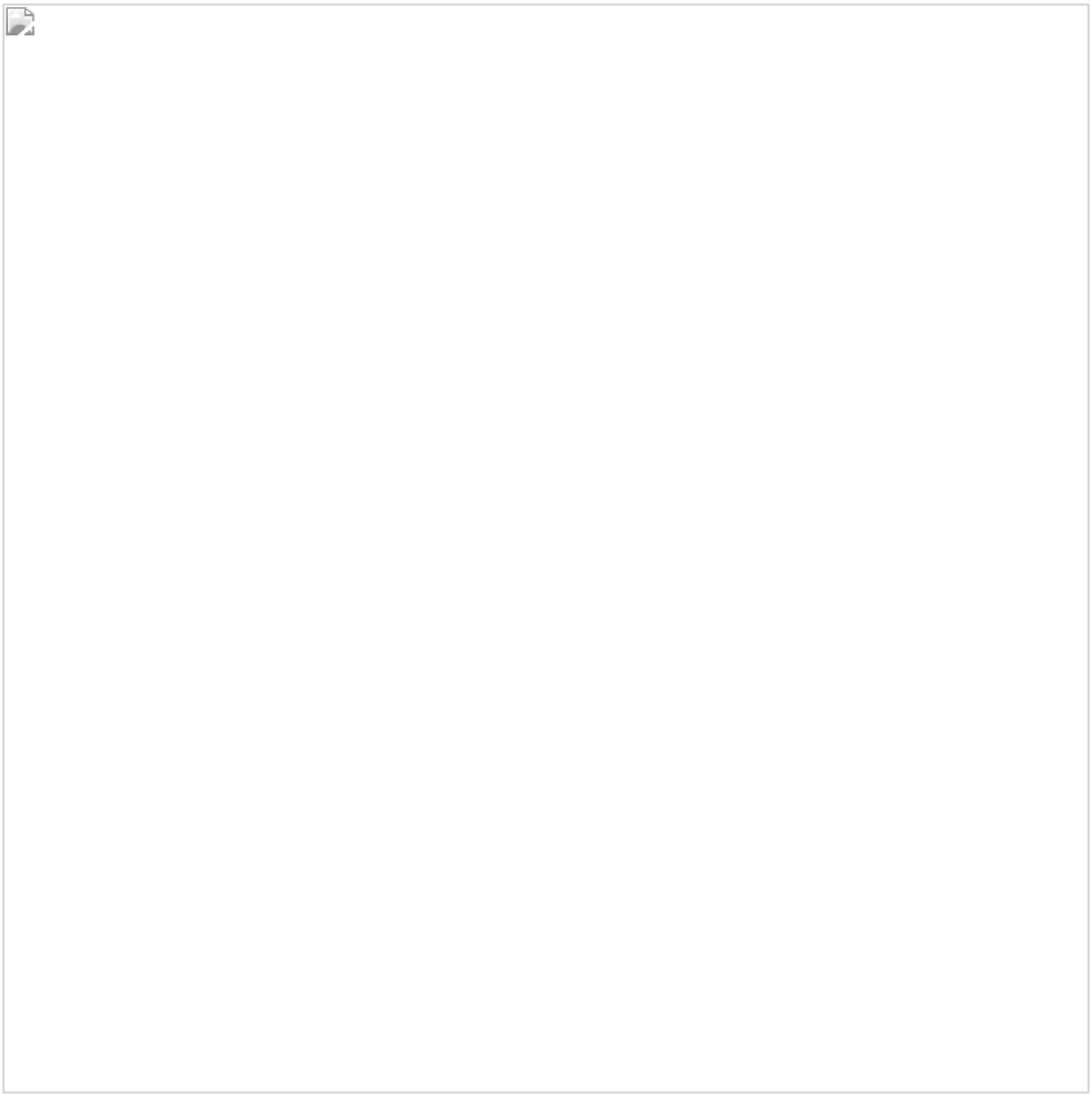


Think about it

1. What did Jason carry across the river?

- ○ An old woman
- ○ A sack of gold
- ○ A lamb

The Queen of the Gods



When Jason set her down and looked back, the old woman had grown tall and shining. It was Hera, the queen of the gods.

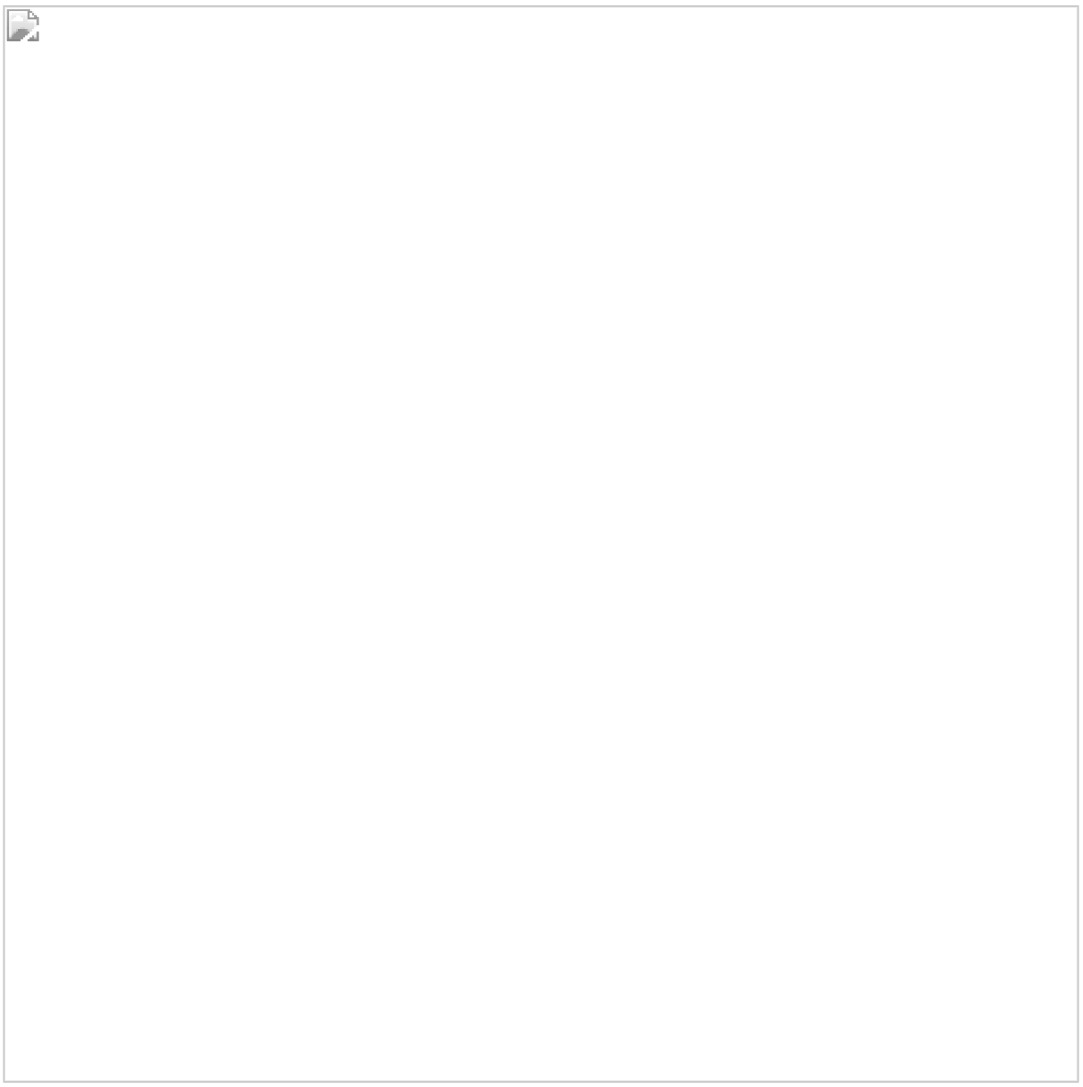
“Call on me in the hour of need, and try if the Immortals can forget!” she said. Then she rose like a white cloud and floated away.

Jason blessed old Cheiron. He had been kind to someone who could do nothing for him, and he did not know it was a goddess.

TALK ABOUT IT

Jason helped the woman without knowing who she was. Why does it matter to be kind to everyone, not just to people who can help you back?

The Queen of the Gods · another picture

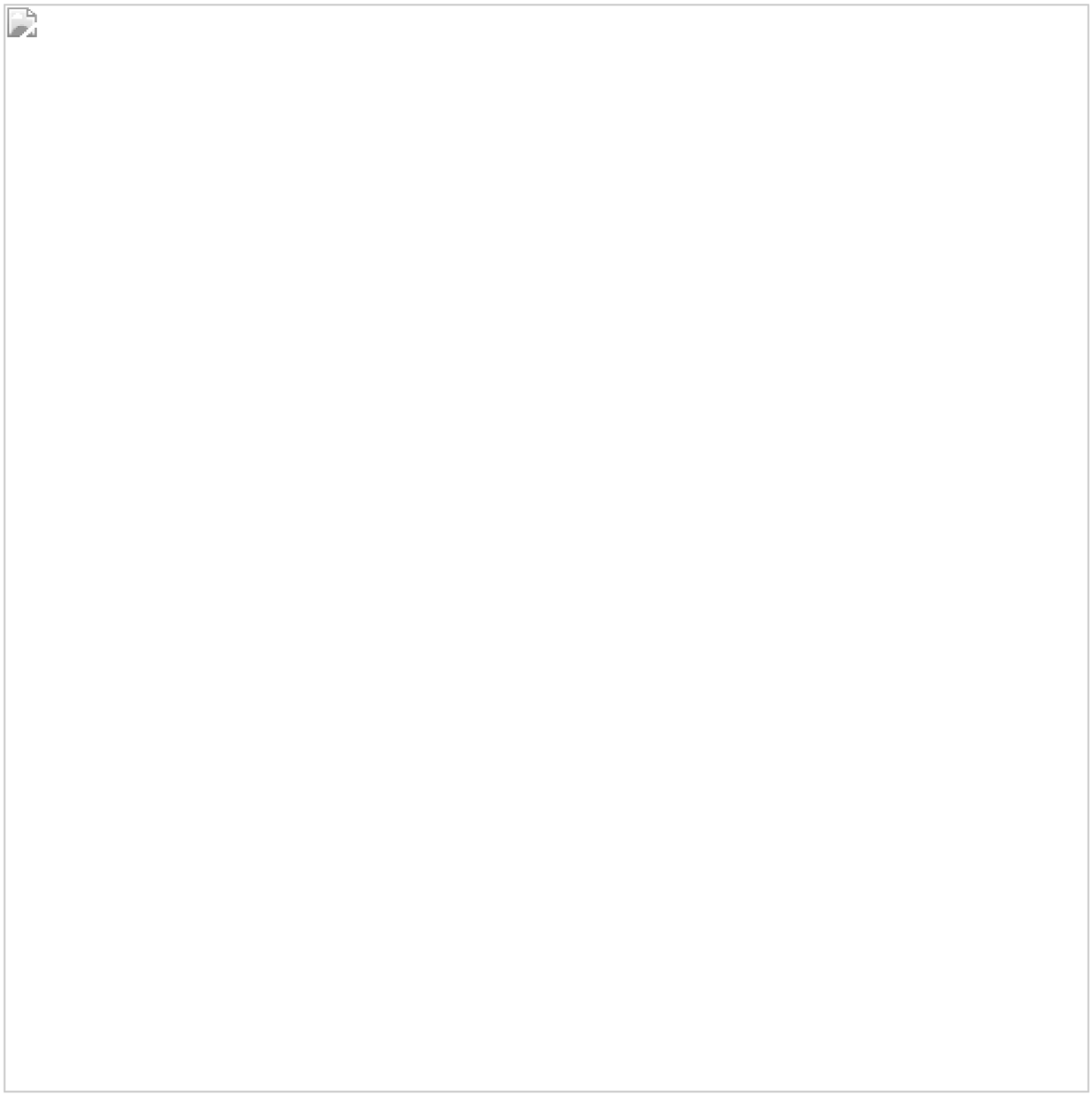


Think about it

1. Who was the old woman really?

- ○ A witch
- ○ Hera, the queen of the gods
- ○ Cheiron's sister

The Uncle's Trap



Jason came to Iolcos, where his uncle Pelias was king. An old man warned him that an oracle had said a man with one sandal would take Pelias's kingdom.

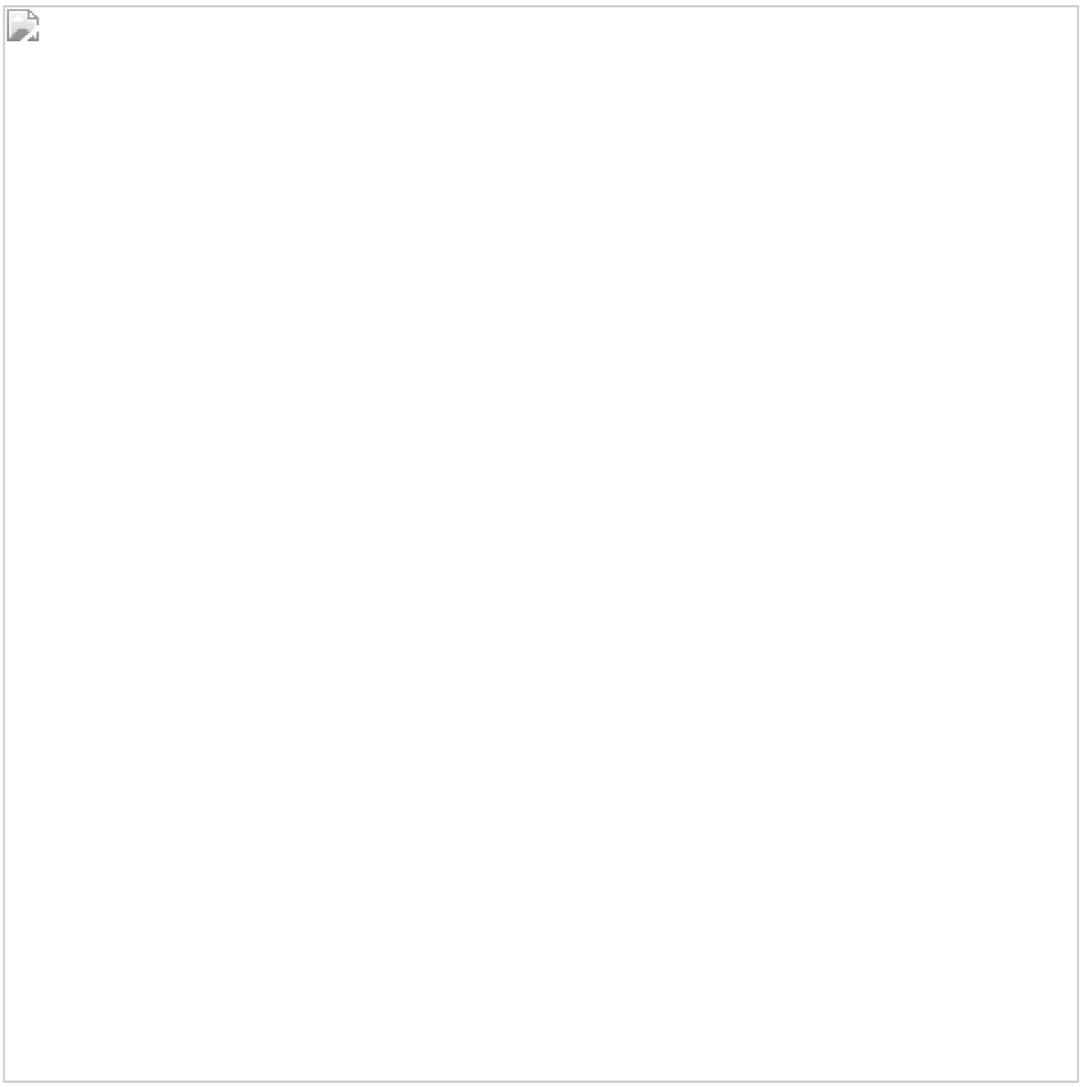
Pelias welcomed Jason with a feast, then told him a story that was not true: the spirit of Phrixus kept him awake, and only the Golden Fleece could set it right. He hoped Jason would go and never come back.

Jason knew he had been tricked. But he said, “I will go and fetch the Golden Fleece.” He asked Pelias for the kingdom when he came back, and one promise more: “Treat my father lovingly while I am gone.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Pelias used a lie to send Jason away. Why do you think lies like that are so hurtful?

The Uncle's Trap · another picture

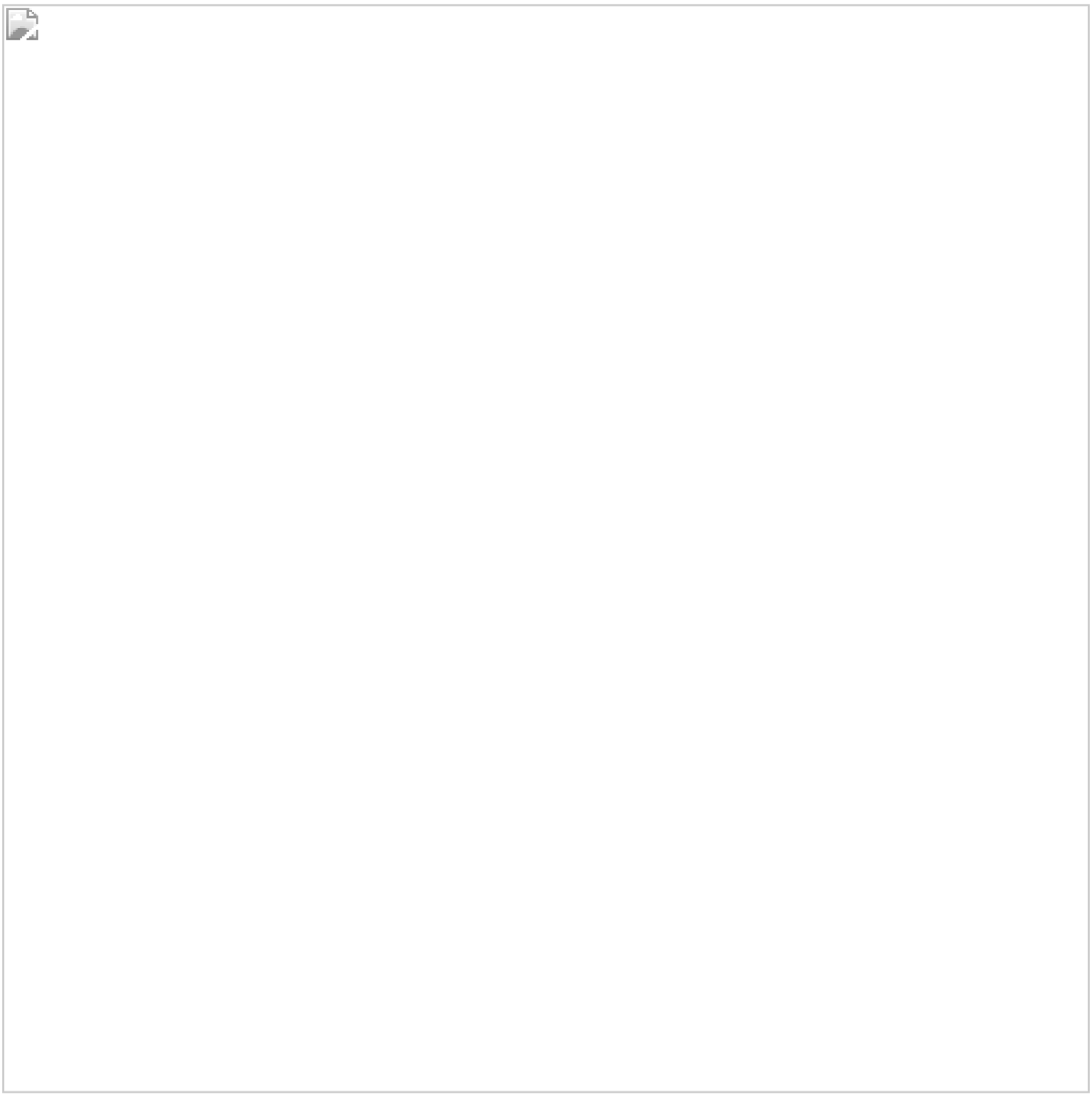


Think about it

1. What did Jason ask Pelias to do while he was gone?

- ○ Treat his father lovingly
- ○ Give him a ship
- ○ Sell the kingdom

The Ship Argo



Heralds called across the land, and the princes who had learned with Jason at the Centaur's cave came to Iolcos. The women whispered, “Alas, they are all going to their death!”

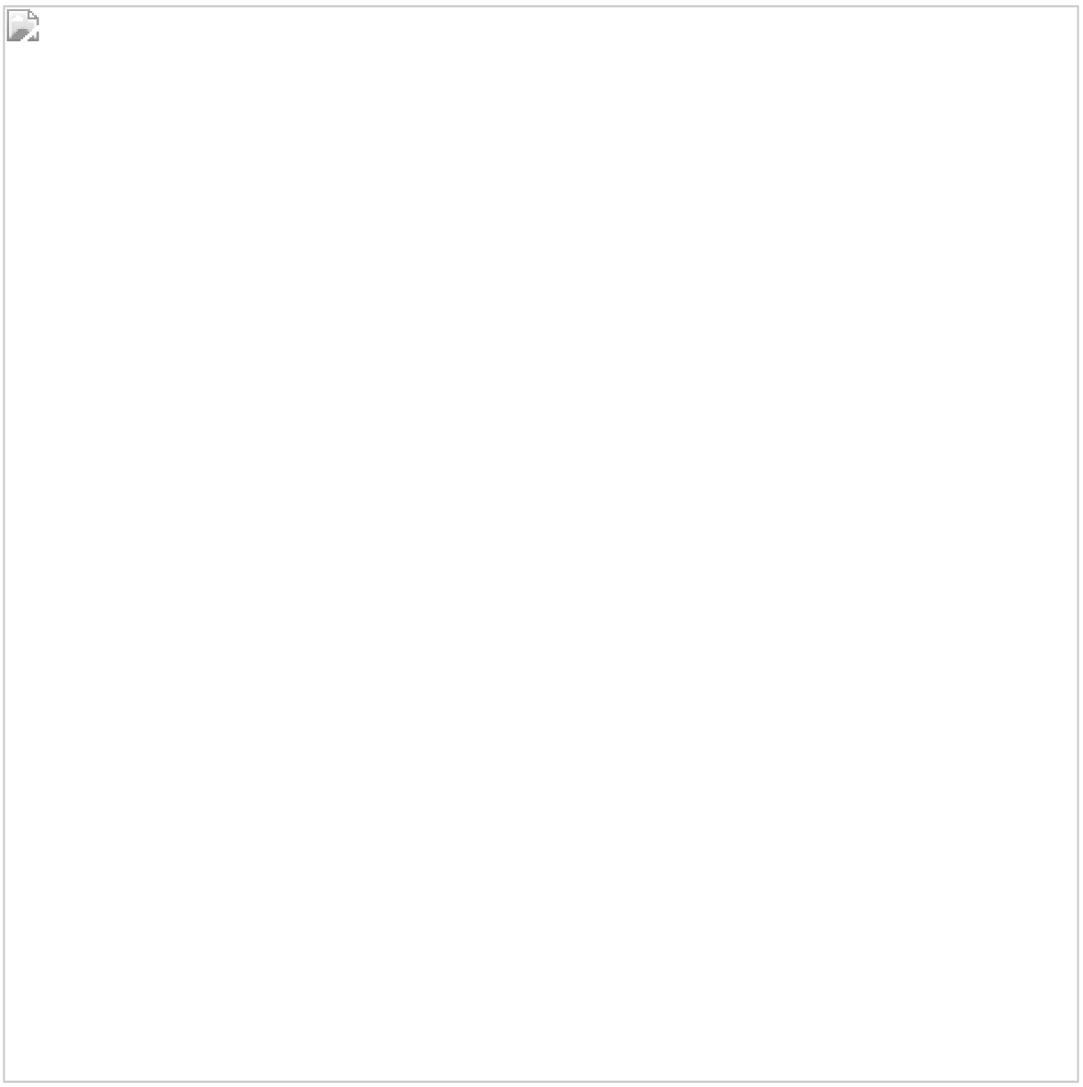
The heroes cut mountain pines and built the Argo, the first long ship that ever sailed the seas. Orpheus, the prince of singers, joined them with his harp.

The ship was too heavy to move. Then Orpheus sang, and the Argo heard him and longed for the sea. She stirred in every timber and leapt down the beach into the water. They chose Jason as captain, and each hero promised to stand by him faithfully.

TALK ABOUT IT

The ship would not move until Orpheus sang. What do you think music can do for people working together?

The Ship Argo · another picture

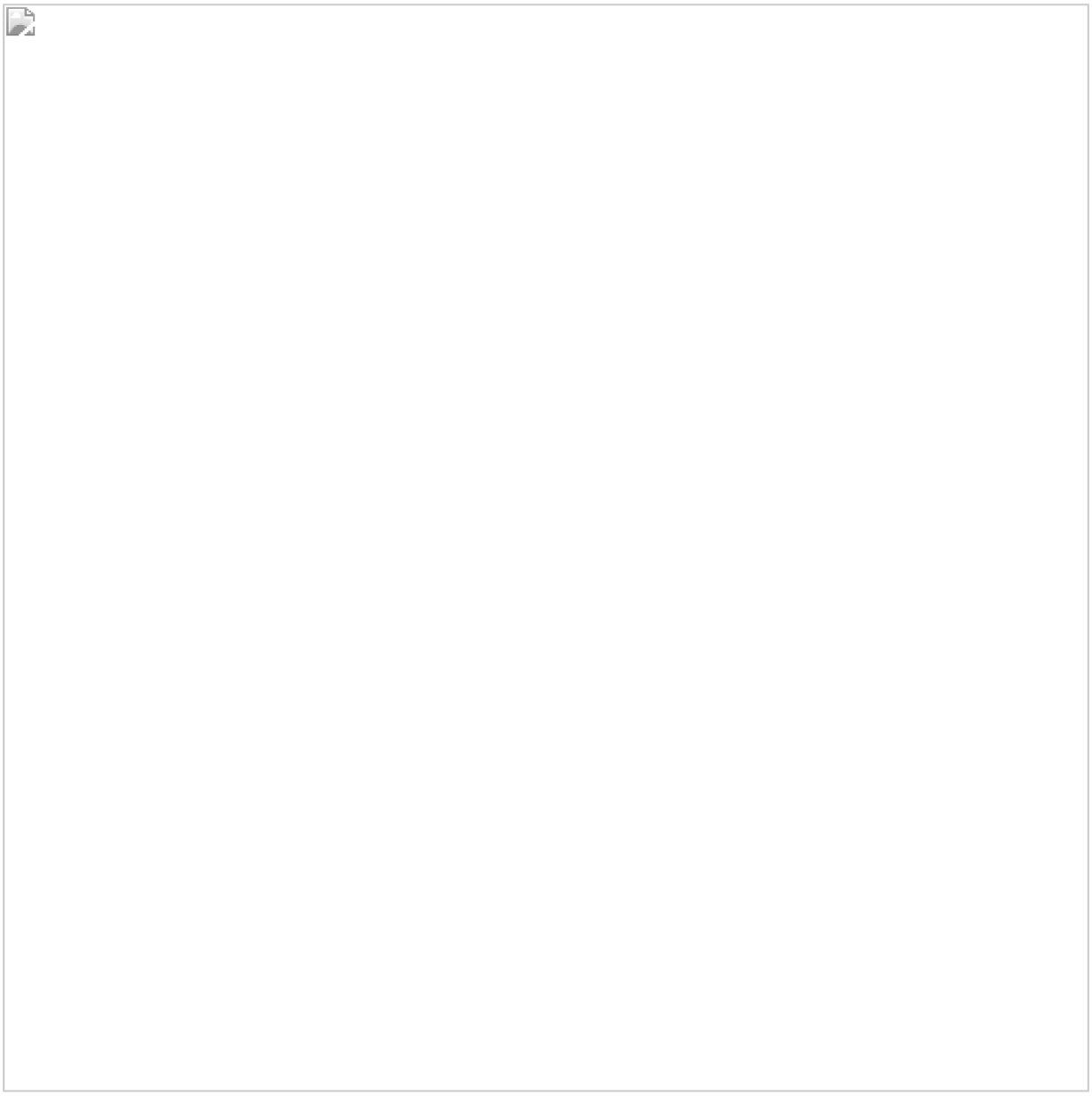


Think about it

1. How did the heroes get the Argo into the sea?

- ○ They pushed with oxen
- ○ They waited for a flood
- ○ Orpheus played his harp

Goodbye to Cheiron



Before leaving, the heroes climbed their old mountain to ask Cheiron's blessing. He gave them a feast, and Orpheus sang of the making of the world. Even the trees bowed to listen.

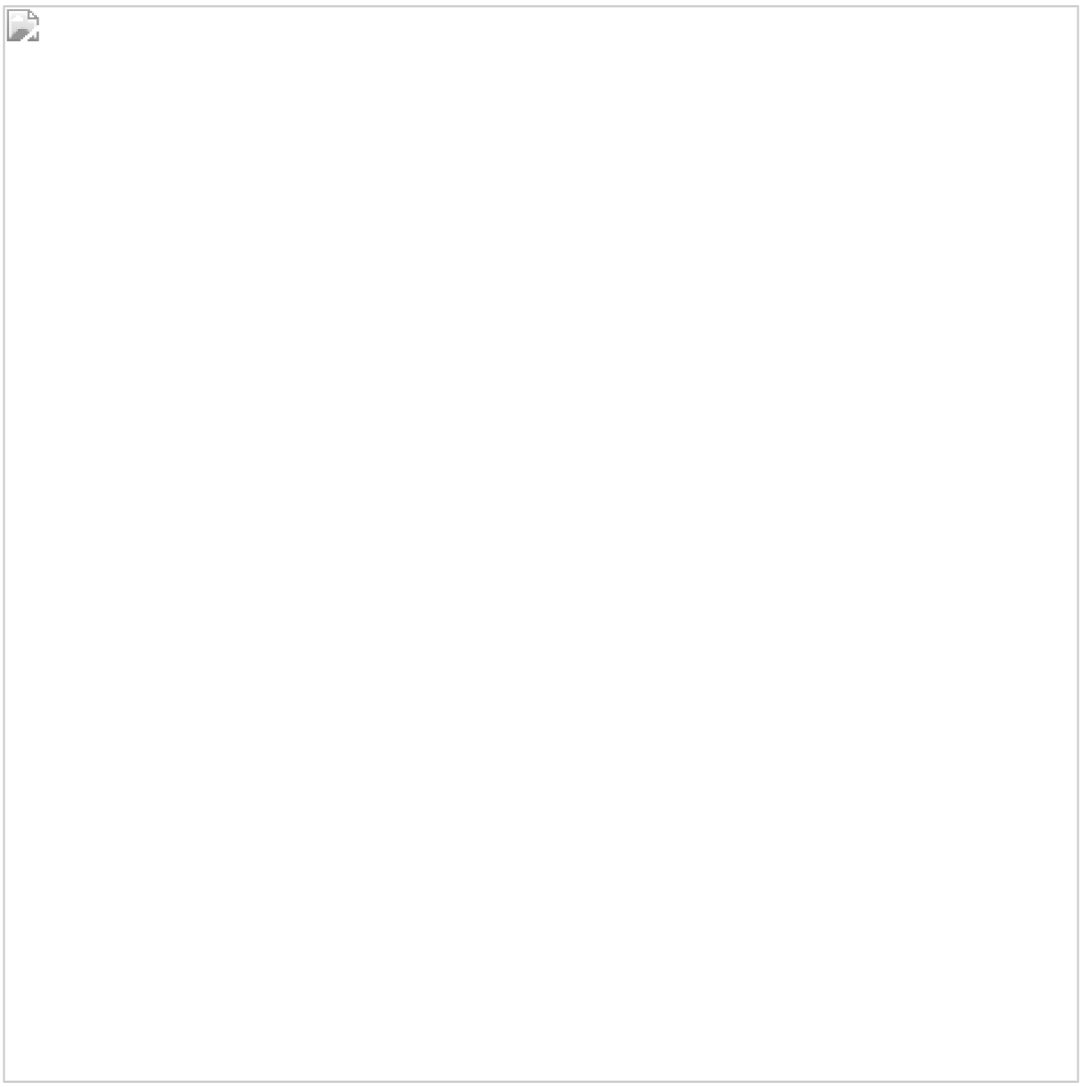
Then old Cheiron came down to the shore, weeping, and kissed them one by one. He went up on a cliff and prayed for them, with his arms raised and his white hair blowing in the wind.

The heroes watched him until they could not see him any more.

TALK ABOUT IT

Who has said goodbye to you with a hug or a prayer? What did it mean to you?

Goodbye to Cheiron · another picture

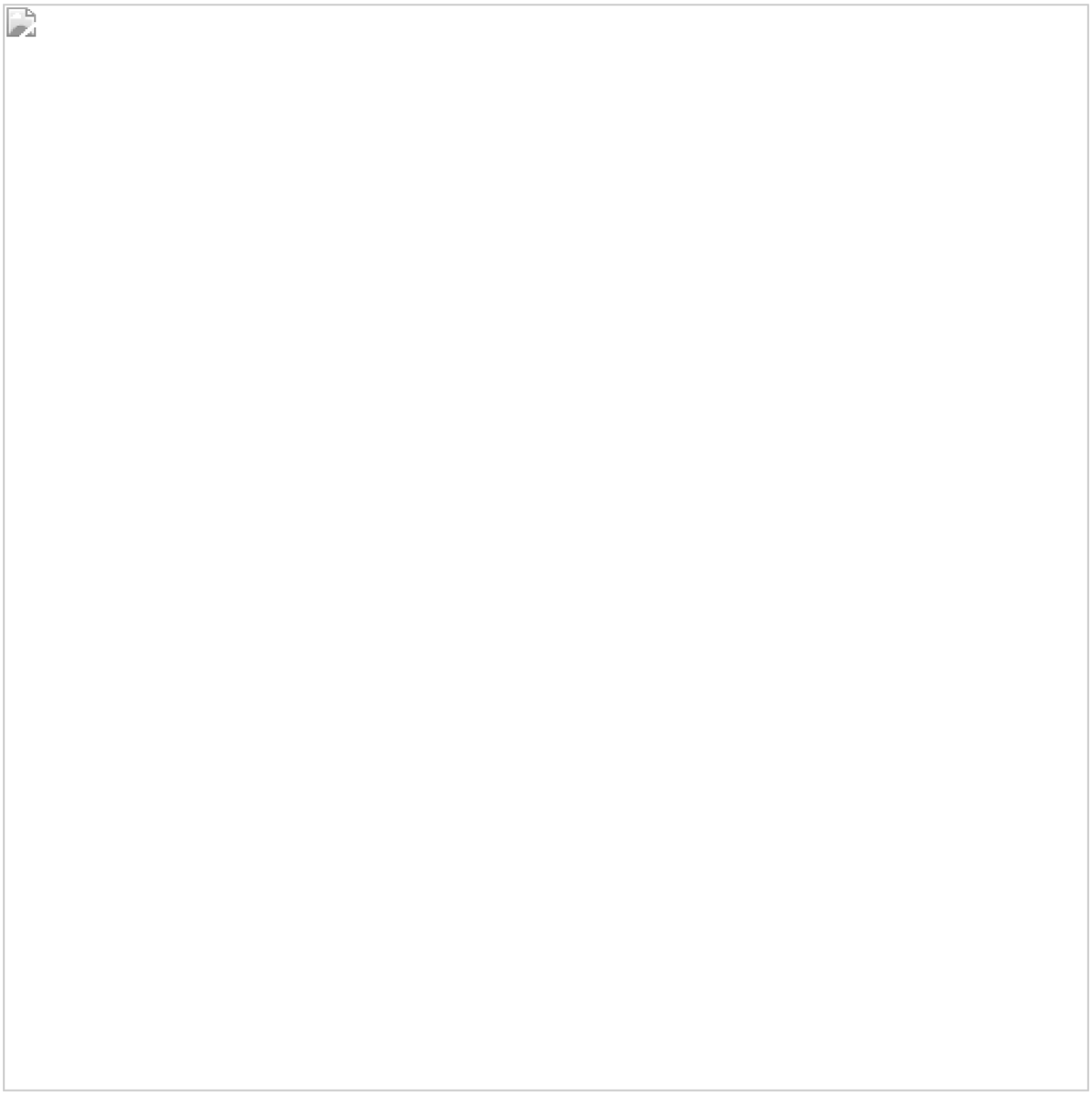


Think about it

1. What did Cheiron do as the Argo sailed away?

- ○ He swam after them
- ○ He went to sleep
- ○ He stood on a cliff and prayed for them

The Blue Rocks



In the wild Black Sea, they came to the blue rocks, which crashed together like gray glass castles. “Between the blue rocks we must pass, so look for an opening, and be brave, for Hera is with us,” said Orpheus.

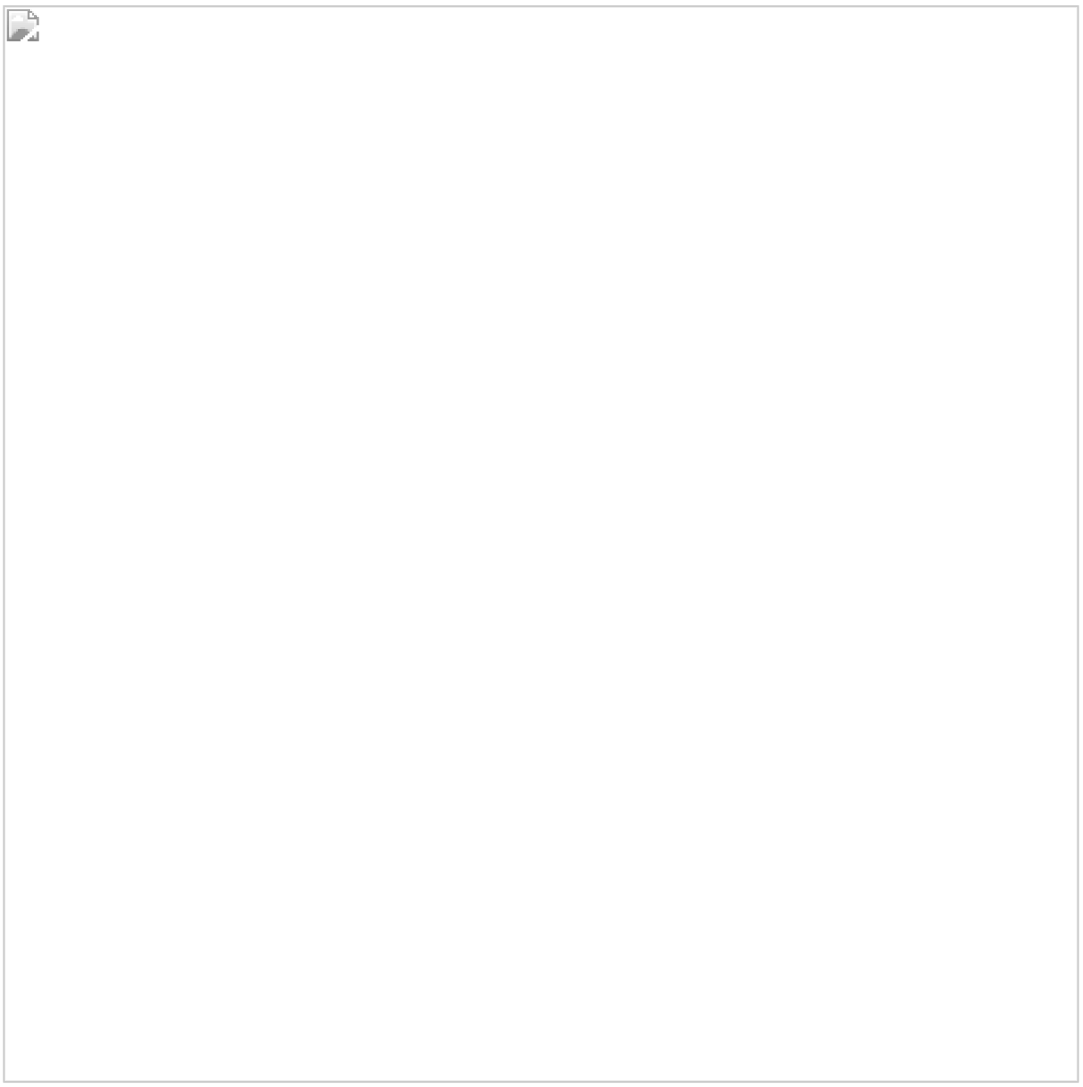
The helmsman waited, with his teeth clenched, until a heron flew past. “Hera has sent us a pilot; let us follow the bird,” he said.

The heron darted through a hidden gap. The rocks clapped shut and took only a feather from its tail. The Argo rushed through after it and was safe.

TALK ABOUT IT

The heroes needed a guide, and a bird showed them the way. When have you needed someone to go first?

The Blue Rocks · another picture

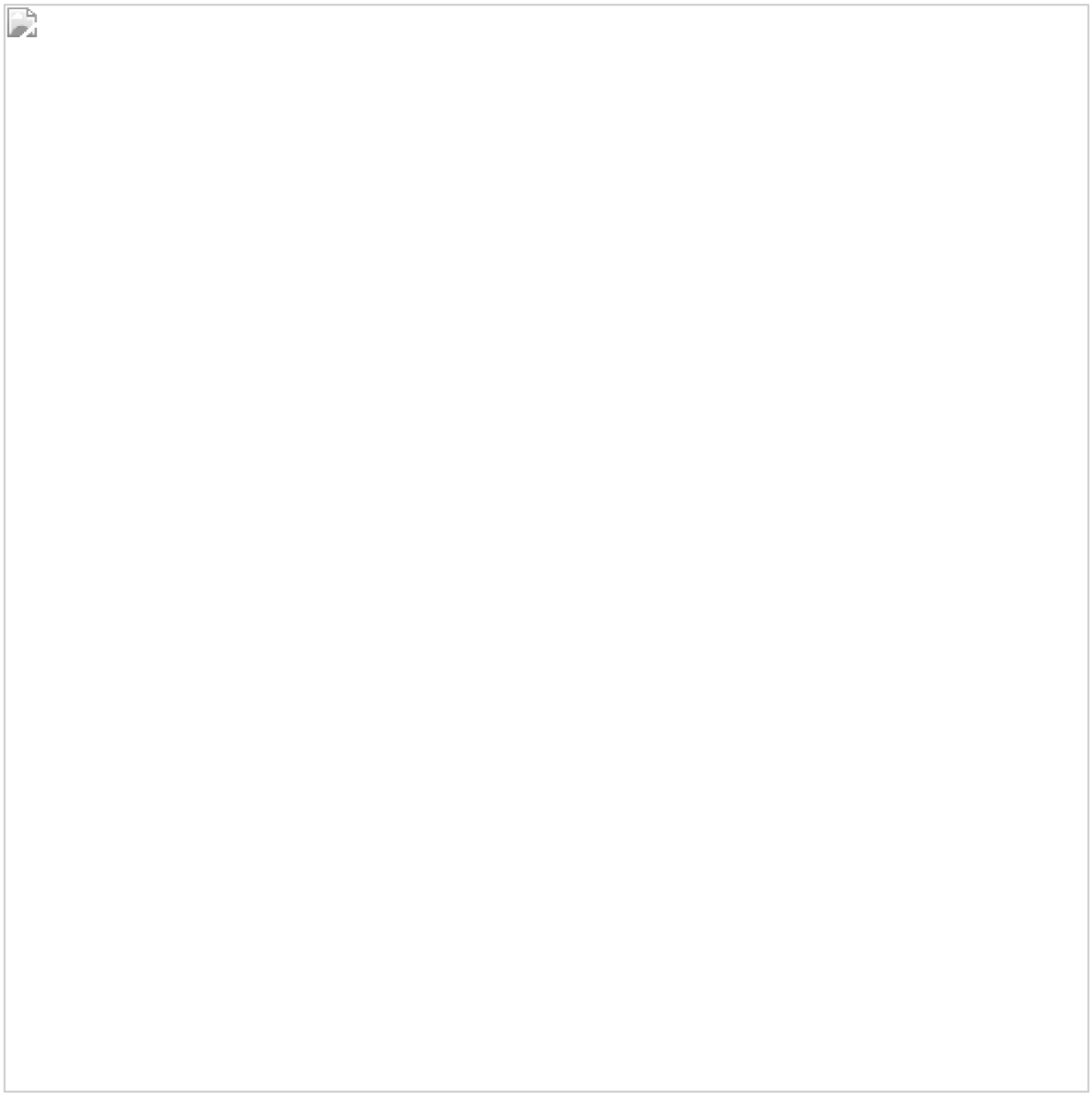


Think about it

1. Who showed the Argo the way through the rocks?

- ○ A dolphin
- ○ A heron
- ○ A cloud

The King of Colchis



At last they saw the golden roofs of King Aietes. Jason spoke boldly: “We are no lawless men.” They had only come for the Golden Fleece.

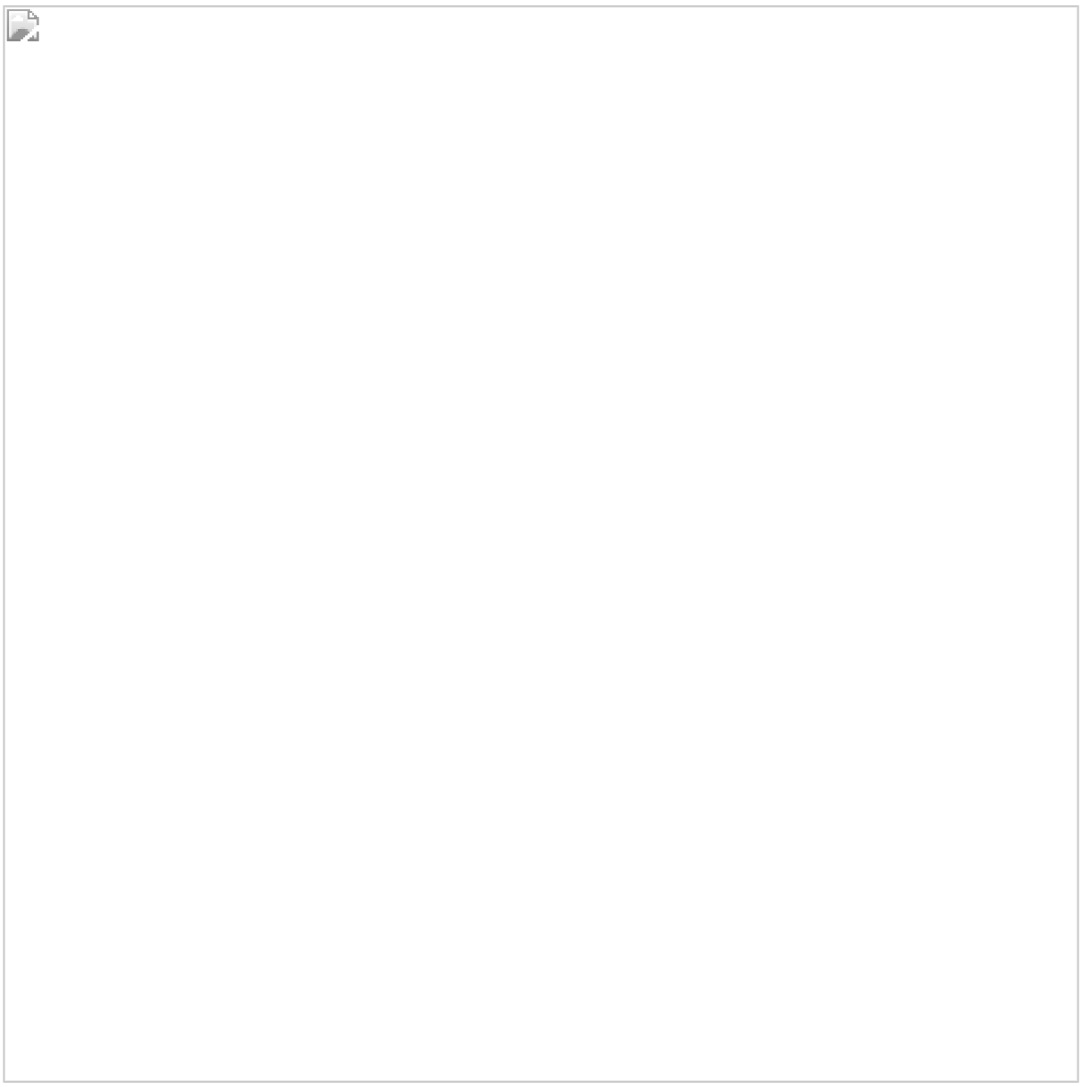
Aietes was angry, but he said one hero might win the fleece. First he must tame two fire-breathing bulls and plow a field. Then he must plant serpents' teeth, which spring up as soldiers, and get past the huge serpent that guards the fleece.

The heroes sat silent. But the king's daughter Medeia took pity on them. She gave Jason a magic ointment: “Anoint yourself with that, and you shall have in you the strength of seven.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Medeia chose to help strangers, even though it was risky. Why do you think she did?

The King of Colchis · another picture

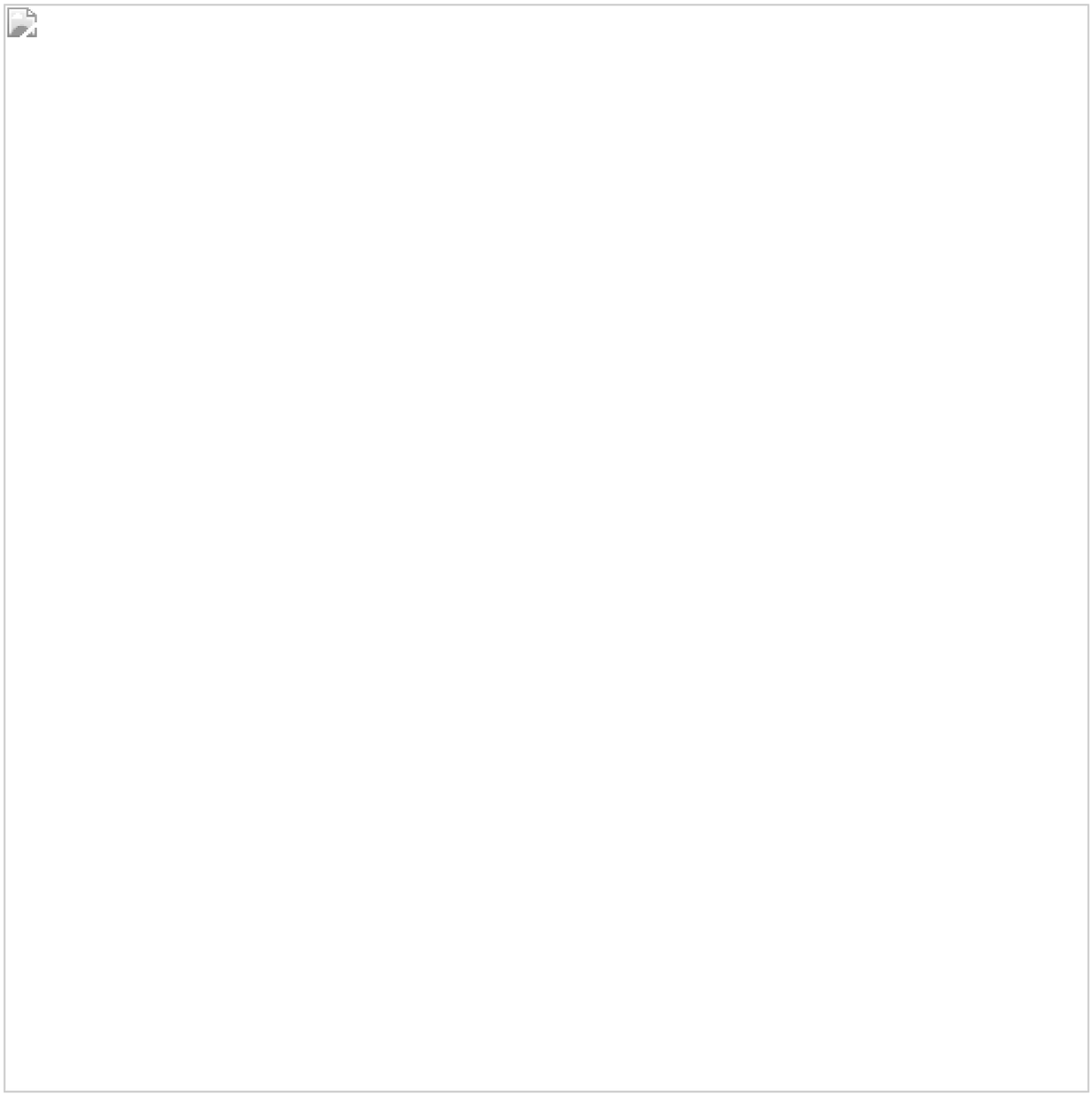


Think about it

1. What did Medeia give Jason?

- ○ A magic ointment
- ○ A golden key
- ○ A sword

Bulls of Fire



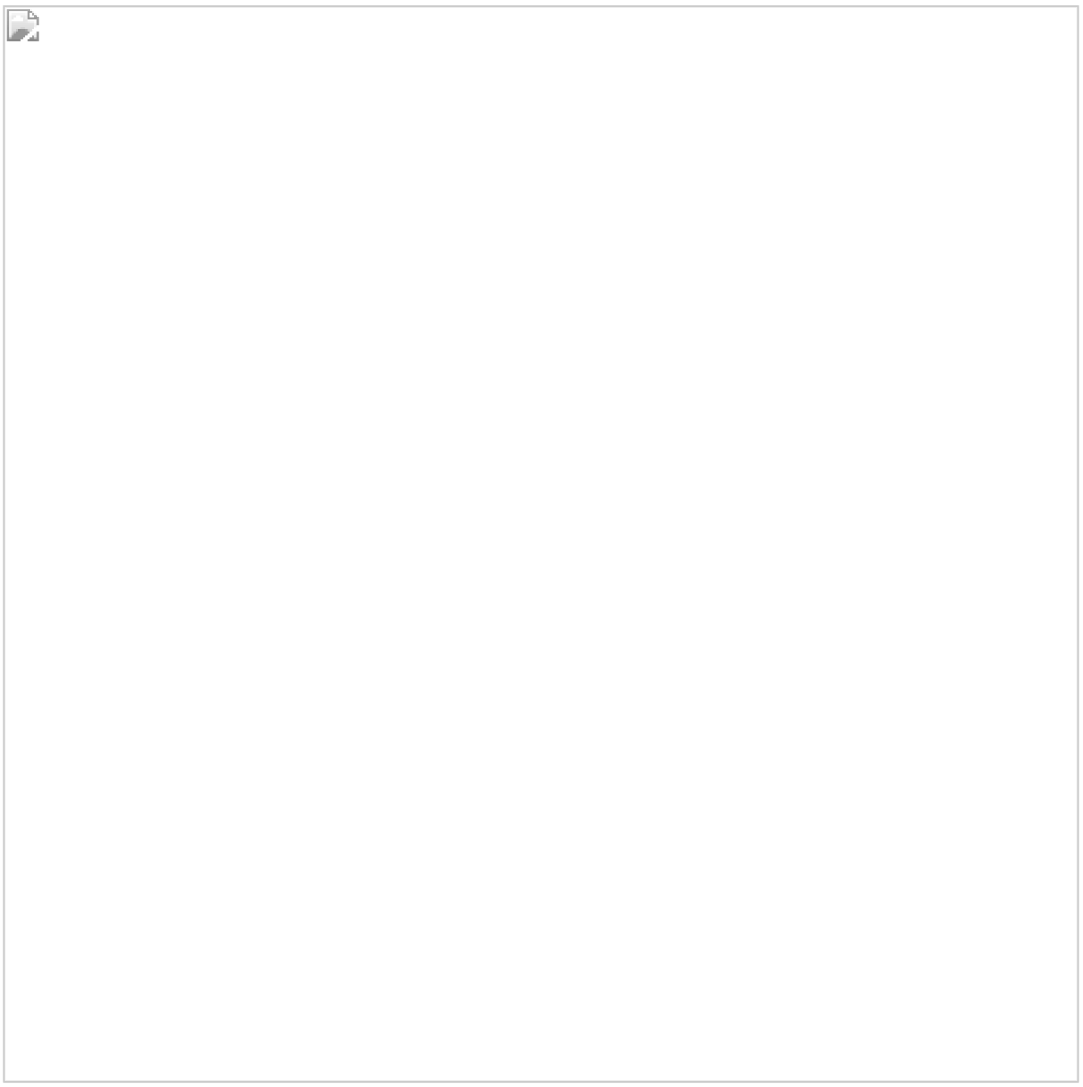
In the field of the War-god, thousands of King Aietes' soldiers came to watch. The bulls rushed out with fire in their breath, but the flames did not harm Jason. He wrestled one to its knees, and soon both bulls were tamed and Jason plowed the whole field.

Then he sowed the serpents' teeth. Out of every furrow a soldier sprang up, and thousands came running toward him.

Jason threw his helmet into their midst. Suddenly they began to fight one another, until they were all gone, and the kind earth took them home again.

TALK ABOUT IT

Jason did not fight alone. Who helped him? What do you think it means to accept help?

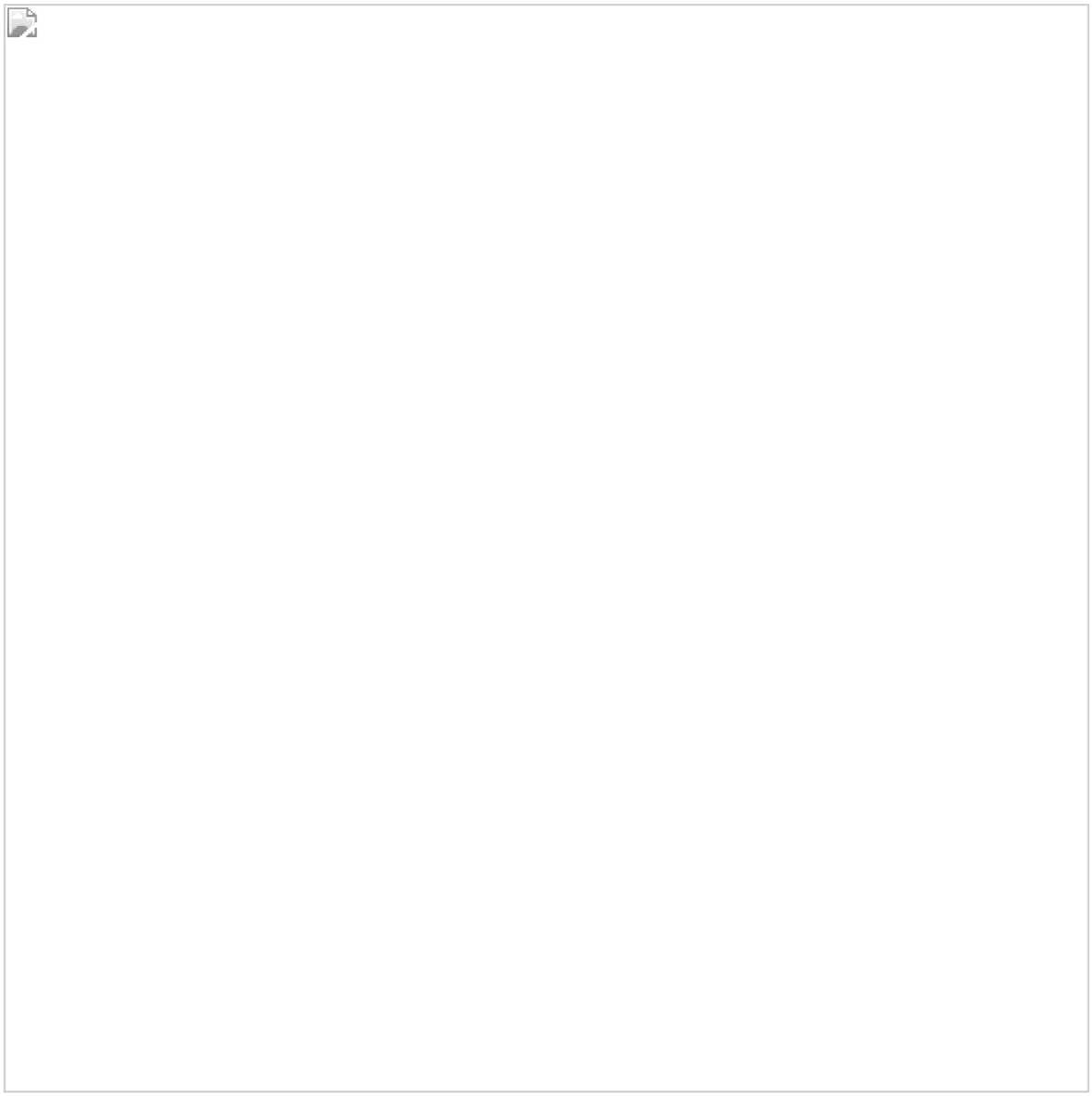


Think about it

1. What did Jason throw into the crowd of soldiers?

- ○ His sword
- ○ His helmet
- ○ A rock

The Sleeping Serpent



Aietes would not hand over the fleece right away, so that night Medeia led Jason and Orpheus to the sacred wood. The fleece shone from a huge tree, and at the foot of the tree lay a serpent coiled among the roots.

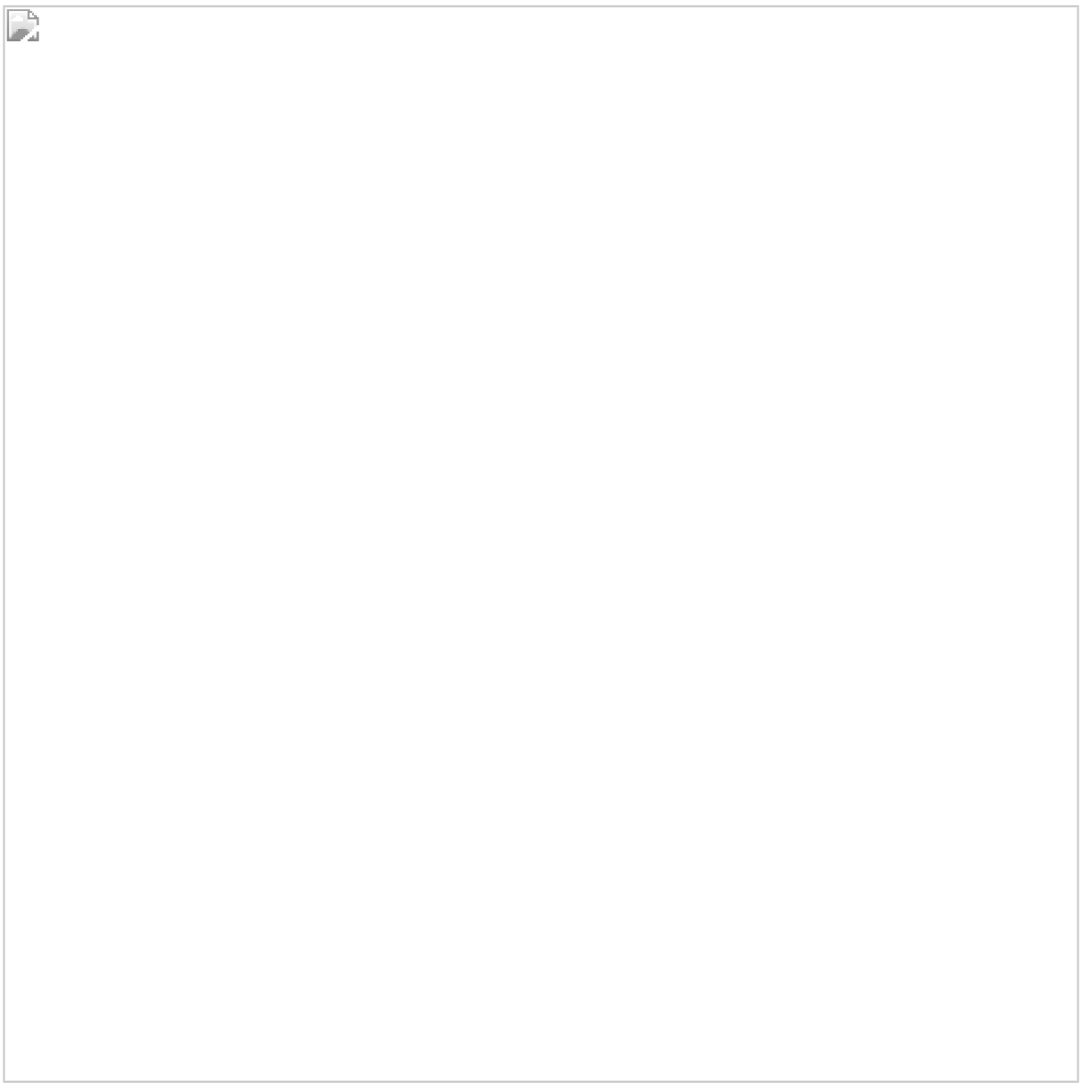
Orpheus began his magic song. The leaves hung still, and the serpent's head sank down. He breathed as gently as a child.

Jason stepped across him and took the Golden Fleece. “Go now, good Argo, swift and steady, if ever you would see Pelion more,” he whispered, and they rowed away in the dark. Medeia, who had helped them, sailed with them.

TALK ABOUT IT

Orpheus used a song, and not a sword. Is there something kind that is stronger than force?

The Sleeping Serpent · another picture

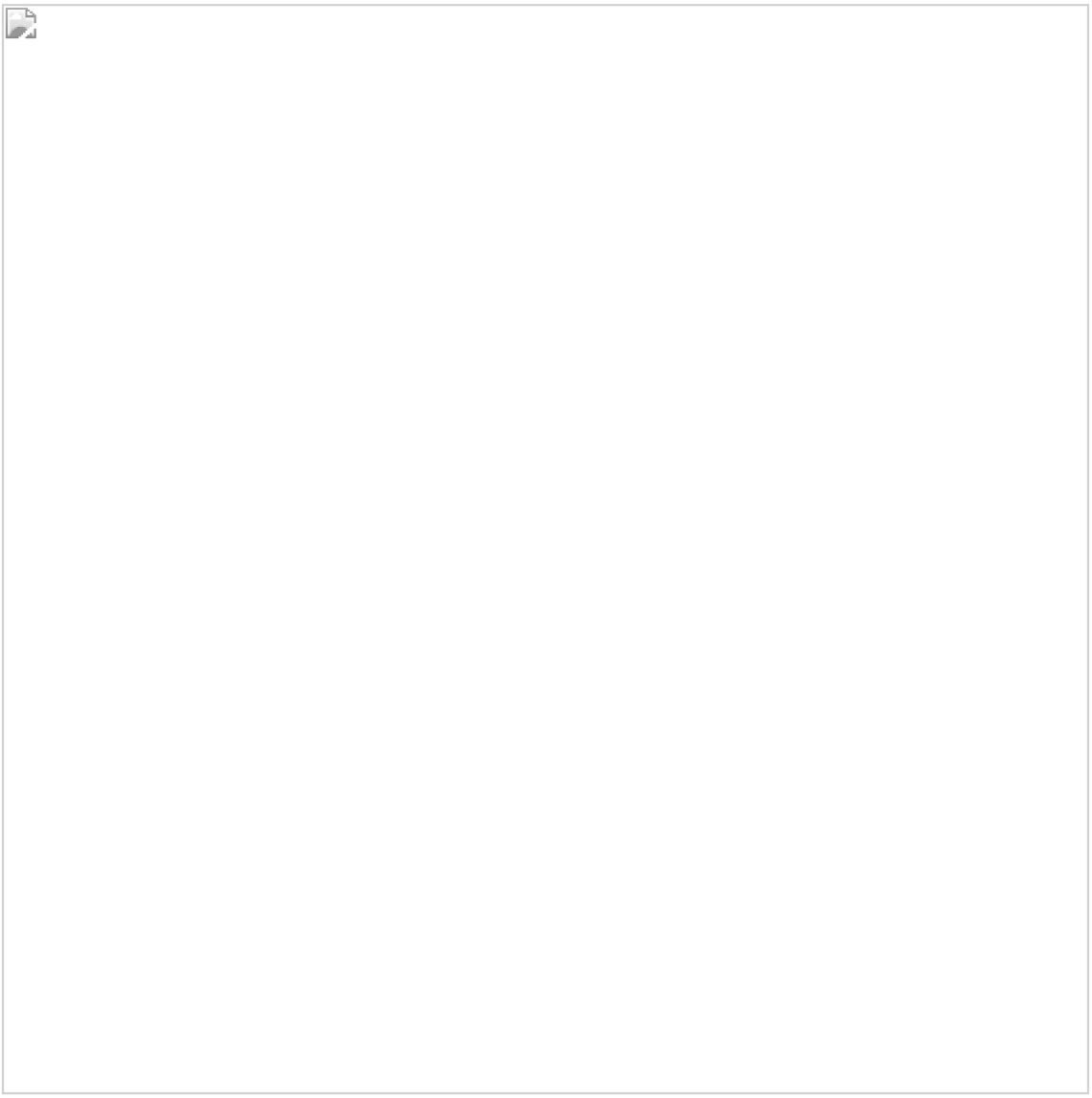


Think about it

1. How did Orpheus get past the serpent?

- ○ He chased it away
- ○ He gave it food
- ○ He sang it to sleep

The Long Way Home



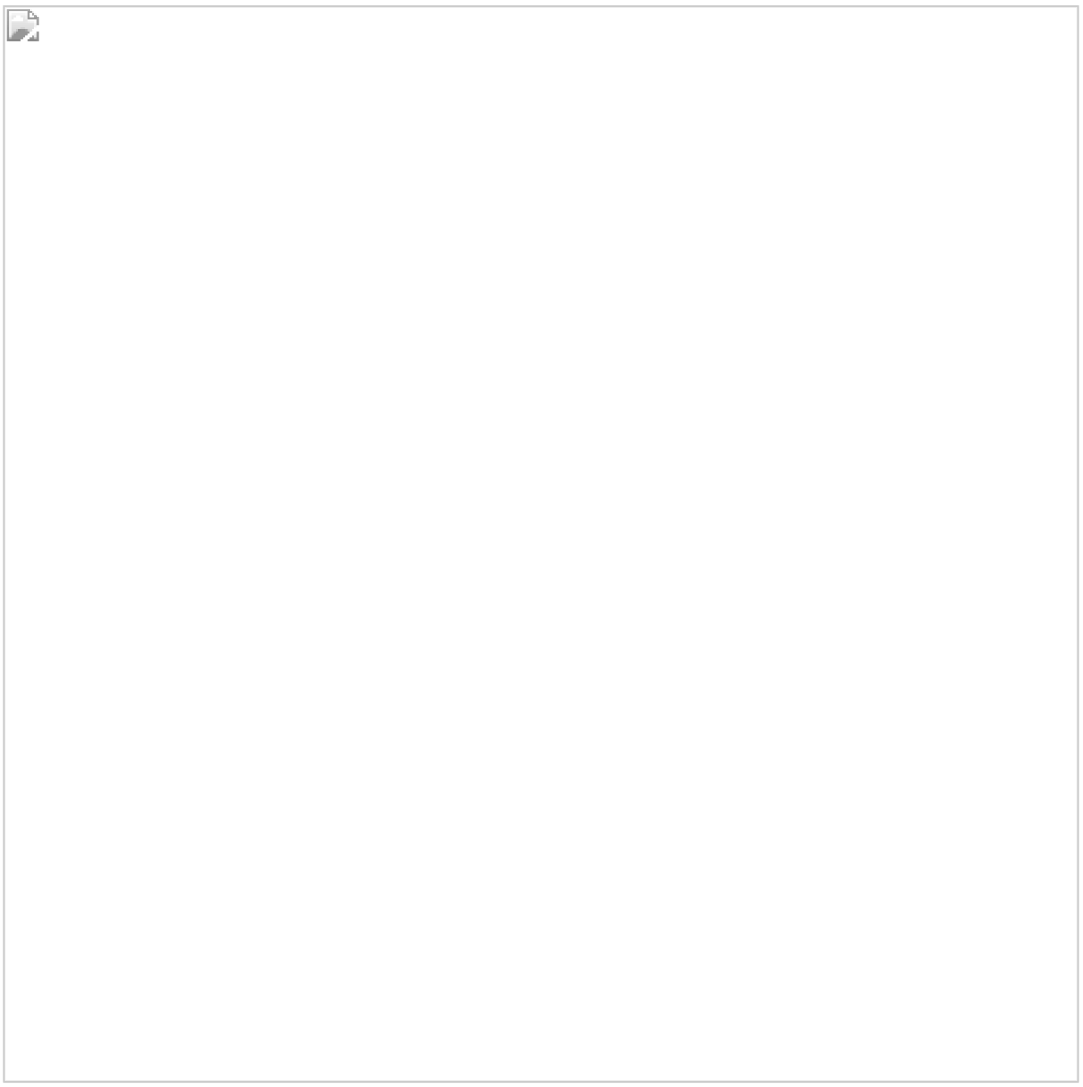
The way home was long. They came to the island of the Sirens, whose slow, sleepy song made the rowers drop their oars and forget everything. “Sing louder, Orpheus,” Medeia cried.

Orpheus sang until his voice drowned the Sirens' song. The heroes grabbed their oars and cried, “We will be men, and we will dare and suffer to the last.”

Next came a whirlpool, and a sea-hag in a cave. But Thetis the sea-nymph and her nymphs played like dolphins around the ship and tossed it safely past, as maidens toss a ball.

TALK ABOUT IT

The heroes were tired and almost gave up. What helps you keep going when something is hard?

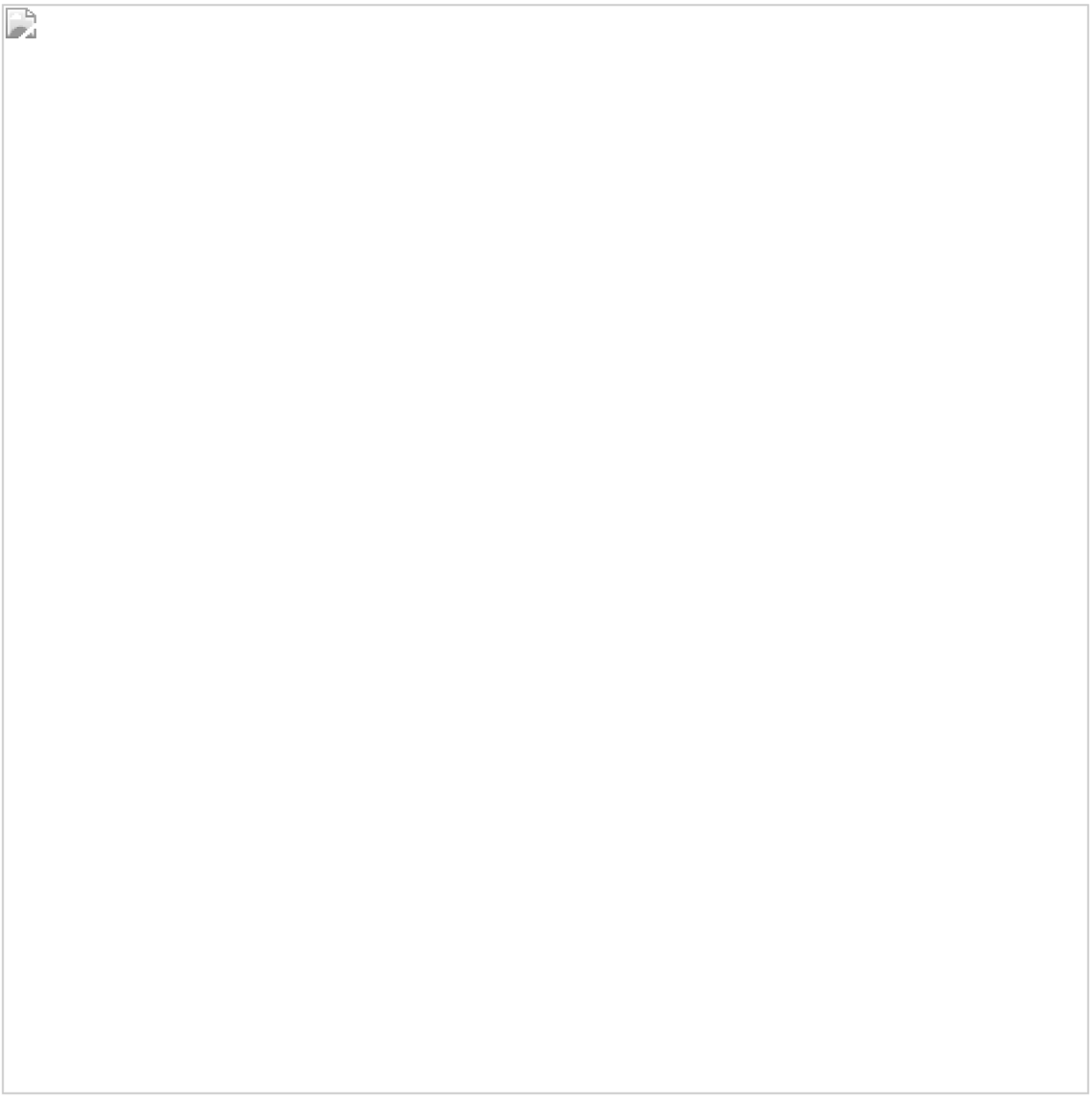


Think about it

1. How did the heroes get past the Sirens?

- ○ Orpheus sang louder
- ○ They hid below deck
- ○ They sailed at night

Home to Iolcos



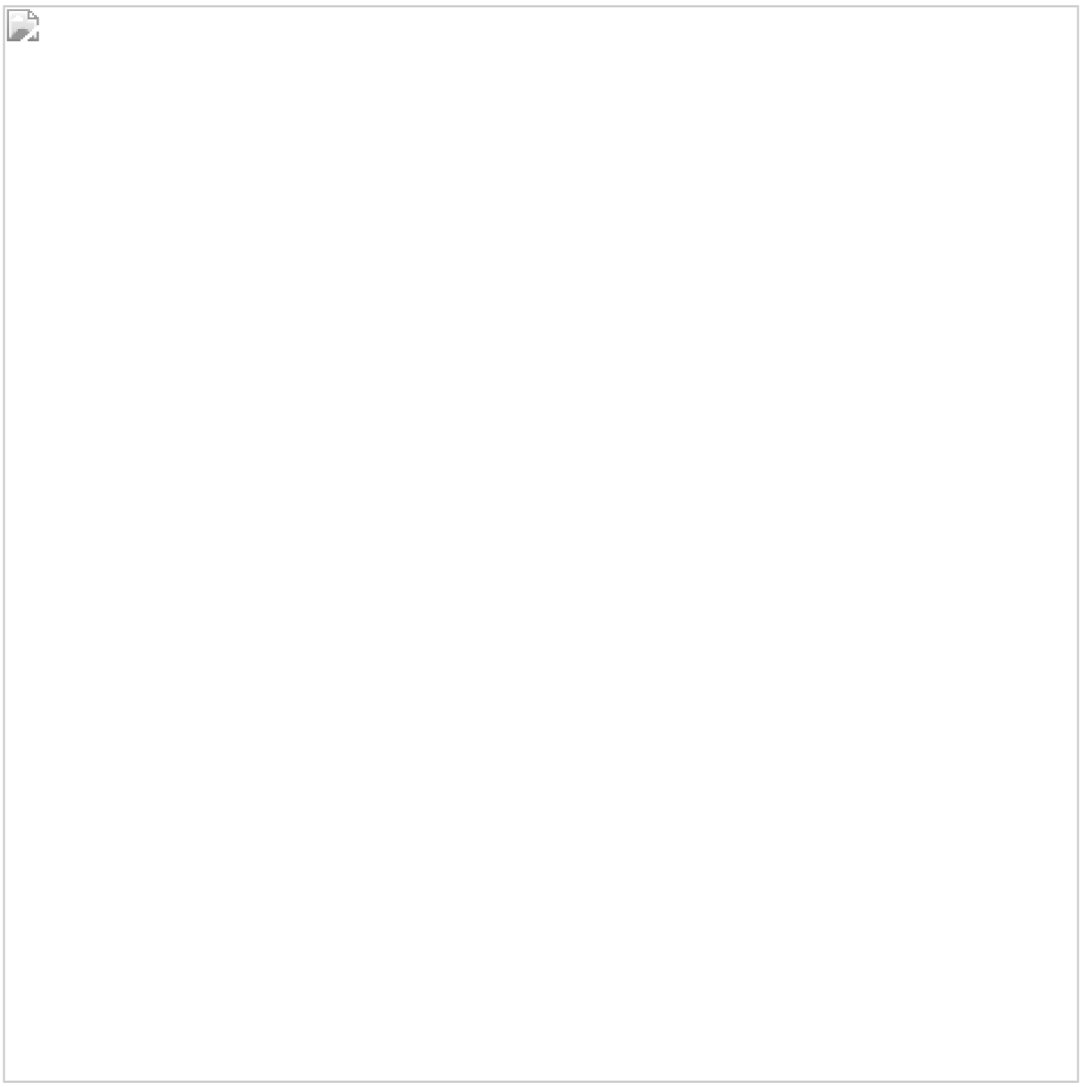
At last they saw Pelion and Iolcos by the sea. They were too tired even to pull the ship up the beach. They crawled onto the pebbles and wept.

Everything looked different; the faces were strange. “We are the sons of your princes,” they said. “Give us news of our fathers and mothers.”

Jason went to the palace, where Pelias and his old father Aeson sat by the fire. Jason fell on his knees. “I am your own son Jason.” His father clung to him: “Promise never to leave me till I die.” Pelias gave up the kingdom as he had promised, and Jason stayed at home in Iolcos.

TALK ABOUT IT

Jason's old father held on to him and would not let go. Why do you think he did? What would you say to someone you had missed for so long?



Think about it

1. What did Jason's father ask him to do?

- ○ Sail again
- ○ Promise never to leave him
- ○ Give up the fleece

2. Which part of Jason's journey took the most courage, and why?

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

— Yeshua HaMashiach

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