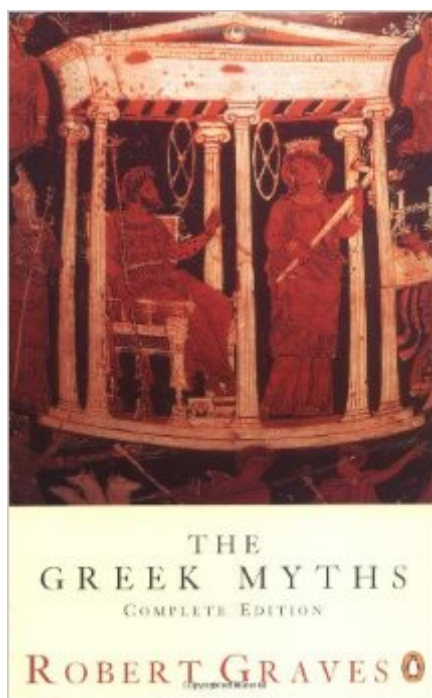


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# The Greek Myths: Complete Edition



## Synopsis

Combines in a single volume the complete text of the definitive two-volume classic, citing all the ancient myths. @GoldenFarce Good, the gals stand outside my house all the time. The constant chanting is creepy, but all agree: Jason crossing the line! When he gets home weâ™ll talk. Iâ™m sure we can work it out. But whatâ™s the best way to approach this? Any advice, anyone? #wackrelationships From Twitterature: The World's Greatest Books in Twenty Tweets or Less

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Robert Graves' THE GREEK MYTHS falls between the Victorian bombast of Bulfinch and the popular style of Edith Hamilton, less stylistically intimidating than the former and more scholarly than the latter. Originally published as a two volume set in 1955 with author revisions in 1957 and 1960, this single volume text does not abridge the original text but merely confines it to a single binding. One's reaction to THE GREEK MYTHS will depend to some extent on one's purpose in acquiring it. This is an exhaustive collection of Greek mythology that far outstrips any other modern anthology that I have encountered, including myths both better known and extremely obscure. Each myth is presented in concise, graceful prose, and where possible Graves includes genealogies of the characters and major variations of each myth; an interpretive essay also follows each myth. While Graves' retelling of the myths themselves have been widely praised, his interpretations of the myths have been somewhat criticized--and justly so. Graves tends to see incarnations of the "White Goddess" and the "Sacrificial King" in every third story; more dangerously, he tends to tie the

myths to historical events in a highly speculative way. While this does not undercut the interest of his interpretations, it does hold a number of traps for the casual reader, who may assume that Graves' essays offer standard, scholastically unbiased interpretations based on proven historical events. For myself, I use Graves' *THE GREEK MYTHS* as both reference and pleasure-reading, and I enjoy it a great deal; it is an indispensable purchase for any one with a serious interest in Greek mythology for any one who must frequently reference the same for scholarly purposes, and I strongly recommend it to them.

I could make a hobby out of "Graves-izing" popular stories. How about Cinderella? If Robert Graves got hold of that story, he'd say something like this: "Cinderella's name means Ash-lady, which denotes her as the ash-pale Death-goddess of winter. She and her two stepsisters form the classic Triple Goddess. Originally, the sisters' names were probably Destruction and Pestilence. Cinderella's transformation at the hands of the Fairy Godmother was really a late patriarchal addition; no doubt the original goddess transformed herself, showing her Love-goddess face rather than her more spectral one. Her dance with the Prince is an example of the White Goddess's choice of the King of the Waxing Year as her consort. In the version that has come down to us, she loses her shoe, but certainly in the uncorrupted, original myth, it was the Prince who lost his shoe, as the sacrificial king was often marked by a limp. This can be seen in the Welsh story of Math ap Mathonwy, and Dionysos's epithets also hinted at lameness. At the hour of midnight, that is to say, the witching hour, Cinderella reveals her terrible, ravaging face by turning back into the ragged Death-goddess. Undoubtedly, the story ended with Cinderella's murder of the Prince, and her mourning for him by painting her face with the ashes of his funeral pyre, as the Welsh women mourned for Llew Llaw Gyffes. The happy ending we are familiar with is actually the record of the patriarchal takeover, when the White Goddess was forcibly married to the Year-King who had become the supreme god of the new mythology." Hey, that was fun! Graves wrote in a poem once, "There is one story and one story only.

Procrustes was a gentleman who made travel upon the byways of ancient Greece interestingly hazardous. He had an iron bed onto which he placed any traveler who fell into his hands. If the traveler was too long for the bed, jolly old Procrustes lopped off the excess. If the traveler was too short, Procrustes stretched him to fit. One day Theseus appeared before Procrustes' door and allowed the old bandit the opportunity to measure himself on his bed. Robert Graves wrote with the intention of expounding and explaining Greek myths. Unstated but implicit in this intention were two

ideas: that there is a more or less self-consistent thing called the Greek myths and that they have a more or less consistent meaning. Neither of these things is necessarily true. The influence of Thomas Bullfinch is so all-pervasive that we are almost blind to it. He provided the English-speaking world with a convenient handbook of myths that made it appear that the Greek (and derivative Roman) world had a central core of beliefs as definable as the Bible, the Qur'an or, for that matter, the Book of Mormon. Admittedly, Graves offers some variant versions, but then, so does Genesis. Years later, Edith Hamilton, with more scholarship and a lot less charm, re-emphasized the lesson. Was it Bullfinch's intention to assemble a handbook of Greek myths? Not really. In his preface, he makes his intention clear. He was a teacher whose students were unable to understand allusions made by great poets of the English language, Shelley, Byron, Wordsworth and their ilk. His handbook is not of Greek myths but of English poetical allusions to Greek myths.

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