Metamorphoses

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF OVID

Ovid was born in a rural valley near Rome, Italy during the reign of Augustus. Ovid's father educated Ovid and his brother in rhetoric in hopes that they would practice law as adults. Although Ovid excelled at rhetoric, he was drawn towards using his oratory skills to explore emotional rather than political themes. When his older brother died at age 20, Ovid gave up the study of law altogether and took to traveling through Athens and Sicily. Ovid resolved to be a poet when he was around 20 years old, a decision which displeased his father. During his literary career, Ovid wrote mostly erotic poetry in elegiac meter. He wrote many poems, a manual on the subject of seduction, and the *Metamorphoses*—the most significant work of mythology to date—by 8 C.E. Over the course of his literary career, Ovid befriended the poets Horace, Propertius, and Macer. He also met Virgil, whose work he admired. In 8 C.E., Ovid was beginning another long poem when he was suddenly banished to Tomis, a city on the Black Sea. Although the exact reason for his exile is unknown, it is known that the emperor Augustus banished Ovid directly, with no preliminary consultation with the Roman Senate. This exile shaped much of Ovid's subsequent poetry. The poems he wrote while in exile were particularly moving as they addressed the theme of desolation and expressed his longing for Rome and for his third wife whom he'd been forced to leave behind. Ovid died in Tomis between the years 17 and 18, and his long poem *Fasti*—which he had started before his banishment—was published posthumously.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Although a work of mythology, the *Metamorphoses* was heavily influenced by major events in the Roman Empire, particularly the reigns of Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus. From a mythological and divine perspective, the *Metamorphoses* outlines Julius Caesar's rise to power in Rome in 49 B.C.E. The *Metamorphoses* also addresses Julius Caesar's betrayal and assassination by members of the Roman Senate in 44 B.C.E. Julius Caesar's son, Caesar Augustus, succeeds his father as the emperor of Rome—an event which the *Metamorphoses* also includes.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* can be compared with other epic poems that address similar historical events such as the Trojan War and the development of the Roman empire. Homer's epic poems the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—written originally in ancient Greek—each address the Trojan War and its fallout. The *Iliad* details the events of the Trojan War which the *Metamorphoses* touches on, such as the heroism and death of Achilles. The *Odyssey* details Odysseus's journey home to Athens after the Trojan War, a journey which the *Metamorphoses* describes in brief through the character Ulysses. The *Aeneid*—a Roman epic poem—details the journey of Aeneas after the Trojan War and his foundation of Rome which the *Metamorphoses* touches on. Similarly, the Greek tragedy *Medea* by Euripides expands upon the story of Medea and Jason found in the *Metamorphoses*. It's also difficult to overstate the *Metamorphoses*' influence on later epic works, such as Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (which adapts some of Ovid's stories into its medieval tales); Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron* (similarly packed with short tales, it incorporates Pyramus and Thisbe at one point); and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Shakespeare drew on Ovid in writing several of his plays, notably *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (both adapting the story of Pyramus and Thisbe), *Titus Andronicus* (Tereus and Philomela), and *The Tempest* (Medea).

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Metamorphoses
- **When Written:** 8 C.E.
- **Where Written:** Italy
- **When Published:** 8 C.E.
- **Literary Period:** Ancient Roman
- **Genre:** Epic Poem
- **Setting:** The universe, ancient Greece, ancient Rome
- **Climax:** The fall of Troy
- **Point of View:** Third Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Treasonous Monogamy. During Ovid's literary career, he contributed public writings that addressed adultery's status as a crime. This support of monogamy—which went against the norm at the time of Augustus's reign in the Roman empire—is one possible cause of Ovid's exile to Tomis.

Lost Writing. Some of Ovid's work is not preserved in its entirety. For example, a play named *Medea*—Ovid's one tragedy—did not survive his lifetime. Of the entire play, only a few lines and fragments are preserved.

PLOT SUMMARY

Ovid begins the *Metamorphoses* by asking the gods to help him trace the origins of the world and its development up to his own time (Caesar Augustus's reign in the Roman Empire). Ovid then explains that the universe used to be a jumble of parts making up a "single face […] called Chaos." The gods separated out the elements, setting the heavier ones down as earth and dissipating the lighter ones as air. They created landforms, animals, and weather. Finally, they created Man—a creature with divine attributes who could hold dominion over other animals. After this initial creation, the world develops naturally through four Ages—the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age. With each age, human beings become more corrupted as they start warring with each other and abusing their power over the Earth and animals. Fed up with this corruption, the gods, led by Jupiter, flood the Earth, obliterating everyone except two devout survivors—Deucalion and Pyrrha. These two survivors, having humbly asked for instruction from the gods, throw stones over their shoulders that metamorphose into a new human race. The world is purged again when Phaethon steers Phoebus's fiery chariot astray, setting the Earth on fire.

The world slowly redevelops after the fire. Many stories ensue, most of which end in a metamorphosis. Jupiter has several affairs with mortal women, incurring Juno's wrath and causing her to transform his mistresses. In one such affair, Jupiter kidnaps Europa, causing her brother Cadmus to set out looking for her. When he can't find her, he gets instruction from the gods to sow dragon's teeth in a particular place. These teeth transform into people, creating the population for a new city—Thebes. Later, Jupiter sleeps with Cadmus's daughter Semele. A furious Juno arranges for Semele's death, and Jupiter snatches the baby from her womb who later becomes the god Bacchus. Those who refuse to worship Bacchus are punished by him, while Bacchus's relatives are punished by Juno, who is still angry at Jupiter for having a child with another woman. Several stories ensue which warn against the refusal to worship the gods, such as when Latona murders Niobe's children after she boasts at her good fortune, and when Arachne is transformed into a spider for daring to be as skilled at weaving as Minerva.

After a story in which an Athenian princess, Philomela, is raped by her sister Procne's barbarian husband Tereus, Medea betrays her father's kingdom to marry Jason, the leader of a Greek army. She then betrays Jason and runs off to marry Aegeus, the king of Athens. Shortly after, king Minos of Crete engages Athens in war over the murder of his brother. When Minos arrives at Athens, Scylla sacrifices the kingdom because she has fallen in love with Minos. Minos refuses Scylla (who transforms into a bird) but takes Athens and returns to Crete, bringing Theseus to feed to the Minotaur. Theseus escapes from the Minotaur with the help of Minos's daughter Ariadne and returns to Athens, stopping along the way to kill a boar that Diana set loose in a nearby city, and in Achelous's house where he hears many stories. The *Metamorphoses* then tells the story of Hercules, who is burned to death when he puts on a cursed shirt given to Deianira by a centaur, who had competed with Hercules for Deianira's hand in marriage. Hercules is made a god. The story of Byblis's incestuous love for her brother follows, then the story of Orpheus whose wife dies tragically on the day of their wedding. In his grief, Orpheus sits and sings many songs of metamorphoses and the gods' powers until he is killed by a group of women whom he'd rejected.

Troy is then founded by Laomedon with the help of Neptune, Apollo, and Peleus. Shortly after founding Troy and marrying Thetis, Peleus kills his brother and flees to Ceyx's kingdom. A story ensues in which Ceyx leaves his devoted wife Alcyone to visit Apollo's temple and is shipwrecked in a storm. The Trojan War begins when Paris kidnaps Helen. The *Metamorphoses* recounts several battle scenes in the Trojan War and Achilles's killing by Paris. Achilles's shield and sword are then given to Ulysses after he wins an oration contest between himself and Ajax. After Athens defeats Troy, Ulysses captures Hecuba and sacrifices Polyxena.

After the Trojan War, Aeneas travels around the Mediterranean until he arrives in a city in Italy. There, he engages Turnus in war and eventually wins the kingdom. At this point, Venus convinces Jupiter to make Aeneas a god. Several generations later, one of Aeneas's ancestors unjustly seizes a city that Romulus then retakes and names Rome. When Romulus and his wife Hersilie are made divinities, Numa becomes king of Rome and instructs himself in the teachings of Pythagoras. After Cipus manages to evade a prophecy that he will become Rome's tyrant, Romans retrieve Aesculapius so he can cure the city's horrible plague. Afterwards, Julius Caesar becomes king of Rome, Numa having died. When Venus foresees that Julius Caesar will be betrayed and murdered, she seeks to change his fate, but Jupiter reminds her that the gods cannot alter Fate. So, Venus makes Julius Caesar a god while Caesar Augustus rules Rome. Ovid ends the *Metamorphoses* by praying that Caesar Augustus will rule for a long time and asserting that his **writing**—unlike everything else that decays—will last for eternity.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Jupiter (Jove) – Jupiter—or Jove—is Saturn's son and the head of all the gods. His distinctive feature and weapon is the lightning bolt, which he uses either to kill people or signify his presence. Although Jupiter is married to Juno, he has countless other love interests throughout the *Metamorphoses*. These love

interests are usually mortals or nymphs, as Jupiter does not want to sleep with a goddess who would bear children more powerful than himself. When a love interest attempts to resist Jupiter, he rapes her, disguising himself in all kinds of forms to do so. Jupiter's affairs with various women anger Juno, who then seeks her revenge, creating much of the poem's action. Semele—one of his love interests—bears him a child, Bacchus, who is birthed out of Jupiter's thigh. Jupiter is the most powerful of all the gods, but not even he can defy Fate.

Deucalion – Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha are the only two survivors after the gods flood the Earth to rid it of corruption. Deucalion and his wife pray to the goddess of prophecy, and she tells them to throw rocks over their shoulders. When they do so, the thrown stones take the form of a new human race.

Daphne – Daphne is the beautiful daughter of a river god. When Cupid intervenes, Apollo falls madly in love with Daphne while she rejects love and men. Apollo chases Daphne through the woods. Daphne prays to her father, who transforms her into a tree so she can escape being raped. Apollo immortalizes the tree and later uses its leaves to crown heroes.

Juno – Juno is a goddess and Jupiter's wife. Most of her actions throughout the *Metamorphoses* are in response to Jupiter's many acts of infidelity. Juno is always jealous of Jupiter's love interests, and afraid that her seat on the heavenly throne will be usurped. She punishes the love interests—even if they are the victims of Jupiter's passion— by transforming them or thwarting their relationships with Jupiter.

Io – Io is the daughter of a river nymph. Jupiter falls in love with her, and one day overtakes her in the woods and rapes her. Jupiter transforms Io into a white cow so that she can escape Juno, who has discovered his infidelity. Suspecting that the cow is Io, Juno convinces Jupiter to give her the cow. While Io is in Juno's custody, she **writes** her name in the dust with her hoof to let her father know who she is. Juno continues to torture Io until Jupiter begs her to stop, promising not to pursue Io again. Juno consents and returns Io to her human form.

Phaëthon – Phaëthon is the son of the sun god, Phoebus. Doubtful that Phoebus is really his father, Phaëthon travels to the sun god's palace for proof. After determining that Phoebus *is* his father, Phaëthon asks Phoebus if he can drive his chariot. Phoebus warns him that the chariot is too dangerous for a mortal to drive, but Phaëthon insists. Phaëthon quickly loses control of the fiery, spirited horses, and the chariot plummets to earth, setting fire to everything. Jupiter strikes Phaëthon dead with a lightning bolt to stop his dangerous path. Phaëthon is mourned by some, but also seen as an example of what happens to mortals who think they can do what the gods do.

Callisto – Callisto is a virgin huntress who follows the goddess Diana. One day, Jupiter rapes and impregnates her. Callisto's visible pregnancy reveals to Diana that she is no longer a virgin, so Diana banishes her from her clan of virgins. Shortly after Callisto gives birth to a son, Juno transforms her into a bear, angry that Jupiter has cheated on her again. Callisto's son grows up to be a hunter who tries to kill his mother when he encounters her in the woods. Jupiter blocks his blow and transports the mother and son to the sky as constellations.

Aglauros – Aglauros is the sister of Minerva and Herse. She is disobedient and selfish, once looking into a basket that the goddess Pallas Athena forbade her to look inside. Later, Aglauros tries to demand gold in exchange for introducing Mercury to her sister Herse, whom Mercury desires. Minerva eventually gets fed up with Aglauros's greedy nature and sends Envy to transform her into a mildewed statue.

Cadmus – Cadmus is Europa's sister. His father sends him to search for Europa and tells him not to return until he finds her. Cadmus looks everywhere, and at last asks Phoebus where he should go. On Phoebus's orders, Cadmus founds a new city by following a stray cow to where it stops. After killing a dragon in a nearby stream, he sows the dragon's teeth in the soil, which sprout citizens for his new city. Cadmus goes on to produce a long legacy until he finally abandons his city with his wife Harmonia, feeling that he has only experienced hardship there. He and Harmonia are eventually transformed into serpents, fulfilling a curse that was placed on Cadmus when he stared too long at the dragon he killed.

Narcissus –Narcissus is a boy whom Teiresiasprophesies will live a long life if he never "knows himself." Narcissus grows up to be desired by many girls. However, he rejects them all, including Echo. One day, one of the gods answers the prayer of one of Narcissus's rejected lovers and leads Narcissus to a clear pool where he catches sight of his own reflection. Narcissus falls in love with himself and slowly dies beside his reflection, unable to obtain the object of his desire—himself.

Echo –Echo is a nymph who used to distract Juno while Jupiter was being unfaithful to her. Juno discovered this and cursed Echo to only repeat the words that another person says to her. When Narcissus rejects Echo, she repeats his rejection and flees to a cave in shame. When Narcissus is dying, Echo echoes his wailing.

Pentheus –Pentheus is aman who scoffs at the gods and the people who worship them. He believes that the people who came from the dragon's teeth that Cadmus sowed should be too brave to worship Bacchus with raucous, effeminate festivals. He captures Acoetes and interrogates him, then runs up the mountain to intercept the Bacchic festival. His mother Agave and her companions tear his body to pieces, fulfilling Teiresias's prophecy of Pentheus's fate.

Bacchus –Bacchus is the son of Jupiter and Semele who was born from Jupiter's thigh. He becomes a new god worshipped throughout Greece with wild dances and drunken festivals in which people wear animal skins and ivy wreaths. He is a polarizing deity throughout Greece, many people refusing to

worship him and incurring punishment.

Pyramus –Pyramus is a teenage character in a story that one of daughters of Minyas tells while she and her sisters are weaving and abstaining from the festival for Bacchus. Pyramus falls in love with Thisbe—a girl who lives next door but whom his parents don't approve of him marrying. Pyramus and Thisbe decide to flee their city so they can be together, agreeing to meet at night at a mulberry tree—a tree that then had white berries. Pyramus arrives at the tree after Thisbe and finds her bloody cloak that she'd dropped after running to hide from a lion. Thinking Thisbe was killed, Pyramus kills himself under the mulberry tree. Later, blaming herself for Pyramus's death, Thisbe kills herself beside him. Their blood seeps into the soil and permanently stains the mulberry berries red.

Thisbe –Thisbe is the teenage character in the love story of Pyramus and Thisbe told by one of the daughters of Minyas. When Thisbe returns to the mulberry tree after hiding from the lion and finds Pyramus dead, she sees the cloak she had dropped covered with blood from the lion's mouth and realizes that Pyramus had thought she was dead. Blaming herself for Pyramus's death, Thisbe kills herself beside him. Their blood seeps into the soil and permanently stains the mulberry berries red.

Clytië –Clytië was Phoebus's lover before he fell in love with Leucothoë. She is furious that Phoebus has found a new love interest, and tells Leucothoë's father about his daughter's affair, leading him to kill Leucothoë. After Leucothoë is dead, Phoebus doesn't return to Clytië, and she lies despondent in the sunshine until she's turned into a heliotrope flower.

Salmacis –Salmacis is a nymph who rejects Diana's lifestyle and likes to show off her nakedness. She falls in love with Hermaphroditus when he comes to bathe in her pool and grabs onto him while he is under water. She prays to the gods that they will become one, and the gods merge the two's faces and bodies.

Ino –Ino is Semele's sister and was one of Bacchus's caregivers when he was young. Juno—who is vengeful towards all of Semele's relatives—sends a demon to Ino and her husband Athamas to poison them with crime, lust, and madness. Ino flees from Athamas, who suddenly tries to seize and kill her and her children, running off a cliff into the ocean with a baby in her arms. Neptune transforms Ino and the baby into sea-gods.

Perseus –Perseus is one of Jupiter's sons. He is banished from his city by his grandfather, who doesn't believe he is the son of the god. Perseus flies around on winged sandals, holding the Medusa's head. When he encounters people who don't believe he's a god, he pulls out Medusa's head and it turns them to stone. One day, he comes across Andromeda hanging from a cliff above a sea-monster and rescues her. Perseus then marries Andromeda. At the wedding, Andromeda's former fiancé Phineus challenges Perseus to a fight, and the wedding party devolves into war. Perseus ultimately wins the fight and turns Phineus and his companions to stone with Medusa's head.

Medusa –Medusa is a cursed woman with snakes for hair. She used to be a beautiful woman until Neptune raped her and Minerva punished the act by cursing Medusa and giving her the power to turn people to stone with her stare. Perseus cuts off Medusa's head while she sleeps and uses it as a weapon.

Ceres –Ceres is the goddess of agriculture and plenty. Jealous that more people worship Ceres than Venus, Venus gets her vengeance by arranging for Pluto to kidnap Ceres's daughter Proserpina. Ceres is ultimately forced to travel to Hades where Pluto has taken Proserpina. She tries to convince Pluto to return Proserpina to land, but only manages to negotiate for Proserpina to spend half her time on land and half in the underworld.

Proserpina –Proserpina is Ceres's daughter and Pluto's love interest. After being struck with Cupid's arrow, Pluto falls in love with Proserpina, kidnaps her, and takes her to Hades. There, Proserpina becomes the Queen of the underworld, but she is sad and afraid. Eventually, Ceres arranges for her to spend half her time back on land where she is much happier.

Arachne –Arachne is a woman who boasts that she is better at weaving than Minerva, goddess of weaving. One day, she challenges a disguised Minerva to a weaving contest. Arachne weaves the superior tapestry, depicting the gods in various disguises raping and deceiving mortals. Furious, Minerva punishes Arachne's arrogance by transforming her into a spider.

Niobe –Niobe is a wealthy and powerful queen with many beautiful children. She refuses to worship the goddess Latona because she believes that no one—not even a god—is more blessed than she is. She arrogantly claims that she is invincible. Latona punishes her arrogance by murdering her children and her husband. When Niobe weeps over their dead bodies, Latona turns her into an eternally weeping stone statue and sets her on a mountaintop.

Tereus –Tereus is a barbarian king who marries Procne—the daughter of an Athenian king who seeks to make peace with the barbarians. After marrying Procne, Tereus returns to Athens to retrieve Procne's sister Philomela. As soon as Tereus sees Philomela, he lusts after her. Pretending to act as a devoted husband bringing his wife's sister to visit his wife, he brings Philomela on his ship to his homeland. Once on land, he brutally rapes Philomela, cuts out her tongue, and rapes her two more times. He imprisons Philomela and returns to Procne, pretending as though nothing happened. Meanwhile, the two sisters manage to reunite, and they seek their revenge against Tereus by killing his son Itys and feeding him to Tereus at a banquet. After this episode, Tereus is turned into a monstrous bird with a long beak.

Procne –Procne is Tereus's wife and Philomela's sister. When Procne hears that her husband has raped her sister, she furiously seeks revenge against him. After debating as to how to seek her revenge, she decides to kill her and Tereus's son Itys and serve him to Tereus at a banquet; she can no longer look at her son with motherly tenderness, but only sees him as a reminder and image of her husband's brutality. At the end of the story, Procne is turned into a nightingale with "the red badge of murder" on its chest.

Philomela –Philomela is Procne's sister. When Procne's husband Tereus deceives her and rapes her, she is furious and distressed. She feels that Tereus has forced her to become her sister's rival. When Tereus cuts out her tongue and imprisons her, Philomela weaves **writing** into a tapestry to send to Procne that informs her of her husband's crime. Procne and Philomela then band together and seek their revenge against Tereus, killing and feeding Tereus's son Itys to Tereus. At the end of the story, Philomela is turned into a swallow with "the red badge of murder" on its chest.

Medea –Medea—the daughter of a king who hopes to prevent Jason and his army of Argonauts from taking a golden ram—is a girl with magical powers. Medea falls in love with Jason and decides to help him win the golden ram, betraying her father. She helps Jason by giving him some magical herbs, then returns to Greece with him as his wife. There, she magically restores some youth to Jason's elderly father Aeson. After this act of kindness, however, she starts to use her magical powers for evil. Pretending that she and Jason are divorced, she travels to Pelias's kingdom and, on pretense of reviving his youth, tricks his daughters into helping her kill him. Medea then returns home, kills her children, and flies her chariot to Athens where she marries king Aegeus. When Aegeus's son Theseus returns from war, Medea tries to murder him, but Aegeus stops her.

Jason –Jason is the leader of the Argonauts—a Greek army. He takes his army to a kingdom on a mission to capture a golden ram. Jason participates in many dangerous tasks in order to win the ram as a prize. He is helped by Medea—the daughter of the kingdom's king—who gives him magical herbs to lull the fiery bulls that he must combat. Jason wins the match with the herbs, takes the golden ram, and marries Medea.

Theseus –Theseus is Aegeus's son. When Theseus returns to Athens after performing several heroic deeds, Medea attempts to kill him but Aegeus saves him. Theseus is then captured by Minos when Minos captures Athens. Minos tries to feed Theseus to the Minotaur, but his daughter Ariadne helps him escape. Theseus then abandons Ariadne and returns to Athens, stopping in Calydon to defeat the boar that Diana sets loose in the city. He also stops at Achelous's house and exchanges stories with the river god.

Aeacus –Aeacus is the king of Aegina and an ally of Athens. When king Minos asks Aeacus to help him in his war against Athens, Aeacus refuses. Not only is he Athens's ally, but Aegina has just managed to recover from a terrible plague that decimated their population. During this plague, Aeacus prayed to Jupiter for help. The next night, Aeacus dreamed that thousands of ants became people. The next morning, Aegina teemed with new citizens that Aeacus called the Myrmidons. Aeacus gathers his new army to assist Cephalus in Athens's war against Minos.

Minos –King Minos is Athens's enemy.When Minosattacks a city named Alcathoe, Scylla—the daughter of Alcothoe's king—falls in love with him. She propositions Minos with the keys for her city's gates as long as he will marry her. King Minos is disgusted by Scylla's betrayal of her father and her homeland and refuses to marry her. However, he takes the keys and peacefully captures Alcathoe before sailing away.

Cephalus –Cephalus is a messenger from Athens who travels to Aegina to ask for their support in Athens's war against king Minos. Cephalus hears king Aeacus's story of Aegina's plague, and shows Aeacus's sons the magic spear that his wife Procris gave him. Cephalus and Procris are in love with each other, but many things get in the way of their happy marriage. Nymphs and goddesses who are unsuccessful in wooing Cephalus fill his head with suspicions that Procris is cheating on him. To discover the truth, Cephalus decides to test Procris by disguising himself and wooing her. Procris at last gives in to his seductions, at which point Cephalus reveals himself and calls her a slut. Over time, Cephalus persuades Procris to forgive him for his trick, and they live happily together again. However, their loving marriage ends tragically when someone overhears Cephalus speaking lovingly to the wind and tells Procris that Cephalus is having an affair with a nymph. To find out the truth, Procris follows Cephalus into the woods and catches him whispering to the wind. Cephalus hears her movements and, thinking she is a predator, impales her with his magic spear and kills her.

Procris –Procris is Cephalus's wife. Over the course of their marriage, Procris gifts Cephalus a fast-running hunting dog and a magic spear that always meets its target. Procris dies tragically after a miscommunication in which she thinks Cephalus is cheating on her with a nymph when he is actually speaking lovingly to the wind. Cephalus, thinking Procris is an animal, accidentally kills her with his spear.

Scylla –Scylla is the daughter of the king of Alcathoe. When Alcathoe is attacked by Minos, Scylla falls in love with him. She battles internally as to whether she should betray her father and her homeland and be with the man she desires. She at last decides to sacrifice her city to Minos and steals the city's keys from around her father's neck while he sleeps. When she offers Minos the keys, Minos takes them but rejects Scylla's love. Ashamed and angry, she jumps in the water and grabs hold of his ship as he sails away. She then transforms into a bird.

Daedaulus –Daedaulus is an Athenian craftsman who builds

the labyrinth in Crete in which Minos stashes the Minotaur. After building the labyrinth, Daedalus fashions sets of wings for himself and his son Icarus to fly back to Athens with. On the way, Icarus gets too close to the sun and his wings melt, sending him to his death in the sea. Daedalus finds his body and buries him. Daedalus was also Perdix's teacher. He was jealous when Perdix invented the compass, so he pushed the boy off a mountain.

Meleager –Meleager is a soldier who leads the charge to kill a ferocious bull that Diana sets loose in Calydon, angry that no one there is worshipping her. Meleager kills the boar, and then angers his fellow soldiers by giving half the credit to a female soldier whom he desires. This upset leads to a duel in which Meleager kills two of his uncles. His mother Althaea, after an internal battle, decides to avenge her brothers and kill her son. Althaea kills him by throwing the fragment of wood on the fire. (Meleager had been cursed as a baby to only live as long as the piece of wood.) Meleager burns to death, and many Calydonians mourn.

Althaea –Althaea is Meleager's mother. After Meleager kills her brothers, she engages in a long internal debate as to where her true allegiance lies—with her son, or with her brothers. She at last decides to avenge her brothers and tosses the fragment of wood (to which Meleager's life was tied by a curse) on the fire. After Meleager dies and Calydon grieves, Althaea kills herself.

Achelous – Achelous is a river god. He hosts Theseus in his house when Theseus is returning to Athens and entertains him with many stories, including the story of how he lost some of his power to Hercules. He and Hercules engaged in a wrestling match in competition for Deianira, and Hercules wrenched off one of Achelous's horns.

Philemon –Philemon and his wife Baucis are characters in a story that one of Theseus's companions tells another companion who scoffs at the gods. Philemon and Baucis are poor peasants, but one day they take in a disguised Jupiter and Mercury who are looking for shelter. Unlike their inhospitable neighbors, Philemon and Baucis serve the gods a delicious feast and make them comfortable. Mercury and Jupiter flood out Philemon and Baucis's rude neighbors and reward the couple by making them priests of a temple. When Philemon and Baucis die, the gods make Philemon an oak tree.

Erysichthon –Erysichthon is a character in a story Achelous tells Theseus as an example of what happens to those who scorn the gods. Erysichthon angers Ceres by chopping down her sacred forest, so she sets the curse of hunger on him. Unable to satiate his hunger, he sells his daughter Mestra as a slave to buy more food. He eventually eats himself to death.

Hercules –Hercules is Jupiter and Alcmena's son. He becomes famous for many deeds, but Juno detests him because he is her husband's bastard son. In her fury, Juno tells Hercules's wife Deianira that Hercules is being unfaithful to her with a woman named Iole. Distraught, Deianira decides to give Hercules a cursed shirt that Nessus had given her saying it would excite Hercules's lust. Hercules puts on the shirt and it burns his flesh. Hercules runs into the woods, begging Juno to kill him. He builds his own funeral pyre, lies down, and dies. Jupiter transforms him into a god.

Deianira –Deianira is Hercules's wife. She was also the love interest of both Achelous and Nessus. When Hercules defeats Nessus, Nessus gives Deianira a cursed shirt that he says will excite Hercules's passion. Later, when Deianira wants to make Hercules fall in love with her again, she gives him the shirt and it burns him to death.

Byblis –Byblis is Caunus's sister. As she grows up, she starts to desire her brother. She berates herself for her incestuous passion and tries to talk herself out of pursuing it. However, her passion becomes so intense that she **writes** her feelings on a tablet to Caunus. When Caunus reacts with disgust, Byblis continues to beseech him again and again, hoping he'll change his mind. When Caunus finally flees Byblis's incessant advances, Byblis goes mad. She collapses on the ground, and some nymphs turn her into a mountain spring.

Iphis –Iphis is a baby who is born a girl but raised as a boy. When Iphis's mother was pregnant with her, her father had threatened to kill the baby if it was a girl. With the help of a goddess, Iphis's mother conceals Iphis's gender and raises her as a boy. When Iphis falls in love with a girl and becomes engaged to her, she frets because she knows she won't be able to be a true husband to her lover. Iphis's mother, also distressed, again calls on Isis for help. Isis transforms Iphis into a boy, and Iphis marries his lover.

Orpheus –Orpheus is Eurydice's husband. When Eurydice dies directly after the wedding from a snakebite, Orpheus follows her to Hades and negotiates with Pluto for her release. However, when the two are climbing out of Hades, Orpheus disregards Pluto's instructions and looks behind him. As a result, Eurydice falls to her death and Orpheus returns to land alone. He sits down on a plateau and plays the lyre, singing many songs and telling many stories. After a time, a group of women from Thrace (whose advances he had rejected) notice him. They stone him to death and scatter his limbs. Orpheus then joins Eurydice in Hades.

Pygmalion –Pygmalion is a sculptor who hates lust and the lasciviousness of women. While leading a single life, he sculpts a statue of a beautiful woman and falls in love with it. He treats the statue like a living woman until Venus brings the statue to life so Pygmalion can marry her.

Myrrha –Myrrha is a character in one of Orpheus's songs who falls in love with her father. Unable to control her incestuous passion, Myrrha decides to hang herself. Before she can, her nurse discovers her and forces her to confess her torturous

desire. The nurse then arranges for Myrrha to sneak into her father's bedroom and sleep with him under cover of darkness. Myrrha sleeps with her father for several nights until he lights a torch, wanting to see what his mistress looks like. Horrified to recognize his daughter, Myrrha's father banishes Myrrha. The gods transform Myrrha into a myrrh tree, retrieving her father's baby from her womb before doing so.

Atalanta –Atalanta is a beautiful girl who can run faster than any man. Many men desire her, but she tells them that they can only be with her if they beat her in a running race. Atalanta kills countless losers until she meets Hippomenes and debates letting him win because she likes him. She decides that winning is still more important to her, but Venus assists Hippomenes in winning the race, and he and Atalanta begin a romantic relationship. However, they forget to thank Venus for her help, and so one day while they are having sex in a sacred cave, Venus transforms them into lions.

Midas –Midas is a king who was trained in Bacchic rites. When Midas welcomes Bacchus into his palace, Bacchus grants him a wish, and Midas wishes for everything he touches to turn to gold. He soon regrets his wish when he can't eat or drink anything that doesn't turn to gold first. He prays to Bacchus who reverses the gift. He then wanders around as a nomad, disgusted with wealth. When he one day asserts that Pan is a better pipe-player than Apollo, Apollo transforms Midas's ears into donkey ears.

Peleus –Peleus is Jupiter's grandson and Achilles's father. He helps Apollo and Neptune take Troy from Laomedon. Shortly before this, he marries Thetis. Although Thetis resists him by changing her form, he takes the advice of Jupiter and Neptune and sneaks up on her, binding her in a rope so she can't transform.Peleus eventually flees Troy after killing his brother.

Ceyx –Ceyx is a king who hosts Peleus when Peleus flees Troy. Ceyx witnesses his brother Daedalion be transformed into a bird and a wolf transformed into marble. Disturbed by these occurrences, Ceyx travels to Apollo's temple, leaving his devoted wife Alcyone behind. He promises Alcyone that he will return shortly, but a horrible storm shipwrecks him and he drowns. When his body floats back to his homeland's shore and Alcyone finds it, the couple are transformed into birds that always fly together.

Alcyone –Alcyone is Ceyx's wife. She is extremely devoted to her husband and suffers when he leaves her to visit Apollo's temple. She prays every day for his return, not knowing that he has already died at sea. Juno tires of Alcyone's prayers and finally sends the image of Ceyx's ghost to Alcyone in her dreams, thus informing her of her husband's death. Alcyone goes down to the sea to mourn where she encounters Ceyx's body floating to shore. She jumps to meet him, and the couple transform into birds.

Aesacus –Although a descendent of Troy's founders and Hector's brother, Aesacus grows up in the country. When he chases a nymph he desires and she is fatally bitten by a poisonous snake, he jumps off a cliff, trying to kill himself. He is transformed into a diving bird that continuously tries to drown itself.

Caenis –Caenis is a girl who was once raped by Neptune. Afterwards, Caenis demands that Neptune transform her into a boy so she'll never be raped again. Caenis the man fights valiantly against the Centaurs in the battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs and is transformed into a bird after the Centaurs crush him under a pile of trees.

Hecuba –Hecuba is Hector's wife. When she is kidnapped by Ulysses after Troy loses the war, Hecuba smuggles Hector's ashes with her. After watching her daughter Polyxena be sacrificed and learning that her son has been murdered by a greedy king, Hecuba flies into a rage. She goes to visit the greedy king, pretending to have money for him, and claws apart his face. She is transformed into a sorrowfully howling dog.

Aeneas –Aeneas is Venus's son and a survivor of Troy who flees with several companions. He wanders around by ship, escaping many dangers, until he finally takes over some small Italian cities led by Turnus and establishes what will later become Rome. His ancestors become Rome's rulers, and Venus makes him a god.

The Cyclops –The Cyclops is a giant creature with one eye. He falls in love with Galatea and tries to seduce her by trimming his beard and gathering animals for her. Despite the Cyclops' professions of love, Galatea rejects him for Acis. Angry and envious, the Cyclops chases Galatea and Acis and tries to crush Acis by throwing a mountain at him.

Glaucus –Glaucus is a sea nymph who used to be a fisherman. One day while fishing, he laid his fish out on a magical pasture, and they started jumping back into the waves. Glaucus ate a few blades of grass and suddenly transformed into a fish-like creature with the urge to live in the sea. As a nymph, Glaucus is furious when he is rejected by Scylla and asks Circe to put a love spell on Scylla. Circe, falling love with Glaucus, poisons Scylla and turns her to stone, causing Glaucus to get angry and reject Circe.

Sybil –Sybil is a woman who possesses long life. When Aeneas visits her, Sybil explains that she once asked Apollo to make her live as many years as there were grains of dust at her feet. She now regrets her wish because, while she has 300 more years to live, she does not have eternal youthful looks.

Picus –Picus is a character in a story that one of Circe's nymphs tells Macareus. Picus was a handsome horse rider who rejected all his lovers in favor of a girl named Canens. One day after Picus and Canens marry, Circe spots Picus out riding and falls in love. She attempts to seduce him but he rejects her. Furious, Circe turns Picus into a woodpecker.

Pomona –Pomona is the goddess of fruits. She spends her time

tending her orchards and rejects all her lovers. One of these lovers, Vertumnus, disguises himself as an old woman and tries to persuade her with stories to accept a lover. When she refuses, Vertumnus transforms back into a human. Just as he is about to rape Pomona, she is captivated by his good looks and willingly accepts him.

Pythagoras –Pythagoras is a famous philosopher, mathematician, and theologian who lives in Croton and delivers speeches to audiences. Numa attends one of Pythagoras's speeches in which Pythagoras urges people not to eat meat as animals are often incarnations of humans. Pythagoras also asserts that the universe is always in a state of change, and that nothing in the world maintains its form for long.

Julius Caesar –Julius Caesar is a ruler of Rome who is famous for his deeds in matters of war and peace. Venus foresees that Julius Caesar will be betrayed and killed by two of his trusted senators, and she tries to prevent it. However, Jupiter reminds her that the gods can't alter fate. So, Venus instead rescues Julius Caesar's soul from his body as it is murdered and makes him a god. Julius Caesar is the father of Caesar Augustus.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Saturn –The godSaturn is the god Jupiter's father. Shortly after the universe is created, Saturn is banished to the underworld and Jupiter becomes the head of the gods.

Lycaön – Lycaön is a corrupted king who lives during the Iron Age. Jupiter pays him a visit disguised as a mortal, and Lycaön mocks the gods and kills and eats Jupiter's companion. To punish him, Jupiter strikes his palace with lightning and turns Lycaön into a wolf.

Pyrrha – Pyrrha is Deucalion's devout wife.

Apollo – Apollo is the son of Jupiter and Latona. He is also Diana's brother and Aesculapius's father. He is known as the god of archery, among other things. He is active in many stories throughout the *Metamorphoses*.

Cupid – Cupid is Venus's son and the god of love. Many times throughout the *Metamorphoses*, he uses his magic arrows to cause both humans and gods to fall in love.

Mercury Mercury is Jupiter's son. He is known as the messenger god and flies on winged sandals. He appears throughout the *Metamorphoses*, such as in the stories of Aglauros and Battus.

Argus – Argus is a man with one hundred eyes whom Juno assigns to guard Io the cow. Jupiter has his son Mercury kill Argus, and Juno uses his hundred eyes to bejewel the tail feathers of her signature peacocks.

Phoebus – Phoebus is the sun god. He is in charge of the changes of days and season and owns a fiery chariot which he drives around the sky. His son Phaethon once tries to drive this chariot and plummets to his death, setting the Earth on fire.

Diana – Diana is the goddess of chastity. She leads groups of women who live chaste lives as huntresses. She punishes anyone in her clan who fails to live chastely, and any outsider who sees her naked.

Ocyrhoë – Ocyrhoë is the daughter of the centaur who takes care of Apollo's son. She prophesies what will happen in Apollo's son's future, and then Jupiter turns her into a horse.

Pallas Athena –Pallas Athena is a Greek goddess. A statue of her plays an important role during the Trojan War, Ulysses claiming credit for recapturing the statue from where it had been smuggled within Troy's walls.

Herse –Herse isthe sister of Minerva and Aglauros. The god Mercury falls in love with her, sparking Aglauros's jealousy.

Minerva –Minerva is the goddess of weaving and wisdom. Among other actions, she sends Envy to punish Aglauros and punishes Arachne for daring to compete with her in weaving.

Europa – Europa is a princess and one of Jupiter's love interests. Jupiter disguises himself as a gentle bull and inveigles Europa into his custody by riding into the sea with her on his back.

Actaeon –Actaeon is Cadmus's son. He accidentally sees Diana naked, and she punishes him by transforming him into a stag. His hunting dogs kill him later that day.

Semele –Semele is Cadmus's daughter and one of Jupiter's love interests. Juno—furious that Jupiter has impregnated Semele—convinces Semele to sleep with Jupiter while he is in his divine form. Doing this kills Semele, and Jupiter snatches her baby from her womb and saves it by stitching it into his thigh.

Teiresias –Teiresias is a famous prophet. He has lived as both a man and a woman, and so settles a debate between Juno and Jupiter as to whether men or women enjoy sex more: he says women do.

Acoetes –Acoetes is a former sailor and one of Bacchus's companions. His sailing crew had once captured Bacchus and refused to believe he was a god. Bacchus punished them by turning them into wild animals but saved Acoetes who had believed him.

Agave –Agave is Pentheus's mother. When he refuses to worship Bacchus, she rips off his head and limbs with the help of her companions.

Mars –Mars is Jupiter and Juno's son. He is known as the god of war.

Venus –Venus is the goddess of love. Aeneas and Julius Caesar are both her sons, and she makes them gods at the end of their lives. Cupid is also her son.

Leucothoë –Leucothoë is one of Phoebus's love interests. Phoebus goes to her disguised as a mortal, then reveals his identity and rapes her. Leucothoë's father is furious that his

daughter is no longer a virgin and buries her alive. Phoebus tries to revive her but is unsuccessful.

Hermaphroditus –Hermaphroditus is a boy who swims in Salmacis's pool, causing her to fall in love with him and seduce him. After Salmacis has their bodies and faces merged, Hermaphroditus asks the gods to curse Salmacis's pool to make whoever swims in it androgynous.

Athamas –Athamas is Ino's husband. When Juno poisons him and Ino, Athamas goes mad and shatters the skull of one of his children against a wall.

Harmonia –Harmonia is Cadmus's wife.

Andromeda –Andromeda is a girl whose fellow citizens tie her to a cliff above a sea-monster in unjust punishment for her mother's arrogance. Perseus rescues her and marries her.

Phineus –Phineus is Andromeda's former fiancé. When Perseus marries Andromeda, Phineus challenges him at the wedding party and starts a deadly battle. Phineus is turned to stone when Perseus forces him to look at Medusa's head.

Calliope –Calliope is one of the Muses. She sings a song that wins a competition against nine sisters who boasted that they could sing better than the Muses. Calliope and the Muses repeat this song to Minerva when she goes to visit them.

Pluto –Pluto is the lord of Hades, or the underworld. He is significant in the story of "The Rape of Proserpina" when he kidnaps Ceres's daughter Proserpina and makes her Queen of Hades. Orpheus also negotiates with Pluto when he tries to retrieve Eurydice from Hades.

Arethusa –Arethusa is a nymph whom Ceres encounters when she is looking for Proserpina. Arethusa was once pursued by a nymph, but Diana saved her from rape by transforming her into a spring named after her.

Latona –Latona is a goddess and the mother of Apollo and Diana. At one point, she harshly punishes Niobe who refuses to worship her.

Itys –Itys is Tereus and Procne's son.

Boreas –Boreas is the god of the north wind. Wary of the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela, Boreas tries to woo his love interest Orithyia gently. However, when this is unsuccessful, he kidnaps Orithyia in a windstorm.

Orithyia –Orithyia is Boreas's love interest. After he kidnaps her in a windstorm, she gives birth to twins with golden wings.

Aeson –Aeson is Jason's elderly father whom Medea magically restores to a younger age.

Pelias –Pelias is an elderly king whom Medea deceives and pretends to restore to youth. Medea concocts a false potion and convinces Pelias's daughters to pierce their father with swords, saying this is part of the revival process. Medea finally slits Pelias's throat, killing him.

Aegeus –Aegeus is an Athenian king whom Medea marries after she kills her children and leaves Jason. Aegeus saves his son Theseus from Medea's attempt to poison him, and Athens gathers to rejoice in Theseus's brave exploits.

The Minotaur –The Minotaur is the monstrous son of Pasiphae—Minos's wife—and a bull. Minos hides the Minotaur in a labyrinth, ashamed of his wife's affair.

Ariadne –Ariadne is Minos's daughter. When Theseus is about to be fed to the Minotaur, Ariadne helps him escape. Theseus then kidnaps Ariadne and abandons her on an island. Taking pity on her, Bacchus makes Ariadne a constellation.

Icarus –Icarus is Daedalus's son. When Icarus is flying behind his father on the wings Daedalus had fashioned from feathers and wax, he is exhilarated with the flight and flies higher towards the sun. His wings melt, and he falls and drowns in the sea.

Perdix –Perdix is Daedalus's student. When Perdix invents the compass all by himself, Daedalus pushes him off a mountain in jealousy. To save him from the deadly fall, Pallas Athena turns him into a partridge—a bird too afraid of heights to fly.

Baucis –Baucis is Philemon's devout and generous wife. Jupiter and Mercury reward her for her hospitality and commemorate her as a linden tree when she dies.

Mestra –Mestra is Erysichthon's daughter. After Erysichthon is infected with hunger by Ceres, he sells Mestra as a slave. Mestra begs Neptune to give her the power of transformation which she then uses to escape servitude.

Nessus –Nessus is a centaur who competes with Hercules for Deianira. Hercules wins Deianira and wounds Nessus, but Nessus gives Deianira a cursed shirt that eventually burns Hercules to death.

Alcmena –Alcmena is Hercules's mother. Alcmena tells Iole—who is pregnant with Hercules's grandson—about the painful time she had giving birth to the half-god Hercules and how her maid Galanthis had helped her when the gods wouldn't.

Iole –Iole is the wife of Hercules's son. She tells Alcmena the story of her sister Dryope.

Galanthis –Galanthis was Alcmena's nursemaid when Alcmena was giving birth to Hercules. Galanthis tricked the goddess of childbirth (who was cursing Alcmena on Juno's orders) into lifting her curse. The goddess of childbirth turned Galanthis into a weasel.

Dryope –Dryope is Iole's sister. One day while walking her baby, Dryope accidentally picks a lotus—a flower that is a nymph. The lotus nymph punishes Dryope by transforming her into a tree.

Miletus –Miletus is Apollo's son and the father of Byblis and Caunus.

Caunus –Caunus is Byblis's brother and the object of her love. When Byblis confesses her incestuous feelings for him, Caunus is appalled and rejects her. Despite his continuous rejections, Byblis persists in pursuing him until he flees and sets up a new home in a faraway place.

Eurydice –Eurydice is Orpheus's wife. She dies just after her wedding when a snake bites her ankle. Orpheus unsuccessfully tries to rescue her from Hades but joins her later when he dies himself.

Cyparissus –Cyparissus is a boy who loves a beautiful stag. When Cyparissus accidentally kills the stag, Cyparissus yearns to die himself, so Apollo transforms him into a cypress tree.

Hyacinthus –Hyacinthus is a Spartan boy whom Apollo likes. Apollo disguises himself so he can play frisbee with Hyacinthus, but Apollo throws the frisbee so hard that Hyacinthus dies when he tries to catch it. Feeling guilty, Apollo transforms Hyacinthus into a hyacinth.

Adonis –Adonis is Myrrha and her father's son. Venus, accidentally grazed by one of Cupid's arrows, falls in love with Adonis and spends time with him in the woods. When she leaves, Adonis is killed by a boar. Venus transforms him into a red flower.

Hippomenes –Hippomenes is one of the men who challenges Atalanta to a running race in hopes of winning her hand in marriage. Hippomenes receives help from Venus and wins the race. However, he forgets to thank Venus for helping him and is transformed into a lion along with Atalanta.

Pan –Pan is a pipe-playing nymph who appears throughout the *Metamorphoses*.

Laomedon –Laomedon is the first founder of Troy. When Apollo and Neptune help him finish Troy and he refuses to pay them, they flood the city and take it over.

Neptune –Neptune is the god of the sea.

Telamon – Telamon is Aeacus's son. He helps Meleager defeat the Calydonian boar and assists Apollo and Neptune in taking Troy from Laomedon.

Thetis –Thetis is a sea-goddess and Peleus's wife. At first, she resists Peleus's attempts to sleep with her, but when he ensnares her in a rope she gives in, deciding the gods are on his side. She soon gives birth to Achilles.

Daedalion –Daedalion is Ceyx's brother. Daedalion's daughter is impregnated simultaneously by Apollo and Mercury and gives birth to twins. When she boasts of her importance, she is killed by Diana. Daedalion is transformed into a hawk when he throws himself off a mountain in grief over his daughter's death.

Priam –Priam is the father of Hector, Aesacus, and Paris. He is sacrificed to Jupiter after Troy loses the Trojan War.

Helen –Helen is an Athenian princess whom Paris kidnaps, instigating the Trojan War between Troy and Athens.

Paris –Paris is Priam's son and Hector's brother. He kidnaps Helen, thus incurring Athens's attack on Troy. During the Trojan War that ensues, Paris kills Achilles with the help of Apollo.

Hector –Hector is Priam's son and a Trojan war hero.

Achilles –Achilles is an Athenian war hero, the son of Peleus and Thetis. He kills many Trojans in the Trojan war but is ultimately killed by an arrow through his heel (his one mortal spot), shot by Paris. Achilles' glorious shield and sword are passed down to Ulysses.

Cycnus –Cycnus is Neptune's son. Achilles kills Cycnus during the Trojan War, upsetting Neptune and causing him to implore Apollo to strike down Achilles.

Nestor –Nestor is a wise man and a member of the Athenian army. He tells the Athenians the story of the Lapiths and Centaurs, and of Hercules's violence towards his brother.

Ulysses –Ulysses is an Athenian war strategist and soldier who bears Achilles's sword and shield after he dies. When the Trojan War ends, Ulysses takes possession of Hecuba and other widows of Troy and sets sail for Greece.

Ajax –Ajax competes against Ulysses for the right to bear Achilles's sword and shield after he dies. In Ajax's speech, he calls Ulysses a deceiver and a coward. When the shield and sword are given to Ulysses, Ajax kills himself.

Philoctetes –Philoctetes is a former Athenian war hero who was driven mad by pain and banished to an island. After winning the contest for Achilles's sword and shield, Ulysses goes to retrieve Hercules's arrows which are in Philoctetes's possession.

Polyxena –Polyxena is Hector and Hecuba's daughter. After Troy loses the Trojan War, Ulysses captures Polyxena and Hecuba and sacrifices Polyxena on board their ship.

Anius –Anius is a king whom Aeneas visits during his travels. Anius tells Aeneas how he lost all his children thanks to the Athenian army.

Galatea –Galatea is a sea-nymph. The Cyclops is in love with Galatea, but she rejects him and spends time with her lover Acis. The Cyclops gets madly jealous and pursues Acis. Galatea saves Acis from being crushed by turning him into a river.

Acis –Acis is Galatea's lover. He is attacked by the Cyclops and saved by Galatea who turns him into a river.

Circe –Circe is Phoebus's daughter.At one point, she transforms Ulysses's companions into pigs, and Ulysses has to sleep with her in order for her to reverse the curse.

Achaemenides –Achaemenides is an Athenian who was abandoned by Ulysses when the Cyclops was terrorizing his crew. Aeneas found Achaemenides and took him onto his ship.

Macareus –Macareus is a former companion of Ulysses. He

tells Achaemenides stories from when Ulysses and his crew stayed with Circe in her cave.

Canens –Canens is Picus's wife. When Picus doesn't return from his ride, she collapses in grief beside a stream, where she transforms into water.

Turnus –Turnus is the ruler of Ardea and leads several tribes in the charge to defeat Aeneas. After fighting stubbornly against Aeneas's army, Turnus is killed and Aeneas takes over Ardea.

Diomedes –Diomedes is a king whom Turnus requests help from in his war against Aeneas. Diomedes refuses, remembering all of his trials during the Trojan War.

Cybele –Cybele is the mother of the gods. She sides with Aeneas in his war against Turnus, and transforms the Trojans' burning ships into sea-monsters.

Vertumnus –Vertumnus is a god who seduces Pomona.

Romulus –Romulus is the grandson of a king whose city is unjustly captured by one of Aeneas's descendants. Romulus retakes the city and names it Rome. Mars then makes Romulus a god.

Hersilie –Hersilie is Romulus's wife. After Romulus is made a god, Hersilie grieves, but then Iris transports Hersilie to the sky to join Romulus as a goddess.

Myscelus –Myscelus is the founder of Croton.

Egeria –Egeria is Numa's wife and is overcome with grief when Numa dies. Hippolytus tries to comfort her without success, so Diana turns her into a spring.

Numa –Numa succeeds Romulus as the leader of Rome.

Hippolytus –Hippolytus is a man who was banished by his father when his stepmother (who desired him) spread the rumor that Hippolytus desired her. Hippolytus wandered in exile, until a fall from his chariot killed him. Hippolytus was saved from Hades by the gods and returned to society.

Cipus –Cipus is a Roman man who one day grows horns and hears a prophecy that he will become Rome's king. To save Rome from a tyrant, Cipus convinces the Roman citizens to banish him.

Aesculapius –Aesculapius is Apollo's son. Initially, he lives in a temple in Epidaurus until the Romans transport him to Rome to heal their plague. Aesculapius travels to Rome in the form of a serpent.

Caesar Augustus –Caesar Augustus is Julius Caesar's son and succeeds him as the ruler of Rome. He is the current ruler of Rome when the *Metamorphoses* ends, and Ovid states that he hopes Augustus will rule for a long time after.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

METAMORPHOSIS

Metamorphosis, or transformation, is the driving force of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The gods exercise their power to transform for a huge variety of reasons, illustrating the claim that Roman academic Pythagoras makes near the end of the poem: that human souls are transitory and can take different forms. Most commonly, the transformations in the *Metamorphoses* take place when a character is in a helpless state or has done something extreme. For instance, the gods often transform human beings into animals or natural elements as a punishment for a crime they have committed. Other times, the gods answer a character's plea for help by transforming them, such as when Daphne is transformed into a tree so she can escape Apollo, or when Perdix is turned into a partridge to save him from a deadly fall. The gods also transform those overwhelmed by grief, such as when they transform Canens and Egeria into springs because they can't cease mourning their dead husbands, or when Narcissus is turned into a flower because he pines for himself. Although some of the forms the transformations take seem arbitrary, many reflect the action or state which prompted them. For instance, Anaxarete is transformed into cold marble to represent her cruel rejection of a poor lover, and Aesacus is transformed into a diving bird that mimics his attempted suicide. Taken altogether, these metamorphoses suggest that, as Pythagoras states, nothing remains the same. Although metamorphosis takes place for a variety of different reasons, sometimes arbitrary and sometimes significant, the sheer volume of transformations throughout the *Metamorphoses* suggests that change is inevitable. In depicting constant transformation on both a personal and a cosmic scale, Ovid demonstrates that change is the world's only constant.

HUMANITY VS. NATURE

In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid portrays humanity's attempt to wield power over nature. Significantly, this tendency to control nature seems to stem from the unique position in which human beings were created. In contrast to the earth's landscape and animals, the gods create human beings as "holier creature[s] [...] which could hold dominion over the rest." Even so, although human beings are made to be capable of dominion over nature, they don't wield it right away. During the Golden Age, the earth is "unscathed by the ploughshare." However, the Iron Age soon follows, in which humanity fells trees and dares to cross the sea to explore new lands. In other words, human beings soon feel that they are more powerful than nature and attempt to control it. Yet their

attempt leads to corruption and dissension, and so displeases the gods that they cause a massive flood to obliterate humanity's creations. This flood is a reminder that nature is indomitable: the two human survivors of the flood, Deucalion and Pyrrha, are humbled by the natural disaster and supplicate the gods—forces more powerful than themselves. Near the end of the *Metamorphoses*, Pythagoras presents another argument for humanity's humility in the face of nature. Pythagoras urges people not to eat meat, claiming first that nature provides sufficient resources to make killing unnecessary, and second that many animals are an incarnation of a human soul. The world Ovid presents further illustrates this claim that nature and humanity aren't strictly separate: nature sometimes yields human beings, such as when the dragon's teeth become soldiers, and human beings countless times become animals or elements of nature. The *Metamorphoses*, in both illustrating nature's power and sometimes personifying it, provides a strong indictment of human attempts to overpower it. Instead, humans should wield their god-given dominion with humility.

LOVE AND DESTRUCTION

The *Metamorphoses* portrays love as a destructive passion. Often, a character in love is afflicted by a passion that causes them to betray their family, kingdom, or values. For instance, when Scylla falls in love with Minos, her kingdom's enemy, she betrays her father and her kingdom to be with him. Similarly, when Myrrha falls in love with her father, she betrays the laws of nature. Even the gods are not exempt from the destructive power of love. Jupiter, the head of all the gods, constantly cheats on his wife Juno due to passion for another. In another example, Pluto (god of the underworld) falls so madly in love with Proserpina that he dramatically kidnaps her in a way that's uncharacteristic of a divine being. Moreover, the many instances of rape throughout the *Metamorphoses* show that love can stir a person to violence. For instance, when Apollo falls in love with Daphne, he pursues her predatorily, wanting to rape her. These rapes often destroy female characters by ensuring that blame falls on them: the women Jupiter rapes are often punished by Juno and Diana. The destructive power of love comes to a head in the story of Procne and Philomela. When Tereus kidnaps his wife Procne's sister Philomela and brutally rapes her, the two women later join together to get their revenge. However, their revenge takes the form of its own crime: Procne kills her son and feeds him to Tereus, her motherly love having been completely destroyed by her discovery that her child's father raped her sister. This shows that rape, while destructive in itself, can also destroy bonds of marriage and motherhood. Not only does Ovid give ample proof that many things thwart and poison love, but his stories also seem to claim that love is always doomed to tragedy. In the story of Pyramus and Thisbe—two people who love each other consensually—miscommunication and poor timing lead their love story to end in death. In giving tragic endings to his love stories, Ovid portrays love as a passion that destroys, leading inexorably to violence and heartbreak.

GODS AND HUMANS

Throughout the *Metamorphoses*, many human characters dare to think they are superior to the gods. Often, characters anger the gods by refusing to worship them, such as when the daughters of Minyas refuse to join Bacchus's festival and he turns them into bats. In another instance, Niobe not only refuses to worship the goddess Latona, but also asserts she is superior to Latona because of her wealth, royalty, and dozens of beautiful children. In response, Latona murders all of Queen Niobe's children and turns her into an eternally weeping statue. In taking away the very thing that made Queen Niobe feel superior, Latona reminds Niobe that the gods are more powerful than even the most fortunate mortal. These stories suggest that, if humans fail to reverence the gods as their superiors, they'll be rightfully punished. On the other hand, although the gods' punishments often humble human arrogance, their displays of power aren't universally moral. For instance, when Arachne asserts that she is the best weaver of women and gods and dares Minerva (goddess of weaving) to a weaving contest, Arachne's tapestry is undeniably superior to Minerva's. Despite Arachne's warranted pride, Minerva harshly punishes Arachne by turning her into a conniving spider. Such stories suggest that the gods' omnipotence doesn't consist in the superiority of their virtues, but in their sheer power to punish and manipulate humans. Significantly, Arachne's superior tapestry depicts the gods disguising themselves so as to dupe humans, especially instances in which the gods have used their power to rape women. This suggests that, while the gods always have the upper hand when it comes to sheer power, they sometimes wield this power in cavalier ways that even degrade them. In this way, the *Metamorphoses* depicts an ambiguous relationship between gods and humans in which humans are obligated to revere gods who are their venerable superiors, yet often undeserving of reverence.

TIME, FATE, AND POETRY

In the first chapter of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid describes the world as a jumble of indistinct parts "called Chaos." The gods give order to this chaos by sorting out the elements by their weight and qualities. In this way, it seems that the gods are responsible for the universe, especially as they go on to have a huge influence over the world's affairs. However, Ovid's work presents other forces over which the gods themselves have no control. On occasions when gods try to alter a character's age, Jupiter reminds them that only Fate has control over age. Later, when Venus hears that Julius Caesar is to be betrayed and murdered, she tries to

save his life, but Jupiter reminds her that his death is already written on the tablets of Fate. These moments of the gods' futility suggest that even they, the creators of the universe, must contend with the fact that the world they created cannot resist the march of time. In this way, time and fate, by propelling human characters and the universe towards certain fixed ends, assert themselves as the true driving forces of the universe. However, Ovid notably presents certain workarounds for the inexorability of time and fate. Venus gets around this problem by memorializing Julius Caesar as a god after he dies, thereby reasserting her dominance over the force of time. In the epilogue which follows directly after Caesar becomes a god, Ovid similarly asserts that he himself will live beyond his body's decay as a posthumously famous poet. By making an analogy between himself as a writer and Caesar as a god, Ovid suggests that **writing**, as a work of creation, has a divine aspect and can even circumvent time and fate to a certain extent.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

SPEECH, WORDS, AND WRITING

Throughout the *Metamorphoses*, words represent a character's identity. In the early stages of the universe's development, speech is all a character has with which to identify themselves. This becomes clear whenever a character is unable to speak, as often happens when they are transformed. When Callisto is transformed into a bear, she can't speak to her son to let him know who she really is. As a result, her son tries to kill her with his hunting spear.

This loss of speech leads many characters to use the act of writing in order to identify themselves. The first instance of this is when Io—transformed into a cow and unable to tell her father who she is—writes her name in the dust with her hoof to inform him. This primitive form of writing evolves over the course of the *Metamorphoses* into more elaborate methods. Philomela—her tongue having been cut out—weaves a story into a tapestry to inform her sister Procne that Tereus raped her. In the story of Byblis and Caunus, Byblis—too ashamed of her incestuous feelings for her brother to tell him in person—inscribes her confession on a tablet instead. In this way, the loss of speech leads to the adoption of written language.

By the end of the *Metamorphoses*, written words are the only thing that endures through time. After a speech in which Pythagoras explains that everything decays over time and that nothing remains the same, Ovid asserts in his epilogue that his poetry will remain even after he dies. In other words, Ovid suggests that written words preserve a person's identity. Therefore, writing throughout the *Metamorphoses* represents a person's ability to not just express themselves, but even immortalize themselves.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Classics edition of *Metamorphoses* published in 2004.

Book 1: The Creation Quotes

Yet a holier living creature, more able to think high thoughts,
which could hold dominion over the rest, was still to be found.
So Man came into the world. [...]
Thus clay, so lately no more than a crude and formless substance,
was metamorphosed to assume the strange new figure of Man.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 75

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs at the end of the first chapter of the *Metamorphoses* when Ovid is describing how human beings were created. This quote points out that, after animals and landforms had been created, a different creature was still desired. The desired creature is a "holier living creature." This phrase, in combining the word "holier" with the word "living," suggests that the desired human being is a kind of mediation between the gods—completely holy beings— and animals—living creatures on earth. Moreover, this desired human being is able to think "high thoughts," which indicates, unlike with the creation of animals, that human beings are given a rational faculty that can strive towards the heavenly realm. Lastly, the desired human being has dominion over the rest of creation—animals and nature—which suggests that the human being is not an equal creation to the rest, but something superior.

The quote suggests that, out of the desire alone to create this superior creature, a "crude substance" was transformed into semi-holy, high-thinking human beings. In this way, although human beings were created out of the divine desire for something that could approach their holiness, human beings are also indebted to the earth, having been transformed from clay. This quote also explains how this moment in creation is not only transformative for human beings, but also that the creation of human beings is transformative for the "crude substance," clay. Clay, which was lately no more than a "crude substance," is now elevated

to a substance that is capable of becoming a holy creature. In this way, the moment of Man's transformation from clay reveals that, since anything can transform into anything, there is a bond between all creations of the earth, no matter what kind they are.

Book 1: The Four Ages Quotes

❝ No pine tree had yet been felled from its home on the mountains and come down
into flowing waves for journeys to lands afar;
mortals were careful and never forsook the shores of their homeland.
No cities were yet ringed round with deep, precipitous earthworks; […]
swords were not carried nor helmets worn; no need for armies, but nations were free to practice the gentle arts of peace.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 94

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs after the creation of the universe when humanity is living through the Golden Age. This quote, although it appears during a time of peace and prosperity for humanity, foreshadows the corruption that will befall humanity soon. This quote suggests that humanity's first offense will be to fell pine trees, describing this as an abuse of nature in which one ruins a natural phenomenon and takes it away from its "home" on the mountains. Following their discovery of lumber, humanity will start trading lumber across seas, using waves that are only meant to flow for journeys to other places. This trade then quickly turns into travel for its own sake. Although travel across seas does not seem like a corrupt action, this quote suggests that, when a person travels, they "for[sake]" the shores of their homeland. In this way, this quote portrays travel as a breach of trust in the gods' provision that leads quickly into other transgressions.

Once people start "for[saking]" their homelands to travel across the sea, this quote suggests that humanity will stop trusting each other. Cities will put up "deep, precipitous earthworks"—high, steep walls—in order to keep out travelers who, having abandoned their own homeland, are likely looking to conquer a new one for their own. Soon, nations will engage in full-on war with each other. In this way, this quote shows how the seemingly simple act of chopping down trees leads ultimately to a state of warfare. When humanity thinks they can tame nature, they start felling trees. This leads them to believe they can dominate nature and dare to cross the sea with ships built from the lumber they felled. The triumph of dominating the sea leads to the readiness to "for[sake]" one's homeland, which in turn leads to distrust all around. Finally, nations engage in war, foreseeably making weapons, as they made ships, from materials they exploited from the earth. In this way, this quote shows the chain of corruption, demonstrating that a human's abuse of power over nature directly leads to the development of vices like greed, violence, and arrogance.

Book 1: Io (1) Quotes

❝ If only words could have followed her tears, she'd have begged him for help;
she'd have told him her name and described her plight. Two letters were all
that could serve for words, two letters traced by a hoof in the dust,
which revealed her name and the sorry tale of her transformation.

Related Characters: Io

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 647

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs in the story of Io shortly after Jupiter has raped her and then transformed her into a cow to conceal her from Juno's jealous eyes. This quote shows that the worst consequence of transformation is the loss of one's speech. In being transformed, Io is essentially unchanged; as this quote points out, her emotions are entirely the same when she is a cow as they were when she was a human, because she still cries tears. However, because Io cannot speak, she can't beg her father for help, tell him her name, or describe her plight. In this way, this quote shows how Io is completely helpless without the ability to speak, and that she has no way of conveying her identity or her feelings. The quote laments that "if only words could have followed her tears," suggesting that words, while they are not a person's identity, are the tools through which they express this identity. Io's tears indicate that she is still herself even in her changed state, but her speechlessness indicates that she has no way of identifying herself.

The second part of this quote shows how speechlessness

leads Io to adopt the act of writing to identify herself. The phrase "two letters were all that could serve for words," shows how, out of the need for expression, primitive symbols came to represent words. This phrase seems to lament the insufficiency or at least the crudeness of letters, in this early stage of their use, to describe the full breadth of human emotion and identity. Nonetheless, two simple letters (which spell Io's name), convey everything to her father: who she is and what happened to her— "her name" and "the sorry tale of her transformation." In this way, writing is immediately a more efficient mode of self-expression than speech. All in all, this passage outlines the profound development of writing and its unique ability to identify a person across different forms.

Book 2: Callisto Quotes

To prevent her appealing for pity by prayers or words of entreaty
her powers of speech were wrested away, and her hoarse throat only
emitted an angry, menacing, terror-inspiring growl.
But though her body was now a bear's, her emotions were human.
Continual groaning testified to her inner anguish.

Related Characters: Callisto

Related Themes:

Page Number: 482

Explanation and Analysis

This quote appears in the story of Callisto after Jupiter has raped her and Juno has turned her into a bear in her anger. In this instance, Callisto is being punished by Juno and so her voice is "wrested away" forcefully and on purpose to prevent Callisto from saving herself from her transformation. Without a voice, Callisto can neither appeal to humans for pity nor pray to the gods to be untransformed. This passage goes on to explain how, without a voice, Callisto miscommunicates her true feelings and identity. While she is actually harmless, her voice expresses itself as a "menacing, terror-inspiring growl." In this way, Callisto is completely prevented from seeking help by being forced to appear as the complete opposite of what she feels (threatening instead of terrified).

As well as pointing out how the loss of speech imprisons Callisto even more than her transformation, this passage also describes the distinction between the animal and the human world. Human beings alone possess the ability to speak, meaning that they, unlike animals, can pray and appeal to pity. In this way, this passage shows how speech relates to intelligence in the sense that speech helps a person strategize their way out of certain plights: if Callisto were able to speak, she could obtain a reverse of her transformation. Furthermore, this passage claims that humans have emotions that animals do not feel. While Callisto is a bear, "her emotions [are] human" and she can feel "inner anguish." This suggests that anguish is a uniquely human emotion that contrasts with the emotions animals can feel, which this passage suggests are anger, menace, and intimidation. In this way, humans are distinct from animals both rationally and emotionally, two distinctions which humans make known through speech even more than through appearances.

Book 2: Europa Quotes

Love and regal dignity, scarcely the best of friends,
are rarely discovered together. And so the father and ruler of all the gods, whose right hand wields the three-forked lightning,
whose nod can sway the whole world, discarded his mighty scepter
and clothed himself in the form of a bull.

Related Characters: Jupiter (Jove)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 486

Explanation and Analysis

This quote appears just before Jupiter disguises himself as a bull, seduces Europa, and then kidnaps and rapes her. In the first line of this quote, "love" and "regal dignity" are defined as two things that are "scarcely the best of friends." This suggests that love and regal dignity are practically opposites, in the sense that the existence of one excludes the existence of the other. The quote then goes on to give an example of how love and regal dignity are mutually exclusive. Jupiter is described as "the father and ruler of all the gods" and endowed with great powers, such as the power to cause lightning. Moreover, he is the one being in the universe whose "nod can sway the whole world." In this way, Jupiter is introduced as a being who should naturally possess regal dignity. However, the quote goes on to describe how Jupiter lowers himself from this mighty image, presumably due to falling in love. He clothes himself in the form of a bull, a form which, as an animal, is much lower than Jupiter's true nature as a god with natural "regal dignity." As

this quote shows, giving into the power of love and thus taking on the form of the bull requires Jupiter to discard "his mighty scepter." In this instance, Jupiter's "mighty scepter" represents the regal dignity that he discards in favor of love.

In order to prove that love and regal dignity are practically opposites, this quote employs exaggeration and a facetious tone. The quote uses language that puffs Jupiter up as a regal figure and the ruler of all things and thereby illustrates his cavalier abandon of this greatness as pathetic. Overall, the quote has a mocking tone that illustrates how great Jupiter makes a fool out of himself (disguises himself as a stupid, powerless bull) in the name of love. Jupiter willingly discards his power and dignity (his scepter) when he falls in love, showing that love undermines regal dignity. It can then be extrapolated that regal dignity also undermines love, and suggests, ultimately, that there is simply nothing regal or dignified about acts of love.

Book 3: Pentheus and Bacchus (1) Quotes

Blood of the dragon's teeth, you're possessed! Are you so spellbound
by curling pipes of animal horn and clashing cymbals
to fall for this juggler's tricks? You, who were never dismayed
by the threatening swords of the foe on the march or his blaring trumpets,
are now being worsted by screaming women, bibulous frenzy, lewd and lecherous hordes and the futile banging of drums!
Elders, how can I respect you?

Related Characters: Pentheus (speaker), Bacchus

Related Themes:

Page Number: 532

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is a part of a speech that Pentheus gives shortly after Bacchus has become famous and gathered many followers. In this quote, Pentheus rebukes his people for worshipping Bacchus, and suggests that they are all under a spell. He explains how music has driven his people mad, describing the "curling pipes" and the "clashing cymbals" that come along with Bacchus's rituals. Pentheus also chastises the Bacchic rituals for being excessively loose and sexual: they are a "bibulous frenzy"—a drunken spectacle—and a "lewd and lecherous horde"—a crude and sexual crowd. In this way, Pentheus paints the Bacchic festivals as an embarrassing display of people giving into their bodily desires.

In this quote, Pentheus contrasts the foolishness of the Bacchic worshippers with the behavior that he expected of them: bravery, manliness, and intelligence. He addresses his people as "blood of the dragon's teeth," reminding them that they were born from the sown teeth of a menacing dragon. By addressing them thus, Pentheus hopes to persuade them that they are above the delirious behavior they are exhibiting in the Bacchic festivals. Furthermore, he shows how the Bacchic worshippers are cowardly by comparing their current behavior to their previous bravery in the face of the "threatening swords of the foe." All in all, Pentheus paints humanity as a race that can display courageous virtues whereas the gods, exemplified by Bacchus whom he describes as a "juggler" who performs tricks, are silly posers who display no virtues. In this way, Pentheus suggests that human beings are greater than the gods and urges them to create their own world. He supports this recommendation by pointing out that, since human beings are descended from dragon's teeth, they owe the gods none of their legacy, and therefore should not allow themselves to be "possessed" by them.

Book 4: Pyramus and Thisbe Quotes

We both implore you to grant this prayer: as our hearts were truly
united in love, and death has at last united our bodies,
lay us to rest in a single tomb. Begrudge us not that!
And you, O tree, whose branches are already casting their shadows
on one poor body and soon will be overshadowing two,
preserve the marks of our death; let your fruit forever be dark as a token of mourning, a monument marking the blood of two lovers.

Related Characters: Thisbe (speaker), Pyramus

Related Themes:

Page Number: 155

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is a part of the speech that Thisbe gives after she finds Pyramus's body and is about to kill herself to be with him. This quote describes both the depth and the tragic nature of Pyramus and Thisbe's love. Thisbe prays to the gods, explaining that she and Pyramus's hearts were "truly united in love." This suggests that, in contrast to some of the other examples of love throughout the *Metamorphoses*, Pyramus and Thisbe possessed true love for each other—the kind of love that unites two people. Thisbe then

goes on to say that, while her and Pyramus's hearts were united during their life, death has "at last" united their bodies. This tragically suggests that the kind of union that lovers can achieve during life is incomplete, and that complete union of their hearts and bodies can only occur by means of shared death. Finally, Thisbe asks the gods to unite her and Pyramus's bodies in a single tomb in order to preserve the united nature of their hearts and bodies. In this way, being laid to rest together marks the complete union of Pyramus and Thisbe and suggests that the complete fulfillment of love can only occur in a state of death.

In the second part of her speech, Thisbe asks the gods to commemorate her and Pyramus's love story by making the mulberry tree produce red berries for all time to come. However, the way she describes the mulberry tree is also as a symbol for mourning and tragedy. Thisbe notices that the tree already has branches that overshadow two bodies and wants the tree to "preserve the marks of [...] death" in the future. Therefore, the mulberry tree becomes "a monument marking the blood of two lovers"—a monument that captures tragedy and love in the very same symbol. In this way, true love and tragedy—as commemorated by the same red mulberry tree—are suggested to be inextricable from each other.

5.3 Quotes

❝ please use words which accord
with the facts of the case. Lord Pluto hasn't committed a crime but an act of love. No need for us to feel shame at the marriage, if only you will accept it, Ceres. Setting aside
all other advantages, Pluto is Jupiter's brother, no less!

Related Characters: Jupiter (Jove) (speaker), Pluto , Ceres , Proserpina

Related Themes:

Page Number: 124

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is a portion of what Jupiter says to Ceres when she implores him to rescue Proserpina, who has been kidnapped by Pluto and taken to Hades. Jupiter first asks Ceres to "use words which accord with the facts of the case," and then explains that Pluto's kidnap and rape of Proserpina was not a "crime" but rather an "act of love." In this way, Jupiter suggests that Ceres has conflated the word "crime" with the word "love," and that this conflation is affecting her opinion as to the proper way to address what has happened. Therefore, in putting into words his disagreement with Ceres's choice of words, Jupiter outlines the different way in which men and women view the same action: whereas Ceres looks at kidnap and rape as crimes committed by men against women, Jupiter sees these as acts of love that should be flattering to a woman, or at least cause them no "shame."

In showing how kidnap and rape are either crimes or acts of love depending on the perspective, Jupiter reveals a fundamental disagreement between men and women. Jupiter's claim is that women interpret a man's act of love as a crime, but Ceres would likely maintain that men get away with committing crimes against women by calling them acts of love. Jupiter concludes his argument by saying that, since Pluto is Jupiter's brother and therefore endowed with superior powers, Ceres should feel no shame that Proserpina was kidnapped and raped by him. This conclusion cheapens Jupiter's argument by suggesting that status somehow justifies rape and kidnapping. All in all, Jupiter's claim that kidnap and rape are not crimes but acts of love is prejudiced because it favors the male perspective only.

Book 6: Arachne Quotes

❝ [Minerva] resented Arachne's
success and ripped up the picture betraying the gods' misdemeanors.
She was still holding her shuttle of [...] boxwood
and used it to strike Arachne a number of times on the forehead.

Related Characters: Arachne , Minerva

Related Themes:

Page Number: 130

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs after Arachne has clearly won the weaving contest against Minerva, and Minerva punishes her accordingly. Not only is Minerva upset because Arachne's tapestry is a "success," but she also resents that Arachne's tapestry "betray[s]" the gods' misdemeanors. This suggests that Arachne exposes the gods for who they really are in her tapestry, and that this very exposure of them is what makes her tapestry so remarkable and successful. Therefore, Minerva's rage is in part because Arachne has revealed to the world with her tapestry that the gods are not as wonderful as they seem to be, or as they claim to be. In fact, the gods must have performed a great deal of

"misdemeanors" to illustrate Arachne's entire tapestry, and so her tapestry serves as the exposure of crimes. In this way, Arachne's tapestry is successful not simply because it is a fine work of art, but because it exposes evil and demands justice.

This passage shows that Minerva is angry both because Arachne's tapestry is more beautiful than hers, and because Arachne has exposed and portrayed the gods as unjust. However, Minerva's very reaction to this as an injustice proves that Arachne's assessment of the gods as unjust is in fact just. Although Arachne is the fair winner, Minerva still punishes her, thereby revealing that she is the unjust punisher that Arachne says she is. Minerva strikes Arachne on the forehead multiple times with her boxwood shuttle (a part of the loom), showing that she is not above petty disputes or jealousy. Moreover, the fact that Minerva uses her own symbolic instrument (the loom) to punish Arachne drives home the point that she is in fact a less graceful weaver than Arachne.

Book 6: Niobe Quotes

❝ I am undeniably blessed; and blessed I'll continue to be, without any doubt. My abundance assures me I'll always be safe.
I am far too important a person for fortune's changes to harm me.
However much I am robbed, far more will be left to enjoy.
My blessings are such that I have nothing to fear.

Related Characters: Niobe (speaker), Latona

Related Themes:

Page Number: 193

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is spoken by Niobe and conveys the arrogance and refusal to worship the goddess Latona that leads Latona to punish her. In this passage, Niobe boasts of her good fortune, saying that she is "undeniably blessed." Her good fortune leads her to believe that she is invincible, that she is "safe" and has "nothing to fear." She thinks of her blessings as an infinite supply that cannot be diminished, asserting that no matter how much she is robbed, far more will be left to enjoy. Niobe places herself above the changes of fortune, thinking of herself as a kind of goddess who lives by higher laws than those that human beings follow. In this way, in contrast to the gods' claim that their superiority is divinely sourced, Niobe makes the claim that human beings can achieve superiority through the fruits of their labor, such as their children or their wealth.

In believing that she is invincible, Niobe is also making the mistake of believing that a person can exist in the same state without changing. After she asserts that she is undeniably blessed, she further asserts that "blessed I'll continue to be," as if this is a proven fact. However, she mentions "fortune's changes," and, although she asserts that she is too important to be affected by these changes, thereby points out that the world operates under these "fortune's changes," and not under laws of permanence and sustainability. In this way, Niobe acknowledges that nothing in the universe ever stays the same and yet she asserts that accruing blessings is somehow a barricade against these changes. While the *Metamorphoses* illustrates that everything changes—a fact which Niobe herself cannot ignore—Niobe makes the demonstrably false claim that human beings can attain permanent states through having lots of great things.

Book 6: Tereus, Procne and Philomela Quotes

❝ But once she saw that maternal claims were making her purpose
waver, she turned away from her child to the face of her sister, then looking at each in turn, she reflected: 'Should Itys be able to say that he loves me, when poor Philomela has lost her tongue?
He can call out to his mother, but she cannot call out to her sister.'

Related Characters: Procne (speaker), Itys , Philomela , Tereus

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 629

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs just after Philomela has told Procne that Tereus raped her, and the two sisters proceed to think of how to get revenge against him. In contemplating her revenge against Tereus for the wrong he did her sister, Procne finds that she is torn in several directions by the news of her husband's crime. This quote points out that, when Procne first heard the news, she felt she had a clear purpose: to seek revenge. However, she shortly after feels that "maternal claims" are making her rethink this purpose. The quote then describes how Procne looks from her son's face into her sister's face and describes how each face

inspires a different instinct and course of action in her. Towards her son she feels "maternal claims," whereas towards her sister she feels a powerful motivation to seek revenge against her son's father. In this way, Procne's love for her son—and therefore her husband by extension—and her love for her sister are mutually exclusive; finding a singular purpose requires choosing one of her two loves.

When Procne looks back and forth between Itys and Philomela, she starts to compare the fortunes of the two. She realizes that, whereas Itys can say he loves her as many times as he likes, Philomela cannot even speak to say that she loves Procne, or to say anything else. This leads her to realize that Itys is able to call his mother for help, whereas Philomela is unable to call her sister for help. After making this comparison, Procne decides that it is completely unfair for her son—whom she has decided represents her husband—to keep his voice when Philomela has lost hers. This suggests that Procne views speechlessness as the worst part of Philomela's plight, as it prevents her from calling out to those she loves.

Book 7: Minos and Aeacus Quotes

❝ And yet no pleasure is ever unmingled; anxiety always intrudes upon joy.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 453

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs at the opening of the story about Minos and King Aeacus when Minos is just beginning to engage Athens in war; King Aeacus has just rejoiced to see his son Theseus return, but his happiness is curtailed when he is quickly threatened with war. This passage begins one of Ovid's chapters, creating a bridge between the happy ending of one story and the ominous beginning of the next. In this way, the sentiment that anxiety always intrudes upon joy furthers the *Metamorphoses* from story to story as each new problem arises and is then resolved.

This quote suggests that life alternates between positive and negative states in a constant cycle. Although the previous story ended on a note of joy, this quote cautions that no pleasure is ever "unmingled," suggesting that no state of pleasure is ever pure—there are always other emotions mixed in as well. The second part of the quote then explains that anxiety always "intrudes" upon joy, breaking its uninterrupted bliss. In this way, even though joy and anxiety seem like opposites, this passage suggests that they are bound to each other in such a way that pleasure cannot exist without quickly being interrupted by anxiety.

This quote describes a process of metamorphosis, although not the obvious kind that fills the pages of the *Metamorphoses*. Instead, this quote describes the transformation of a state of being from good to bad and suggests therefore that not only forms but also things like fortune and state of mind transform. In this way, this quote illustrates another kind of transformation which adds to the plentiful others in the *Metamorphoses*; altogether, these transformations prove the point that nothing in the universe—not even a state of being—remains the same.

Book 8: Scylla and Minos Quotes

❝ God helps those who help themselves, remember, and fortune favors the brave. Another woman whose passion was blazing as strongly as mine would now be already destroying whatever opposed her love—and delight in destroying it. Why should another be braver than I?

Related Characters: Scylla (speaker), Minos

Related Themes:

Page Number: 72

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is spoken by Scylla when she is looking down at King Minos—her kingdom's enemy—and struggling against the love she feels for him. In this quote, Scylla's self-dialogue reveals the arguments that she uses to convince herself towards one plan or action or another. First, Scylla uses religious beliefs to convince herself that both God and fortune reward those who act bravely. Secondly, Scylla uses the rivalry of an imaginary woman to spur her to compete more avidly and act more bravely. However, despite these methods of self-persuasion, Scylla also reveals her uncertainty with her speech. She inserts a "remember" in the second line, ordering herself to remember a teaching, which has the opposite effect of pointing out that there is a reason to forget such a teaching. Furthermore, Scylla finishes this quote by asking herself why another should be braver than her. This question spurs her into action, but also suggests that she is acting largely out of a competitive spirit. All in all, Scylla's speech reveals that she is divided within herself between two courses of action, and that the passionate side of her is trying to take charge.

This part of Scylla's speech points out that love—at least

passionate love—is destructive. Scylla describes her passion as "blazing," suggesting that it is an insatiable and dangerous force that threatens to burn. By means of imagining a heartless woman overcome by a blazing passion, Scylla decides that a person in love naturally destroys everything that opposes them. Furthermore, she decides that the person in love delights in destroying these oppositions. In imagining this other woman, Scylla seems to become jealous of her bold will to destroy and decides that she must be brave like this woman. In this way, Scylla simultaneously decides that love is inherently destructive and that any woman with self-respect eagerly enacts this destruction. As a whole, Scylla's speech reveals that the first thing Scylla's love destroys is Scylla herself.

Book 9: Miletus Quotes

❝ Have you no respect for *me*? […]
Where will this end? Does anyone think they can really defy the decrees of Fate? […]
You are all subject to Fate, and—if this makes your subjection more easy to bear—so am I.

Related Characters: Jupiter (Jove) (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 428

Explanation and Analysis

This quote from Jupiter occurs after the goddess of youth has reduced the age of someone of earth and the rest of the gods fly into an outrage, wanting to have the ability to alter age, too. Jupiter responds by first rebuking the gods for having no respect for him. He stresses the word "me" as if specifically chastising the gods for caring so much about the lives of human beings that they want to prolong them, when he, Jupiter, should be the only one they really respect. In beginning his speech by asking the gods to have respect for him, Jupiter at first seems to indicate that he is the only god who can alter time and age. However, he then goes on to lay out an exploration of the extent of the gods' power. When Jupiter asks where this will end, he seems to be asking where in the chain of power the gods will finally relinquish their control. He then explains that the gods are foolish for even thinking that they can defy "the decrees of Fate," which, as decrees, are official and authoritative outcomes for the future. Lastly, although Jupiter had begun his speech by demanding respect for himself, he admits to the gods that not even he has control over Fate—that all the gods alike are governed by Fate.

In saying that the gods are "subject" to Fate, Jupiter portrays the gods as subjects of a government or rule. This language puts the gods in a similar position to human beings, who are subjects of their own governments and of the gods. In this way, Jupiter's speech disempowers the gods somewhat by admitting that they themselves are just a body of beings (albeit with more power than humans) who are ruled by universal laws such as Fate. Jupiter delivers this speech to the gods as their leader, but by the end of his speech, it is revealed that his supreme power is merely part of the gods' internal hierarchy—a hierarchy which is itself only a part of the universe.

Book 9: Byblis Quotes

❝ I have committed a wrong which I cannot undo.
I've written my letter and asked for his love; my intention's exposed.
If I venture no more, my reputation's already tarnished;
there's little to lose by further appeals, but much to be gained.

Related Characters: Byblis (speaker), Caunus

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 626

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is spoken by Byblis after she has sent a tablet inscribed with her feelings to Caunus, and he has rejected her. In this quote, Byblis reflects on the nature of writing and what it accomplishes. Byblis laments that, having written her letter, she has committed a wrong which she cannot "undo." In this way, writing creates a permanent relic that cannot be uncreated. Byblis says that, in writing the tablet, her "intention's exposed," suggesting that writing also reveals something that can't be concealed after it has been written down. Moreover, the way Byblis describes writing shows that it actualizes something that had previously remained only a thought. For Byblis, she "commits her crime" as soon as she writes down her feelings, thereby making the claim that writing makes a thought an action.

Because writing exposes someone and makes them act, it defines their identity and course of action going forward. Now that she has written her letter, Byblis can't entertain changes of heart or mind. She can't continue to debate which course of action she'd like to choose, but rather she is now beholden to the words she wrote in favor of one

specific course of action. She explains that she is now ordered by her writing to act in a certain way: her reputation is already "tarnished" permanently by her writing, and so she can't give in now. In this way, writing is powerful because it inscribes a person's chosen self in an ineradicable form and then orders them to live up to what they have written. Byblis's experience with writing supports the *Metamorphoses*' use of writing to symbolize the one action that preserves a person's identity through time and change.

Book 10: Orpheus' Song: Myrrha Quotes

❝ I wonder, for daughterly duty
cannot condemn this love. All other creatures can mate
as they choose for themselves. It isn't considered a scandal for bulls
to mount the heifers they've sired [...] and even a bird
can conceive her chicks by a mate who happens to be her father.
How lucky they are to do as they please! How spitefully human morality governs our lives!

Related Characters: Myrrha (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 324

Explanation and Analysis

Myrrha speaks this quote when she is wrestling with herself over her incestuous desire for her father. In this quote, Myrrha jealously describes what love looks like in the animal kingdom. In her view, love in the animal kingdom has no restrictions or rules. She says that animals can mate "as they choose for themselves," thereby expressing her opinion that animals are allowed more free will than human beings are, at least in the matter of love. Moreover, she explains that, in the animal kingdom, incest is not considered a "scandal." Near the end of this quote, Myrrha suggests that this absence of scandalous behavior in the animal kingdom is due to the absence of the human morality that "spitefully" governs human life. In this way, Myrrha believes that the distinction of human beings from animals—which she suggests is created by human beings' moral faculties—is something to lament, as it actually limits rather than privileges humans. Myrrha exclaims that animals are lucky to be able to do whatever they please. In her opinion, human morality is spiteful because it critiques the natural behavior of animals and prevents human beings from this freedom of behavior.

In this way, Myrrha sees human morality as something that limits a person's ability to pursue love freely; because human morality is "spiteful," love is under attack in the human realm, and therefore always imperfect. By extension, love is a force that threatens humans and potentially lowers them to the wildness and "scandal" of the animal kingdom.

Book 11: Aesacus Quotes

❝ Then Aesacus furiously lowered
his head and plunged to the depths. He repeatedly tried to discover
a pathway to death and never stopped trying. His love made him thin,
and all of him lengthened out: his legs on their knotted joints, his neck with the head so far from the body. He loves the sea, and because he is constantly diving down it, we call him the diver.

Related Characters: Aesacus

Related Themes:

Page Number: 791

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs at the end of the story of Aesacus after he has tried to kill himself but was transformed. This quote describes Aesacus's transformation as responding perfectly to the emotional state that Aesacus is in. The bird that results from Aesacus's transformation is thin due to his love and heartbreak; moreover, its "head [is] far from the body," responding to Aesacus's attempted departure from his body with his suicide. Furthermore, the diving bird continuously mimics Aesacus's attempted suicide by repeatedly diving and trying to die. In this way, it is as if Aesacus's transformation is a snapshot of the state of being he was in when he transformed—an extreme state in which he tried to end his life. This suggests that transformation can sometimes be a direct response to the changes one is already undergoing: Aesacus is transformed because he had already changed within himself towards suicidal tendencies.

This quote also illustrates, with Aesacus's futile attempts to kill himself, that true death is impossible in the world of the *Metamorphoses*. In first diving into the sea, Aesacus was trying to find "a pathway to death." However, this quote illustrates that this pathway is impossible to find or that it doesn't exist, because Aesacus "repeatedly" tries to discover it and can't. This quote also indicates how it is Aesacus's transformation that prevents him from discovering this pathway to death. Aesacus transforms into a bird who can

survive the repeated dives into the depths of the sea. In this way, transformation seems to take the place of annihilating death. Instead of dying when he dives into the sea, Aesacus transforms into a diving bird that lives its life out of the habit of trying to die, which, to the bird, is simply a lifestyle. This quote explains that this inability to die is frustrating for Aesacus, as he "furiously" plunges his head into the depths, trying to die again and again. In thwarting Aesacus's purpose, transformation proves itself to be a stand-in for death; instead of dying, human beings simply transform.

Book 12: The Death of Achilles Quotes

So Achilles who'd vanquished the mightiest heroes
was vanquished himself by a coward who'd stolen the wife of his Greek host.

Related Characters: Achilles

Related Themes:

Page Number: 608

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs near the end of the Trojan War when Achilles—of the Greeks—has just been killed in combat by Paris—a Trojan. This quote first defines Achilles as not only a hero but a man who can conquer heroes. This paints Achilles as a superhero who is practically invincible. On the other hand, this quote describes Paris as a coward because he stole the wife of his Greek host. This quote places these characters—the superhero and the coward—side by side in order to show the absurdity of a man whom heroes can't even vanquish being vanquished by a coward. This absurdity suggests that there is a kind of randomness to the universe.

While this quote does express a sense of randomness to the world's events, it also conveys a sense of constant change that is in keeping with the main themes of the *Metamorphoses*. This quote describes a role reversal that occurs between Achilles and Paris: Achilles is lowered by Paris's defeat of him so that, in the end, Paris—formerly a coward—is now above Achilles—formerly a great hero. In this way, both Achilles and Paris, by means of each other, undergo a transformation. Transformation—as a given fact in the world of the *Metamorphoses*—helps to clarify the absurdity that the role reversal of Achilles and Paris initially evokes. In the *Metamorphoses*, constant changes of shape assert that nothing in the universe can remain in the same state for long. In the case of Achilles and Paris, this is again proved true. By the law of transformation and change, Achilles and Paris were bound to transform eventually.

Book 13: The Judgement of Arms Quotes

Your simple brawn must be measured
against my brains. In a ship the helmsman takes precedence over
the rower; in war the commander has more respect than the soldier;
so I must rank above you. In the make-up of human beings, intelligence counts for more than our hands, and that is our true strength.

Related Characters: Ulysses (speaker), Ajax

Related Themes:

Page Number: 365

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is a portion of the speech Ulysses delivers to the Greek judges in his campaign for being given Achilles's sword and shield. In this passage, Ulysses claims that, within humanity, there is a hierarchy in which people with intelligence rank above people with physical strength. To illustrate this, Ulysses gives two examples, one of the helmsman and the rower, and the other of the commander and the soldier. In the case of the helmsman and the rower, the rower is responsible for actually moving the ship forward, but Ulysses suggests that the rower is less important than the helmsman who guides the ship; Ulysses's suggestion seems to be that, without guidance, the physical strength of the rower has no purpose. Similarly, in the case of the commander and the soldier, the soldier defeats his enemies with physical strength while the commander tells him where to stand and whom to strike next. In this case, Ulysses seems to suggest that, without orders, the physical strength of the soldier would be wasted.

In the final lines of this passage, Ulysses suggests that humanity has reinterpreted the meaning of strength. Whereas strength tends to refer to physical "brawn," as Ulysses puts it, this physical strength is not a human being's ultimate "strength," meaning that it is not their most significant advantage. Ulysses says that "intelligence counts for more than our hands" and conditions this by saying "in the make-up of human beings," thereby suggesting that intelligence is a uniquely human skill. Because of its uniqueness, it—rather than physical strength which even animals have—is a human's true strength.

Book 14: The Mutinous Companions of Diomedes Quotes

What's left to encounter that lies
beyond your endurance to bear? What further damage can Venus
inflict, supposing she wanted to? Prayers can avail, if worse
is yet to be feared; but when the worst has already occurred,
fear lies at our feet and the crown of misfortune is freedom from care.
No matter if Venus can hear my words; [...]
we can treat her longing with scorn
to a man. Her power may be great, but it counts for little with us!

Related Characters: Venus

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 486

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Acmon, one of Diomedes's sailing crew, expresses his frustration that Venus keeps laying obstacles for his crew, and suggests that they all cease to pay her any mind. In the first two questions that Acmon asks of his crew, he suggests that the sailors have experienced the absolute worst of fortunes, and that it is simply not possible for there to be anything worse in store for them. He believes that his men have endured the greatest possible hardship at Venus's hands, and therefore that there is no possible hardship that they can't endure. Furthermore, he believes that Venus has concocted every imaginable hardship to inflict upon them, and therefore that, even if Venus wanted to, there'd be no other possible hardship for her to create for them.

After explaining that no greater hardship can possibly be in store for them, Acmon next asserts that hardship makes a human being invincible. He even claims that excessive misfortune comes with a reward—the "crown of misfortune" which is the "freedom from care." He explains that, when a person has experienced the worst, they no longer have anything to fear, and so they may crown themselves with a carefree attitude. This fearless person no longer needs to pray, suggesting that they are no longer subjected to the power of gods. In this way, Acmon makes the claim that human beings, while not supernaturally powerful or divinely born, can attain the invincibility and independence of a god through enduring misfortune. However, his claim rests on the belief that human beings can discern when they have experienced "the worst"; the gods, whose powers are invisible to the human world, continuously prove that they can always inflict worse.

Book 14: Ardea Quotes

The cries of sorrow,
the lean, pale faces and all that betokens a captured city
survived in that bird; yes, even the name, as the heron called ardea
beats her wings in her grief for the city from which she arose.

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 177

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs just after Aeneas has defeated Turnus's native city, Ardea, and it has transformed into a bird. This passage illustrates the first instance of a city—an inanimate human creation—being transformed into an animate being. This quote explains how the transformation of Ardea into a bird commemorates all the human aspects that Ardea contains. The ardea bird represents the "lean, pale faces" and the "cries of sorrow" of all the people who lived there and suffered while the city fell. The bird also preserves the name of the city. Therefore, in the city's transformation, it is treated like a human being with emotions and a name. This suggests that, as humanity has developed and built huge cities, these cities themselves have become personified—have become one body through which many people identify themselves. The transformation of Ardea also suggests that cities, like characters, cannot remain long without undergoing change. Therefore, the transformation of Ardea adds to the list of transformations in the *Metamorphoses* which serve, altogether, to prove that nothing in the universe remains the same.

This quote also explains that Ardea "survives" within the form of the bird that it becomes. This suggests that, like human beings in the *Metamorphoses*, cities can't die. Instead of dying, a defeated city transforms into a being that represents it and commemorates its existence for all time to come. In the case of Ardea, the bird into which it transforms represents its grief. In this way, transformations, as well as preserving people, also preserve past monuments of history.

Book 15: Pythagoras Quotes

The earth supplies nourishing food in lavish abundance; she offers you feasts that demand no slaughter or bloodshed.
[…]
Here is the wondrous wealth which the earth, the kindest of mothers,
produces; and yet you are happy to bite cruel wounds in your victims,
chomping them up with your teeth in the grisly style of the cyclops.
You have no way of relieving the hunger-pangs of your greedy, uncivilized bellies except by destroying the life of another.

Related Characters: Pythagoras (speaker), The Cyclops

Related Themes:

Page Number: 81

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is a passage from Pythagoras's speech in which he urges people to stop eating meat. Pythagoras describes the earth as "the kindest of mothers" because she willingly offers an abundance of food to human beings, laying a generous feast out of sheer goodwill towards humanity. Pythagoras points out that, since these feasts are so "wondrous" and "abundant," it is insupportable that humans start killing animals to eat. Since the earth willingly offers this "wondrous wealth," no one needs to slaughter or shed blood in order to feed themselves. Whereas eating a diet of fruits, vegetables, and dairy is about accepting what is willingly offered, eating meat is about killing—a malicious action in which a person takes by force what the earth-mother does not offer them to eat.

In this speech, Pythagoras clearly outlines what he sees as the proper relationship between human beings and nature. Pythagoras explains that, when a human being kills animals for meat, they are behaving not like a human but like a monster. He describes the meat-eater as resembling the cyclops, "chomping" their victims in a "grisly style." Pythagoras also suggests that the action of eating meat is "uncivilized" and comes from greed. This is because nature offers plenty for the human being to eat without bloodshed, so that the hunger for meat is itself a desire for more than one needs. By turning a human being into a monster, the action of eating meat turns a person away from their proper relationship to nature. While the wrong relationship to nature and the right relationship both involve taking, Pythagoras illustrates with this quote that each involves a very different kind of taking. Eating meat involves subduing nature and taking its bounty by force, whereas abstaining from eating meat involves accepting nature's gifts instead.

All is subject to change and nothing to death. The spirit in each of us wanders from place to place; it enters whatever
body it pleases, crossing over from beast to man,
and back again to a beast. It never perishes wholly.
As pliable wax is easily stamped with a new impression
and never remains as it was nor preserves one single shape,
but still is the selfsame wax, so I say that our souls are always the same, though they move from home to home in different bodies.

Related Characters: Pythagoras (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 165

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is a passage from Pythagoras's speech when he is describing the constant change that occurs in the universe. The first line of Pythagoras's speech suggests that change takes the place of what people tend to think of as death; instead of dying, everything simply changes. This line also suggests that life is both very unstable and very stable; while everything is subjected to the instability of change, there is also a permanence to everything in the sense that nothing dies. Pythagoras goes on to explain that the human soul is the deathless part of a person, and that this deathlessness allows souls to move among different bodies, taking on different shapes. Throughout all these changes, Pythagoras suggests that the deathless human spirit "wanders" and enters "whatever body it pleases," an image which suggests that the human soul leads a carefree life, transitioning through forms without its freedom and immortality being affected by these forms.

Pythagoras clearly illustrates the carefree soul with the image of a piece of wax. In this image, the piece of wax is the human soul, whereas the impression stamped in it is the body that the human soul is currently inhabiting. In this way, this image reverses the positions one might first think to give to the body and soul. It would seem that the body—as the material of the human being—would be the piece of wax and that the soul—as an insubstantial element of the human being—would be the impression stamped in the wax. However, Pythagoras reverses this expectation by showing

that the body is the perishable part of the human (the impression) while the soul is the imperishable part (the wax). In this way, Pythagoras provides an image for how the human soul can continuously transform while remaining the same immortal soul.

❝ I rejoice that the walls of my kinsmen
are rising so fast, that the Greeks won a war for the good of the Trojans.

Related Characters: Pythagoras (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 451

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is spoken by Pythagoras when he traces the rises and falls of history and the transformations of the world since its creation. In this quote, Pythagoras recalls the tragedy that befell the Trojans during the Trojan War: that the Greeks defeated them and burned their city of Troy to the ground. Pythagoras then points out that this very tragedy—Troy's defeat and the Greeks' success—led to the amazing success of Troy in the city's new form—Rome. In this way, Pythagoras points out several transformations. First, that Troy undergoes a transformation from Troy to Rome. Second, the state of defeat that befell Troy transformed into a state of prosperity and power. In this quote, Pythagoras points out that the bad often yields the good and suggests that, in sinking low, something can rise and attain to an even greater state than it started with. In this way, Pythagoras claims that every event is transformative.

With this quote, Pythagoras points out how the world is always changing—whether in appearance or fortune. Transformations do not simply occur to people (the most common transformation in the *Metamorphoses*), but also to fortune, history, events, cities—everything in the world. Because of the transformative nature of events, Pythagoras rejoices that the walls of Rome are "rising fast"—that Rome is reaping its reward from its downfall. Pythagoras rejoices that he is living during the rise, when his city is undergoing its transformation for the better, rather than during the pinnacle—such as Troy before the war—when the only direction fortune could go is down.

Book 15: The Apotheosis of Julius Caesar Quotes

❝ You may go yourself [to] [...] visit the Records of Fortune, a massive structure of tablets inscribed in brass and the solidest
iron. These tablets fear no clashing of clouds, nor the thunderbolt's
wrath, nor destruction, however it come; they are safe and abiding.
There you will find your families' destinies cast in enduring adamant.

Related Characters: Jupiter (Jove) (speaker), Venus , Julius Caesar

Related Themes:

Page Number: 809

Explanation and Analysis

Jupiter speaks this quote just before Julius Caesar's death when he is explaining to Venus that the gods can't alter the edicts of fate. In the second half of this quote, Jupiter explains how the tablets of Fortune are indestructible. The tablets can survive through "clashing clouds," meaning that intense weather can do nothing to harm them. Moreover, the tablets can survive through "the thunderbolt's wrath," suggesting that Jupiter's powers—exemplified by the lightning bolt—have no power over them. This strength of the Records of Fortune to withstand being changed by the gods or other forces in the world shows that these tablets hold the highest position of power in the universe. They are cast in "enduring adamant," which means that they are timeless and unyielding. ("Adamant" refers to an impenetrable stone.)

In the first half of this quote, Jupiter says that the Records of Fortune are "inscribed" on tablets of solid brass and iron. As opposed to being an invisible force that rules the world, Fate is a written document on an indestructible surface. The fact that Fate is inscribed means that the future—the destinies of families—can be read by the gods and therefore not ignored or counteracted. The future is revealed to the gods and they can do nothing to alter it because they cannot destroy the tablet and therefore cannot unwrite what was written. Jupiter's description of the physical object of the Record of Fortune—a massive structure inscribed with the future—conjures the image of a supreme, invincible, and eternal written document. Through this description given by Jupiter, Ovid suggests that the written word is timeless, powerful, and indestructible. Metaphorically speaking, writing is "enduring."

Book 15: Epilogue Quotes

That day which has power over nothing except this body of mine
may come when it will and end the uncertain part of my life.
But the finer part of myself shall sweep me into eternity,
higher than all the stars. My name shall be never forgotten.
Wherever the might of Rome extends in the lands she has conquered,
the people shall read and recite my words.

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 873

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is a passage from Ovid's epilogue in which he asserts that his poetry will last forever. The first half of this quote describes the process of death for the human being. In the first two lines, Ovid draws a connection between his body and "the uncertain part of [his] life." He says that the day of death has power over his body and will end the "uncertain" part of life, suggesting that one's body is the uncertain part of their life. Ovid then explains that the "finer part" of himself will take over, "sweeping" him into eternity. In contrast to the first two lines, it is clear that this "finer part" of the human being is nether part of the physical body nor an uncertain part of life. Ovid describes this "finer part" as being able to sweep him, to carry him to eternity—which exists higher than all the stars. In this way, Ovid suggests that the human being has something like a soul—an immaterial part of themselves that lives on after their body has perished.

In the second half of this quote, Ovid explains how the "finer part" of himself affects the future of his writing. He says that his name will live on after his death, suggesting that one's name can go along with the finer part of themselves on its upward flight into eternity. However, this name is also attached to the world. Ovid explains that people will know his name after death as long as they live in Rome, which he expects to extend even farther than it already has. In this way, Ovid feels that his name bridges a gap between his elevated soul and his posthumous fame on earth. Through his name, people read and recite his poetry, thereby keeping his name alive. In this way, Ovid suggests that his writing creates an eternity for himself not only above the stars but also on earth.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

BOOK 1: PROLOGUE

Ovid explains that he is moved to write about transformations. He asks the gods to help him write a poem that traces history from the creation of the world to the present day.

The two driving forces of the Metamorphoses *are transformations and the history of the world. The connection of these two themes suggests that the evolution of history itself is a kind of transformation.*

BOOK 1: THE CREATION

Ovid starts by explaining what the universe was like before Earth came into being. Before creation, the universe is one face, called Chaos. This face has no distinct parts and is a jumble of incompatible elements. The gods Titan (the sun), Phoebe (the moon), and Amphitrite (the ocean) don't exist. The land, sea, and sky are all present in Chaos, but they are indistinguishable. None of these elements has a shape, and they all conflict with each other.

Ovid's account of the creation of the universe is not so much a creation as an organization. Instead of asserting that the universe is created out of nothing, Ovid asserts that the materials of the universe already existed and only needed to be set in order. This suggests that the materials that make up the universe have always existed and therefore didn't come into being in a particular moment.

Then, the kind god of nature settles the conflict of the elements by separating them. Fire, the lightest element, rises to the heavens; air settles between the fire and earth, the heaviest element. Water, lighter than earth by as much as fire is lighter than air, surrounds the earth. Then, the god who did this forms the earth into a sphere so it hangs in balance. He adds springs to the ocean and rivers to the land. Then he makes plains, valleys, mountains, and forests.

When Ovid explains the organization that creates the universe, he specifies that the god of nature who initiates it is kind. This suggests that giving form to disorganized material is a generous action, creating a more peaceful, constituted world out of chaos. In this way, Ovid introduces the act of transforming as an act of benevolence.

This wise god traces five zones on the earth's surface. The central zone is too hot to live in, and the top and bottom zone are buried in snow. Between the snow and heat two zones blend the hot and cold into a livable temperature. The god puts the mists, winds, and thunder in the air. The winds—gods Eurus, Zephyr, Boreas, and Auster—would tear the earth to pieces if they didn't counteract each other. The creator puts a pure ether above the air. Stars shine that were hidden before in Chaos's darkness.

Ovid also explains that the act of organizing the world is an act of wisdom. Separating the elements and organizing the gods of the winds has a balancing effect. Without this organization, where the winds are set up to counteract each other, the winds would destroy everything. In this way, form and organization stabilize the powerful forces of the universe.

The god fills the universe with creatures. He puts fish in the sea, animals on the land, and birds in the air. But the world needs a "holier creature" and so Man comes. Man was either made by the creator in hopes of a better universe or by the god Prometheus sprinkling divine raindrops on earth to create the likenesses of gods. Animals walk on four feet and look down, but Man stands up and looks at the sky. In this way, dirt was metamorphosed into Man.

In the creation of the universe, Man is created to have dominion over animals. Significantly, however, exactly how and why human beings are superior is left unknown. Ovid provides several possible explanations for their superiority, suggesting that their exact disposition and their future experience will be somewhat enigmatic.

BOOK 1: THE FOUR AGES

Ovid explains that the first Age on earth is the Golden Age. This Age has no laws or punishments, and the people do what is right of their own free will. People have not started cutting down trees, ploughing the earth, or travelling away from their homelands. No cities put up barricades, and no wars start. The people practice peace and enjoy eternal spring. The earth yields fruits in plenty, and rivers of milk and honey.

During this time, nothing changes: humans don't alter the earth, and the earth doesn't change seasons. Ovid presents this healthy relationship between humans and nature as ideal but unsustainable. This supports Ovid's theme that everything changes and no state remains the same.


When Saturn is banished to Tartarus, the dungeon of the gods, Jupiter, Saturn's son, takes the throne and the Silver Age starts. Spring is broken into summer, fall, winter, and a short spring. People, who used to live in caves, take shelter from the weather in houses. They plough the fields and yoke the oxen. Then the Bronze Age comes, bringing weapons.

This passage suggests that Jupiter's ascension to the throne of the gods catalyzes the universe's movement into the Silver Age. This shows that dissension and movement in the world of the gods affects the changes that occur on the earth.

Next the Iron Age comes, and evil invades the earth. Cruelty and deception replace loyalty and truth. People become violent, lustful, and greedy. They sail from their homelands, chop down the trees, and put boundaries around their cities. They strip the earth of its food and mine for gold and iron to make weapons. Wars break out. Sons deceive their fathers and husbands and wives plot each other's deaths. Finally, Justice the Maiden abandons the bloody earth.

Ovid's description of the Iron Age suggests a connection between humanity's moral decline and the abuse of the natural world. As soon as human beings start mining the earth for metals, they start making weapons. Similarly, as soon as human beings start travelling, they start warring and stealing. This description of the Iron Age shows a connection between the corruption of human nature and the exploitation of natural resources. As soon as humans start abusing their dominion over the earth, they develop vices like greed and violence, and vice versa, in a self-perpetuating cycle.

BOOK 1: THE GIANTS

While the earth falls corrupt, giants build a stairway of mountains to the throne of heaven. Jupiter strikes Mount Olympus with lightning and it falls, crushing the giants. Mother Earth, wanting to save her creations, turns the giants' blood into human form. However, these humans are still cruel and greedy.

The giants that emerge on earth and try to climb their way to heaven are an extreme example of a human desire for divine immortality and power that expresses itself throughout the Metamorphoses.

BOOK 1: LYCAÖN

Jupiter, also known as Jove, looks down from heaven and sighs, thinking of a gruesome visit he paid to Lycaön—a corrupt king. Jove calls for the gods, and they walk the Milky Way to assemble at Jove's palace. Jove vents his anger to the gods, saying that he fears for the universe even more than he feared the giants who tried to capture the heavens. The giants were one enemy, but Jove now fears he'll have to destroy the whole world to punish its corruption. He wants to populate the earth with demigods but knows they won't be safe around Lycaön, who wants to kill Jove. The assembly roars for Lycaön to be killed.

Lycaön not only refuses to worship the gods but also desires to kill Jupiter. This suggests that Lycaön believes he does not owe anything to the gods, and that he desires to be the most powerful man in existence. In contrast to the monstrous giants who sought to usurp the heavens, Lycaön is merely a human being. Lycaön's humanity unsettles Jupiter even more than the giants because it indicates that the whole human race is becoming corrupted.

Jupiter assures the gods that Lycaön has been punished and recounts the story to them: Jove heard of the evil times on earth, and so he dressed as a mortal and went to investigate. After travelling and witnessing the evil, Jove arrives at Lycaön's palace. He reveals to the people there that he is a god. Lycaön mocks him and plans to test Jove's immortality by trying to murder him later that night. Unable to wait, Lycaön murders Jove's companion, roasts his flesh, and serves it at the banquet. Then Jove strikes the palace with lightning. Lycaön flees to the country where he transforms into a wolf but maintains his savage expression.

The story of Lycaön's punishment involves the first human transformation that the gods enact on the earth following creation. To punish Lycaön for his sin, Jupiter transforms him into an animal—into a creature lower and with less dominion than a human being. Lycaön's transformation at the outset of the world shows two things: that nothing in the universe remains the same, and that the gods are all-powerful.


Jupiter explains to the assembly that Lycaön is only one of many evil men who deserve to die. Madness and evil govern the earth. Jove plans to punish everyone. Most of the gods agree, but some don't want to end the human race; they wonder who will honor the gods when only animals are left. Jove tells them he will breed a new human race, better than the one before it.

Human beings occupy a complicated place in the universe that confuses the gods when they gather to discuss the world's affairs. While human beings are uniquely able to upset the gods with their corruption, they are also the most pleasing to the gods, since they're the only creatures that recognize the divine world.

BOOK 1: THE FLOOD

Jupiter starts to strike the earth with lightning, but he worries that the heavens will catch on fire. He remembers that the Fates once decreed that the throne of heaven would burn. So, Jove gathers storm-clouds instead. He imprisons all the winds, and then releases Notus, the wind of the South. Notus flies over the earth, bringing gloom and pouring rain. Farmers weep as their crops are flattened. Jove calls his brother, the sea god Neptune, and tells him to let loose his strength. Neptune strikes the earth with the sea, causing the rivers to burst their confines. Crops, livestock, and houses crumble under a gigantic wave.

Jupiter decides to punish humanity and purify the world from sin, not with his divine weapon—lightning—but with nature itself. In order to unleash the power of the universe's natural elements, he reverses the counterbalance that was established between the winds. He also unleashes the sea from its position of restraint. In this way, he returns the universe to some of the chaos which governed it before the creation.


After the flood, the land and the sea can no longer be distinguished. Men row their boats where their houses had been, the forests fill with dolphins, and wolves, sheep, and tigers swim together. The boar's strength and the deer's speed are useless. Only the peaks of mountains show above the water, and anyone who doesn't drown in the flood dies later of starvation.

Jupiter returns the universe to the disorganized state of chaos that characterized it before the creation. In this way, Ovid reminds his audience that nothing can be destroyed, only re-formed. To obliterate the corrupt world, Jupiter can only rearrange and restructure it, just as the initial creation only rearranged and restructured what already existed.

BOOK 1: DEUCALION AND PYRRHA

A just man named Deucalion and his devout wife Pyrrha row their boat to shore on the bank of Parnassus—a mountain that reaches the stars and that is the only piece of land uncovered by the flood. Jove is glad that the only two survivors of the flood are Deucalion and Pyrrha, both free from sin. He sends away the storm-clouds and Triton, a demigod of the sea, blows his conch shell horn to restrain the sea. The shores slowly reform, and the forests reappear.

As in the story of Noah's Ark in the Bible, the flood in the Metamorphoses *leaves two survivors, one of each sex, so that the human race can be repopulated. In the initial creation of the universe, human beings were created as semi-divine beings with dominion over animals, but after this flood, it is important to the gods that the first humans be devout—that is, faithful worshippers of the gods themselves.*


Deucalion looks around the restored land and cries because of how empty it feels. He says to Pyrrha that he fears they aren't safe yet. He imagines how one of them would feel if the other had died and says he would have drowned himself to be with her. He wishes he had the skill of his father, the god Prometheus, to create human life. Deucalion and Pyrrha cry together and then go to a cave to pray to Themis, goddess of prophecy. They lie down, kiss the stone, and pray that the gods restore the human race.

When Deucalion and Pyrrha realize that they are the only two human beings alive, they feel extremely lonely. Instead of feeling triumphant and that they are now the lords of the Earth, they long for the human race to return so that they can live in community with other people. In this way, Deucalion and Pyrrha provide a humbler beginning to the second human race than the first (humans with dominion over nature).

Themis responds to Deucalion and Pyrrha, telling them to undress and to throw the bones of their mother behind their backs. Frightened, Pyrrha refuses to obey, not wanting to spite her mother's ghost by throwing away her bones. Deucalion suggests that Themis must mean for them to throw aside Mother Earth's bones—rocks. Still uncertain, Pyrrha agrees to try, so the two undress and scatter some rocks behind them. At once, the stones lose their hardness, expand, and take the form of humans. In this way, a new, hardworking race is started.

As opposed to the first human race, this second human race—metamorphosized out of rocks—is more connected to the earth. Ovid specifies that this race is hardworking. This seems to be due to the second race having come from the humility of Deucalion and Pyrrha and the resilient, earthy nature of rocks. In this way, metamorphosis reconstitutes the human race, and humanity's nature evolves.


BOOK 1: PYTHON

After the rocks transform into humans, other animals are made. The sun heats mud and makes it transform into animals. Farmers just starting to plough their fields overturn earth to find partially formed creatures, old and new, made out of the "friendly enmity" of heat and moisture. One of these new animals is the serpent, Python. The monstrous serpent frightens everyone until Apollo, god of archery, shoots it with his bow. Wanting to be remembered for this feat, Apollo establishes the Pythian Games where various athletes compete for victory.

This chapter illustrates the transitory relationship between natural elements, animals, and human beings. It suggests that the constitution of a human being is fluid and can take many forms. The "friendly enmity" that causes transformations can also apply to the relationship between gods and humans. While humans and gods are different and often at odds, the gods also seem to have an affinity for humanity that leads them to be involved in human affairs.

BOOK 1: DAPHNE

Jealous of Apollo's victory over Python, Cupid points his bow at Apollo. Apollo tells Cupid to put down the bow because he, Apollo, is the only one who can shoot without missing. Cupid retorts that he will make Apollo yield to him like a mortal. Cupid then draws two arrows from his quiver: a gold one that causes passion, and a lead one that repels passion. Cupid shoots Apollo with the gold arrow and Daphne, daughter of the river Penéus, with the lead arrow. Afterwards, Daphne avoids all suitors and plays in the forest with no thought of marriage or sex. When her father asks her for a grandson, she begs him to let her be a virgin forever.

In this chapter, Cupid punishes Apollo by making the object of his desire resist him. Daphne is the first female character in the Metamorphoses *who embraces chastity; many female characters after her will also embrace this lifestyle, but will struggle to keep it against the wishes of the men who want to be with them. This battle between men and women ensues throughout the* Metamorphoses, *often making love a tense, complicated, or non-consensual event. As the first "love story," Apollo and Daphne's antagonism casts love in a negative light.*

By contrast, Apollo falls in love with Daphne and wants to possess her. Passion fills him like fire as he gazes at Daphne's eyes, lips, and tempting limbs. He approaches her but she runs away. He runs after her, begging her to stop. He says he is not a predator trying to catch her but a man who loves her. He tells her that his father is Jupiter and that he's an expert archer and healer, except that he cannot escape love's arrow or heal from its disease.

Apollo believes that Daphne is misunderstanding the motivation of his actions. Apollo claims that he is pursuing Daphne out of love, not as a predator. However, because Daphne does not desire Apollo's advances, his passion is no better than predation. Apollo also calls love an inescapable disease, suggesting that it is a force that causes a person to act against their will.

Daphne runs faster to escape Apollo. She looks even more beautiful running, and Apollo loses his patience. Like a predator closing in on its prey, he comes upon her. Desperate and afraid, Daphne prays to her father, the river Penéus, to take away her beauty. At once, Daphne turns into a tree. Still in love with her, Apollo clutches the tree and feels Daphne's heart beating beneath the bark. Although he can't marry her, he decides he'll crown heroes with her leaves and flank palaces with her saplings. He makes her immortal like himself, and she waves her branches in assent.

The antagonism between Apollo and Daphne only exacerbates their respective feelings towards one another. Daphne's fear of Apollo and her running away from him makes him desire her more, and his increased desire only makes her run faster in greater fear. Daphne's transformation is a kind of stalemate between them. When Daphne is a tree, Apollo still loves her but is unable to possess her.

BOOK 1: IO (1)

In Thessaly, the Peneus river flows down a rocky ravine where the river god Penéus rules. All the river nymphs gather to recognize Daphne's transformation into a tree, except Ínachus, who is too upset over his missing daughter Io to appear. This is what happened to Io: one day, Io leaves her father's river and Jupiter sees her and falls in love with her. He tells her to lie down in the shade and to let him help her escape the wild beasts in the woods. She tries to flee, but Jupiter darkens the sky, overpowers her, and rapes her.

The first actual rape in the Metamorphoses *is committed by Jupiter—the lord of the gods. Apart from using his divine powers to flood the earth and rid it of sin, Jupiter uses them to overpower and abuse women. Throughout the* Metamorphoses, *the rape of women is one of Jupiter's main actions and uses of his power, calling into question the goodness of the gods.*

Queen Juno—Jupiter's wife—notices that the sunny day has turned to night and suspects that Jupiter is cheating on her again, as he often has. She goes to earth to find him, but before she can catch him, Jupiter transforms Io into a beautiful white cow. Queen Juno suspects that the cow is really Jupiter's mistress, so she asks Jupiter to give her the cow. Reluctant to give up Io but not wanting to reveal his infidelity to his wife, Jupiter finally gives Queen Juno the cow. The Queen, still suspicious, has Argus—a man with a hundred eyes—keep watch over her. Io can't plead with Argus to release her, because her voice has become a moo.

Many of the transformations that occur throughout the Metamorphoses, *including the transformation of Io, are caused by Jupiter's infidelities and Juno's anger in response. Events such as the rape of Io bring the two most powerful gods—Jupiter and Juno—down to earth where they engage in menial or mortal activities, such as cow-herding. Their involvement in earthly affairs both shows that love is a weakness for gods as well as humans, and calls into question the gods' emotional superiority above human beings.*

One day, Io wanders close to her father's river. Her father feeds her grass and she licks his hands, weeping because she can't tell him who she is. She **writes** her name in the dust with her hoof to explain. Her father weeps, lamenting that his lineage will be a herd of cattle. Argus then moves Io to a pasture farther away.

When Io finds herself unable to speak due to having been transformed, she adopts the act of writing in order to tell her father who she is. This suggests that loss of speech is the worst consequence of transformation, but also that human beings will go to great lengths to express themselves with words. This need for expression leads to the development of writing.

Jupiter is unable to bear Io's distress. He calls for his son, Mercury, and orders him to kill Argus. Mercury grabs his sleep-inducing wand and goes down to earth. There, he pretends to be a shepherd playing music on a reed pipe. Entranced by the music, Argus asks Mercury to sit down beside him. Slowly, the music starts to put Argus to sleep.

Beyond simple transformation, the conflict between Jupiter and Juno over Jupiter's mortal mistresses leads them to murder. This antagonism between the two heads of the gods suggests an instability in divinity, and a dysfunction in the forces most involved in the universe's affairs.

BOOK 1: INTERLUDE: PAN AND SYRINX

To resist sleep, Argus asks Mercury about his pipe. Mercury tells him this story: in the mountains, there lived a beautiful naiad named Syrinx. Syrinx avoided everyone who tried to sleep with her and followed the goddess Diana—the goddess of chastity. When Pan saw Syrinx, he chased her, trying to catch her, but she called on some stream nymphs to transform her. Pan found himself clutching river reeds instead of Syrinx. Then, Pan heard a whistling music among the reeds. Excited, he fashioned a pipe out of reeds so he and Syrinx could communicate with each other.

This interlude testifies to the embedded nature of the stories in the Metamorphoses. *Within some stories, other stories are told that often explain the origin of something—in this case the reed pipe—through a transformation. The stories' focus on transformations to reveal origins shows that metamorphosis creates change and therefore history.*

BOOK 1: IO (2)

When Mercury is halfway through the story of Pan and Syrinx, Argus falls asleep. Mercury cuts off his head, splattering the rocks with blood. Furious, Queen Juno sends a demon to terrify Io. Io wanders the world, trying to escape her invisible enemy. At last, she sinks to her knees on the bank of the Nile, groaning and lowing. Hearing her, Jupiter embraces the Queen and promises that he'll never pursue Io again if only she will stop punishing Io. The Queen is persuaded, and Io slowly regains her human form and voice. She is worshipped today as a goddess.

The suffering that Jupiter and Juno each cause in the human world only ceases when they resolve their conflict with each other. This shows how dependent the world is on the gods' often fluctuating emotions. Also, Io is one of the few characters in the Metamorphoses *who regains her human form and voice after having been transformed, suggesting that the resolution that Jupiter and Juno achieve is rare in their relationship.*

BOOK 1: PHAËTHON (1)

Io gives birth to Épaphus, who is rumored to be Jupiter's son. When Épaphus starts school, he jeers at one of his peers, Phaëthon, for boasting that his father is the sun god. Phaëthon turns red with shame and runs to his mother, Clymene. He asks her to give him a sign that he really is the sun god's son. Clymene looks up at the sun and says that if she is lying that the sun god is Phaëthon's father, then the sun may refuse to give her light for the rest of her life. Clymene then tells Phaëthon where his father lives, and Phaëthon sets out eagerly to find him.

The conflict between Épaphus and Phaëthon—both rumored to be the sons of gods—reveals the pride that humans feel to be associated with divinities. However, Phaëthon's rumored association with the sun god also makes him restless because he can't see the sun god and therefore has no proof that he is really his son. In this way, association with the gods can lead humans to a reckless desire to see the divine realm.

BOOK 2: PHAËTHON (2)

The Sun's palace is made of gold and bronze. A huge map of the world is painted on its walls, illustrating the gods and nymphs of the sea and the men and animals of the earth under the heavens with the zodiac signs. Phaëthon mounts the steps to the palace and marches boldly up to Phoebus—the Sun god whom he hopes is his father. The Spirits of the days, months, and years and of the seasons stand by Phoebus's emerald throne. Phoebus addresses Phaëthon as his son and asks him what he is doing here. Phaëthon asks Phoebus to give him a sign that he is Phaëthon's father. Phoebus tells Phaëthon to stop doubting. He makes an oath to grant Phaëthon whatever he wants. Phaëthon asks to drive Phoebus's chariot for one day.

The Sun god's palace is the operating room of the passing of time. When Phaëthon walks into the palace and witnesses divine mechanisms that he has never seen before, he is not humbled. Instead, he walks right up to Phoebus as though they are equals. He also refuses to take Phoebus at his word and instead demands proof that Phoebus is his father in the form of a sign. Phaëthon even asks to drive Phoebus's chariot, arrogantly believing that, because he is a god's son, he can do the same things as a god.

Phoebus begs Phaëthon to take back his request and explains that driving the sun god's chariot is extremely dangerous. The route through the sky is steep, and Phaëthon will encounter the beasts of the zodiac signs along the way. Looking down on the earth from the chariot's great height will terrify him, and he won't have the strength to steer the spirited horses. Phoebus understands that Phaëthon wants proof that the Sun is his father, but he fears that driving the chariot will kill him.

Phoebus tries to explain that, although Phaëthon is the son of a god, he does not possess the power and invincibility of the gods. Phaëthon, now that he has witnessed the divine realm, aspires to the gods' height of power. Because Phoebus has made an oath, he is forced to give Phaëthon what he wants, showing that the gods are not quite all-powerful but are bound by their words to a certain extent.

Phaëthon ignores his father's warnings and insists on driving the chariot. Reluctantly, Phoebus leads him to the beautiful golden chariot. As the moon sets and the morning star rises, the horses are brought out and harnessed to the chariot. Phoebus takes off his crown of sunbeams and puts it on Phaëthon's head. He tells Phaëthon to restrain the horses rather than encourage them and avoid riding too high where he'll burn the heavens or too low where he'll encounter the Serpent. He tries to change Phaëthon's mind again, but Phaëthon ignores him and climbs in the chariot.

Phaëthon is willful and arrogant. He desires to drive the Sun god's chariot and believes—ignoring the god himself—that he will succeed. In this way, Phaëthon's thirst for glory and for a taste of the divine realm leads him into extreme danger. Having witnessed the divine realm, Phaëthon refuses to believe there is anything the gods can do that he can't do, an attitude that proves to be his downfall.

The Sun god's fiery horses leap into the sky, flying upward. Phaëthon is lighter than Phoebus and the horses can't feel his weight. They run wild, and Phaëthon panics. He lacks both the strength to manage them and the knowledge of the route to take. He looks down on earth lying far below and regrets having taken the chariot. He wishes that Merops—his human father—was his only father. He doesn't know where to go or what to do. The zodiac beasts appear. The Scorpion reaches its pincers towards him, and he lets go of the reins in fright. The horses break their course and bolt downwards towards the earth.

As soon as Phaëthon is in the chariot, he realizes that he lacks both strength and knowledge to perform a god's task. The gods possess both inhuman strength and power and a knowledge of the workings of the universe that are invisible to humans. This story demonstrates that, although human beings have a connection to the divine realm which makes them aspire to its heights, they are also fundamentally unequipped to participate in it. This places humans in a position of limbo between gods and animals.

The earth bursts into flames. The crops and forests burn, earth dries out, and the cities crumble to ashes. Phaëthon looks down at the blazing earth, and the floor of the chariot starts to burn his feet. Many places that were lush turn into desert. The rivers steam and fill with dust, and gold and other ores melt. Fish and dolphins dive down to the depths of the sea. Neptune—the sea god—hides beneath the sea.

The fire that Phaëthon ignites on earth is reminiscent of the flood Jupiter used to purify the earth of corruption: both catastrophes reconstitute the landscape. Phaëthon's fire is an example of a metamorphosis in nature and is another reminder that nothing—not even the Earth—remains in the same form for long.

Mother Earth manages to raise her head above the ashes and speak to the gods in a parched voice. She asks the gods to look at her burned hair and skin and asks if this is the respect she deserves. She has worked tirelessly to yield crops and has endured the pain of the plough, all so that humans can live and worship the gods. She asks why Neptune must suffer. She asks the gods to rescue the Earth from chaos and to prevent their own heavens from being burned.

Mother Earth asks the gods to rescue the Earth from chaos, suggesting that, after the terrible fire, the earth reverted to the state of chaos it was in before creation. Mother Earth finds this chaos painful and upsetting, harking back to the benevolent divine actions that first created the world. Mother Earth suggests that, without a formed landscape, there would be no human beings.

After Mother Earth finishes her speech, Jupiter flies to the region where he rules the rain and clouds, but they are depleted. So, he launches a lightning bolt at Phaëthon instead, killing him. Phaëthon falls from the chariot and lands in a river far from his home. Some naiads find his body, wash his face, and bury him with an inscription that praises his bravery. Meanwhile, Phoebus is so grieved that the Sun goes into an eclipse. Clymene wanders the earth until she finds her son's tombstone and weeps over his grave.

Phoebus pauses the operation of the sun—a usually constant aspect of the universe—because he is so grieved over Phaëthon's death. This shows that the gods, although all-powerful, have many weaknesses, including the love of their children. Because of Phoebus's love for his son, he makes mistakes and suffers losses like humans do for the sake of their children.

Phaëthon's sisters also weep over Phaëthon's grave. After several days, they start to transform into trees. Clymene tries to peel away their bark, but they cry out in pain. Soon, they can't speak but continue to weep beads of amber sap. Sthénelus, Phaëthon's best friend, wanders in grief until he is turned into a swan. He is angry at Jupiter for killing Phaëthon and refuses to fly, so he only swims in the lakes.

In this passage, excessive grief causes Phaëthon's family and friends to transform. This suggests that grief can sometimes be so extreme as to change a person irreversibly. Furthermore, grief can be crippling, as Phaëthon's sisters' loss of speech and his friend's refusal to fly suggest.

Phoebus, distraught and angry at himself, keeps the sun in eclipse. He declares that he won't work for the world any longer; he wants Jupiter to take over driving the unruly horses so he can see how hard it is and regret punishing Phaëthon for his mistake. The rest of the gods beg Phoebus not to doom the world to darkness, and Jupiter threatens him with his lightning bolts. At last, Phoebus returns to driving the chariot, taking out his grief by harshly whipping the horses.

While Phaëthon's mortal relatives grieve for him, Phoebus undergoes a similar process of grief. In a human way, Phoebus angrily refuses to go back to work. When he does, he is bitter and angry, showing that the gods, although all-powerful, are not above the emotions that afflict human beings.

BOOK 2: CALLISTO

Jupiter inspects heaven to make sure it hasn't been damaged by the fire from the sun's chariot. Then he goes down to Earth to restore it from the burn. He catches sight of a beautiful virgin huntress named Callisto who is the favorite of the virgin goddess Diana. Jupiter spies Callisto taking a nap alone in the forest and decides that the pleasure of being with Callisto will make up for Queen Juno's anger. Jupiter disguises himself as Diana and approaches Callisto, who rises and expresses her love for Diana. Jupiter kisses Callisto, giving away his true identity. Callisto struggles, but Jupiter overpowers her and rapes her.

Jupiter is quickly distracted from his job as overseer of the Earth and the heavens by another love interest. Thus Jupiter shows himself to be incapable of resisting sex, a very earthly desire. Jupiter also uses his power and his ability to disguise himself to rape his love interests. In this way, Jupiter's dealings with love paint him both as a god with base weaknesses and as a god who abuses his power to cruel ends.

Jupiter leaves Callisto. Diana appears with her group of virgins, but Callisto runs away, fearing Diana is Jupiter again. When she spots Diana's followers, however, she is reassured. However, she is ashamed that she is no longer a virgin and looks down at the ground. Guessing Callisto's secret, Diana leads the virgins to a stream and tells them to undress and bathe. Callisto tries to hide her belly as she undresses, but the virgins notice her pregnancy and banish her.

Although Jupiter raped Callisto against her will, Callisto is still blamed by Diana for losing her virginity. This shows that love has a uniquely destructive effect on women. Not only are they often forced to be with the men who desire them, but they are then blamed for the outcome. Under these circumstances, love is often seen by women as a predatory enemy in the Metamorphoses.

Queen Juno hears of Jupiter's infidelity. Furious, she finds Callisto, who has just given birth to Jupiter's son, Arcas. The Queen grabs Callisto's hair and calls her a whore. She transforms Callisto into a hideous bear so that her beauty won't tempt Jupiter again. She takes away her voice so she can't plead with Jupiter. Jupiter takes no mercy on Callisto, and she wanders the earth running in fear from other wild beasts.

Not only is Callisto blamed by Diana for losing her virginity, but she is also blamed by Juno for causing Jupiter to cheat on her. The Metamorphoses *depicts how women are caught in a web of blame when they are raped, forced to betray both themselves and other women, and therefore it presents love as a destructive force.*

Arcas grows up to be 15 years old. One day, while hunting, he encounters a bear. He runs from it, unaware that it is his mother. He tries to kill the bear with his spear, but Jupiter blocks the blow. Jupiter then transports mother and son through space and implants them as constellations in the sky. Juno is furious to see her rival celebrated in the sky and goes to visit the ancient gods of the Ocean to implore them to reject these new constellations. They agree. Juno hopes Jupiter will restore Callisto to human form so that she won't usurp the Queen's place as Jupiter's wife.

Because Callisto loses her voice when she is transformed into a bear, she cannot tell her son who she is. In this way, Juno puts Callisto in danger of being killed by her own son. Just in time, Jupiter rescues Callisto from this fate. This again illustrates how the ongoing battle between Jupiter and Juno, sparked by Jupiter's affairs with human women, accounts for much of the action in the Metamorphoses. *Petty fighting, rather than something like wise discussion, often rules the universe.*

BOOK 2: THE RAVEN AND THE CROW

Queen Juno gets in her chariot, drawn by peacocks whose feathers are set with Argus's 100 eyes. Around the same time that her peacock's feathers were set, the raven (which used to be white) was turned black. This is how it happened: Apollo's raven catches his beloved sleeping with another man. The raven sets out to tell Apollo of his beloved's infidelity when a crow flies up to him and warns him not to tattle.

"The Raven and the Crow" is another embedded story that tells first how Argus's eyes became peacock feathers and then how the raven was turned black. These embedded stories reveal that everything in the universe has an origin story, usually involving the gods and a transformation of some kind.

The crow tells the raven of the time when the goddess Pallas hid a baby who was born from the earth in a basket and gave it to three sisters, making them swear not to look inside it. Minerva and Herse obeyed, but Aglauros broke her oath and looked in the basket. The crow—who was Minerva's raven attendant at the time—saw and told Pallas. Instead of rewarding Minerva's attendant, Pallas turned her into a crow.

Within the story of how the raven turned from white to black, the crow tells the story of how it became a crow. The crow—who used to be a raven—was punished for gossiping about another's crime, a story that acts as a warning that nothing can ever be sure of maintaining its current form.

Before being Minerva's attendant, the crow was a royal princess. She was very beautiful, and Neptune fell in love with her. He chased her aggressively, and she called on gods and men for help. A virgin goddess transformed her into a raven so she could escape Neptune. Then, she became Minerva's attendant. But now, she is a worthless crow because of her tattling.

Before the crow was a raven, it was a beautiful princess. This story of how the princess was first turned into a raven to escape being raped shows how many forms one being can transform into, and for a variety of different reasons.

The raven ignores the crow's warning and tells Apollo that his beloved was unfaithful to him. Apollo takes his spear and strikes the unfaithful woman. The woman cries out that she wishes she could have given Apollo his child before she died. Apollo regrets killing the pregnant woman and clasps her dead body, moaning, but his healing powers fail to revive her. He takes the baby from her womb before her body is burned and carries it to a centaur's cave. He curses the messenger raven, turning him black.

The raven, like the crow, is punished for tattling. The story of Apollo's revenge against his unfaithful mistress reveals how tattling—although it may seem like the right thing to do—can often lead to more harm than the harm of the event the tattler relays. However, it does seem that Apollo, in his anger at his own short temper, "shoots the messenger" by unjustly punishing the raven.

BOOK 2: OCYRHOË

In the centaur's cave, Chiron the centaur takes care of Apollo's son as his own. Suddenly, Chiron's red-haired daughter Ocyrhoë appears, who has the ability to tell the future. She prophesies that Apollo's baby will grow up to be the healer of the world and will have the ability to revive spirits. When Jupiter gets angry with him for reviving a spirit, he will strike him dead with a lightning bolt. Later, he will be turned back into a god. Ocyrhoë then prophesies that Chiron will be wounded by an arrow, and that the gods will end his immortal life so as to spare him from suffering.

While the gods seem to be able to create action and alter the natural progression of events, it is also possible that they are simply fulfilling events already written in stone in the future but invisible in the present. Thus, when Chiron's daughter prophesies the future of Apollo's divine son, it becomes clear that the future is determined and unalterable. It is revealed that many events are the result of fate rather than chance.

Ocyrhoë's voice fades, and she laments that her power to tell the future has angered the gods. She starts to crave eating grass and galloping. Slowly, she transforms into a horse, and her voice changes to a whinny. Chiron asks Apollo to restore Ocyrhoë to human form, but Apollo doesn't have the power to defy Jupiter.

Apollo explains to Chiron that the gods don't have the power to alter one another's changes. In this way, the gods are always battling and balancing each other out, no one god being able to consistently cast his power over the power of another.

BOOK 2: BATTUS

During this time, Apollo, who is dressing as a herdsman, is distracted by love, and his cattle wander off where Mercury finds them. Mercury stealthily herds the cattle and hides them away, seen by no one except an old man named Battus. Mercury gives Battus a cow in exchange for his silence. Battus accepts the gift but tells Mercury that the stones will tell on him. Mercury puts on a new disguise, returns, and promises Battus two cows if he'll tell Mercury if he saw a man and a herd of cattle pass by. Battus confesses where he saw the man and the herd go, so Mercury transforms the traitor into a stone.

In this story, Mercury tests the character of a mortal. Mercury seems to at first expect Battus's oath to be trustworthy, and then sets about determining whether or not it is. He then catches Battus in his betrayal and transforms him into the very thing that Battus said would give Mercury away—a stone. In this way, Mercury binds Battus to his own word in order to punish him for breaking his word.

BOOK 2: AGLAUROS

After transforming Battus, Mercury takes flight. He notices a procession of virgin maidens making their way to Pallas's temple with provisions for a sacrifice. He starts circling the maidens like a hawk waiting for spoils. He is struck by the beauty of Herse and is filled with desire for her. Mercury lands on Earth but doesn't bother to put on a disguise. He neatens his appearance and makes his way to the maidens' lodgings. Aglauros—Herse's sister and the girl who'd defied Pallas and peeked into the basket—greets the god. Mercury tells her he wants to have a child with her sister Herse. Aglauros, who is greedy, demands gold in exchange for admitting him to Herse.

Like Jupiter, Mercury is distracted from more god-like activities by the beauty of a mortal girl. Unlike Jupiter, however, Mercury does not use disguises or displays of power to seduce and overpower his love interest. He approaches Herse and her sisters in his true form and requests to be with her. Mercury deals with his attraction to human beings by approaching them on their terms, whereas Jupiter abuses his power to take what he wants against a person's will.

At Aglauros's request, Mercury leaves. Minerva, Aglauros's sister, thinks angrily of Aglauros's greedy sins. Minerva travels to Envy's cavern, a filthy dark cave where Envy lurks and feeds on snakes. Envy is pale and shriveled, and her teeth drip with poison. She wastes away, torturing herself and her victims. Minerva approaches Envy and asks her to infect Aglauros with her poison.

Besides simply transforming a person, the gods also punish characters by sending demons to the transgressors to infect them with poisonous vices. This is another form of metamorphosis in which a character is infected with the vice that they initially gave in to.

Envy follows Minerva to Athens. There, she strokes Aglauros's breast, infecting her heart with poison. Then she implants Aglauros's mind with images of Herse and the glorious god Mercury to torture her with jealousy. Aglauros wants to die to escape her jealousy. She crouches in front of Herse's door and blocks Mercury when he returns, but Mercury magically opens Herse's door. Aglauros feels herself turn to stone and lose her voice, becoming a statue stained with the poison of envy.

Aglauros is poisoned by Envy—the demon of the vice that she herself was prone to. In this way, Aglauros is punished by being transformed into a symbol of her own crime. Like many other victims of transformation, Aglauros loses her voice. As with other characters, her loss of speech caps off her punishment by making her incapable of expressing herself.

BOOK 2: EUROPA

After punishing Aglauros, Mercury returns to the sky. Jupiter asks Mercury to go drive a herd of royal cattle to the seashore, concealing his motives. Mercury does what Jupiter asks. Then, Jupiter disguises himself as a magnificent bull and goes in among the cows. The princess Europa looks at the beautiful bull in wonder. Gradually, Europa is persuaded by the bull's gentleness to pet him and eventually ride him. When she gets on his back, Jupiter slowly carries her to the sea and walks into the water. Europa clutches his horns in sudden fright as the land falls away.

Jupiter yet again disrupts order by kidnapping and raping a mortal girl. In the instance of Europa, Jupiter transports his victim to the opposite shore, carrying her away from her homeland. This action expands Europa's legacy by placing her on a different continent. In the first human race before the flood, humans became corrupt when they started sailing the sea to new shores. In this second human race, travelling to new shores is initiated by Jupiter's capture of Europa.


BOOK 3: CADMUS

Jupiter carries Europa to the opposite shore where he drops his bull's disguise. Meanwhile, Agenor—Europa's father—tells his son Cadmus to find Europa or else be exiled from his homeland. Cadmus searches everywhere and at last asks Phoebus where he should make his new home. Phoebus says that he will soon meet a wild cow and tells him to follow this cow to where it stops to graze and found a city there. Cadmus does as he's told, following a cow to a green pasture surrounded by an untouched forest.

Jupiter's capture of Europa spurs yet more change and the development of a legacy by pushing Cadmus out of his homeland, too. Cadmus, in trying to find Europa and in becoming homeless, is led to receive Phoebus's instruction to found a new city. In this way, the development of the primitive world is spurred on by Jupiter's interests in human mistresses.

Cadmus sends a group of companions to the river to collect libations for a sacrifice to Jupiter. As soon as the men start to collect water, a fiery dragon that lurks in a cave beneath the river appears. The men try to kill the dragon with swords, but it crushes them to death.

Cadmus's men have to confront an ancient dragon in order to claim the new location for their city. This is an example of how humans battle against nature in order to establish their own power.

Cadmus goes to look for his companions and finds the dragon lapping blood from their corpses on the riverbank. Cadmus hurls a massive boulder at the dragon, but it glances off the dragon's shiny scales. Cadmus then impales the dragon with his javelin. The dragon pulls out the javelin, but the spike remains imbedded in his chest. Howling in pain and anger, the dragon rears for another attack. Cadmus impales the dragon with his spear and nails his neck to a tree.

Cadmus's fight with the dragon presents a condensed example of the adoption of weapons and war skills that takes place in the development of the human race. Cadmus first uses a natural weapon—a boulder—to try and defeat the dragon, and then resorts to his javelin and a more sophisticated attack. This scene indicates humanity's re-adoption of the martial qualities of the Iron Age.

A voice rings out, accusing Cadmus of staring at the dead dragon. It says that he will suffer the same fate. Then the goddess Pallas appears and tells Cadmus to sow the teeth of the dragon like seeds. Cadmus obeys, and before long, an armor-clad army rises from the earth. Cadmus starts to fight them, but one of the soldiers tells him it is a family feud. The soldiers fight amongst themselves while Cadmus looks on. The armies kill each other, and finally, only five soldiers remain. These five soldiers help build the city that Phoebus told Cadmus to build.

Similar to the stones that Deucalion and Pyrrha threw that turned into people, the dragon's teeth turn into a new population of humans. This time, however, the newly transformed people are soldiers who are engaged in a civil war with each other. Whereas Deucalion and Pyrrha's new population possessed the hardworking qualities of rocks, Cadmus's possess the fiery, threatening spirit of the dragon.

BOOK 3: ACTAEON

Cadmus marries and fathers many children who then bear him grandchildren. His legacy is mostly happy, except for what happened to his son Actaeon: One day, Actaeon and his fellow hunters and bloodhounds are hunting in the mountains. They have just left off from a long day of hunting. Meanwhile, Diana bathes nearby in her secret place along the river while her virgin nymphs hold her clothes. Actaeon wanders upon the scene by mistake. Diana's virgin nymphs cry out and try to hide Diana, but she is so tall that Actaeon sees her naked body.

Although Actaeon sees Diana's naked body by mistake, the fact that her body has been seen cannot be undone. Therefore, Diana blames Actaeon for seeing her even though he is blameless. This is similar to the way Diana punished Callisto even though Callisto lost her virginity involuntarily. This shows that much of what happens to a person—and the transformations that they undergo in consequence—are beyond that person's control.

Not having her arrows, Diana splashes water at Actaeon. She curses him, causing antlers to sprout from his head. Slowly, Actaeon turns into a stag and loses his voice. As he wanders the woods, his ferocious pack of bloodhounds catch sight of him. Not recognizing their master, they chase him and shred him to pieces with their teeth. Actaeon's hunting companions cheer the hounds on, then look around for Actaeon so he can praise their kill. When Actaeon is dead, Diana's anger finally subsides.

Because Actaeon loses his speech along with his looks, he is unable to alert his hunting hounds and his fellow hunters to his transformation. As a result, Actaeon is killed by his own hunting companions. This shows how essential a person's speech is in supporting their identity. Without speech, a person has no way to express themselves and thereby protect themselves.

BOOK 3: SEMELE

Some of the gods felt that Diana's punishment of Actaeon was too extreme, while others felt that it was appropriate. Queen Juno applauds the punishment because she is still furious that Jupiter slept with Europa and is happy to see Europa's lineage harmed. Now, Juno is furious and jealous because Jupiter has slept with Semele, Cadmus's daughter, and impregnated her. She decides Semele must be killed and wants to contrive for Jupiter to kill her himself.

Diana's punishment of Actaeon alongside Juno's punishments of Jupiter's mistresses shows how the gods' personal insults and sensitivities account for much of the action that takes place in the human realm. The gods punish all those who offend them—even those who are blameless—and usually by transforming them, therefore disrupting human reality.

Queen Juno disguises herself as Semele's elderly nurse and goes to talk to Semele. She urges Semele to ask Jupiter for proof that he is really a god. She suggests that Semele ask Jupiter to have sex with her in his godly form, as he would with his wife Juno. Persuaded, Semele makes Jupiter promise to give her what she asks. Jupiter gives her his oath.

Juno's idea that Semele should demand proof of Jupiter's divinity is reminiscent of when Phaëthon demanded proof that Phoebus was his father. Semele and Phaëthon's stories demonstrate that the human need for proof from the gods is dangerous, and often results in death.

Jupiter returns to the heavens, distressed because he can't deny Semele's request, although it will prove fatal. He tries to equip himself with his gentlest lightning bolts, but when he returns to Semele and has sex with her in godly form, she catches on fire. He takes the baby from her womb and stitches it into his thigh. When it is born, the baby is raised by Semele's sister, then given to nymphs who raise him in a cave.

Similar to the story of Phoebus and Phaëthon, Jupiter is bound by his oath to Semele and cannot refuse her deadly wish. Jupiter's proof to Semele that he is a god—having sex with her in his true form—kills Semele, once again proving that humans cannot withstand firsthand contact with the divine world.

BOOK 3: TEIRESIAS

One day, Jupiter and Queen Juno argue over whether men or women enjoy sex more. To settle their dispute, they decide to ask Teiresias, a man who had lived as both a male and a female. Once, Teiresias came upon two mating serpents and knocked them apart with his staff. He then suddenly transformed into a woman. Eight years later, he broke apart a second pair of mating serpents and was changed back. When Jupiter and Juno ask Teiresias whether men or women enjoy sex more, Teiresias says that women do. Resenting this verdict, Juno curses Teiresias with blindness. Jupiter, trying to make amends for this curse, gives him the gift of seeing the future.

Up until this point in the Metamorphoses, *sex has been mostly destructive to women. Three women were raped by Jupiter, one was killed by sleeping with him, and Juno has been repeatedly cheated on. Following these stories, Teiresias's response to Jupiter and Juno's debate seems implausible. However, whether or not Teiresias's verdict is true, Jupiter and Juno's debate and the relationships thus far suggest that men and women generally do not understand what the other wants.*

BOOK 3: NARCISSUS AND ECHO

Teiresias becomes a famous prophet. One day, a sea nymph who has just given birth to a beautiful baby, Narcissus, asks Teiresias if Narcissus will live to an old age. Teiresias replies that Narcissus will live a long life if he never knows himself. Narcissus grows up to be very handsome. Boys and girls desire him, but he is too proud to give himself to any of them.

As a prophet, Teiresias can see things about the future that are invisible to everyone else. This reveals that, in the world of the Metamorphoses, *the future is predetermined—that everything has a set fate. Although it seems that there are many changeable factors in each of the stories, in reality neither gods nor humans have control over what is fated to occur.*

One day, Narcissus is spotted by Echo, who falls in love with him. Echo is a nymph who used to help Jupiter in his infidelities by distracting Juno before she could catch Jupiter in the act. To punish Echo for this, Juno cursed her to only be able to repeat the words that are spoken to her. Echo follows Narcissus, unable to say the loving things she wants to say to him.

In this instance, the contest between Jupiter and Juno once again affects human reality. It's also an example of (in effect) the loss of speech inhibiting someone's heartfelt self-expression.

Narcissus asks who's there, and Echo repeats his question. Startled by his own voice's reflection, Narcissus tells the voice to come out so they can be together. Echo repeats Narcissus's words, reveals herself, and tries to embrace him. Horrified, Narcissus scolds her away. She flees in embarrassment, repeating his insults. Echo spends the rest of her life in caves, but her voice wanders the world as echoes.

Narcissus rejects all of his lovers, but he is intrigued by Echo because she repeats his own words back to him. Narcissus's self-absorption is actually the origin of the modern term "narcissist." He is only interested in himself and is outraged when he discovers that Echo is a woman and not some image of himself.

One day, one of Narcissus's rejected lovers prays to the god Nemesis that Narcissus will one day fall in love and be unable to obtain the object of his desire. Soon after, Narcissus comes upon a clear pool after a tiring day of hunting. He stoops over the pool to drink and is struck by the beauty of his own reflection. He falls in love with himself and plunges his arms in the pool to try and embrace his reflection.

When Narcissus falls in love with his reflection, he fulfills the prophecy that Teiresias made about him. Recall that Teiresias had said that "knowing himself" would be the death of Narcissus. Both his interest in his own voice's echo and his obsession with his own face in the pool make Narcissus want to know himself.

Narcissus stays by the pool day and night, not turning away from his reflection to sleep or eat. He laments that no one has loved as tragically as himself, who longs but can't reach his beloved. As soulmates, he and his reflection will die together. He watches his reflection repeat his words but can't hear them. He cries, and his tears blur his reflection. Unable to see himself, Narcissus tears at his clothes and beats his chest until a welt appears. Narcissus passes away, consumed by his unsatisfied desire.

Narcissus's obsession with himself tortures him because he can't possess himself as he could another lover. His attempt to embrace himself and his tears destroying his reflection cause him to go mad with grief. His only consolation is a tragic one in which he and his reflection die together as soulmates. In this way, Narcissus's story is an example of love's destructiveness.

Echo watches Narcissus die. She echoes the sound of his fists beating his chest and his words of farewell to his reflection. As Narcissus crosses the River Styx into Hades—the land of the dead—he gazes at his own reflection. His body is never found, only a white and gold flower where he had died.

Echo's presence exacerbates Narcissus's love. She echoes the sound of his misery, leading him to believe that his reflection is mimicking his grief in his voice. Narcissus believes that he has fallen in love with an exact copy of himself.

BOOK 3: PENTHEUS AND BACCHUS (1)

After the story of Narcissus spreads through Greece, everyone worships Teiresias as a great prophet. Pentheus, however, scoffs at the gods and Teiresias's foresight. Teiresias predicts that when Pentheus refuses to worship Bacchus—the son of Jupiter and Semele and the new god—his body will be torn to pieces and strewn throughout the land. Pentheus throws Teiresias out.

Pentheus refuses to respect either the gods or the idea of fate. Teiresias predicts that Pentheus will die when he refuses to worship a god. This interaction between Pentheus and Teiresias foreshadows a new conflict between the gods and humanity in which the gods demand worship and certain people refuse to give it.

When Bacchus arrives, crowds gather to worship him. Pentheus accuses everyone of going crazy. He asks how the same people who fought bravely in wars and traversed the world to found the new city of Thebes under Cadmus can now be so overcome by madness. Pentheus believes that, since these people were born from the dragon's teeth that Cadmus sowed, they are strong and should therefore banish effeminate boys like Bacchus. Pentheus can't bear that Thebes will bow to Bacchus and instructs his enslaved men to bring Bacchus to him in chains.

Pentheus would rather worship the feats of human beings than the gods. As the human race has developed and founded their own cities, they have their own creations and legacies to be proud of. This development leads certain people, such as Pentheus, to honor the human race in its bravery more than the gods whose power is, in Pentheus's view, ridiculous and feminine. Pentheus believes that humans are more righteous than the gods.

Cadmus tries to reason with Pentheus, but Pentheus ignores him. Pentheus's enslaved men return. They didn't find Bacchus, but they captured one of Bacchus's henchmen instead. Pentheus wants to kill the prisoner as a warning to Bacchus, but first he questions him about where he came from and why he practices Bacchus's religion.

Pentheus views the practice of Bacchus's religion as an irrational madness. On the other hand, Cadmus tries to reason with Pentheus. The rational view of religion would hold that the gods deserve worship, and also that defying the gods leads to punishment.

BOOK 3: ACOETES AND THE LYDIAN SAILORS

Pentheus's prisoner introduces himself as Acoetes. His parents were humble people who left him no material possessions after they died. Instead, Acoetes's father left him with the skill for fishing. Over time, Acoetes learned how to sail a ship so he could use his skill for fishing in new regions.

Acoetes's story stresses that he is humble, having been raised modestly by fishermen. Knowing that Acoetes becomes a follower of Bacchus, Acoetes's modest character suggests that humility is a key characteristic of a devout (that is, god-honoring) person.

One day, Acoetes's fishing crew anchors their ship on an island called Chios where they spend the night. The next morning, as they board the ship, Acoetes notices that one of his men has captured a boy with a beautiful face who is stumbling in a drunken stupor. Looking at this boy, Acoetes is convinced that he is a god and not a mortal boy. Acoetes prays to the divine to forgive his men for capturing the god and not to ruin their voyage. Acoetes's men rise up against their captain, trying to knock him overboard.

Acoetes's story suggests that people who have a tendency towards cruelty generally do not feel inclined to worship the gods or even believe in their existence. Acoetes's crew capture the young boy because they do not believe that it is possible for a god to inhabit a human form. Closed-minded in this regard, they stumble into being cruel to a god by being cruel to a human being.

Bacchus (the captured boy) wakes up from his drowsy state and asks what is happening and where the sailors are plotting to take him. One of the sailors asks Bacchus where he'd like to be taken. Bacchus replies that his homeland is Naxos, and if they take him there, he will be safe. Acoetes starts to sail right towards Naxos, but one of his men whispers maliciously for him to steer the other way and takes over the wheel.

Acoetes's men believe that the boy (the disguised Bacchus) is no threat to them because he appears to be a child. They see only what is in front of them—a innocent, frail child—and don't consider that he may be an incarnation of a god. Their lack of understanding of changes of form (metamorphoses) causes them to disregard Bacchus's power.

Bacchus, realizing that the sailors are deceiving him, pretends to weep and asks why grown men enjoy playing a trick on a boy. Acoetes cries with him. Suddenly, the ship stops. Confused, the sailors try to row, but their oars have become overgrown with ivy. Bacchus is suddenly crowned with grape vines and surrounded by tigers and lynxes. The sailors jump up in fear, but their bodies start to turn black and scaly. Finally, they become dolphins and dive into the sea. Acoetes, who is untransformed, sails Bacchus to Naxos. There, he worships Bacchus and joins his religion.

Bacchus initiates a huge display of transformation in order to prove his power to Acoetes's men and to punish them for mistreating a god. Acoetes, who instantly believed that the child was Bacchus and tried to protect him from his crew, remains untransformed. Therefore, in this instance, transformation is used as a punishment for neglecting to worship a god. Acoetes gets to remain in his human form because he was humble before Bacchus.

BOOK 3: PENTHEUS AND BACCHUS (2)

Pentheus interrupts Acoetes, saying he's heard enough nonsense. He tells his guards to take Acoetes to the dungeon to torture him. However, before Acoetes's torture can begin, the doors of the dungeon magically open and release him. Acoetes then goes to the mountain where the sacrificial rites in honor of Bacchus are taking place. When Pentheus hears the cries of worship from the mountains, he goes up to spy angrily on the rituals. His mother Agave sees him and she and her sisters begin to attack him. Pentheus begs for mercy, but the women pull off his arms, and Agave wrenches off his head. Agave holds Pentheus's head up in victory, and the women continue to worship Bacchus.

Pentheus's mother Agave is the one who finally punishes Pentheus for his refusal to worship Bacchus. This suggests that, in the order of relationships, the relationship between humans and gods is above that between mother and son or other familial relationships. Since Pentheus refused to worship a god, Agave puts aside her motherly ties to him and gives him his just retribution. This story establishes the superiority of the gods by showing that they demand more allegiance than one's family does.

BOOK 4: THE DAUGHTERS OF MINYAS (1)

Only a few women refuse to participate in the revelry over Bacchus. For one, Alcithoë, Minyas's daughter, doesn't believe that Bacchus is Jupiter's son. The priest of Thebes orders a festival for Bacchus and excuses everyone from their daily chores so they can attend. He orders everyone to dress in animal skins and threatens that Bacchus will severely punish anyone who refuses to attend. All the women gather, burning incense and calling Bacchus by all his names. They praise him as the god of the East who draws everyone's admiration through his glory.

The Bacchic festival is mandatory, but it is also unclear what Bacchus stands for or what the rituals are in praise of. The rituals demand that everyone abandon their work, dress in skins, and dance around in revelry. These strange Bacchic rituals drive home the point that people should worship the gods unconditionally, whether or not it appears relevant to their daily lives.

While the festival is going on, Minyas's daughters stay inside, weaving wool. They believe that Minerva—goddess of wisdom and commerce—deserves their attention. One of the daughters suggests they each tell a story to pass the time.

Minyas's daughters feel that Bacchus and his festivals are extremely impractical. Instead, they worship Minerva, who stands for commerce and weaving—practical skills that apply to their lives.

BOOK 4: PYRAMUS AND THISBE

Minyas's first daughter tells the story of how the mulberry tree's white berries became red: once, two beautiful teenagers—Pyramus and Thisbe—lived in adjoining estates. Growing up together, they fall in love, but they are forbidden to marry because their families don't approve of the match. One day, they discover a small hole in the wall that divides their families' estates, and they whisper to each other through it. They are grateful to the wall for allowing them to talk to each other, but they curse it for separating them physically.

The story of Pyramus and Thisbe is the first complete story in the Metamorphoses *which tells of a male and female who love each other mutually. However, a different kind of obstacle—the disapproval of the two families and the wall between their homes—keeps this mutual love from existing happily. This suggests that love of any kind is likely doomed.*

One day, Pyramus and Thisbe decide to elude their guards the next night and run away together. They decide to meet at a mulberry tree—a tree that had white berries—by a fountain before leaving the city. That night, Thisbe sneaks out to the mulberry tree. As she waits for Pyramus, a lion whose mouth is bloody from a kill comes to drink in the fountain. Frightened, Thisbe runs to a cave to hide, accidentally dropping her cloak behind her. As the lion is leaving the fountain, it mangles the cloak in its bloody mouth.

Pyramus and Thisbe find a way to get around the first obstacle to their love, but they encounter new and unforeseen obstacles—such as the lion—that continue to reduce their chances of being together happily. This suggests that Pyramus and Thisbe's love is not fated to succeed. All in all, this paints love as something either destructive or doomed—either way, it's always tragic.

Soon after, Pyramus arrives at the mulberry tree and discovers Thisbe's bloody cloak. Thinking that Thisbe was eaten by a wild beast, Pyramus stabs himself, wanting to die with her. His blood spurts up, staining the mulberries and the roots of the tree dark red.

Similar to the story of Narcissus, Pyramus feels that the only way he can be with Thisbe is in death. This indicates the depth of his love but also its inevitably tragic nature.

A little later, Thisbe dares to leave the cave and return to the mulberry tree to meet Pyramus. She is confused by the new red color of the mulberries until she finds Pyramus's writhing body. She embraces him and kisses him. Pyramus looks into her eyes and dies. Thisbe notices her bloody cloak and guesses that Pyramus killed himself to be with Thisbe whom he thought was dead. Thisbe then kills herself with Pyramus's sword, praying to the gods that the mulberry tree remain red forever as a sign of their united love. The gods answer her prayer, and so the mulberry tree now bears red berries.

Pyramus and Thisbe's love story is made tragic by a misunderstanding. This suggests that love—even true love—is always doomed to fail due to the complications of the real world. The gods make the mulberry red to commemorate the tragic ending of their love story. It's ambiguous, though, whether the gods had the power to divert the couple's doomed fate.

BOOK 4: MARS AND VENUS

After the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, Minyas's second daughter tells the story of Mars and Venus: once, the Sun god discovered the god Venus having an affair with the god Mars. The Sun god tells Vulcan of his wife Venus's infidelity. Distraught, Vulcan weaves a net and sets it as a trap around his bed. Venus later enters the bedroom with Mars and the net traps them while they are having sex on the bed. Vulcan then opens the bedroom doors and lets all the gods laugh at Venus and Mars, caught and ashamed.

This story of the gods' affairs paints the gods' world as petty and ridiculous. Their affairs aren't elevated above those of humans; they have personal dramas, sleep around, and gossip about each other. In some ways, the human world seems elevated above the world of the gods; they have stories such as that of Pyramus and Thisbe, for instance. The gods, although all-powerful, are not necessarily more dignified because of it.

BOOK 4: LEUCOTHOË AND CLYTIË

Minyas's daughter's story continues to tell how Venus got her revenge on the Sun god for telling her husband about her affair with Mars. She wants him to be thwarted in a strong passion like she was. At this time, the Sun god is in love with a beautiful girl named Leucothoë. He starts to set late and rise early because he wants to look at her. He desires her so much that he forgets his other lover, Clytië, who is deeply in love with him.

This story illustrates how the gods use the human world to get revenge against each other. Because Venus is angry that Phoebus spoiled her affair with Mars, she wants to ruin his affair with Leucothoë, not caring that Leucothoë is a human girl with feelings. In this way, the gods sometimes treat humans as their game pieces, an attitude which has the effect of lowering their prestige.

One night, while he is off duty, the Sun god enters Leucothoë's home where she is weaving wool with her sisters. Disguised as her mother, he asks the sisters for a private word with Leucothoë. When the sisters leave, he reveals his true identity to Leucothoë. She is afraid, but he possesses her and sleeps with her.

This is another example of how the gods use disguises in order to deceive and overpower humans. In this way, the gods don't seem to really care about human beings' feelings and often view them as objects to fulfill their own needs.

Clytië grows extremely jealous when she hears of the Sun god's affair and tells Leucothoë's father of his daughter's affair. He is furious and buries Leucothoë alive even when she protests that she had sex with the Sun god against her will. The Sun god tries to revive Leucothoë's cold buried limbs with his warmth, but it is useless. He sprinkles the ground around her with a fragrant nectar.

Like Io and Callisto, Leucothoë is blamed for being raped. In this case, her father is furious that she has lost her virginity, and the fact that she lost her virginity against her will does not change his opinion. In this way, Phoebus's love for Leucothoë destroys her life and leads to her death.

Clytië wants the Sun god to return to her, but he ends their affair. Her passion turns to madness, and she refuses to eat or drink. She lies staring at the Sun god until she turns into a heliotrope flower. When Minyas's daughter finishes the story, her sisters remark that real gods—unlike Bacchus—can do amazing things.

Minyas's daughters claim that the "real" gods are remarkable, but this last story of Phoebus, Leucothoë, and Clytië instead suggests that the gods tend to be petty, careless, and destructive of human life. The fact that they can transform things only enables them in these vices.

BOOK 4: SALMACIS AND HERMAPHRODITUS

It is now Minyas's third daughter's turn to tell her story. She says that she wants no more tales of transformations due to love and jealousy, and embarks on the story of Hermaphroditus, Mercury, and Venus's son: Hermaphroditus is raised by a naiad in a cave until he is 15 when he leaves home to explore the unknown. One day while travelling, he discovers a perfectly clear pool surrounded by green grass. The pool belongs to a nymph, Salmacis, who rejects Diana's lifestyle of hunting and virginity and likes to bathe naked in pools and stare at herself in the mirror.

Minyas's daughter notices that love and jealousy cause most transformations. She determines to tell a story about a transformation that does not come from either love or jealousy, but her story is nevertheless unable to avoid the elements of a relationship between a man and a woman. This suggests that most transformations—and most of the action in human reality—comes from the interaction of men and women.

When Salmacis sees Hermaphroditus, she desires to possess him. She preens herself, then calls to Hermaphroditus, telling him he is so beautiful that he must be a god. She demands that he kiss her and take her to his bed right away. Hermaphroditus blushes and tells her to stop or he'll run away. Salmacis pretends to leave but hides in the trees, spying on him. She watches him undress for a swim and becomes wild with excitement and desire.

This story is distinct from other stories of desire in the Metamorphoses *in that, in this one, the female character is pursuing the male. This reversal of the standard shows that female characters are also capable of being predatory towards their love interests, and that they also use deceptions in order to force men to be with them.*

Hermaphroditus jumps into the pool. Salmacis jumps in after him and grabs hold of his body. He tries to get away, but she wraps her limbs around him and holds on. Salmacis prays to the gods that she and Hermaphroditus will become one, and they grant her wish. The two's bodies and faces merge. This new person can be described neither as male nor female but resembles both. The new Hermaphroditus asks Venus and Mercury that this pool make whoever enters it androgynous. They grant his wish.

Salmacis's desire for Hermaphroditus leads to her desire to be one with him. While Minyas's daughter's story doesn't deal with love or jealousy as the cause of a transformation, it does seem to explain, by means of a transformation, what the end goal of desire is—that is, union between two people. Altogether, Minyas's daughters' stories portray different aspects of love and the metamorphoses they inspire.

BOOK 4: THE DAUGHTERS OF MINYAS (2)

After Minyas's third daughter finishes her story, the three sisters keep weaving, ignoring the festival for Bacchus. Suddenly, they are assaulted by the sound of loud drums and the smell of perfume. Their looms start to turn green and grow ivy. It is nearly nighttime, but their house blazes with candlelight. The frightened sisters try to hide in dark corners. Suddenly, their fingers grow membranes, and they transform into bats. They hang from the ceiling, unable to speak.

The punishment of the daughters of Minyas shows that the gods are superior to humans at least in the fact that they can transform and punish them at will. While they abstained from Bacchus's festival, the three daughters told stories, but when they are turned into bats, they lose their voices and therefore their ability to praise their preferred gods altogether.

BOOK 4: INO AND ATHAMAS

Everyone in Thebes now acknowledges Bacchus as a new god. Semele's sister Ino—who helped raise her nephew Bacchus—is fiercely proud of Bacchus, as well as of her own husband Athamas and their children. Queen Juno is furious that her rival Semele's son Bacchus caused Pentheus's death, turned Minyas's three daughters into bats, and is causing everyone to go mad with revelry. Juno wants to punish Ino, too, for Bacchus' existence.

Juno is relentless and merciless when it comes to punishing Jupiter's love interests. She punishes the human world as a way of venting her anger and jealousy at her husband's infidelity. As a goddess, she is not the arbiter of justice, as readers might expect, but rather a figure whose emotions cause horrible tragedies to occur to blameless mortals.

Queen Juno decides to pay a visit to Hades. Ovid asks the reader to imagine a cold, misty path winding along the Styx River. This path leads to Hades—the land of the dead—which is full of bodiless spirits wandering aimlessly. Queen Juno watches the perpetual torment of Athamas's brothers who both live in Hades. She hates that Athamas is allowed to live happily on land when his wife's nephew is Bacchus. She asks one of the three Furies—the three goddesses of vengeance who have hair of snakes—to drive Athamas to madness and crime. The Fury—Tisiphone— consents at once, and Juno returns to heaven.

Instead of merely transforming Ino and Athamas, Juno decides to seek help from Hell. While the gods can alter forms, it seems that they cannot alter a character's personality or make them wicked. Similar to the way Envy represented the epitome of the vice of jealousy, Tisiphone represents the epitome of madness and evil. These incarnations of the vices do more harm than the gods because they poison their victims' very essences rather than simply transforming them into another physical form.

Tisiphone grabs a bloody torch and travels to Ino and Athamas's palace. Ino and Athamas are frightened by the ominous presence of the Fury, who tosses her head to make her snakes hiss. She then flings a handful of serpents into the palace. The snakes slither over Athamas and Ino and breathe poisonous breath over them. Tisiphone then pours a poison of crime, lust, and madness over Athamas and Ino. She dances around with her bloody torch, then departs.

In order to punish Ino and Athamas, Juno has them poisoned to become mad, lustful, and criminal. In this way, she seems to want to punish them by making them worthy *of punishment, making this another example of her punishment of an innocent victim.*

Athamas goes mad, telling his hunters to trap Ino and her two children, whom he believes are a lioness and cubs. He runs after Ino, snatches the baby from her arms, and shatters its skull on the stone floor. Ino screams and runs from the palace, calling on Bacchus to help her. From afar, Queen Juno laughs. She has Ino climb up a steep cliff and jump with her other baby into the ocean. Venus, who pities Ino, calls on Neptune to transform Ino and her baby into sea-gods, and he grants her wish.

Juno's punishment of Ino and Athamas is barbaric and heart-breaking. Athamas kills his own children and chases his wife as if she is an animal he is hunting. While this is happening, Juno is watching and laughing. This paints Juno as a cruel and petty goddess who uses her power to vent her emotions and inflate her triumph instead of to enact justice.

Ino's companions run to the cliff and grieve because they believe she has died. They curse Queen Juno. Angered by their insults, Juno turns Ino's companions into stone as they attempt to jump off the cliff to follow their friend to her death. A few others she turns to gulls, who repeatedly brush the sea's surface.

Ino's companions justly feel that Juno is deplorable and cruel. Instead of worshipping her, they want to dethrone her, but this feeling—no matter how justified—only leads to their punishment, too. This shows that the gods' power—at least Juno's—is tyrannical.

BOOK 4: CADMUS AND HARMONIA

After witnessing many griefs and failures, Cadmus decides to abandon the city of Thebes that he had founded. While he and his wife Harmonia wander the world in exile, Cadmus wonders if the dragon whose teeth he sowed was sacred, and if the gods were angered when he killed it. He wills that he will be turned into a serpent as punishment. Instantly, he transforms into a snake. Before his voice disappears, he begs his wife to embrace him. He wraps himself around Harmonia while she weeps and begs the gods to transform her, too. They grant her wish, and the husband and wife slither into the woods where they live out their days as harmless serpents.

Cadmus's transformation into a serpent suggests that the dragon he had killed to start his new city was indeed sacred. When he defeated the dragon, Cadmus also defeated nature and wielded his power over it. Years later, his punishment for this abuse of power is to be turned into a snake—into a being without the human power to control nature. Harmonia asks to be transformed as well, showing that, in most cases, people would rather be together in the same form than keep their human form.

BOOK 4: PERSEUS (1)

After Cadmus and Harmonia become serpents, India and Greece join Bacchus's cult. However, Bacchus is forbidden to enter Argos by its ruler Acrisius, who denies that Bacchus is Jupiter's son. Acrisius also denies that his grandson Perseus is Jupiter's son. Perseus flies around in exile, carrying the head of Medusa—a maiden with snakes for hair—as a trophy. Where drops of blood from the head fall, hordes of serpents appear. As it grows dark, Perseus lands in the kingdom of Atlas, hoping to rest for the night. Atlas is a mighty and famous ruler, and his vast kingdom is surrounded by golden apple trees.

One of the main arguments for not worshipping certain gods is that there is no proof that these new gods—Bacchus and Perseus—are the sons of real gods like Jupiter. Since the gods rarely appear to people in their divine form—not even to the human women they have children with—it is impossible for anyone to have proof of a person's divine lineage unless they have faith in it. As it did in the story of Phaëthon, doubt about one's descent can cause unrest in the human world.

Perseus tells Atlas that he is the son of Jupiter. Atlas, remembering a prophecy he once heard that said the son of Jupiter would steal his golden apple trees, tells Perseus to leave. Perseus holds his ground and pulls out the head of Medusa. Instantly, Atlas turns into a huge mountain jutting up into the clouds.

Perseus turns Atlas to stone with the Medusa head, proving that he has a god's power and punishing Atlas for his lack of respect. The gods do not want to prove their power to humans but expect humans to blindly embrace and worship their power.

Perseus spends the night in a cave. In the morning, he puts on his winged sandals and takes flight. After a while, he comes across a girl tied to a cliff over the ocean. This girl—Andromeda—is being unjustly punished for her mother's arrogance. Perseus is captivated by Andromeda and lands beside her. He flirts with her, and she blushes shyly and tells him her story. Suddenly, a monster appears from the waves. Andromeda's parents run to their daughter, regretting their cruelty. Perseus promises to rescue Andromeda if they will let him marry her. They agree and promise him their kingdom as a dowry.

Although Perseus is part god, he lives in the human world and gets wrapped up in its affairs. He negotiates with the people in Andromeda's kingdom, wanting to obtain Andromeda as a wife and her kingdom as his to rule. In saving Andromeda, who is being unjustly punished, Perseus brings justice, but also secures a place for himself in the world and people whom he can persuade to worship him.

Perseus flies on his winged sandals to meet the monster. They fight until Perseus, bracing himself against a rock, spears the monster in its vital organs. The kingdom rejoices, and Andromeda's parents give Perseus their daughter. Perseus puts the Medusa head on a bed of seaweed. The seaweed hardens into a new plant which populates the sea today as coral.

Although Perseus is a god and has powers at his disposal—such as Medusa's head—he fights the monster as if he were a mortal. This suggests that Perseus wants to gain honor in the eyes of Andromeda's people by winning a fight with only human skills.

In his new kingdom, Perseus builds sacrificial altars to Mercury, Minerva, and Jupiter. He and Andromeda have a regal wedding. Perseus tells how he obtained Medusa's head: he stole a seeing eye from two sisters in Atlas, then went to the land where Medusa glared at men and animals until they turned to stone. While Medusa slept, Perseus cut off her head. Perseus explains that Medusa was once a beautiful woman with many suitors. Then one day, Neptune raped her. Minerva saw the rape and punished it by transforming Medusa's tempting hair into menacing snakes.

Medusa is originally given a head of snakes and the power to turn people and animals into stone as a kind of retribution for having been raped. Following her rape, anyone who tried to approach her would be turned to stone. Perseus cuts off Medusa's head and uses it as his own weapon, an action which does not endow him with nobility. Rather, it seems that Perseus's power comes only from the stolen weapons of other gods.

BOOK 5: PERSEUS (2)

While Perseus is telling stories at his wedding feast, a commotion breaks out. A man named Phineus raises his spear and announces he's come to seek revenge on Perseus for stealing his bride. Phineus's brother Cepheus rebukes Phineus for being ungrateful for Perseus's heroic deed and asks him why he didn't rescue Andromeda from the sea monster. Phineus ignores Cepheus and flings his spear at Perseus, but misses. Perseus launches his spear at Phineus, but Phineus dodges it and it kills another man. Fury towards Perseus breaks out and weapons start flying.

The war that breaks out at Perseus and Andromeda's wedding feast is over an argument as to who has the right to Andromeda. Phineus believes he has the right to Andromeda because he was engaged to her before Perseus came along. Perseus, on the other hand, believes he won Andromeda fair and square. In the same way that he took Medusa's head, Perseus believes a person has the right to whatever they can get for themselves.

The warrior goddess Minerva arrives to protect and encourage Perseus. Many famous and innocent people die. Perseus kills an elegant youth whose loyal friend tries to avenge him but is quickly killed by Perseus as well. Phineus's spear accidentally strikes a neutral observer. A wise elder, the singing minstrel, and many others die. Soon, Perseus's henchmen are all dead. Andromeda and her mother scream in the background. Phineus and his thousands of supporters circle around Perseus, who stands against a pillar, fending off his attackers left and right.

The fight between Perseus and Phineus is the first full-blown war to occur in the Metamorphoses. *The scope of the war that breaks out here as a result of a fight shows how the world has become corrupted again since the flood. Ovid lists all the people who are casualties of the violent disagreement between Perseus and Phineus, showing how tragic war is in that it takes the lives of those who had no part in the conflict.*

Losing his courage, Perseus pulls the Medusa head out of his bag. His opponents all attack him in turn but freeze to stone before they can strike. In all, two hundred of Perseus's attackers are turned to stone, and one of his innocent supporters. Phineus, who had looked away, begs for mercy. Perseus calls Phineus a coward and forces the Medusa head in his face. Phineus freezes in his cringing posture, and Perseus displays him in his father-in-law's palace.

Perseus uses Medusa's head to turn his enemies into statues which he then displays in his new palace. Transforming Phineus into stone seems to be a worse punishment than simply killing him because it preserves evidence of Phineus's cowardice in a statue that will exist for all time. By transforming Phineus, Perseus immortalizes his weak nature.

Perseus and Andromeda return to Perseus's native city. There, Perseus defeats his grandfather's brother who had taken over Acrisius's kingdom by forcing him to stare into the Medusa head. Perseus's grandfather now believes that Perseus is Jupiter's son, but a nearby king still belittles Perseus's glory and scoffs at the Medusa head. Perseus promptly turns him to stone.

From start to finish, Perseus's story shows how he acquired the power necessary to prove that he is the son of Jupiter. He obtains the Medusa's head and then uses it against his enemies. This display of power forces those who refuse to respect him as a person of divine descent to worship him.

BOOK 5: MINERVA AND THE MUSES

After supporting Perseus, Minerva goes to visit the Muses—the sisters of the arts. She tells the Muses that she heard a rumor that a winged horse emerged from Medusa when she died, striking the earth with its hoof and causing a fountain to spout. The Muses take Minerva to the beautiful fountain.

The Muses are able to show Minerva the rumored fountain. In this way, the Muses—as the sisters of the arts—are able to confirm whether certain things are real or only fictional.

The Muses confess to Minerva that they are frightened by how much crime has been happening lately. They tell of a wicked tyrant who deceptively welcomed the Muses inside to take shelter from the rain. When they tried to leave after the storm, the tyrant locked the door and tried to assault them. They took flight, and the tyrant climbed on the roof, calling after them in madness and finally falling to his death.

The increase in crime is reminiscent of the progression towards corruption that humanity followed after the first creation. This state of corruption leaves women, even the Muses, especially vulnerable to violence.

Suddenly, a group of magpies alight in a nearby tree. The Muses explain that these magpies used to be nine ignorant sisters who lost a contest with the Muses and were turned into birds. The sisters had come to the Muses, boasting that their voices were nicer than the Muses' voices. The sisters suggested a contest, judged by nymphs, to determine the better singers. In the contest, one of the sisters sang a song that exalted the giants and belittled the gods. It told how the giants pursued the gods and forced them to transform into animals. The Muses then perform the song that they sang in response to the sisters, accompanied by Calliope—one of their band—on the lyre.

The story of the girls who competed with the Muses is an example of the kind of corruption that the Muses say has befallen the world. Not only did the girls dare to think they—as mere mortals—were better singers than the Muses—divine women—but they also competed with a song that scoffed at the gods and praised those who have tried to overthrow the heavens. This suggests that, from the divine point of view, arrogance and sacrilege are the worst crimes.

BOOK 5: CALLIOPE'S SONG: THE RAPE OF PROSERPINA

The Muses' song first introduces Ceres, the goddess of agriculture and plenty. Then the song explains how the island of Sicily is built on the back of one of the fallen giants who had tried to usurp heaven. The giant vomits lava and flame and causes earthquakes. Fearing that the giant will erupt the earth, Pluto—the lord of Hades—leaves his underground realm in his chariot to inspect the land.

The opening of the Muses' song shows how even the landscape is the result of the metamorphosis of creatures. As a result, the landscape is personified; many natural occurrences are due to the animal or human nature that is incarnated inside that landform.

As Pluto is inspecting, Venus catches sight of him. Venus tells her son Cupid to shoot Pluto with one of his arrows and make him fall in love with Ceres's daughter. She is angry that none of the female goddesses worship her and wants to overpower Ceres before she also scorns Venus. At his mother's request, Cupid strikes Pluto in the heart with an arrow.

Once again, jealousy and revenge lead one of the gods to tamper with human affairs. Although the gods are always demanding humility from humans, they are rarely humble themselves. In this light, the gods' use of power is not very just.

One day, Ceres's daughter Proserpina is picking flowers beside a shady lake. Pluto sees her and falls in love with her. Impatient with desire, he snatches her, causing her picked flowers to fall. A nymph recognizes Ceres's daughter in Pluto's chariot and rises from her pool to rebuke him for abducting Proserpina instead of asking her mother for permission to marry her. The nymph tries to bar Pluto's way, but he hurls his staff into the pool and opens a path to Hades. The disempowered nymph loses her form and becomes water.

The nymph who intercepts Pluto as he is kidnapping Proserpina suggests that the right way to pursue someone is to ask the girl's parent for her hand in marriage. Throughout the Metamorphoses *thus far, however, the passion one feels for a love interest has been so intense that it always results in kidnap and rape. Here again, Pluto destroys the lives of Proserpina and her mother as a result of his passion.*

Ceres searches anxiously for her daughter far and wide. At last, she stops at a cottage to beg a glass of water. A kind woman brings her a glass, but as Ceres is drinking, the woman's son jeers at her greediness. Furious, Ceres turns the boy into a spotted newt. As she returns discouraged to Sicily, she notices Proserpina's cloak in the nymph's pool. Ceres tears at her hair in grief and curses the whole of Sicily, making it go barren of crops.

While Ceres looks for Proserpina, she disguises herself as a human. She even gets tired out and has human needs, such as thirst. This humanness leads the people that Ceres encounters to think that she is no more than a mortal. Not expecting divine punishment, some people are mean to her as they would be to anyone else.

Another water nymph—Arethusa—rises from her pool and begs Ceres not to take her anger out on the land. The nymph tells Ceres that she recently traveled to Hades and spotted Proserpina there. Although Proserpina looked sad and afraid, she was queen of the underworld. Still in grief, Ceres goes to heaven to visit Jupiter. She begs him to rescue Proserpina—their daughter—from her kidnapper husband.

Arethusa points out that Proserpina has been made the queen of the underworld, suggesting that, although she is clearly unhappy, her status makes up for the wrong that was done to her. Ceres does not seem to agree with Arethusa and focuses on the fact that Pluto is a kidnapper—not fit to be a husband.

Jupiter explains to Ceres that Pluto has not committed a crime but an act of love. Even though he is lord of Hades, Pluto is Jupiter's brother, and therefore a worthy match for Proserpina. However, Jupiter says that he will rescue Proserpina as long as she hasn't eaten any food yet in Hades. Unfortunately, however, Prosperina has eaten seeds from a pomegranate tree in Hades and was observed by a nymph who tattled on her. Furious, Ceres turns the tattler into an ugly bird.

Jupiter claims that Pluto has committed an act of love rather than a crime. Jupiter—who has kidnapped and raped many women before—thinks that the forcefulness of these actions is excused because they are done in the name of love. Jupiter also points out that Pluto, as a god, is a worthy husband, believing that a person's status as a god makes up for their raping a woman. These misogynistic views, coming from the head of all the gods, perpetuates a world in which love is a destructive force.

Similar to the tattling nymph, Proserpina's friends are given bird's wings and feet. However, they requested the gods for these so they could fly over the ocean to worship Proserpina's memory. The gods heeded their wish and turned them into Sirens—birds with human faces. Jupiter decides to settle the conflict between Pluto and Ceres by allowing Proserpina to split her time between Hades and earth. In Hades, she is always sad, but on land, she is radiantly happy.

Proserpina's mood—which fluctuates between happiness when she is on land with her mother and sorrow when she is in the underworld with Pluto— shows that neither Pluto's love nor his status as the god of the underworld makes up for his taking Proserpina against her will, as Jupiter had claimed they would.

BOOK 5: CALLIOPE'S SONG: ARETHUSA

Once Ceres has her daughter back, she goes back to the nymph Arethusa to hear her life story. Arethusa explains that she used to be a brave huntress. However, she was known more for her beauty than her bravery, and this shamed her. One day, as she is coming back exhausted from a hunt, she comes across a perfectly still pool. She wades in and then, unable to resist, flings off her clothes and dives in the water. Suddenly, she hears a deep murmur beneath the water. Then, a water nymph named Alpheus appears. Not having time to grab her clothes, Arethusa flees naked and Alpheus chases her.

When Arethusa lets down her guard and swims carefree in the pool, she is noticed by Alpheus, who attempts to ambush her. Similarly, when Daphne shook off the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing and ran carefree through the woods, Apollo was tempted by her and became more tempted the more Daphne ran. In these cases, the female character's empowerment tragically becomes her vulnerability.

Arethusa runs and runs, but Alpheus starts to catch up to her. She sees his shadow looming in front of her and cries out to Diana for help. Diana surrounds Arethusa in a swirl of mist to conceal her from Alpheus. Alpheus circles around the mist, calling her name. Arethusa shifts a step and turns into a pool of water. Realizing that the water is Arethusa, Alpheus reverts to water form so he can unite with her. Diana creates a cleft in the earth and Arethusa plunges down to join Diana's isle.

Diana is able to save Arethusa from being raped by Alpheus, but only by transforming her into a spring. Similarly, Daphne was only saved from Apollo's advances by being transformed into a tree, unable to speak and live as she used to. In this way, transformation is a saving grace, but it comes at the cost of one's former existence.

BOOK 5: CALLIOPE'S SONG: TRIPTOLEMUS AND LYNCUS

After she hears Arethusa's story, Ceres takes her chariot to Athens. There, she gives her chariot to a man named Triptolemus with instructions to till the soil and spread seeds in the barren fields. Triptolemus takes Ceres's chariot over Europe and Asia, spreading seeds. In one city, a barbarian king named Lyncus is jealous that Triptolemus has charge of Ceres's chariot. He attempts to stab Triptolemus in his sleep that night, but Ceres turns him into a lynx. Triptolemus resumes his voyage to restore fertility to the land.

Ceres chooses a human man to help her fertilize the land after the barren spell she caused. This favoring of a mortal creates jealousy that almost leads to a tragic outcome. Competition of all kinds—between Jupiter and Juno, between the gods, between humans and the gods, and between humans for the gods' attention—stirs up the world more than anything else.

BOOK 5: THE DAUGHTERS OF PIERUS

The Muses' song ends and Calliope ceases playing her lyre. The Muses explain to Minerva that the nymphs had judged the Muses the winner of the sisters' contest. The sisters had rudely protested the verdict, and so the nymphs had turned them into a chattering band of magpies.

The sisters were sore losers of the contest with the Muses and refused to believe that the Muses were really superior. Now, the Muses prove their superiority with power by transforming the sisters into magpies.

BOOK 6: ARACHNE

The Muses' story makes Minerva realize that she also needs to demand praise from those who dare to deny her power. She thinks of Arachne, a girl who has become famous because of her artistry. However, Arachne claims to have become great at weaving all on her own without the help of Minerva—goddess of weaving. Arachne suggests a contest between herself and Minerva, confident that she will win.

Arachne angers Minerva by claiming to be independently skillful at weaving. The gods believe that they are each—as pillars of certain activities and virtues—responsible for the expressions of those activities and virtues in the human world. Arachne's pride in her own skill is therefore a sin in the gods' eyes.

Minerva disguises herself as an old woman and tells Arachne to pay tribute to Minerva. Arachne may be the best human weaver, but she isn't better than Minerva. Arachne ignores the woman, telling her that she's too old to give advice. Minerva then reveals her identity. Arachne blushes, but refuses to cancel the contest. Minerva and Arachne set up their looms and begin expertly weaving beautiful multi-colored wool.

When Arachne believes that she's in the presence of an old woman, she is confident in her superiority to Minerva. When Minerva reveals her identity, however, Arachne falters. Although her pride leads her to remain confident in herself, it is clearly much easier to claim to be better than the gods when one can't see them.

Minerva weaves a tapestry that depicts the gods wielding their particular powers. In the center, she depicts herself producing olive trees while the gods watch, impressed. In two corners of the tapestry, she depicts two mountains that represent two mortals who once aspired to be Jupiter and Juno. In the other two corners, she depicts two women who competed with Juno and were turned into birds.

Minerva's tapestry portrays the gods as all-powerful beings who justly punish those who try to usurp them. Her tapestry serves as a warning to humans not to aspire to the heights of the gods and reminds them that they will be punished—transformed—as the result of any arrogance.

Arachne weaves a tapestry that depicts Jupiter kidnapping Europa in the disguise of a bull. She depicts many other women whom Jupiter kidnapped and raped by disguising himself to trick them. She depicts Neptune's deceptions and affairs, and shows Apollo and Bacchus disguising themselves to overpower women. Not even the goddess of envy could have criticized Arachne's skillful tapestry.

Like Minerva's, Arachne's tapestry also portrays the gods' ability to transform and be transformed. However, Arachne's tapestry suggests that this power does not make the gods great. Instead, since the gods abuse their power in unjust ways towards humans, it's actually questionable whether the gods deserve universal praise.

Furious at her rival's success, Minerva rips up Arachne's tapestry. She then fastens a halter around Arachne's neck and suspends her in the air. She decides to spare Arachne's life, but she turns her into a spider, forced to weave webs for the rest of her life.

Although Arachne's tapestry is clearly superior to Minerva's, Minerva shows Arachne that she is better than her by transforming her. From the standpoint of sheer power, the gods are always superior to humans, even if they are less virtuous.

BOOK 6: NIOBE

The story of Arachne spreads. When Niobe, the queen of Thebes, hears it, she doesn't take it as a warning. Niobe is proud of her husband Amphion, a skillful lyre player, and of her many children. One day, a woman storms through Thebes speaking a prophecy and telling the women to pray and offer incense to the goddess Latona and her children. The women obey.

Similar to Arachne who was proud of her independent skill at weaving, Niobe is proud of her husband and children. Like Arachne, Niobe believes that she owes no one but herself the credit for her blessed life. She does not believe that Latona—goddess of motherhood—deserves any praise when she herself birthed her children.

When Niobe sees the women worshipping Latona, she gets angry. She feels that the women should worship her because her distant relations are gods and she has seven daughters and seven sons. Niobe is wealthy and powerful, but Latona has no home on earth and only two children. Niobe boasts that she is too blessed to suffer misfortune. The women cease their worship but continue to pray to Latona under their breath.

Not only does Niobe believe that Latona can claim no credit for her blessed life, but she also believes that her blessings surpass Latona's to the point that she, Niobe, should be worshipped like a goddess. This indicates that Niobe, among others, believes she can rise to the level of goddess through her own accomplishments.

When Latona hears Niobe's speech, she is furious. She tells her children, Apollo and Diana, to help her reclaim the honor she deserves. Apollo and Diana fly down at once and land on the roof of Niobe's palace. Niobe's seven sons have just mounted their horses for a race. Apollo and Diana kill each son with arrows. One of the sons begs for mercy, but he is already fatally wounded. Amphion kills himself with his sword, unable to bear the grief of losing his sons.

Although Niobe has offended Latona, Latona's punishment is particularly cruel. Latona has Diana and Apollo—her children—kill Latona's children. This shows that Latona's own experience as a mother does not prevent her from killing Niobe's children. She uses her pride in her own children to punish Niobe for her pride in hers.

Niobe, hearing of the tragedy, runs to her sons and throws herself on their dead bodies. She calls out to Latona, boasting that she is still more powerful than her because her grief is stronger than Latona's joy. Apollo and Diana kill each of Niobe's daughters as they attempt to comfort their mother. Niobe begs the gods to spare her youngest daughter, but they ignore her request. Niobe collapses over her dead children. She turns to stone, unable to move but still weeping. Then, a wind sweeps her to a mountain top where she grieves for eternity.

Although Latona seemingly wins over Niobe, Niobe claims in her final moments that she is still the winner because her grief is stronger than Latona's joy. Niobe is forced to suffer the intense grief of losing all her children—a loss which highlights her previous richness. Latona, in not truly suffering loss, does not experience the level of love that Niobe does when she watches her children die.

BOOK 6: THE LYCIAN PEASANTS

After hearing what happened to Niobe, everyone fears and worships Latona. Stories resurface of other times when Latona made her power known. For example: one day, a boy went to fetch cattle with the help of a guide from a certain pool. On the way, they passed an old altar smoking with fires from a sacrifice. The boy's guide whispered a prayer. The boy asked the guide what local god the altar belonged to. The guide said that the altar didn't belong to a local god but to the goddess Latona who was banished by Queen Juno and forced to give birth to Apollo and Diana in exile.

Among the order of the gods, Latona is one that has often been forgotten. She was originally one of Jupiter's mistresses and therefore incurred Juno's wrath. Because she lived in exile, many people have forgotten to worship her. Latona's need for revenge seems to boil over with the story of Niobe, giving Latona a chance to prove her existence and demand the reverence she is owed.

The guide said Latona went to Lycia after giving birth to Apollo and Diana. Exhausted, Latona knelt to drink from a lake. Some nearby men collecting reeds told her to stop drinking from the lake. Latona pleaded with the men, begging them to have mercy on her and her babies' thirst. The men still refused and swirled the water to make it too muddy to drink. Latona called on the heavens to transform the men into frogs. To this day, they jump in and out of muddy lakes.

The people who act cruelly to the gods, it seems, are the people who act cruelly in general. The men who muddy the water believe that they are muddying the water of an innocent human girl, and don't realize they are muddying the water of a goddess. In this way, a person who does not act kindly in general can end up unknowingly offending gods and being punished.

BOOK 6: MARSYAS

Another story of Latona's power tells of how she punished a satyr who claimed to be as good at playing the pipe as Latona's son Apollo. Latona peeled away the satyr's skin, exposing his intestines. The satyr's fellow nymphs and naiads cried for him, and their tears turned into a spring that feeds the sea.

The cruelty of Latona's punishment of the satyr far exceeds the severity of his crime. This shows that the gods hate arrogance more than any other vice and detest when humans claim to be better than them at anything.

BOOK 6: PELOPS

Despite these tales, the people still mourn Amphion who lost his seven sons. Most people blame Niobe, but Pelops weeps for her. Pelops was a boy who was dismembered by his father. He was reassembled by the gods who placed an ivory patch in his shoulder to reconnect his arm to his body.

Although the gods saved Pelops from his cruel human father, Pelops is able to empathize with Niobe's plight. It is likely that he valued the motherly pride that led her to champion her children above anything else.

BOOK 6: TEREUS, PROCNE AND PHILOMELA

After Niobe's fate, princes from all around travel to Thebes to offer sympathy. Every city participates except for Athens which is engaged in a war with barbarians. These barbarians are led by a king named Tereus. To achieve peace and because Tereus is wealthy, Pandion, the king of Athens, arranges for his daughter Procne to marry Tereus. Their wedding and consummation is attended by the Furies instead of Juno, and so their son Itys is born under a bad omen.

The beginning of Tereus and Procne's relationship foreshadows that it will not end happily. Their marriage is an arranged marriage that was made in an attempt to achieve peace between two warring nations. Also, they are married by demons instead of by Juno—the goddess of women and the state. All in all, this suggests that they are not married in unity and love.

Five years after their marriage, Procne begs Tereus to let her sister Philomela visit her in Thrace. Tereus agrees and sets sail for Athens to ask Pandion for permission to bring Philomela to Thrace. As Tereus is making his request to the king, Philomela appears, and Tereus is overcome with desire for her. Tereus is lustful by nature and determines to have sex with Philomela, whether by wooing her or abducting her.

Procne misses her sister, feeling that her marriage—whether it's good or bad—took her away from her real kin. With no intervention from the gods, Tereus lusts after Philomela as soon as he sees her and does not once consider the criminality of his intention to sleep with her.

Tereus repeats Procne's request for Philomela's visit, adding his lustful passion to his voice. While appearing as a devoted husband wanting to give his wife her wish, Tereus pursues his wicked plan. Philomela, eager to see her sister, pleads with Pandion, embracing him and promising to return soon. Tereus fantasizes that Philomela is embracing him and imagines what she looks like naked.

Tereus deceives Pandion and Philomela by disguising himself as a devoted husband. Although his passion really comes from lust, he plays it off as concern for Procne. In this way, although Tereus doesn't transform, his pursuit of Philomela is comparable to the gods' abuse of power in which they disguise themselves in order to sleep with their love interests.

Pandion gives permission for Philomela to visit Thrace. At Philomela's farewell banquet, Pandion takes Tereus aside and makes him promise to take care of Philomela. With tears in his eyes, Pandion says that Tereus is family and asks him to return his daughter safely to him after she visits her sister. He then joins Philomela and Tereus's hands and bids them farewell. When Philomela steps onto Tereus's ship, Tereus rejoices. He keeps his eyes on his prey.

At no point throughout his deception of Philomela and Pandion does Tereus feel that he is doing anything wrong. Interestingly, lustful passion and wickedness emerges in him without the intervention of the gods. Either Tereus is an example of a character who is truly wicked on his own, or the curse that befell Procne and Tereus on their wedding day is now unfolding.

When the ship gets to Thrace, Tereus drags Philomela onto land and into the forest. Tereus brutally rapes Philomela while she screams for her father and sister. When her terror finally subsides, Philomela tears at her body in despair. She screams at Tereus, calling him a monster for ruining her, cheating on his wife, and forcing her and Procne to be rivals. She wishes Tereus had murdered her before raping her so her ghost could be pure. She says she will get her revenge and tell the world and the gods of Tereus's crime.

Philomela accuses Tereus of cheating on his wife and making her and Procne rivals by raping her. In this way, Tereus destroys many things when he rapes Philomela. He destroys his bond of marriage with Procne, Procne and Philomela's bond of sisterhood, and Philomela's virginity as well. In this way, Tereus's violent love forces Philomela to betray everything that is important to her.

Tereus is frightened by Philomela's threats. He ties her hands behind her and pulls out his sword. She lifts her throat, wanting him to kill her, but he cuts out her tongue instead. He then rapes her several more times before going home to Procne. He tells her that Philomela died on the journey from Athens. Procne mourns and sets up a tomb for her sister.

Philomela's verbal threats frighten Tereus. Her ability to speak means that she will be able to tell her horrible story and therefore get revenge. In cutting out her tongue, Tereus removes her ability to speak and therefore the potential expression of his crime.

Philomela is imprisoned in a stone hut. Unable to speak, she fashions a loom and weaves a tapestry that tells her horrible story in **writing**. She then gives this tapestry to one of Procne's maids with instructions to give it to Procne. When Procne reads Philomela's story on the tapestry, she is speechless with grief and rage. At this time, the women are gathering to worship Bacchus. Procne dresses in her ceremonial clothes and makes her way to Philomela's hut. She releases her sister and brings her home to her palace.

Even though Tereus has cut out Philomela's tongue and she can't speak, her need to express the horrible thing that happened to her does not disappear. In order to express herself without verbal words, Philomela adopts the art of writing, weaving her story into words on a tapestry. This written relic allows Philomela to hold onto her story and reveal the truth to Procne.

Philomela shudders with shame, unable to look Procne in the eyes. Procne tells Philomela not to weep, and says that she plans to destroy Tereus, either by cutting off his sex organs or by some other cruelty. Just then, Itys, Procne's son, runs into the palace and tells his mother he loves her. Procne realizes that her maternal tenderness towards Itys is making her forget her hatred of his father. She hates that Itys can tell Procne he loves her when Philomela can't say anything.

After Tereus rapes Philomela, each person's bonds of loyalty are disrupted. Philomela can't look Procne in the eyes, fearing that Procne might hate her as a rival. Furthermore, Procne realizes, in siding with her sister over her husband, that she can no longer love her son—the image and offspring of her detestable husband. In this way, Tereus's rape destroys the bonds of marriage and motherhood for Procne, too.

Procne and Philomela drag Itys to another room. Itys pleads, but Procne kills him with a sword and Philomela cuts his throat. The two sisters then tear apart his body and cook him over a fire. They then lay the table for a feast with the cooked flesh.

The extremity of Philomela and Procne's revenge against Tereus—in which they kill and cook his son—indicates how utterly devastating Tereus's rape was—it leads Procne and Philomela to become criminals, too.

Tereus comes home and dines on his son's flesh. When he calls for Itys, Procne tells him that Itys is inside his belly. Philomela then revels herself, tossing Itys' head in Tereus's face. Tereus goes mad and chases the two sisters around the banquet hall. The Furies transform the sisters into a nightingale and a swallow, each wearing the badge of murder on their chests in spots of red plumage. Tereus is changed into a monstrous bird with a long beak.

The Furies, rather than the gods, transform Philomela, Procne, and Tereus at the end of this story. Since Procne and Tereus rejected the gods at their wedding, the gods do not intervene throughout the story to help or punish the offenders. In this way, the story shows how rapidly corrupt people can become by worshipping the wrong things and therefore forfeiting the gods' help.

BOOK 6: BOREAS AND ORITHYIA

Pandion dies with grief after hearing what happened to Procne and Philomela. The throne of Athens is taken over by a new king who has many beautiful sons and daughters. Boreas, the god of the north wind, falls in love with one of the king's daughters, Orithyia. Boreas's hatred for Tereus's violence and cruelty makes him woo Orithyia gently.

The story of Tereus's brutality has such an effect on humanity that it causes men—including male gods—to reconsider how they approach women. It occurs to some, like Boreas, that force against a woman is devastating and leads to horrible corruption.

Boreas's gentleness is unsuccessful. The god then asks himself why he, who can assault the earth with powerful weather, isn't using his rightful strength to win the girl he wants. He blasts winds over the earth and makes it go dark. Boreas then swoops down on the frightened Orithyia and kidnaps her in his talons. He flies with her to the north where she gives birth to twins. When the twin boys reach puberty, they sprout golden wings.

When gentleness is not winning over Orithyia, Boreas decides to return to force in order to sleep with her. This shows that the men who learned from Tereus are not reconsidering whether or not love should be consensual. Boreas feels that he has a right to Orithyia no matter what, and so once he is unable to get her willingly, he does so by force, thereby putting an end to any positive developments that could have been made in the area of love.

BOOK 7: MEDEA AND JASON

The Argonauts—a Greek army captained by Jason—leave Greece and make their way to King Aeetes's palace. They plan to capture the Golden Fleece—a golden ram guarded by a sleepless dragon. King Aeetes says that if the Argonauts win a dangerous combat with bulls, they can take the golden ram.

At this point in the Metamorphoses, *armies travel freely from their homelands to engage other kingdoms in wars. Recall that after the first creation of the world, travelling and war were two of the corrupt actions that humanity adopted.*

Meanwhile, Aeetes's daughter Medea falls in love with Jason. She is unable to fight against her desire for him, and she believes that some god is fueling her passion. Even though she has just seen Jason, she fears for his life and doesn't want him to die in her father's games. She doesn't know why she longs to marry a man who will take her away from her homeland, but she also thinks her father's games are unjust.

Medea feels that her love for Jason is against her own will. She sees it as a force that is causing her to act against everything that she values and wishes for. She has no ill-will towards her father or her homeland, but suddenly she wants to abandon her kingdom to be with Jason. In this way, romantic love competes with and threatens familial love.

Medea wants to help Jason win the games, but she fears that he'll leave her afterwards and marry someone else. However, she decides that Jason is too strong and heroic to forget the debt he owed her if she saved his life. Medea would be happy and fearless if she were Jason's wife, but she is afraid she's being a traitor. She ends her inner conflict by resisting her desire and deciding to be a virtuous daughter.

Medea feels that if she helps Jason win his competition against her father, she will be obligating him in a debt towards her. However, after deliberating for a long time over her passion, she finds the strength to resist it and decides to choose her familial loyalty over her passion for Jason.

After resolving to resist her passion, Medea goes to an altar to pray and runs into Jason. Jason looks more handsome than ever, and Medea's desire is instantly rekindled. Jason grips Medea's hand and begs her to help him survive against the bulls. He promises to marry her if she helps him. Medea believes Jason and hands him some magical herbs with instructions.

Jason makes a deal with Medea in which he promises only to marry her if she betrays her father and helps him win the games. When Jason is right in front of Medea's eyes, she is unable to resist desiring him. All her reasonings against this transaction fall away.

The next day, Aeetes's kingdom gathers to watch the games. The bulls come forward, bellowing and breathing fire. The Argonauts freeze with fear, but Jason approaches the bulls and strokes their backs, protected from their fire by the magic herbs. He subdues the bulls and forces them to plough a furrow. As the Argonauts cheer, Jason takes the golden teeth of the Theban dragon Cadmus had killed from a helmet and sprinkles them in the furrow. Bodies grow and burst out of the soil as armor-clad soldiers.

As part of the elaborate games that Jason has to participate in, he takes possession of the teeth of the same sacred dragon Cadmus had once killed and used to make a new army. Jason also sows the dragon's teeth to make soldiers. In this way, Cadmus's original sin of using a sacred dragon to create an army of humans is being perpetuated.

The new army points their spears at Jason. Medea shakes with fear, worried that the herbs she gave Jason won't be strong enough to fend off the army. Jason throws a boulder into the midst of the army. The disruption causes them to start fighting among themselves, and they all die. Jason feeds the sleepless dragon the rest of the herbs, and it falls asleep. He then takes possession of the Golden Fleece, marries Medea, and returns with both to his homeland.

The army that sprouts from the dragon's teeth quickly starts fighting amongst themselves, just as the army Cadmus had created had been engaged in a civil war. Jason finally wins the games by subduing the dragon, suggesting that the games are fashioned off of Cadmus's original defeat of the dragon.

BOOK 7: THE REJUVENATION OF AESON

When the Argonauts return to Greece, the parents bring gifts to the gods to thank them for their sons' return. Jason's father Aeson, however, is too old to participate. Jason entreats Medea to take a few years off his life to add to his father's life. Medea is moved by Jason's devotion to his father because she now regrets that she betrayed her father to marry Jason. Medea tells Jason that she won't decrease his life, but that she will try to increase his father's life.

Even though Medea had been unable to resist her desire for Jason and had been willing to help him, she now regrets that she betrayed her father to do so. This suggests that familial love is often stronger than romantic love, even though it also seems inevitable that romantic love often moves a person to forsake familial love.

The next full moon, Medea walks out barefoot. She turns around three times and sprinkles her head three times with water from a stream. She calls on the gods and thanks them for giving her the power to quiet the sea, gather the clouds, and raise spirits from their graves. She thanks them particularly for helping her save Jason. She then asks them to help her add years to Jason's father's life. The gods produce Medea's chariot, drawn by serpents. She takes her chariot into high mountains and roams for nine days, collecting the herbs she needs for her task.

Medea is not a goddess, but the gods have gifted her magical powers. She derives her power from the forces in nature, walking out when the moon is full, performing rituals with water from a stream, and finding herbs for magic potions. Most of her power is the ability to control nature—quieting the sea and gathering the clouds—but she also wishes to meddle with time by raising spirits from the dead and reversing old age.

When Medea returns, she builds altars to Hecate, goddess of magic, and to the goddess of Youth. She then mixes sheep blood, milk, and honey and whispers an incantation. Aeson's body is brought out and Medea sends everyone away so she can work alone. She dips a withered olive branch into the potion and pulls it out full of olives. Then Medea cuts Aeson's throat, letting his blood drain out, and replaces his blood with her potion. Instantly, his white hairs and wrinkles disappear, and he becomes young again. Bacchus, seeing what Medea has done, calls on her to restore the youth of some of his companions.

Medea's process of making Aeson younger appears similar to witchcraft. She creates a magic potion and whispers an incantation over it. Although she fulfills Jason's wish to make his father younger, her witchcraft involves several barbaric steps. Her potion contains the blood of a sheep, and she essentially has to kill Aeson by slitting his throat and letting his blood drain out before she can make him younger.

BOOK 7: THE PUNISHMENT OF PELIAS

After reviving Aeson, Medea does something wicked. She pretends that she and Jason are separated and goes to the house of King Pelias, who is very old. His daughters welcome Medea, who pretends to be their friend. She tells them how she restored Aeson's youth, and the daughters ask her if she can do the same thing for their father. Medea agrees. To prove that she can restore youth, she slashes an old sheep with her sword and throws it in her cauldron. A lamb leaps out.

After Medea revives Aeson seemingly out of the kindness of her heart, she proceeds to use her magic to do something wicked. Once she has gained a reputation as someone who can restore youth, she decides to use this to her advantage, suggesting that she had an ulterior motive in her original revival of Aeson: she wanted to gain people's trust so she could start using her magic for evil.

Four nights later, Medea drugs king Pelias and his guards. She fills a cauldron with plain water and herbs with no magical powers. She then sends for the four daughters. Calling them cowards, she demands that they cut gashes in their father to show their duty to him. Not wanting to fail their father, the loyal daughters start cutting him with their swords. The king begs for mercy. The daughters lay down their swords. Medea jumps up, slits the king's throat, and throws his body in the boiling water.

Not only does Medea deceive Pelias by pretending to mix the magic potion of youth, but she manipulates his daughters into being the ones to slit his throat. In making Pelias's daughters betray their father, it seems that Medea is perversely dealing with her own guilt over betraying her father: she wants to implicate others in a crime of betrayal similar to the one she committed.

BOOK 7: MEDEA'S FLIGHT

Before king Pelias's daughters can punish Medea for killing their father, Medea flies off in her chariot. She flies over many fields and mountains where notable events occurred. She flies over Hyrie's lake, named after a mother who cried a lake of tears over her son whom she believed fell to his death but had really been transformed into a swan. She passes places where other transformations took place.

Medea's flight over the places where notable events and transformations occurred is a reminder that metamorphoses are constantly changing the landscape and moving history forward throughout the world. Everything in the universe—whether by transformation or human action—is in a constant state of change.

When Medea arrives home, she kills all her children with her sword. Avoiding Jason's rage, she flies away again in her chariot. She flies to Athens where King Aegeus greets her and soon marries her.

Mysteriously, Medea kills her children but not Jason. The fact that she doesn't kill Jason makes her both a murderer and an adulteress by the time she marries King Aegeus.

BOOK 7: THESEUS AND AEGEUS

Shortly after Medea marries King Aegeus, Aegeus's son Theseus returns from his heroic voyages. However, Aegeus doesn't know that Theseus is his son. Medea plots to murder Theseus and brews a potion out of foam from the teeth of a mad dog who was dragged from a cave. Medea gives this potion to Aegeus to give to Theseus in a glass, convincing him that Theseus is an enemy. As Theseus goes to drink the potion, Aegeus notices the family crest on his sword. Aegeus knocks the potion away from Theseus's lips, just barely saving his life.

Medea seems to want to gain power in the world. She betrays her father to marry Jason because she is excited at the prospect of living in Athens. She then commits a series of murders until she finally marries Aegeus—king of Athens. When Theseus returns, Medea likely feels that the king's son will overshadow her power. In positions of power, men traditionally take precedence over women, so Medea is fighting a losing battle, murdering profusely in her attempt to gain power.

To thank the gods for helping him escape a crime, Aegeus lights fires on altars and hosts a celebration. Everyone gathers to rejoice and tell of Theseus's heroic exploits. Theseus has killed giants, robbers, and bulls, making the world safer and opening paths to new places. The people call Theseus the most valiant of heroes, and the whole of Athens rejoices.

In contrast to Medea, who uses her magical powers towards evil ends, Theseus is championed in Athens as a hero who has made the world a safer place. Theseus's return just barely saves Athens from falling under Medea's evil reign.

BOOK 7: MINOS AND AEACUS

War soon puts a stop to Aegeus's happiness at Theseus's return. King Minos of Crete is seeking revenge for his son Androgeos who was killed in Athens. The king travels around, gathering allies. Several kingdoms join his cause, but many also refuse to side with him. Eventually, King Minos arrives at Aegina where a king named Aeacus rules. A large party gathers to greet the Minos. Minos asks King Aeacus to help him get his revenge against Athens, but Aeacus refuses. Aegina and Athens have a treaty of friendship, and Aeacus doesn't want to break it.

Athens—a city in Greece—and Crete—another city on a Greek island—are engaging in a war and asking the rest of the nations to choose sides. In this way, war is continuing to escalate in the world, suggesting that humanity is steering towards corruption again. However, although war is a kind of corruption, it also seems to spur history forward—a movement that Ovid set out to trace in the Metamorphoses.

King Minos threatens to return and involve Aegina in war. As he sails away, a ship from Athens enters Aegina's port. King Aeacus's three sons—Telamon, Peleus, and Phocus—greet Cephalus, an aged hero, as he deboards with his two companions, Clytus and Butes, and welcome them into the palace.

This passage introduces two characters who will be important later on in the Metamorphoses. *Telamon and Peleus—King Aeacus's three sons—will later be important in founding yet another monumental city.*

BOOK 7: THE PLAGUE AT AEGINA

Cephalus's business in Aegina is to bring a message from Athens asking for King Aeacus's help in the war that King Minos is threatening. Without hesitation, King Aeacus promises to aid Athens and says he has a strong army of young men. Cephalus remarks that he is pleased to see Aegina so full of strong young men but wonders where the familiar faces are.

Cephalus remarks that none of the faces he sees in Athens are familiar. At this point in the Metamorphoses, *Athens is an old city, so the fact that it is full of young and unfamiliar men suggests that it has been rejuvenated or repopulated in some way recently.*

Aeacus sighs and explains that a terrible plague decimated Aegina. Queen Juno, angry that Aegina was named after one of Jupiter's mistresses, had infected Aegina with the plague. This is how it began: a fog fills the city and the air becomes hot and toxic. Slithering snakes infect the lakes and fields. First birds and wild animals die, and then oxen, sheep, and horses. The carcasses rot in ditches, oozing contagious liquids.

Juno—who has been absent from the action of the Metamorphoses *for a while—is still at work getting revenge for Jupiter's infidelities. Her vengeful plague has the effect of a reverse transformation. The dead carcasses of the sick rot and liquify, seeping back into the earth—reminiscent of the flood that returned the world to its fundamental state of amorphous chaos.*

Next, the peasants and farmers come down with the plague. The sick people's mouths dry out and they become insufferably hot. Unable to bear clothes, they lie around naked. They go mad, rolling out of their houses and roaming the streets. They are so thirsty that they crawl to the infected springs to drink and swiftly die. Aegina's doctors try to fight the plague, but their medicine has no effect. Any doctor or devoted friend who cares for a sick person dies, too.

Although Juno does not explicitly transform the people of Aegina, her plague works to the same end. The disease alters whomever it infects, making them animalistic and deranged. In this way, the gods' power to metamorphose can be seen as an explanation for real life instances of decay and transformation, such as plagues.

In his despair, King Aeacus wants to die with his people. Many times, he tries to make a sacrifice to Jupiter, but the victim dies before he can kill it. Losing all hope, people start killing themselves. Those still alive fight over the funeral pyres for their dead loved ones. Soon, no one performs the proper burial rites anymore, and corpses lie in the streets.

As the plague infects Aegina's people and transforms them into almost inhuman creatures, humanity's institutions also fall away. The ritual of burning the dead on a funeral pyre becomes futile. In this way, the gruesome plague returns humanity to a primitive state.

BOOK 7: THE BIRTH OF THE MYRMIDONS

Finally, King Aeacus protests to Jupiter, asking him to assist the son he had with Aegina (King Aeacus). Jove hears King Aeacus and gives a sign in the form of a lightning bolt. King Aeacus then notices a nearby oak tree crawling with lines of ants gathering grain. King Aeacus asks Jove to give him as many citizens as there are ants on the oak tree. At his prayer, the earth trembles. Aeacus kisses the ground in fear.

Now that Aegina's population has been decimated by Juno's plague, the city is in need of a new population. In past stories, the human race has grown out of metamorphoses. Aeacus notices the populous ants and wishes for a citizenry that large, hinting that the ants could be a starting place for his new population.

That night, King Aeacus dreams that thousands of crawling ants grow and transform into a population of humans. When he wakes up, he hears the sound of a crowd outside. Then Telamon opens the door and leads his father out to show him a whole new citizenry, greeting him as king. King Aeacus gives his new people—whom he calls Myrmidons—Aegina's abandoned homes.

King Aeacus dreams that the ants he saw transformed into thousands of new citizens, suggesting that the population that greets him the following morning were indeed birthed from ants. However, the fact that he does not actually witness this transformation makes the occurrence of metamorphosis in these later years seem more mythological than it was at the world's beginning.

BOOK 7: CEPHALUS AND PROCRIS

After King Aeacus tells the stories of the plague and the Myrmidons, he and Cephalus sit down to a feast. The next morning, strong winds prevent Cephalus and his companions from going back to Athens. They go to find King Aeacus again and run into Phocus, one of King Aeacus's sons. Phocus leads the Athenians to a courtyard where they sit down to talk. Phocus notices that Cephalus is carrying a beautiful wooden spear with a gold point. He asks Cephalus where he got such a beautiful spear. Cephalus explains that the spear never misses its target, and magically returns to its thrower after it strikes its target.

Because Ovid has made it his project to trace history from creation until the present day, the Metamorphoses *takes on a non-linear form out of necessity. Each character involved in a given story has their own history and place of origin, and so Ovid often veers away from the current story he is telling to address another person's history. The resulting embedded stories suggest that history isn't strictly linear, and that sometimes it's best relayed through storytelling.*

Cephalus tells Phocus the story of the spear. A while ago, Cephalus married Procris, the sister of Orithyia. Procris was beautiful, and Cephalus was very happy with her. A month after their wedding, Cephalus is out hunting when Aurora, the goddess of the dawn, takes him into the sky. Cephalus doesn't sleep with Aurora and thinks only of Procris. Aurora gets upset and tells Cephalus that he will soon regret marrying Procris. As Cephalus returns home, he thinks of Aurora's warning and starts to wonder if Procris has been unfaithful to him. He trusts Procris's character but distrusts her beauty. He decides to test her loyalty.

Although Cephalus and Procris are in love and happily married—something that is rare in the Metamorphoses*—their relationship is thwarted by external factors right away. This suggests that love is never safe from destruction. Even when love is not born out of jealousy or force, jealousy and wickedness from others can nevertheless corrupt it. In general, the* Metamorphoses *portrays love as a fragile, corruptible state that rarely survives.*

Sensing Cephalus's plan, Aurora disguises Cephalus to look like a different man. When Cephalus enters his house, he finds no sign of Procris's infidelity. When Procris comes up to him, he longs to kiss her and reveal his identity, but he determines to follow through with testing her loyalty. He tries to seduce her, but she maintains that she belongs to her husband who is missing. The disguised Cephalus brings Procris gifts, and at last her resistance fails. Cephalus reveals himself and calls Procris a harlot.

Corrupted by Aurora's meddlesome notions of Procris's infidelity, Cephalus decides to test Procis, goading her into committing a crime that she hadn't yet committed. In this way, Cephalus's suspicions cause him to create Procris's infidelity where it didn't exist before. This kind of testing and deceiving is another example of the corruptibility of love.

Procris resents Cephalus for his trick and joins Diana's clan of chaste women. Cephalus is still in love with her and begs her for forgiveness. At last, he wins her back. Procris gifts Cephalus the fastest hunting dog in existence and the beautiful spear with the golden tip.

Procris joins Diana's clan of chastity while she is angry at Cephalus, proving that she had no real desire to be with anyone but him. The fact that Procris and Cephalus return to each other after all that tries to push them apart is a testimony to the strength of their love.

Cephalus tells what happened to the hunting dog that Procris gave him: one day, a ferocious fox attacks Thebes, causing the citizens to fear for their herds. The men lay traps to catch the fox, but it escapes. The men then beg Cephalus to unleash his dog on the fox. Cephalus agrees and sets his dog loose. The dog chases the fox, repeatedly getting within inches of catching it, but it escapes. Cephalus reaches for his spear. Suddenly, the dog and the fox are turned to marble, neither winning nor losing the race.

Since this story is told from the perspective of Cephalus, it is left unknown which god transformed the dog and the fox or why. However, it seems that the dog and the fox are transformed into marble to commemorate what a good match they are for each other. The fox always escapes the dog, but the dog is always right on the fox's heels, suggesting that neither would have won or lost.

Cephalus then tells the story of the spear: Cephalus and Procris are deeply in love and very happy together. In the mornings, Cephalus goes hunting by himself with his gold-tipped spear. When he gets tired, he stops to rest. He longs for a cool breeze and speaks to the wind to bring him pleasure and relieve him. One day, an eavesdropper hears him speaking to the wind and thinks he's speaking to a nymph he's having an affair with. The eavesdropper tells Procris that Cephalus is having an affair. Procris is devastated by the news but decides to get proof of Cephalus's infidelity before she accuses him.

Cephalus and Procris's love is thwarted again, this time by a misunderstanding. Cephalus is not really cheating on Procris, but it seems to an outsider that he is. This outsider then tattles to Procris and kindles her suspicions. This occurrence is reminiscent of the tattling raven who made a situation worse by tattling, and suggests that outsiders, in misunderstanding what they see, often become the death of love.

The next morning, when Cephalus finishes his hunt, he asks the wind to delight him as usual. Suddenly, he hears a sound in the trees nearby. Thinking it is a wild animal, he launches his spear. He hears Procris cry. He finds her and clutches her dying body, trying to staunch the wound in her chest. Procris murmurs that she loves Cephalus and asks him not to marry the breeze nymph after she dies. Realizing what had brought her into the woods, Cephalus tells Procris the truth. It is too late, and she dies in his arms.

Cephalus and Procris's love story ends a lot like Pyramus and Thisbe's love story ends. A misunderstanding causes Cephalus to kill Procris. However, Cephalus, unlike Thisbe, does not kill himself out of guilt and the desire to be with his wife. All the same, the story of Cephalus and Procris testifies to the tragic nature of love.

BOOK 8: SCYLLA AND MINOS

When Cephalus finishes his story, King Aeacus appears with the soldiers he's gathered for Athens. A few mornings later, Cephalus sets sail for Athens with the soldiers from Aegina. Meanwhile, King Minos is attacking cities along the coast. He arrives at Alcathoe where King Nisus reigns. Nisus has a daughter named Scylla who likes to climb to a tall tower in the city and throw pebbles on the wall to make music.

The ongoing war between Minos and the allies of Athens guides the Metamorphoses *to new places and new characters. In this way, war has the effect—somewhat like a transformation—of altering the reality of characters all over the world and moving history forward.*

When King Minos arrives, Scylla climbs the tower and watches the enemy troops assemble outside the city gates. When her gaze falls on King Minos, she falls in love, thinking he is strong and handsome enough to be Apollo. She desires to leap into the enemy encampment and open the gates to King Minos.

Scylla—who has probably never seen anyone outside of her own kingdom before—is utterly astounded by Minos and falls deeply in love with him. This love makes her feel reckless, fantasizing about leaping from the tower and betraying her kingdom.

In her passion for King Minos, Scylla can't decide if she loves or hates war for bringing Minos to her. She wants to confess her love to him and give him whatever he wants. She decides that King Minos is justified in wanting to avenge his murdered son. She then decides it would be best for her to surrender her city to Minos so as to end the war without bloodshed. She could steal her father's key and open the gates in exchange for becoming Minos's wife. She wishes she had no father to betray but decides she must be brave.

Scylla's love for Minos makes her consider whether war is a good thing. However, her love for Minos is also causing her to consider betraying her father's kingdom to the enemy. In this way, although war seems like a gift to Scylla, it is actually responsible for a love that threatens to destroy everything she values. Love, in this case, is part of war's destructive nature.

When night comes, Scylla sneaks into her father's bedroom and takes the gate key from around his neck. Then she makes her way through the enemy troops to King Minos. She surrenders her city to Minos and asks him to marry her as a reward. King Minos is disgusted by her betrayal of her father and her kingdom. He says that he won't endanger Crete by bringing her to live there as his wife. He introduces himself to the captured Alcathoe citizens as their new just lawgiver, then sets sail back to Crete.

Scylla's decision to betray her father's kingdom in hopes of marrying Minos is similar to the way that Medea betrays her father for Jason. However, Scylla, unlike Medea, waits for Minos to proposition her with marriage before she proceeds with her betrayal. Because Scylla boldly proposes the betrayal, Minos finds her appalling and can't trust her.

Scylla screams after Minos, rebuking him for leaving her when he owes her his success in capturing Alcothoe. She wonders where she can live now that she has betrayed her kingdom and has been denied Crete. She tells Minos that Jupiter wasn't the bull who seduced his mother, Europa, but that Minos was born from a purebred bull. Minos deserves his wife, Pasiphae (who recently deceived a bull and had sex with it) because he is truly a beast by nature.

Although Scylla committed an awful betrayal, Minos's rejection of her also seems cruel. Scylla's betrayal of her father's kingdom is extremely helpful to Minos, but he also finds it deplorable. To get around this problem, Minos takes advantage of the betrayal but then abandons Scylla. Ultimately, Scylla's passion for Minos destroys her life.

In her anger, Scylla jumps into the water and grabs hold of the stern of Minos's ship. Her father Nisus (who was just transformed into a falcon) notices her and swoops to stab at his traitorous daughter with his beak. Scylla releases the stern and a wind lifts her into the air where she is also turned into a bird.

Because Scylla's father and Scylla are in the depths of degradation, the former having just lost his entire kingdom without a fight and the latter having betrayed her father and been rejected by her lover, they are transformed into birds: they have nothing left.

BOOK 8: THE MINOTAUR AND ARIADNE

When Minos returns to Crete, he makes a sacrifice of 100 bulls to Jupiter. While he was away, his wife Pasiphae gave birth to the Minotaur—half man and half beast—revealing her affair with the bull. To hide her shameful offspring, Minos hires an Athenian craftsman named Daedaulus to build a labyrinth that is impossible to escape from. Minos hides the Minotaur in the labyrinth and feeds him Athenian boys.

Minos's wife Pasiphae is looked down upon because she gave birth to the Minotaur after having sex with a bull. This recalls when Jupiter disguised himself as a bull in order to have sex with Europa. In this way, Pasiphae seems to model her affair off of Jupiter's seduction of Europa. However, Pasiphae is seen as deplorable for her action, whereas Jupiter is absolved of all blame.

One day, Minos's daughter Ariadne helps Theseus—one of the Minotaur's victims—escape the labyrinth by giving him a string to follow back to the entrance. Theseus follows it back, kidnaps Ariadne, and escapes to Naxos where he then abandons her. Bacchus takes pity on Ariadne and takes her crown into the sky where it becomes a circle of stars.

Theseus, in abandoning Ariadne after she betrays her father to help him escape, acts just as Minos acted towards Scylla. The similar actions of Minos—the ruler of Crete—and of Theseus—the king of Athens' son—suggest there is an ambivalent pattern to the behavior of war heroes.

BOOK 8: DAEDAULUS AND ICARUS

Daedaulus grows to hate Crete and wants to return to Athens. Since King Minos has blocked passage to Athens by land and sea, Daedaulus decides to get to Athens by air. He fashions a set of wings out of feathers and wax. While he works, his son Icarus plays curiously with his father's creation.

Daedalus will not let the great expanse of air between Crete and Athens stop him from travelling back home, showing that he arrogantly believes he can conquer nature and the limitations it sets on him.

When Daedaulus finishes his wings, he puts them on himself and Icarus. He instructs his son not to fly either too close to the sun or too close to the ground. Crying with fear for his son, Daedaulus kisses Icarus, and they take flight. Icarus soon gets adventurous and flies towards the sun. The heat from the sun softens the wax that glues the wings together, and the wings fall off. Icarus flaps his bare arms, then falls, drowning in the sea. Daedaulus sees his son's wings floating in the water and goes down to bury Icarus's body.

Daedaulus's arrogance in creating artificial wings with which to fly to Athens results in the death of his son. In this way, nature proves that it is indomitable. Icarus's thrill at feeling superhuman is also responsible for his death. Like Phaëthon, the excitement of getting to do something that humans by nature cannot do leads to Icarus's demise. Both Daedaulus's and Icarus's lack of humility have a disastrous consequence.


BOOK 8: DAEDALUS AND PERDIX

While Daedaulus buries Icarus, a partridge chatters nearby. The partridge used to be one of Daedaulus's pupils, Perdix. While his pupil, Perdix invented the compass. Daedalus was so jealous that he threw Perdix off a mountain. The goddess Pallas saved Perdix's fall by turning him into the partridge—a bird that never flies high off the ground, remembering its traumatic fall.

Daedalus has demonstrated his belief that he can conquer nature with his inventions. In this story, he shows that he believes no one else can surpass him with their inventions. Perdix's terrifying fall is commemorated in his new form, showing how a metamorphosis can sometimes illustrate what initiated it.

BOOK 8: MELEAGER AND THE CALYDONIAN BOAR

After Theseus discovers how to escape the labyrinth, Athens no longer has to pay its tribute of young men to Crete to be fed to the Minotaur. Theseus becomes a hero in Athens, and everyone asks him for help when they run into dangers. That year in Calydon, a city near Athens, the king throws a huge festival celebrating Ceres, Minerva, and Bacchus for blessing the region. Diana is forgotten, and she flies into a rage. To get her vengeance, she sets a vicious boar loose in Calydon. The boar tramples the crops and livestock. The people hide behind the city walls.

For the last few of the Metamorphoses' *stories, the gods have been mostly absent from the action. Now, just as the Athenians are celebrating an end to their sufferings at the hands of the people from Crete, they anger Diana by refusing to worship her. Diana unleashes a vicious bull into Calydon, showing how both humans and the gods pose threats throughout the world.*

Meleager, a young soldier, gathers a group of fighters to kill the bull. Among this group are Telamon and Peleus, Aeacus's sons, and Atalanta, a female archer whose face is a combination of masculine and feminine features. When Meleager sees Atalanta, he immediately desires her. However, he focuses on killing the boar. The hunters assemble on a plateau, some laying traps and others unleashing hounds. The boar careens towards the hunters, flattening the trees and hounds that lie in its path.

This passage mentions that Telamon and Peleus are part of the group that confronts the Calydonian boar. These two men will be important later on. As a woman, Atalanta is a potential distraction for the soldiers who set out to kill the boar. Meleager immediately desires Atalanta when he sees her and is almost thrown off his focus.

The hunters throw their spears at the boar and miss. They call on Apollo to help their spears meet their target, but Diana removes the tips of their spears in mid-flight. The boar's fury increases, and he flattens several hunters. One of the hunters climbs a tree to safety. Telamon trips as he tries to approach the boar. Atalanta shoots an arrow that strikes the boar beneath its ear. Meleager boasts to the others of Atalanta's successful shot. The hunters are ashamed that Meleager is boasting about a woman. One of them tries to prove himself by killing the boar, but it impales him with its tusks.

Atalanta is the first of the group to actually strike the boar with an arrow, embarrassing the male soldiers by making them feel less manly. When Meleager praises Atalanta's shot, the men become more upset and try to prove that they are better hunters than a woman. In this way, Atalanta—as a woman—disturbs the norm amongst the male soldiers. The tension of desire between her and Meleager further stirs things up.

The hunters continue to fight the boar. Theseus misses every time he tries to strike the boar. At last, one of Meleager's spears hits the boar's back. The boar goes wild with fury and pain. Meleager advances and drives the spear deeper, killing the boar. Meleager's fellow hunters applaud him, but Meleager gives Atalanta the boar's hide and tusks and shouts that he shares his glory with her. The men are jealous and ashamed. Meleager's uncles seize the prizes from Atalanta, saying she doesn't deserve them because she's a woman. Meleager kills both his uncles.

Meleager's desire for Atalanta ultimately leads him to kill his own uncles. This shows that, in this case, the bond of romantic love and desire that Meleager feels towards a female love interest surpasses his loyalty and love towards his family. In this way, Meleager's love for Atalanta causes him to create dissension amongst his fellow soldiers and to ultimately destroy his familial ties.

Meleager's mother Althaea is praising her son when she sees her brothers' corpses. Hearing that Meleager killed them, she decides to avenge their death. Back when Althaea was giving birth to Meleager, the Three Fates had put a curse on the new baby by throwing a shard of wood into the fire and saying he would live as long as that piece of wood. Althaea had snatched the fragment out of the fire, soaked it in water, and hid it away. Now, Althaea gets out the fragment and orders her servants to light a fire.

Althaea ceases to praise Meleager's glory the instant she sees her brother's corpses, illustrating the battle between motherly and sisterly love. The fact that her first instinct is to avenge her brother's death by killing her son shows that her love towards her son is surpassed by her love towards her brothers and suggests that sisterly love is of a higher order than motherly love.

Althaea takes the fragment of wood in and out of the fire, battling between motherly and sisterly affection. Her expression fluctuates between anger and compassion. She feels that she can't let her brothers go unavenged, but also that she can't kill her own son. At last, she decides to avenge her brothers and tosses the fragment into the flames. Out in the city, Meleager feels a burning inside his body. He calls for his family and burns to death before their eyes.

Althaea's compassion for her son doesn't overpower her wish to avenge her brothers' death. Althaea's predicament is similar to Procne's, when Procne debates whether to sacrifice her son out of loyalty to her sister. In both cases, the women decide that the bonds related to their kingdom—their brothers and sisters—are more important than their bonds to their children.

Calydon mourns Meleager's death. Feeling guilty for killing her son, Althaea kills herself. Meleager's sisters beat their breasts in grief and kiss their brother's body on the funeral pyre. Diana, satisfied with her vengeance, turns his sisters into birds.

Just after deciding that she can't let her brothers' death go unavenged, Althaea kills herself in guilt over killing her son. This shows that when two bonds of love contest each other, there may be no right answer. The person is forced to choose, with painful consequences either way.

BOOK 8: ACHELOUS, THE NAIADS AND PERIMELE

After Theseus helps defeat the boar in Calydon, he heads home to Athens. On the way, he is stopped by a flood caused by the river god Achelous. Achelous invites Theseus into his house to wait out the dangerous flood. Theseus accepts the invitation, and he and his companions enter Achelous's mossy house. Achelous, who is proud to be hosting a hero, has nymphs serve Theseus and his friends a banquet.

Although Achelous is a river god, he is honored to be hosting Theseus—a human war hero. Achelous shows Theseus veneration by inviting him into his house rather than the other way around. This shows that the gods are often intrigued and impressed by humanity and what it is capable of, even without omniscient power.

While he dines, Theseus asks Achelous about the islands that he sees scattered throughout the water. Achelous explains that these islands used to be naiads who had neglected to honor Achelous in a festival. Angry at being forgotten, Achelous had swept a flood across the land that drowned the naiads. Achelous then split the land into five islands. Achelous then points to a small island that had once been Perimele, a girl Achelous had loved and raped. Perimele's father had pushed her off a cliff when he found out she was no longer a virgin, but Achelous had sought Neptune's help in turning her into an island.

Achelous's story is an example of creatures being transformed into landforms. In this case, the naiads were transformed as punishment for refusing to worship Achelous. However, one of them was transformed into an island to save her from death. In this way, the same transformation—in this case into islands—can be to either punish or save. This suggests that transformation itself can be both a blessing and a curse.

BOOK 8: PHILEMON AND BAUCIS

After Achelous finishes his story, one of Theseus's companions scoffs, calling the story fiction and saying that the gods can't create and alter things in nature. Theseus's companions are appalled at this man's sacrilege. One of the companions, Lelex, tells him to visit an oak and linden tree in a certain land. Lelex says that Jupiter and Mercury once visited this land disguised as mortals. They went from house to house, asking for food and shelter, and were turned away by everyone except a couple named Philemon and Baucis who lived in a humble shack.

In the Metamorphoses, *the gods most often make themselves known through transforming. They transform their victims, offenders, lovers, and themselves. Theseus's sacrilegious companion, in not believing that the gods can transform, therefore implies that the gods are never very close by. On the other hand, believing in transformation leads people—like Philemon and Baucis—to treat everyone as though they may be gods in disguise.*

Although they have very little, Philemon and Baucis greet the disguised gods and prepare them a meal. With love and care, the couple cook and engage the gods in pleasant conversation. They bring a bucket of warm water for washing and steady a rickety table adorned with olive branches. They serve a humble yet delicious meal in carved dishes. While they eat, the dishes magically refill, and Philemon and Baucis realize their guests must be gods.

Philemon and Baucis's hospitality shows that what the gods demand from human beings is not a sacrifice of wealth but rather humility, generosity, and kindness with whatever means a person has. Although Philemon and Baucis have very little, their hospitality towards their guests (whom they believe are only mortals) impresses the gods.

Philemon and Baucis pray to heaven to forgive them for serving their guests such a poor feast. They try to kill their one goose to serve, but their guests stop them and confess that they are gods. Jupiter and Mercury tell the couple that their neighbors will pay for their inhospitality, but that Philemon and Baucis will be saved. The gods tell the couple to hike up a mountain. Philemon and Baucis obey, and when they look back, they see that their neighbors' homes are under water, but that theirs has become a temple.

When Philemon and Baucis suspect that their guests are gods, they try to make their feast even more generous. However, the fact that they treat human guests almost as generously and respectfully as they would treat gods is what pleases Jupiter and Mercury. A positive outcome of believing in transformation is that it causes a person to treat everyone well, as even a poor beggar might be the incarnation of a god.

Mercury and Jupiter ask Philemon and Baucis what they want. The couple ask to be made priests of the temple and to die on the same day so as never to be separated from each other. Their wish is granted. They serve in the temple until they one day start to sprout leaves from their limbs. Each turns into a tree (oak and linden respectively), and the nearby peasants honor the trees as proof of the gods' existence.

Philemon and Baucis are very humble. They want to lead religious lives of constant worship. When the couple dies, the gods turn them into the trees they want to be turned into, showing how humility pleases the gods. This metamorphosis also serves to teach future generations to honor the gods like Philemon and Baucis did.

BOOK 8: ERYSICHTHON

After Lelex finishes his story, Theseus asks for more stories of the gods' wonders. The river god Achelous tells Theseus that the gods have the power to assume all kinds of shapes. Achelous then tells the story of a man named Erysichthon who tried to chop down a sacred oak which grew in Ceres's ancient woodland. Erysichthon instructs his slave to chop down the oak. The slave chops at it, and the tree moans and lets out a spurt of blood. Shocked, the slave lays down his ax. Erysichthon chops off the slave's head. Ceres's voice issues from the oak, threatening vengeance, but Erysichthon ignores her and cuts down the oak.

Erysichthon's abuse of nature amounts to the abuse of a god. When Erysichthon cuts down the ancient oaks, he ignores the moans that indicate that they are not simply trees but beings. These moans are evidence of the transitory nature of the gods in that they can inhabit inanimate things in nature. Erysichthon cuts down the trees anyway, abusing both nature and the gods, and therefore showing how the refusal to respect nature and the refusal to respect the gods amount to one and the same thing.

The dryads in Ceres's wood mourn the loss of the sacred oak. They beg Ceres to punish Erysichthon, and she agrees. Ceres sends one of her dryads to the land where the goddess Hunger lives to tell Hunger to plague Erysichthon. The dryad takes Ceres's chariot and finds Hunger in a barren field. Hunger's skin sags over her shrunken bones. The dryad passes along Ceres's message. Hunger travels to where Erysichthon lives and breathes inside his mouth. She then leaves and returns to her barren wasteland.

Ceres chooses Hunger to plague Erysichthon because his actions stem from greed. Instead of going elsewhere to cut down trees that aren't sacred, Erysichthon wants every tree he can fell, showing that nothing—not even the gods' warnings—can stop him from seizing everything he wants. Hunger will show Erysichthon what it feels like to be unable to satisfy a need.

Erysichthon starts to dream of food. He awakes starving and demands food. Banquets are laid before him, but no amount of food can satisfy his hunger. The more he eats, the hungrier he is. Erysichthon soon spends all his money on food, and so sells his daughter Mestra to slavery.

Instead of repenting or asking the gods for forgiveness, Erysichthon just tries to acquire as much food as he can, even selling his daughter. In this way, his vice—greed—makes his punishment worse.

Mestra runs to the sea and begs Neptune, who once raped her, to save her from the life of a slave. As Mestra's enslaver pursues her, Neptune disguises Mestra into a fisherman. Mestra thus deceives her enslaver, and he walks away. Mestra then resumes her normal shape. When Erysichthon sees that Mestra can change form, he sells her to enslaver after enslaver, but she escapes each time with a new disguise. Finally, Erysichthon gnaws at his own body in his hunger, eating himself to death.

Erysichthon has had plenty of evidence that things can change shape and that gods and creatures can inhabit many forms. He heard voices from inside Ceres' ancient trees, and he sees Mestra change form before his eyes. Despite this evidence, Erysichthon continues to believe that he can force the power of transformation into submission.

Achelous ends his story by wondering why he is telling of others who can change shape when he, too, has this power. However, he then laments that he has lost part of his power.

Despite the fact that the gods seems indomitable, Achelous's comment that he's lost part of his power shows that the gods, too, can have weaknesses.

BOOK 9: ACHELOUS AND HERCULES

Theseus asks Achelous how he lost half of his power. Achelous is reluctant to tell a story of his own defeat but begins: Achelous falls in love with Deianira, who has countless suitors. Achelous enters Deianira's father's palace and asks for Deianira's hand in marriage. At the same time, Hercules asks Deianira's father the same thing. Hercules explains that Jupiter is his father and that he has performed many tasks at his stepmother Juno's request. Achelous retorts that if it is true that Hercules is Jove's son, he is also a bastard and the result of the god cheating on his wife.

The contest between Hercules and Achelous is another example of the divisive potential of love. Hercules and Achelous butt heads over their mutual love for Deianira. Moreover, Achelous insults Hercules by pointing out that his existence is the result of a divisive love story: if Hercules is a god, then he is also the result of an affair. In this way, love is a divisive force that can also affect a person's identity long after they are born.

Angry at this accusation, Hercules says that Achelous can win with words, but he, Hercules, can win with physical strength. Hercules and Achelous start to wrestle. After a long fight, Hercules grips Achelous's throat and brings him to his knees. Achelous transforms into a snake and slithers from his grasp. Hercules taunts that Achelous can't really use the powers of a serpent, because it is only a disguise and not his natural form. Hercules again grips Achelous's throat. To escape, Achelous turns into a bull. He lunges at Hercules, but Hercules pushes him to the ground, grabs one of his horns, and wrenches it off.

This passage points out that, while the gods can change form, they are not rendered entirely all-powerful by doing so. When a god transforms, they are not able to make use of the strengths of that particular animal, meaning that their self-transformation is limited. This reveals that the gods are of a different order than humans, animals, and nature: while the latter three are easily transformed into each other, the gods can only disguise themselves.

As Achelous finishes the story of his defeat, a nymph comes in bearing Achelous's broken horn filled with fruit for the guests. The next morning, Theseus and his companions leave, not wanting to wait any longer for the flood to go down.

Theseus and his companions leave somewhat abruptly, suggesting that they are not in awe of Achelous—who was defeated by a half-god—nor do they venerate him.

BOOK 9: HERCULES AND NESSUS

Unlike Achelous, Nessus the centaur is fatally wounded trying to compete with Hercules for Deianira. After defeating Achelous, Hercules travels home with his new wife Deianira. They come to a river that is flooding so high that it is nearly impassable. Nessus calls out to Hercules that he will carry Deianira across the river while Hercules swims across. Hercules trustingly hands Deianira to Nessus.

Nessus is another character who competes with Hercules over a woman. Nessus is a centaur—half person, half horse—but not endowed with any divine powers. As a result, Nessus is killed in his competition against Hercules, whereas Achelous the god only lost a horn.

When Hercules reaches the opposite bank, he hears Deianira scream. Hercules screams that Nessus is a monster for trying to rape another man's wife. He shoots Nessus through the chest with an arrow. Nessus whispers that Hercules will pay for killing him, then hands Deianira his blood-soaked shirt, telling her that it will excite her husband's lust.

Even though Hercules has defeated Nessus, Nessus seems to be able to instigate revenge by giving Deianira a cursed shirt. This suggests that, even when one kills their adversary, they are not always free from the revenge that this person seeks.

BOOK 9: THE DEATH OF HERCULES

Many years later, the stories of Hercules's deeds spread through the world, and he becomes famous. The fame of her husband's bastard son infuriates Juno, so she sends the goddess Rumour to Hercules's wife, Deianira. Rumour tells Deianira that Hercules has fallen in love with Iole, the princess of a city Hercules has recently captured. Distraught to hear that she has a rival, Deianira weeps. She soon realizes that weeping will do no good and wonders how she should act. She considers running away or killing Iole.

For the most part, Jupiter's children are unable to enjoy their glory because Juno is always in the background venting her rage and jealousy over Jupiter's infidelities. However, Juno usually can't target Jupiter's children directly. For instance, she attacks Bacchus's family to vent her rage against Bacchus. In Hercules's case, Juno makes use of Deianira to plot against Hercules.

Finally, Deianira decides to give Hercules the blood-soaked shirt Nessus gave her in hopes of rekindling his lust towards her. She has a servant deliver the shirt to Hercules, who puts it on and sits before an altar lit with incense for Jupiter. The shirt starts to burn Hercules's skin. He jumps up and pushes over the altar. The shirt attaches to Hercules's flesh and starts to sear through it. He calls up to Juno, begging her to kill him. He recounts all the dangerous tasks Juno has forced him to perform and how he has survived them all, but says that he can't survive this.

The centaur's cursed shirt is another example to add to the many things that constantly change. Whether by the gods' powers, by curses, or by sickness, things are metamorphosizing constantly, including a character's fortune. Hercules is a glorious hero, but his success cannot last, as nothing in the world stays the same way for long but constantly gives way to a new form.

In his agony, Hercules runs around the mountainside. He finds one of his servants and begs the man to kill him. When the servant refuses, Hercules throws him into the sea. As he falls, the servant is changed into a stone that hides beneath the waves. Hercules chops down trees to build a funeral pyre. He lights the pyre, lies down on it, and awaits death smiling.

Hercules is in such deep pain that he wants to die. He builds his own funeral pyre and lies down on it smiling, suggesting that he is not at all afraid of death, and even welcomes it willingly. This bravery in the face of death leads the gods to consider making him a god.

The gods watch as Hercules—Earth's greatest hero— burns to death. Seeing their anxiety, Jupiter says that he is glad the whole world and the gods care for his son, but that they really owe their care to him, Jupiter, for fathering Hercules. Jupiter then tells the gods not to worry because Hercules won't die; the human part of him will die, but the godly part of him will live on. True to Jupiter's word, Hercules's human body burns away until he resembles Jupiter. Then Jupiter transports him to the sky to reside in the heavenly palace.

Although the gods are all-powerful and cannot die, they grow attached to the mortal heroes on earth. Hercules's transformation into a god is the first instance in the Metamorphoses *when the gods transport a human into the divine realm. The fact that Hercules's body burns away leaving the "godly part" behind suggests that humans have an immortal part of them that lives inside a mortal body and can transition into new bodies without itself dying.*

BOOK 9: ALCMENA AND GALANTHIS

When Hercules becomes a god, Iole marries his son Hyllus on Hercules's instruction, and she becomes pregnant. Alcmena, Hercules's mother, tells Iole that she hopes the gods will be kinder to Iole in childbirth than they were to her.

Alcmena, as a mortal woman pregnant with a god's child, understandably has a difficult time giving birth. The gods do not help her, likely because Juno is angry that Jupiter has cheated on her again.

When Alcmena went into labor with Hercules, the pain was unbearable. Alcmena prayed to Lucina, the goddess of childbirth, begging for assistance. Lucina sat with her legs crossed, ignoring Alcmena. One of Alcmena's loyal servants, Galanthis, realized that Queen Juno was cursing Alcmena. So Galanthis went up to Lucina and lied, saying Alcmena had had her baby. Lucina sprang to her feet to greet the new baby, and the spell on Alcmena was broken: Hercules was instantly born. Furious that Galanthis had tricked her, Lucina turned the servant into a weasel.

The story of Alcmena and Galanthis is an example of a time when a human being is more helpful and merciful than the gods. Galanthis, realizing that Alcmena is being cursed, deceives Lucina in order to ease the pain of her labor. From the gods' perspective, Galanthis is viewed as disrespectful and arrogant for deceiving the gods, but from a human perspective, Galanthis is a kind and heroic savior.

BOOK 9: DRYOPE

When Alcmena finishes her story, Iole says that the grief of seeing a loyal servant transformed is nothing compared to the grief of seeing a family member transformed. Iole tells Alcmena the story of her sister Dryope: Even though Dryope was not a virgin (she had been raped by Apollo), she married well.

Iole follows up Alcmena's story of Galanthis with another story about the injustice of the gods' transformations. Her and Alcmena's stories support the fact that the gods often use their power in unfair ways.

One day, Dryope is walking in the woods, nursing her baby and picking flowers. She picks a lotus, and Iole, who is with her, notices that the flower's stem is dripping blood. Dryope doesn't know that the lotus was once a nymph who altered her features to escape a man who was trying to rape her. Dryope backs away, apologizing to the nymph. Suddenly, her feet are rooted to the ground. Bark covers her limbs. Iole embraces her, trying to prevent the bark from spreading.

Dryope picks the lotus completely accidentally, not knowing that the lotus is a nymph. What is more, Dryope apologizes to the nymph as soon as she realizes what she has done, showing that she didn't mean to hurt anyone. In this way, transformed beings can be traps for innocent humans, and the gods are not merciful towards those who mistakenly hurt a disguised being.

Dryope's husband and father enter the woods and fall to their knees, embracing the tree with Dryope's face. Dryope weeps, lamenting that she is being punished for nothing. She asks Iole to take her baby but to bring him back each day to play under her. She asks her family to keep her baby from picking flowers. They lift her baby so she can kiss him, and then the bark closes over her face.

Dryope feels that she is being punished for nothing, having hurt the lotus nymph accidentally. She instructs her family to keep her baby from picking flowers, hoping to save him from falling into the same trap she did by encouraging him not to interfere with nature at all. Even benign interactions with nature can lead to a person accidentally offending a god.

BOOK 9: IOLAUS AND CALLIRHOE'S SONS

Alcmena and Iole weep together over their sad stories. Suddenly, they look up and see a young man standing in the doorway. It is Iolaus, a man who was restored to youth by Hebe, the goddess of youth and one of Hercules's wives. After Hebe had answered Hercules's prayer to restore youth to his son, she swore never to do this for anyone else again. However, a complicated civil dispute in Thebes leads Callirhoe, the wife of Alcmaeon who was murdered, to ask Jupiter to put the years that were taken off Iolaus's life onto her sons' lives so they can avenge their father. To this end, Jupiter makes use of Hebe's gift of restoring youth.

Throughout the Metamorphoses, *it has been a question whether age-altering is something the gods have the power to do or not. Medea altered the age of several people with magic, but she quickly began using this skill for wicked ends, actually killing her victims instead of making them younger. What is more, the different prophets throughout the stories have revealed that there is a set fate that the gods cannot alter. It seems plausible that aging would be in the category of fate, but Hebe, at least, has the power to alter it.*

BOOK 9: MILETUS

After Hebe adds years to Callirhoe's sons' lives, the gods rise up in outrage. They wonder why the gift of youth and age can't be granted to others who need it, too. Each god has a person they want to see become either older or younger. As they bicker, Jupiter raises his voice and says that Fate causes people to age, and that none of the gods can defy Fate, not even Jupiter.

The gods are angry that fate prevents them from altering the age of whomever they choose. As all-powerful gods, they resent that there is anything they cannot alter, but Jupiter reminds them that there is a set fate—which includes the steady decay of time—that the gods have no control over.

Jupiter draws the gods' attention to Minos, whom Jupiter wishes he could revive. Minos used to be strong and powerful but is now old and weak. Minos lives in fear of Miletus, Apollo's strong young son. Minos is too afraid to turn Miletus away, but Miletus leaves of his own accord and establishes a new city in Asia. There, he marries a nymph and gives birth to two beautiful twins, Byblis and Caunus.

Jupiter explains how time moves forward without the gods being able to stop it. Young heroes are always eventually replaced by their young sons or their younger rivals. In this way, the world transforms through generations, each new generation usurping the last and so on.

BOOK 9: BYBLIS

As Byblis and Caunus grow up, Byblis starts to desire and love her brother as more than a brother. She likes to kiss him on the lips and dresses up to visit him. She is jealous of the other girls who try to get his attention and hates that Caunus calls her his sister. She keeps her incestuous thoughts out of her head during the day, but at night she dreams that they have sex and become one body. When she wakes up, she rebukes herself for her incestuous thoughts, but decides that there is no harm in enjoying Caunus in dreams.

Byblis falls in love with Caunus as they grow up together and can't keep him out of her dreams, as hard as she tries. This suggests that love is a passion that takes over a person against their will and can at times direct them towards a person they do not want or should not want to be in love with. In this regard, love is an uncontrollable and sometimes destructive force.

Byblis wishes that the gods' rules and the world's conventions would let her marry her brother. She dreads the day when another woman will give birth to Caunus's child. She reflects how the gods often sleep with their siblings but recognizes that the gods live by different rules than humans. Byblis's tormented desire makes her long to die. However, she knows that if Caunus fell in love with her, she wouldn't refuse him. After wrestling with herself, she decides to **write** Caunus a letter confessing her feelings.

Byblis's love for her brother Caunus causes her to break societal conventions and the rules of the gods and nature. In this way, love—as a passion that overcomes a person against their will and sometimes directs them badly—is a force that can be destructive to society and human laws. All in all, love is a lawless passion which can destroy a person and those around them.

Byblis **writes** a message to Caunus on a tablet. She starts to call herself his sister, but then calls herself his lover. She reveals her name and describes her shame. She explains that she can't help her love, and that it's tormenting her. Caunus has the power to save her from dying, as long as he is willing to disregard the rules. Byblis believes that rules have no bearing on two people in love. She says that she and Caunus can hide their relationship under the guise of brother and sister. When she finishes her message, she hands the tablet to a servant to bring to Caunus.

Like many characters in the Metamorphoses, *Byblis loses her voice and therefore her ability to express herself. While in Byblis's case she loses her voice due to shyness and shame, not having her voice literally taken away from her, her speechlessness still leads her to adopt the method of writing in order to convey her true feelings to Caunus. In this way, writing can be seen as a necessary development in society, as it is a way to communicate when speech won't do or isn't possible.*

When Caunus reads Byblis's message, he is appalled and angry. He throws the tablet aside and threatens the servant who brought it to him. The servant runs to Byblis and relays Caunus's refusal. Byblis feels cold with shame. She rebukes herself for **writing** the message. She wishes she had spoken to Caunus in person so that she could have embraced him and softened his resolve. Now, her incestuous intentions are revealed, and her mission is destroyed.

Although writing gave Byblis a way to get around her speechlessness due to shame, she now resents the act of writing. She feels that her written feelings were lifeless and ineffective in a way that speaking to Caunus in person would not have been. In this way, writing, instead of developing communication, actually allows for greater miscommunication, and does not fully succeed in substituting the voice's ability to express one's true self.

Byblis decides that she will beseech Caunus again and make him change his mind. Now that she has revealed her incestuous desire, she has nothing to lose by pursuing him. She wants Caunus to see that she loves him against her will. Byblis pursues Caunus, but he continuously rejects her and at last flees the city and sets up a new home in a faraway place.

Another consequence of Byblis writing her feelings on a tablet is that they are now permanent. There is a record of her feelings now that cannot be erased, meaning that Byblis cannot conceal her incestuous feelings. In this way, writing holds a person to their views for eternity.

After Caunus flees, Byblis goes mad. She leaves her homeland and wanders the earth, tearing at her clothes and beating her breast. At last, she collapses on the ground and presses her face into the leaves. Some nymphs try to console her, but she is deaf and motionless with heartbreak. Finally, Byblis wastes away. The nymphs collect her tears and use them to feed a mountain spring that is named after her.

Byblis is so overcome with grief and madness that she is effectively no longer human—unable to move or speak. It is as if Byblis has already been transformed by her grief by the time she is transformed into a mountain spring. In this sense, transformation comes into play when a person is no longer capable of being fully human.

BOOK 9: IPHIS

After Byblis's transformation, a similar transformation occurs in Crete. A humble yet respectable man and his wife are expecting a baby. The man approaches his wife and tells her that he only wants a boy; if she gives birth to a girl, she must kill the baby. The man and wife weep. The wife tries to change her husband's mind, but he is resolute.

This passage suggests that, during this time, male children were more favored than female ones. Because of the traditions of male inheritance and succession, only male children could carry on their father's legacy and were therefore often sought by fathers.

When she nears her due date, the woman dreams that Isis—the goddess of Help—is standing beside her bed, flanked by her sacred companions. Isis tells the woman that she will raise her baby no matter what gender it is. When the woman awakes, she prays that her dream will come true. The woman gives birth to a baby girl. She conceals the baby's gender from everyone, including her husband. The man names his supposed son Iphis, and the baby is raised as a boy.

Iphis—although a girl—is raised like a boy. Her mother is able to conceal the baby's true gender from Iphis's father, and Iphis grows up looking and acting like a boy. At this point, it seems that Iphis accepts that she's a boy, or at least is content to live as if she is.

Thirteen years later, Iphis's father arranges for Iphis to marry a girl named Ianthe. Ianthe looks forward happily to her wedding night when she will go to bed with her husband Iphis, but Iphis frets because she knows she can't perform a husband's duty. She reflects that animals never mate with the same gender. Even Pasiphae, who had mated with a bull, had mated with a male bull. She wonders if Daedalus could change her into a boy, the way he disguised the bull, so that Pasiphae could have sex with it. She realizes that nothing is preventing her from marrying Ianthe except nature itself. She wants Ianthe to be her wife but knows that they'll never truly be bonded.

Up to this point, it seems that Iphis's life as a boy feels natural to her. But as she reaches maturity and her oblivious father arranges a marriage for her, an obvious problem emerges—she can't fulfill the physical duty a husband is expected to fulfill. In this way, Iphis feels that nature—her sex—is the only thing that is preventing her from being with Ianthe.

Iphis's mother is as distraught as Iphis. She delays the wedding as long as she can, pretending to be ill. When she can't delay any longer, she and Iphis go to Isis's altar. Iphis's mother begs the goddess for help. When she finishes her prayer, the altar trembles. As they leave the altar, Iphis feels herself become stronger and more vigorous. Iphis is transformed into a boy, and he and his mother bring gifts to Isis's temple in thanks. Iphis than marries Ianthe.

Iphis's sex was not changed by Isis when she was first born, but only now that she is about to marry Ianthe. It's not clear why Isis delays until it's time for Iphis to marry, but in any case, this metamorphosis—from female to male—seems to resolve happily for those involved.

BOOK 10: ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

Shortly after Iphis marries Ianthe, another marriage takes place in Thrace. Hymen, the god of marriage, attends, but the wedding isn't a happy one. Just after the wedding, the new bride, Eurydice, is walking through a field when a serpent bites her ankle and poisons her to death. Orpheus, her husband, is overcome with grief and follows her to Hades. He finds the Lord of Hades and says that he hasn't come to explore the land of the dead. Orpheus knows that, eventually, everyone will live in Hades, but he asks that Eurydice be allowed to live a little longer with him on land.

Ovid follows up the story of Iphis and Ianthe's complicated yet ultimately successful marriage with a story of a marriage that experiences tragedy. Although Orpheus and Eurydice love each other and their wedding is attended by the god of marriage, Eurydice immediately ends up in Hades. This tragic wedding day portrays love as something that is always susceptible to bad luck, even if the love itself is happy.

Moved by Orpheus's speech, the Lord of Hades tells Orpheus he may lead Eurydice back to land, but only if he walks in front of her and never looks behind him until he has returned. Orpheus agrees, and he and Eurydice start up the steep, misty slope out of Hades. As they climb, Orpheus grows afraid that Eurydice is slipping and looks back. As soon as he looks back, Eurydice falls back into Hades.

Because he cares about her, Orpheus loses Eurydice a second time. Orpheus is instructed not to look back at Eurydice as they ascend from hell, but concern for her compels him to, with disastrous consequences. This darkly suggests that a person's love for someone can ironically cause them to lose the person.

Orpheus is overcome with grief for the second time. He wants to cross the river into Hades again, but the ferry driver doesn't let him. Orpheus sits on the shore for weeks, weeping and refusing to eat. Finally, he walks home. For three years, he refuses the love of women. Instead, he starts sleeping with teenage boys.

Orpheus is so heartbroken over Eurydice that he can't resume his life as normal. Even once he returns home, he can no longer love women at all, a detail Ovid uses to suggest love's destructive potential.

BOOK 10: CYPARISSUS

One day, Orpheus sits down on a high plateau and starts to play his lyre. Suddenly, trees of all kinds grow and surround the plateau. One of the trees is the cypress, which used to be a boy named Cyparissus. Once, Cyparissus had loved a sacred stag with golden antlers and jewels dangling from its neck. Cyparissus took the stag around with him and adorned it in purple reins. One day, when the stag was resting, Cyparissus accidentally struck it with his spear. As he watched his beloved stag die, Cyparissus wanted to die himself. Reluctantly, Apollo turned Cyparissus into a cypress tree, a tree that everyone will mourn under.

After he accidentally kills the stag, Cyparissus wants to die, and Apollo responds accordingly. Instead of ending Cyparissus's life, Apollo transforms him into a cypress tree, suggesting that completely ending a person's life is impossible. As with other characters who waste away in grief, Cyparissus cannot go on living, but that doesn't mean his existence disappears. In this way, transformation is an analogy for death, or it is what counts for death in this world. Cyparissus's transformation suggests that a person never dies but only changes form.

BOOK 10: ORPHEUS' SONG: INTRODUCTION

Orpheus sits in the new grove of trees and tunes his lyre. He starts to play, saying that his song will first be about Jupiter, the most powerful god in the universe. Then he will sing about boys that the gods love and about girls who have been punished for wild passions.

Orpheus's song suggests that boys are lovable and girls are destructive. While boys can inspire the love and admiration of the gods, girls only possess wild passions that lead the gods to punish them.

BOOK 10: ORPHEUS' SONG: GANYMEDE

Orpheus sings that Jupiter once fell in love with a young boy named Ganymede. Jove disguised himself as an eagle and carried Ganymede up to the heavens. To Juno's annoyance, Ganymede still serves Jove at his table.

Orpheus's song explains that Jupiter has affairs with human boys as well as with girls. His affair with Ganymede is another instance of love getting between him and Juno.

BOOK 10: ORPHEUS' SONG: HYACINTHUS

Orpheus then sings that Apollo once loved a young boy named Hyacinthus who lived in Sparta. Apollo wanted to bring Hyacinthus up to the heavens, so he disguised himself to be Hyacinthus's companion. One day, Apollo and Hyacinthus played a game of throwing discs. Apollo threw first, tossing the disc high into the clouds. When the disc finally fell back to earth, Hyacinthus tried to catch it, but it hit him in the face with huge force. Apollo caught Hyacinthus in his arms. He tried to heal Hyacinthus's wound, but he didn't succeed, and Hyacinthus died.

The story of Hyacinthus and Apollo shows how the gods often desire to be a part of the human world. Although Hyacinthus is not a god, Apollo wants to bring him up to the heavens. First, however, he tries to participate in Hyacinthus's daily life. Apollo clumsily tries to contain his power but ends up killing the boy he admires, showing how the gods' attachment to the human world is their weakness.

Apollo laments Hyacinthus's death and feels that he is to blame. Apollo promises to sing about Hyacinthus in his songs and to turn him into a flower. As he is speaking over the body, a deep red flower blooms with the sounds of mourning written in its petals. Every year, Sparta honors Hyacinthus with a festival.

Hyacinthus is turned into a flower—a flower that becomes an emblem for grief in the future. In this way, many transformations commemorate the person who has died by populating the earth with a certain natural phenomenon.

BOOK 10: ORPHEUS' SONG: THE CERASTAE AND PROPOETIDES

Orpheus sings of the Cerastae and the Propoetides—two groups that everyone despises. The Cerastae were a group of men who sacrificed human victims on their altar to Jupiter. This sacrifice of humans upset Venus, the goddess of life. She decided to punish the Cerastae family by transforming them into bulls.

The Cerastae sacrificed human beings on Jupiter's altar, showing how intense reverence for a god can lead a person to crime. These crimes of worship are then punished by the gods.

Worse than the Cerastae's insult, the Propoetides—a group of women—insulted Venus by asserting that she wasn't a goddess. To punish them, Venus subjected them to lives of prostitution. Slowly, the Propoetides lost all shame and hardened into granite.

Compared to the Cerastae who sacrificed human beings, the Propoetides committed a worse sin by rejecting Venus. In this way, the gods consider the actions that insult them personally as the worst offenses.

BOOK 10: ORPHEUS' SONG: PYGMALION

Orpheus sings of Pygmalion, a sculptor who noticed the Propoetides' lascivious way of life. Tired of female vices, Pygmalion decided not to marry for many years. Meanwhile, he carved an ivory statue of a beautiful woman. The statue was so realistic that Pygmalion fell in love with it. He caressed and kissed the statue, believing that it kissed him back. He brought the statue gifts and beautiful clothes and tucked it into bed at night.

Pygmalion swears off women but immediately starts carving a statue of a beautiful woman. This shows how passion and love are often inevitable in a person's life, demanding expression in some way. Even a person—such as Pygmalion—who notices that passion leads to destruction cannot resist desiring someone or something.

When it was time for Venus's festival, Pygmalion made his offering on her altar and then asked for a woman that resembled his ivory statue. When Pygmalion returned to his house and embraced his statue, it started to soften and respond to his touch. Pygmalion kissed the living woman and thanked Venus profusely. Pygmalion and his new wife had a daughter named Paphos.

Pygmalion—who had decided that real women were destructive—creates his own perfect woman in the form of a statue which Venus then turns into a real woman. Thus, Venus reintroduces positive love into the world, healing Pygmalion's skepticism and creating his ideal companion.

BOOK 10: ORPHEUS' SONG: MYRRHA

Orpheus sings that Paphos gave birth to a son named Cinyras. Orpheus then warns of the shocking crime he is about to describe and instructs fathers and daughters to cover their ears. Myrrha, Cinyras's daughter, is pursued by many suitors, but she is filled with incestuous desire for her father. Myrrha prays to the gods to remove her wicked desire. She resents that animals are allowed to mate as they please, but that human morality prevents her mating with her father. She wishes that her father wasn't her father so that she could love him as she wants to. She considers running away but can't stand to be away from Cinyras.

Myrrha's tortured inner dialogue illustrates how desire has turned her against herself. She becomes unable to make decisions—whether to run away or to stay—because two parts of herself are wanting two different things. What is more, desire turns her against human morality, causing her to wish she were an animal so that no laws would forbid her following her desire. In this way, desire destroys Myrrha herself, turning her into a battlefield of two selves.

Cinyras approaches Myrrha to ask her which of her suitors she wants as a husband. Myrrha gazes at Cinyras with longing and tells him that she wants a husband like him. Mistaking her meaning for daughterly duty, Cinyras kisses her. That night, Myrrha lies awake tormented by passion. At last, she decides that it would be best to die. She gets up and prepares to hang herself with a belt from the rafters.

The inner torment that Myrrha's incestuous desire creates leads her to attempt suicide. This extreme response shows how destructive an uncontrollable desire is: it leads a person into such a tortured state of indecision that they might contemplate ending their own life.

Overhearing movement, a nurse runs into the bedroom and prevents Myrrha's suicide. The nurse weeps and embraces Myrrha, insisting on knowing why she wants to kill herself. Myrrha remains silent, but the nurse presses, suspecting that Myrrha is in love and promising to help. Myrrha buries her head in her pillow and says that what the nurse wants to know is a crime. Relentless, the nurse threatens to tell Cinyras that Myrrha tried to kill herself. At last, Myrrha whispers that her mother is lucky to have the husband she has. Appalled, the nurse tells Myrrha to abandon her passion. Myrrha maintains that she wants to die if she can't have her father. Reluctantly, the nurse promises to get her what she wants.

The nurse, determined to prevent Myrrha killing herself at all costs, ultimately gives Myrrha the possibility of fulfilling her desire. In this way, the nurse's timely arrival is a blessing and a curse. She saves Myrrha's life—a commendable action—but to do so, she has to enable Myrrha to pursue incest. In this way, the nurse's care for Myrrha leads her to nurture Myrrha's bad desires. The nurse, in saving Myrrha's life, prevents one of desire's destructive consequences but enables another.

During this time, Cinyras is sleeping alone for nine nights while his wife participates in a festival for Ceres. The nurse goes to Cinyras and tells him that a girl Myrrha's age is interested in being his mistress. Cinyras asks for the girl to be sent to his bedroom that night. When night comes, Myrrha guiltily leaves her bedroom. Ignoring several ominous signs, she goes to her father's dark bedroom. She falters and wants to run, but the nurse presents her to Cinyras, and they have sex.

At this point, the nurse is a decidedly bad influence on Myrrha. Myrrha's better nature makes her pause on her father's doorstep, not wanting to go through with the plan. The nurse, perhaps thinking she is saving Myrrha's life, urges her to continue. As a character, the nurse shows that when a person is in a place of indecision, others can easily influence them in the wrong ways.

Myrrha returns to Cinyras's bedroom for several nights. One night, Cinyras decides he wants to see his mistress and comes into the room holding a torch. When he sees Myrrha, he grabs his sword, wanting to kill her. Myrrha flees and roams the land, her stomach growing big with Cinyras's baby. At last she prays to the heavenly powers to neither let her live nor die because she deserves to be part of neither world. The gods grant her wish and transform her into the myrrh tree.

In Myrrha's case, her transformation places her in a state of limbo between life and death. This means that she does not continue to live but that she also doesn't descend into Hades. All the same, her decision about her fate reveals that no one really dies in this world, but only passes into another form or another place. In this way, the Metamorphoses *suggests that there is no real death.*

BOOK 10: ORPHEUS' SONG: VENUS AND ADONIS (1)

Although Myrrha is now a tree, her baby continues to grow in her womb. When it is time for the baby to be born, Lucina kneels by the myrrh tree and cracks open the bark, allowing the baby to exit. Naiads take the baby Adonis into their care, and he grows up to be very handsome.

Although Adonis is the child of incest, he is allowed to be born anyway, and is not himself punished for his mother Myrrha's actions. In this way, the Metamorphoses *shows that bad things can still give birth to good things.*

Meanwhile, Cupid gives his mother Venus a kiss and grazes her breast with his arrows. Venus then becomes very attracted to Adonis. Although she usually likes to pamper herself, she takes to running in the mountains and jumping over rocks alongside Adonis. She counsels Adonis in his hunting, telling him to beware of the dangerous animals she hates, like lions. Adonis asks her why she hates lions. Venus lies down in Adonis's arms and tells him the story.

Cupid—as the one responsible for shooting people with love's arrow—shows how love is comparable to an infection. Any person—even the goddess Venus—is susceptible to the love potion of Cupid's arrow and completely changes under its power. This portrays love as a spell rather than a totally natural passion.

BOOK 10: VENUS' STORY: ATALANTA AND HIPPOMENES

Venus tells Adonis about Atalanta, a girl who could run faster than any man. Atalanta was very beautiful, and all the men wanted to marry her, but the gods had warned her never to marry. Atalanta devised a game for turning away all her suitors, telling them that they could marry her if they beat her at a running race. If they lost, however, Atalanta would kill them. Many men tried to beat her, but they all lost.

The gods warn Atalanta never to marry, as if to save her from something destructive. However, Atalanta's unattainability also causes a lot of damage, as she kills every suitor who fails to outrun her. In this way, both marrying and resisting marriage cause trouble.

During one of these races, a spectator named Hippomenes scoffs at the foolishness of the men who try to outrun Atalanta. However, when he sees Atalanta, he gasps with desire and instantly decides to join the race. When all the suitors are outrun and Atalanta crowned victor, Hippomenes steps forward. He tells Atalanta that she won't be sad if she loses to him because he is so courageous.

Before Hippomenes sees Atalanta, he is able to think rationally, seeing how joining the race only leads to death. However, when he sees Atalanta and feels desire for her, he instantly joins the race, showing how desire acts against rationality and makes a person reckless.

Atalanta is moved by Hippomenes's youth, bravery, and determination to marry her. She wishes he would find another woman to marry so that he won't have to die for losing the race. She doesn't think he should be punished for loving her and wishes she had not been told to never take a husband.

Having sworn off love, Atalanta is moved against her will by Hippomenes. She then recognizes the predicament that love places her in: losing to Hippomenes will displease the gods, but winning will make her kill a person she likes.

As Hippomenes and Atalanta prepare to race, a friend of Hippomenes prays to Venus to assist his friend. Moved, Venus picks three golden apples from a sacred tree. She goes to Hippomenes and gives him the apples with instructions. As the race begins, Atalanta quickly overtakes Hippomenes. Then, Hippomenes throws one of the apples. Distracted, Atalanta goes after the apple and falls behind. She catches back up, but Hippomenes throws the second apple. Just before the finish line, he throws the final apple (which Venus makes heavy), distracting Atalanta again and winning the race.

Although the gods originally warned Atalanta never to marry, Venus is now supporting Hippomenes in his effort to change Atalanta's mind by winning and forcing her to marry him. Venus is moved to help Hippomenes when his friend prays to her, showing how the gods act upon whims and spontaneous emotions. What is more, the gods rarely act in unison with each other and go against one another's intentions.

After Hippomenes and Atalanta marry, Hippomenes forgets to thank Venus for her assistance. Offended, Venus determines to punish him and make an example out of him. As Hippomenes and Atalanta are walking one day, Venus excites them with lust. They go into an ancient cavern and have sex, defiling the sacred space. To punish them, Venus transforms them into lions with faces of anger. Venus ends her story by begging Adonis to avoid lions.

Venus is angry that Atalanta and Hippomenes are ungrateful, but she doesn't punish them simply for this. Instead, she manipulates them into committing a crime: infecting them with lust, thereby leading them to defile the sacred cave. In this way, Venus pettily forces them to commit a universal crime so she can punish them for a personal offense.

BOOK 10: ORPHEUS' SONG: VENUS AND ADONIS (2)

After warning Adonis, Venus returns to the heavens. As Adonis leaves the woods, he disturbs a boar. Adonis tries to spear the boar, but it deflects the blow. Then the boar charges Adonis and kills him. Venus, flying in her chariot, sees his dead body and goes to him. She grieves over his body and decides to transform him into a deep red flower. Adonis becomes the anemone—a fragile flower with a short life.

With the flower that Venus transforms him into, Venus preserves the distinguishing features—fragility and short life—of Adonis. He was fragile, unable to defend himself for long against a vicious boar, and had a short life. In this way, Venus creates a new flower that represents Adonis.

BOOK 11: THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS

With his songs, Orpheus enchants the trees, animals, and rocks to follow him. Suddenly, a group of women from Thrace notice Orpheus. They start throwing spears at him, angry because he had rejected their company. For a while, Orpheus's music weakens their blows and protects him from fatal wounds. However, the women beat their drums and play their pipes louder. Then they band together and attack Orpheus with stones, spears, and branches.

Orpheus is able to enchant everything to follow him except the angry women. The women who unleash an attack on Orpheus are angry because he once rejected their advances, having sworn off women after losing Eurydice. Their vengeance suggests that it is nearly impossible for a person to escape the destructiveness of passion, even if they want to.

Nearby, a group of farmers ploughing a field notice the frenzied women and flee in fright. The women kill the farmers' abandoned oxen and take their tools to finish killing Orpheus. The trees lose their leaves and the river swells with tears in mourning for Orpheus. The women scatter Orpheus's limbs and toss his head and lyre into the river. His head washes up on a foreign shore where a snake attacks it. Orpheus passes into Hades where he is reunited with Eurydice. He now looks back at her as much as he pleases.

The angry women resort to more and more brutal methods to kill Orpheus. They use farming tools as weapons, showing how humanity's use of tools to tame nature leads to their use of weapons to kill other human beings. The women eventually scatter Orpheus's limbs and chop off his head, recalling how Agave tore off her son Pentheus's head when he scoffed at Bacchus.

BOOK 11: THE PUNISHMENT OF THE MAENADS

Bacchus is angry that the women killed Orpheus and decides to punish them. He twists tree roots around their bodies and embeds their toes in the soil. Bark encloses their bodies, and they transform into trees.

The angry women resemble Agave and the other women who participated in Bacchic rites and punished anyone who abstained, but Bacchus hypocritically punishes the women who kill Orpheus.

BOOK 11: MIDAS

Still angry at the Thracian women, Bacchus leaves Thrace. He brings a band of dancers with him, but Silenus—Bacchus's old foster father—isn't among them; Silenus had been found drunk by peasants of King Midas's kingdom. Midas had once been trained in Bacchus's rites. Pleased that Silenus is a fellow follower of Bacchus, King Midas invites him to a feast and then reunites him with Bacchus.

Silenus—who had taken care of Bacchus after he was born from Jupiter's thigh when Semele died—is now an elderly man, showing that much time has passed since the time when Bacchus became a god. Since then, new kingdoms emerged, and Bacchus and Silenus became separated.

Happy to be reunited with Silenus, Bacchus tells King Midas that he will grant him anything he desires. Without thinking, King Midas asks that everything he touches be turned into gold. Bacchus fulfils his promise reluctantly, knowing that Midas's wish will be his downfall. Midas departs for home, touching trees and rocks along the way and turning them into gold. Ecstatic at his new ability, Midas sits down to supper. However, the food and drink he tries to consume turn to gold as soon as they touch his lips.

As in the case of Phaëthon, the person that the god wants to reward often—out of greed or pomposity—chooses something that will be their downfall. Bacchus, like Phoebus, makes an oath to give Midas whatever he wants, showing that he expects the best of Midas—expects that he will choose more wisely than he does.

Midas realizes that his love of gold will destroy him. He prays to Bacchus, confessing his stupidity and asking for Bacchus to reverse his gift. Bacchus lifts the gift and tells Midas to purge his guilt by bathing in a nearby stream. The king obeys. To this day, the stream leaves gold particles on its bank.

Midas is able to get the spell reversed because he admits that it was very stupid and thoughtless for him to ask for such a thing. In this way, his humility saves him from something that would have killed him.

Midas is now disgusted by wealth and wanders the mountainsides worshipping Pan, the pipe-playing god. One day, Pan boasts that he is a better musician than Apollo, who plays the lyre. Pan decides to enter a competition with Apollo, judged by Tmolus—god of the mountain. Pan plays his pipe, Apollo plays his lyre, and Tmolus proclaims Apollo the winner.

When gold nearly kills Midas, he decides to abandon a life of pursuing material things altogether. He lives in the woods without a home or possessions. He also worships pipe music—a non-material pleasure. In this way, Bacchus's spell changed Midas's life.

Midas overhears the competition and disagrees with Tmolus's verdict. Irritated by Midas's naivete, Apollo turns Midas's ears into donkey ears. Midas conceals his ears with a purple turban, but his haircutter knows the secret. Wanting to confess what he knew but not wanting to betray Midas, the haircutter whispers the secret into a hole in the ground and covers it with dirt. Next spring, a cluster of reeds grows which whistle the confession the hairdresser had buried.

Although Midas has seemingly been changed and made wiser by his experience with gold, he still blunders and accidentally displeases Apollo. When the barber whispers his confession into the ground, it returns the next year as a whisper in the reeds, suggesting that, once something has come to be, it can't disappear—it can only return in a different form.

BOOK 11: LAOMEDON'S TREACHERY

After punishing King Midas, Apollo visits Troy, a newly founded city. The founder, Laomedon, is slowly building the city walls. Apollo and Neptune disguise themselves as humans and agree to build the walls in exchange for gold. When they finish the walls, Laomedon refuses to pay them. Neptune floods Troy and forces Laomedon's daughter Hesione to be sacrificed to a sea-monster. Apollo rescues Hesione, but Laomedon refuses to pay him the reward for his heroic deed. Apollo then captures Troy with the help of Peleus and Telamon.

Troy is an important city later on in the Metamorphoses. *Although it is initially founded by Laomedon, it is not finished being built by him but by Neptune and Apollo with the help of Peleus and Telamon—King Aeacus's sons and the old allies of Athens. In this way, Troy is a city that is founded by a cooperation between gods and humans. Going forward, the gods will continue to be involved in Troy's affairs.*

BOOK 11: PELEUS AND THETIS

After capturing Troy, Telamon marries Hesione, Laomedon's daughter. Peleus is already married to the goddess Thetis. Jupiter, Peleus's grandfather, had lusted after Thetis, but didn't want to sleep with her for fear that she would give birth to a child who would become more powerful than himself. Instead, Jupiter tells Peleus to have a child with Thetis. One day, Peleus finds Thetis lying naked and asleep in her underwater cave. When he wakes her and tries to woo her, she resists him, so he grabs her and tries to rape her. She escapes by changing shape, first into a bird, then a tree, and finally a ferocious tiger.

Because Thetis is a goddess, Jupiter worried that the child he would have with her would have the power to overthrow him. This might explain part of the reason why Jupiter likes to sleep with mortal women and have children with them. In so doing, he maintains his position as the head of all the gods and does not allow the world to produce anything that could be stronger than him. This shows that even the gods aren't above self-interest. This story is also an example of metamorphosis saving someone, as Thetis's transformations help her escape Peleus's attempted assault.

Peleus flees Thetis's cave and decides to ask the sea-gods for advice. One of them tells him to sneak up on Thetis while she sleeps and ensnare her in a rope, preventing her from changing shape. Peleus follows the sea god's advice. When Thetis wakes up and tries to change shape, she is too tightly bound. She gives in to Peleus, deciding that the gods are helping him, and soon gives birth to Achilles.

After Peleus has overpowered her abilities, Thetis then realizes that the gods are on Peleus's side. The gods, in this case, are another thing—besides Peleus's force—that manipulates Thetis into having sex with Peleus. In this way, the gods can be seen as a cruel rather than a protective presence.

BOOK 11: PELEUS AT THE COURT OF CEYX (1)

Peleus is happy with his new wife Thetis, but he is soon banished from his city when he kills his half-brother. He goes to Trachis, a peaceful city ruled by a king named Ceyx. Peleus enters Ceyx's palace with his few companions and asks Ceyx for a home in Trachis. He tells Ceyx who he is but doesn't tell him that he killed his brother. Weeping, Ceyx welcomes Peleus to Trachis, saying that Peleus is a famous man and the grandson of Jupiter.

When the world had just been created, travel and war were signs of humanity's corruption. This passage shows that war and travel are interconnected. For instance, when a person kills someone, they flee to escape the consequences; or, when people from one nation travel to other nations, they often want to engage them in war. In this way, war and travel create constant unrest.

BOOK 11: CEYX'S STORY: DAEDALION

Peleus asks Ceyx why he is weeping. Ceyx draws Peleus's attention to a bird of prey disturbing the other birds in the sky and says that bird used to be his brother, Daedalion. While Ceyx had a peace-loving nature, Daedalion had a passion for war. One day, Apollo and Mercury both catch sight of Daedalion's beautiful daughter Chione and fall in love with her. Mercury immediately touches Chione with his sleep-inducing wand and rapes her. Meanwhile, Apollo waits till night comes, then disguises himself, sneaks into Chione's bedroom, and rapes her.

When Ceyx is telling Daedalion's story, he explains that Daedalion had a passion for war, suggesting that that is why he has now become a bird of prey who disturbs the other birds. However, it seems that conflict was first started in Daedalion's life not by himself but by Apollo and Mercury. Since both gods rape Chione, it seems nonsensical that Daedalion's transformation was a punishment.

Nine months later, Chione gives birth to twins, Autolycus and Philammon, the sons of Mercury and Apollo respectively. The glory of giving birth to the sons of two gods causes Chione to boast that she is more important than the goddess Diana. Furious, Diana pierces Chione's tongue with an arrow. Then Chione dies in Ceyx's arms. When Ceyx tells Daedalion the news, Daedalion is overcome with grief. He tries to throw himself on the burning funeral pyre, but he is held back. He runs to the top of a mountain and throws himself off a cliff. Apollo transforms him into a hawk—a bird that vents its rage on other birds.

Ceyx explains that Daedalion is transformed because he tries to kill himself in grief. However, Apollo transforms Daedalion into a hawk that vents its rage on other birds, suggesting that he is punishing Daedalion for behavior akin to the hawk's. It is unclear whether Apollo transforms Daedalion because he is honoring his grief, or if he is punishing Daedalion for his warring nature—a nature that had nothing to do with the events of the story. In this way, Daedalion's story reveals that transformation can often be very arbitrary.

BOOK 11: PELEUS AT THE COURT OF CEYX (2)

As Ceyx is telling his story, Peleus's herdsman runs into the palace. The herdsman explains that he had brought Peleus's cows to drink at a stream near a small shrine for the local sea-gods. Suddenly, a menacing wolf had appeared from the swamp by the riverbank and attacked and eaten the cows. The herdsman says that if they gather their forces, they can kill the wolf and save some of the cows.

Peleus's herdsman steers Peleus's cows to drink at the shrine of local sea-gods, suggesting that the wolf is a manifestation of these sea-gods' anger at the herdsman's disrespect. This makes clear that disrespect of the gods is one of the most dangerous mistakes a person can make.

Peleus and Ceyx grab their spears and order their men to put on their armor. As they are about to leave, Ceyx's wife Alcyone runs from her bedroom and begs Ceyx to stay so that he won't be killed. Peleus thanks Ceyx and Alcyone for their hospitality and tells Ceyx that he doesn't want him to risk his life on Peleus's account. Peleus prays to the river gods to send away the wolf, but they ignore him. When Thetis adds her prayers, the wolf is turned into marble. Peleus then goes to Magnesia, which is ruled by king Acastus.

In this scene, Alcyone introduces herself as a devoted wife who doesn't want her husband to engage in conflict that might lead to his death. This suggests that Ceyx and Alcyone have a loving relationship that prevents them from engaging in travel, violence, and danger—the things that were labelled as corrupt shortly after the world's creation.


BOOK 11: CEYX AND ALCYONE

Back in Trachis, Ceyx is still disturbed by his brother Daedalion's transformation and by the transformation of the wolf that attacked Peleus's cattle. He decides to consult an oracle at Apollo's temple, which is only accessible by sea. When Alcyone hears that her husband is planning to leave on a long sailing trip, she starts to cry. She asks why Ceyx must leave her, and why he must travel by sea; she is afraid that he will die at sea, leaving her no body to bury. She knows that the storms on the open sea are very dangerous. She begs Ceyx to take her with him.

Ceyx, who was held back from fighting the wolf that attacked Peleus's cattle by his loving wife Alcyone, is now drawn into unrest because of the different transformations that he has seen. This unrest actually causes him to consider leaving his wife and his kingdom—a place where he is happy and stable. This suggests that transformation—although it is such a common aspect of this world—is disturbing to those who haven't witnessed it.

Ceyx is moved by Alcyone's concern, but he is set on his journey. He tells Alcyone that it is too dangerous for her to accompany him, but he promises that he will return before two full moons. This promise comforts Alcyone slightly, and Ceyx orders his ship to be prepared. Alcyone tries to delay her husband's departure, but he sets sail, waving to her from his ship. Alcyone waves back until the ship disappears, then she goes to her bedroom and bursts into tears.

Ceyx sailing away from Alcyone as she stands on the shore creates a foreboding picture. As the first chapter of the Metamorphoses *pointed out, traveling across seas is something that can lead to corruption. There is the sense that, when Ceyx sails away, he will never return, the safe and happy space made by him and Alcyone having been broken.*

When night is falling, the wind picks up and the sea gets choppy. Ceyx commands his crew to secure the ship against the storm, but the storm increases in intensity, and soon Ceyx has no idea what to do. Waves crash over the ship, drenching the shouting sailors. The ship rises high on tidal waves, then crashes low into the depths of the waves.

In this scene, Ceyx is confronted with a reminder that nature is more powerful than humanity. The invention of ships and the common practice of overseas sailing may have made humanity feel that nothing can stop them, but the tempest checks this confidence.

The ship's planks start to break, and the rain drenches the sails. The ship floods as the waves batter against its broken sides. The sailors run around in confusion, losing their morale. They cry, pray to the heavens, and call out the names of their families. Ceyx thinks of Alcyone and wishes he'd never left her.

About to be killed by nature, Ceyx thinks that if he had never left Alcyone, he would not have been put at nature's mercy. This suggests that staying with what's familiar—rather than venturing out over-confidently—protects them from danger.

Suddenly, a tremendous wave crashes down on the ship and sends it to the bottom of the ocean. Many of the sailors drown, while some manage to swim to the surface. Ceyx clings to a floating plank and prays to the gods to no avail. He then prays that the waves carry his body to Alcyone so she can bury him. At last, he is submerged by a wave and doesn't resurface.

Ceyx's last wish is that he will be reunited with Alcyone. This shows how love for another person is a kind of humility. Instead of wishing for his life to be spared or for his memory to be glorified, he wishes to be reunited with his wife.

Back in Trachis, Alcyone has no idea that Ceyx has died. She counts the nights until her husband's return, sewing new clothes for him. Every day, Alcyone goes to Juno's altar and prays that her husband will return to her and not to another woman. Juno plans to grant her wish but is tired of receiving prayers for a dead person. Juno goes to Iris, the messenger goddess, and tells her to visit the god of Sleep and ask him to make Alcyone dream of Ceyx's death.

Juno listens to Alcyone's prayers and plans to answer them. However, she gets tired of Alcyone's constant praying and wants to inform Alcyone of her husband's death before the news comes to her naturally. Juno's motivation isn't clear, but it could be read as a lack of empathy, making the news of Ceyx's death more nightmarish than it has to be.

Iris goes to the cave where Sleep lives. The cave is silent except for a babbling stream. Deep inside, Sleep rests on a bed of soft cushions. When Iris approaches him, he can barely open his drowsy eyes. Iris gives Sleep Juno's message, asking him to appear in Alcyone's dream disguised as Ceyx's ghost. Sleep looks around at the various dream gods and chooses Morpheus—the one who can disguise himself as people—to carry out the task, then goes back to sleep.

With the help of Sleep, Juno creates Ceyx's ghost in order to inform Alcyone of her husband's death and stop her from praying to Juno. In this way, Juno shows that she is fed up and bored with Alcyone's anxious love and decides to instigate her heartbreak early. With no god who appears to sympathize with deep human love, it is perhaps no surprise that love never seems to succeed in the human world.

That night, Morpheus floats to Trachis and stands at the foot of Alcyone's bed, disguised as Ceyx's ghost. He whispers into Alcyone's ear, crying and telling her of his death. He tells her not to consider this dream a mere rumor, but to put on her mourning clothes and perform the funeral rituals. Alcyone sobs in her sleep and reaches out to the ghost but touches only air. She begs the ghost of Ceyx to take her with him.

As soon as Ceyx's ghost informs Alcyone that her husband is dead, she begs to be taken to death with him. The tragic end to their marriage shows, more clearly than anything else, how deeply Ceyx and Alcyone love each other. The Metamorphoses *therefore portrays love as an overwhelmingly tragic occurrence.*

Alcyone wakes up and runs into the next room to look for Ceyx. When she doesn't find him, she sobs and tears at her hair. She believes the ghost in her dream and tells her servants that Ceyx is dead. She turns to look at where the ghost had stood and speaks to Ceyx, telling him she wishes he'd brought her with him so they could have died together. She plans to die herself and unite their names on the gravestone.

Now that Ceyx has died, the only way that he and Alcyone can be together is if she dies, too, and their names are written side by side on the gravestone. Like Pyramus and Thisbe's, their love only endures in a tragic form, suggesting that happiness can never last long.

The next morning, Alcyone goes to the seashore. She reminisces about the last time she saw Ceyx when he sailed away. As she gazes out to sea, she notices an object bobbing towards her. As it comes closer, she realizes that the body is Ceyx's and leaps towards it. As she leaps, she changes into a bird. She flies to Ceyx, letting out a sad song, and kisses him with her beak. The gods then transform Ceyx into a bird, too. Even as birds, they remain devoted to each other.

Because they are transformed into devoted birds, Ceyx and Alcyone are able to be together in a sense. While their relationship as humans was doomed to tragedy, their relationship as birds is happier. In this way, transformation provides a way for people to have what they couldn't have as humans in a different form, even if it's not quite the same.

BOOK 11: AESACUS

An old man watches two birds—formerly Alcyone and Ceyx—circle over the sea. Another man draws his attention to a bird skimming the sea with its wings. The bird used to be Aesacus, descended from the founders of Troy and brother to Hector, the famous Trojan. Aesacus, however, was a river god's child and was born on a secluded mountain. Aesacus didn't like cities and shunned Troy. However, he was in love with Hesperia, the daughter of another river god.

The story of Ceyx and Alcyone, as remembered through the two birds who fly together, leads to the story of Aesacus, the diving bird. This shows both how the stories in this world lead to one another, filling out a whole history, and also that things aren't always what they appear but often are metamorphoses of something else.


One day, Aesacus spies Hesperia drying her hair by a riverbank. He ambushes her and chases after her. As she runs, a poisonous snake bites Hesperia's ankle, and she drops down dead. Aesacus clutches her body and weeps, rebuking himself for chasing her. He feels that he is as much her murderer as the venomous snake.

Aesacus isn't actually responsible for Hesperia's death, but his pursuit causes her to run into the snake. In realizing that his actions led to Hesperia's death, Aesacus is one of the first men in the Metamorphoses *who confronts the consequences of acting predatorily towards a woman.*

To relieve his guilt, Aesacus jumps off a cliff, hoping to drown. To his dismay, a river goddess transforms him into a diving bird. Still wanting to die, Aesacus throws himself against the rocks, but his feathers cushion the blow. He resorts to diving deep into the sea, continuously trying to die.

Propelled by his guilt, Aesacus wants to die, but instead he is transformed into a bird that continually mimics suicide. This situation shows that in the world of these stories, no one completely dies, even if they want to. Instead, they are transformed into a new form. Rather than annihilation, death means change in the Metamorphoses.

BOOK 12: THE GREEKS AT AULIS

Aesacus' father Priam has a funeral for Aesacus in Troy. His sons attend, except for Paris, who is in Greece. There, Paris soon kidnaps Helen, another man's bride. Grecian soldiers sail after him, but they are delayed by a storm in Aulis where they hold a ceremony for Jupiter. When they are about to make a sacrifice, a serpent slithers up a tree over the altar and eats nine birds from a nest. A prophet proclaims that this means that the Greeks will conquer Troy, but only after nine years of war. Then the snake turns into marble.

The famous Trojan war begins when Paris kidnaps Helen from Greece. However, only when the prophet in Aulis foresees the entire scope of the Trojan War does it become clear that this war has been fated to occur since before it even began. This is another reminder that fate operates decisively in this world. Although it seems that Paris is responsible for starting the war, his actions precipitate a long-fated war.

When the storm continues, the prophet suggests that the Greeks sacrifice a virgin girl in order to appease Diana. A father at last decides to put the public before himself and agrees to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia. Diana takes sudden pity on the girl and substitutes an animal for the sacrifice. The storm finally subsides, and the Greeks continue on their way to Troy.

Diana saves Iphigenia just before she is sacrificed, suggesting that Diana is motivated most of all by people's willingness to appease her. She rewards this willingness by releasing people from their intended sacrifice.

BOOK 12: RUMOUR

Ovid asks the reader to picture a region between the earth, sea, and sky. This is where the goddess Rumour lives, able to see everything and whisper to anyone. The place is constantly echoing and filled with a gossiping crowd spreading true and false rumors.

Ovid takes this section to introduce Rumour. He does this in order to acknowledge the force that causes hearsay to spread—an occurrence that can spur action.

BOOK 12: CYCNUS

Rumour spreads word to Troy that Greece is coming to start war with them. The Trojan army assembles to wait for the Greeks. As soon as the Greeks arrive, Hector—Aeacus's brother—and Cycnus—son of Neptune—kill many of them. On the Greek side, Achilles kills many Trojans. Achilles then sets his sight on Cycnus and casts his spear at him, boasting that he will kill him. Although his aim is perfect, the spear only bruises Cycnus. Cycnus boasts that as the son of Neptune, he is invincible, and that his armor is merely for show. He tries to kill Achilles, but his spear is blocked by Achilles's shield.

Achilles and Cycnus are two war heroes on either side of the Trojan War. They represent the confrontation of two heroes who are equal in lineage. They are both the sons of gods or goddesses—Cycnus of Neptune and Achilles of Thetis. As soldiers, however, Achilles behaves as a mortal, blocking Cycnus's blows only with his own skill and tools, whereas Cycnus behaves more as a god, having the power to avoid being impaled.

Achilles tries several more times to kill Cycnus, but his weapons have no effect. Furious, he asks how he can fail to kill one man when he is such an excellent war hero. He flings his spear at another Trojan and kills him. Triumphant, he casts his spear at Cycnus again, but it bounces off. Yelling with rage, Achilles pulls out his sword, but his blows only dent its blade. He starts beating Cycnus with his shield, chasing him until he trips. He pins Cycnus to the ground and strangles him with the straps of his helmet. Then, Neptune transforms Cycnus into a swan.

Achilles's victory over Cycnus shows that a war hero with no special divine powers can beat another war hero endowed with divine powers. Although Cycnus is surrounded by a force that protects him from all sharp points, Achilles finds a way around this with sheer rage and brute force, beating and strangling Cycnus to death. This conflict proves human strength can at times be stronger than divine power.

BOOK 12: ACHILLES' VICTORY CELEBRATION

After a long fight, the Trojans and the Greeks suspend the war to rest. The Greeks sacrifice to Pallas and sit down for a banquet. They entertain themselves by talking of courage and manliness and retelling Achilles's defeat of Cycnus. The Greeks are baffled by Cycnus's inability to be wounded. Nestor, one of the Greeks, comments that he once knew a man (who was born a woman) who survived a thousand blows unwounded. The soldiers ask Nestor for the full story.

Achilles and his victorious fellow soldiers discuss manliness and courage and how these virtues helped Achilles defeat Cycnus. These virtues seem to be uniquely human virtues that the gods don't necessarily possess. In any case, they are virtues that humans have learned to use to their advantage in the absence of divine powers.

BOOK 12: CAENIS

Nestor tells his story: Caenis is a beautiful girl who is pursued by many suitors. Caenis refuses her suitors, but one day she is walking on a deserted beach when (according to Rumour) Neptune rapes her. Triumphant, Neptune promises Caenis whatever she wants. Caenis says that Neptune has wronged her and asks that he change her into a man so that men will never take advantage of her again. Neptune changes Caenis into a man, and furthermore makes Caenis invulnerable to sword-wounds.

Caenis wants—as a kind of reparation for being raped—to be in a position where she'll never be raped again. She asks to be turned into a male, suggesting that no matter what women do, simply by virtue of being a woman they are under the constant threat of rape. Therefore, Caenis believes that the only thing that will protect her from rape is not being a woman anymore.

BOOK 12: THE BATTLE OF THE LAPITHS AND CENTAURS

Nestor's story then tells of the time he attended a royal wedding in Thessaly: the palace is filled with guests, including the centaurs that inhabit the nearby forest. The wedding hymn starts and the bride enters. A centaur named Eurytus, already drunk, lusts after the bride and seizes her. Chaos ensues as the other centaurs grab the women they want. Nestor and Theseus rise and confront Eurytus, who starts punching Theseus. Theseus picks up a table and throws it at Eurytus, who is now vomiting wine.

The story of the fight that breaks out between the Lapiths and the centaurs at a wedding is reminiscent of the war that breaks out between Phineus and Perseus at Perseus's wedding to Andromeda. Together, these two stories show how weddings can be disastrous and divisive, particularly when two different groups live together in the same area.

The drunk centaurs throw glasses of wine at the Lapiths. They throw a table holding candles and the wedding altar, then use the broken pieces to beat their enemies. The Lapiths fight back, using whatever they find in the palace as weapons. One of the centaurs is killed while he sleeps, too drunk to wake up.

The centaurs are portrayed as animalistic and crude, getting drunk and using sloppy tactics in battle. Their undignified natures illustrate that they possess only half of human nature, being half man and half horse.

The fight spills outside where the centaurs uproot trees and rocks to throw at the Lapiths. Theseus hops on one of the centaur's backs and strangles him while Peleus kills several with his javelin and sword. A beautiful centaur with gold hair is killed. Many female centaurs had tried to woo this centaur, but only one had succeeded. The beautiful centaur's girlfriend kills herself beside him.

Nestor introduces the different people who are casualties of the fight between the Lapiths and the centaurs. In this way, he illustrates the damage that war does across the lines. No matter what side of a war a person chooses to be on, there are always unfair deaths on both sides.

Nestor explains that he killed a few centaurs with his javelin and shows the Greeks his scars from the battle. At that time, Nestor was in fit shape for the Trojan War, but it would not start for many years. Returning to his story, Nestor explains that Caenis kills five centaurs. One of the centaurs taunts Caenis, saying that he'll always be a girl and telling him to go back to spinning wool. The centaur tries to stab Caenis, but his sword can't pierce him. At last, Caenis kills the centaur with his sword; Caenis is unwounded.

The contention between men and women during war provides another example of the dysfunction between the sexes. Women resent men for overpowering them, whereas war makes it clear that men resent the times when they can't overpower women. Men believe that women are weaker by nature and not meant to be soldiers and so despise seeing them fight in war.

The centaurs are embarrassed that their strength has been beaten by a man who used to be a woman. They start hurling trees and rocks at Caenis, burying him under a massive pile. Caenis attempts to roll the pile off him, but it is too heavy. Caenis dies, but some see a bird fly up from the pile. They hail the bird as Caenis, then turn to kill the rest of the centaurs.

In defeating the centaurs, Caenis makes them feel effeminate because he used to be a woman. This suggests that a person breaking out of the confines of their gender's stereotypes can be destabilizing for others as well as freeing for them.

BOOK 12: PERICLYMENUS

While Nestor is telling his story, Hercules's son interrupts Nestor to accuse him of forgetting to praise Hercules's part in the battle of the Lapiths and centaurs. Nestor says that no one praises their foes. Nestor explains that Hercules destroyed many innocent cities and that he killed Nestor's brothers.

When Hercules was presented earlier in the Metamorphoses, *he was presented as a great hero who became a god. Here, Nestor puts this into perspective and shows how every person is a hero or a foe from different points of view.*

One of these brothers, Periclymenus, had been given the power of metamorphosis by Neptune. When Hercules killed his brothers, Periclymenus changed into a bird and attacked him with his talons. Hercules shot Periclymenus with an arrow, wounding his wing and ruining his ability to fly. Nestor finishes his story by saying that his silence about Hercules's heroism is his vengeance for what Hercules did to his brothers. The Greek soldiers retire to get some sleep.

Nestor explains that his silence is a form of revenge against Hercules. This suggests that telling stories about a person after their death has the effect of immortalizing them and making them venerable like a god. In refusing to talk about Hercules, then, Nestor is effectively declining to immortalize him.

BOOK 12: THE DEATH OF ACHILLES

After the Trojan War drags on for nine years, Neptune is still angry that Achilles killed Cycnus. Neptune goes to Apollo and asks if he takes pity on Troy and on Hector, whose corpse was dragged through Troy. Neptune points out that Achilles lives on, corrupted by bloodlust, and asks Apollo to kill him.

Ultimately, Greece's greatest warrior is killed not by the Trojans but by the gods. Achilles's death is the result of a personal insult he dealt to the gods, showing how the gods' petty feelings hugely affect major events on earth.

Apollo enters the battle and notices Paris firing arrows at the Greeks. He tells Paris not to waste his arrows on the many soldiers but to target Achilles instead. He guides Paris's arrow to point at Achilles's heel. Paris shoots, and Achilles the war-hero is killed by "the coward" who stole his Greek host's wife.

Ovid points out that, thanks to the gods' intervention, a hero is killed by a "coward." The irony and implausibility of a hero being killed by a coward points out how the gods' intervention for petty reasons often makes the human world an irrational place.

Achilles lives on as a legendary hero. After he dies, the warriors debate about who should carry his glorious shield, but no one feels worthy enough. At last, two skilled warriors—Ulysses and Ajax—each claim the right to the shield. King Agamemnon summons Greek chiefs to decide which one should have the shield.

The debate between Ulysses and Ajax over Achilles's shield suggests that his legacy could go in a couple different directions. In this way, Ovid shows how, as time moves on, there are many turning points in history that have long-term consequences.

BOOK 13: THE JUDGEMENT OF ARMS

The Greek chiefs take their seats and a crowd gathers to listen to Ajax and Ulysses defend their cases. Ajax gives his speech, angrily explaining that Ulysses retreated when Hector attacked but that he stood his ground. Ulysses's strength is in speaking, but Ajax's is in battle. Ajax is descended from Jupiter through Telamon, who once captured Troy, and Aeacus, a judge in Hades. He is also Achilles's cousin. Ajax accuses Ulysses of entering the war late and feigning madness to try and get out of fighting at all.

Ajax's main points in favor of himself against Ulysses are that he is descended from gods, is related to Achilles the war-hero, and that he is strong, whereas Ulysses is crafty and deceptive. Ajax portrays Ulysses's qualities as weaknesses, but it is easy to see that from another perspective, these same qualities could appear as strengths.

Ajax continues, blaming Ulysses for marooning Philoctetes—a former Greek soldier—on an island to live in madness and starvation. Ulysses also framed another Greek soldier for treason, and abandoned Nestor when Nestor called to him for help. Later, when Ulysses needed help, Ajax saved his life. After Ajax saved him, Ulysses ran in fright from Hector while Ajax dueled with Hector and wasn't defeated.

Ajax's speech recounts the major moments in the Trojan War. Ovid relays these events in speech rather than through direct action, and from two diverging perspectives—Ulysses's and Ajax's. In this way, he shows how historical events are always unclear by virtue of being relayed orally, and suggests that a completely objective perspective on a historical event is impossible to attain.

Ajax asks where Ulysses was when the Trojans attacked the Greeks' ships when Ajax protected them with his manly strength. Ajax lists the few heroic deeds that Ulysses did, but says that they were all done under cover of night; Ulysses only accomplishes feats through ruses and tricks. Therefore, Achilles's golden helmet will hinder Ulysses by shining in the dark. Ajax says that Ulysses is a coward and isn't strong enough to carry the shield. Finally, Ajax's armor is damaged, so he deserves a replacement.

Ajax suggests that strength as a virtue is superior to strategy. In this way, he places physical qualities above intellectual qualities and suggests that humanity's virtue is in its physicality. Ajax believes that he has earned Achilles's shield through his display of strength. However, he ends his speech by saying he simply needs the armor, a mundane point whose practicality weakens his case.

Ajax ends his speech, and Ulysses rises to give his. Making eye contact with the chiefs, Ulysses conveys his wish that Achilles were still alive to bear his own arms. Ulysses says that he is more intelligent than Ajax. Like Ajax, Ulysses is descended from Jupiter, but ancestry does not make him deserves Achilles's arms; also, the fact that Ajax is Achilles's cousin means nothing: if the arms are to be given to the next of kin, they should be given to Achilles's father. Ulysses says that the contest for arms depends on actions.

Ulysses delivers his speech while making eye contact with the judges and claims that he is superior to Ajax because he is more intelligent. He also claims that legacy means nothing. His points indicate a potential turning point in humanity's beliefs. Until this point, legacy—particularly descent from the gods—has been highly valued. Moreover, since godly descent is valued, power has also been valued above human intelligence.

Ulysses relays his actions in the Trojan War: when Achilles's mother Thetis disguised her son as a girl to keep him from the fighting, Ulysses tempted him with manly weapons and persuaded him to join the fight. For this reason, Ulysses is responsible for providing the hero who killed Hector. When the Greeks were delayed at Aulis, Ulysses persuaded Agamemnon to sacrifice their daughter to appease Diana and calm the storm. Ulysses was then sent to Troy to negotiate for Helen's return; he would have succeeded if it weren't for Paris's obstinance and greed.

Ulysses's speech reveals how the people behind the scenes in wars are extremely significant. Like Myrrha's nurse, minor characters and people in the background of events are responsible for encouraging or dissuading main characters towards particular courses of action. In this way, no one person is ever responsible for an action. Instead, many forces combine to bring about events.

Ulysses asks where Ajax was before open war began; Ulysses was busy laying traps and raising the soldiers' morale, but Ajax ignorantly thinks only fighting is important. Then, when King Agamemnon wanted to surrender, Ajax cowardly supported his decision. On the other hand, Ulysses inspired the troops to keep fighting after holding out for ten years.

Ulysses suggests that courage has more to do with encouraging others than simply fighting. He lists the times when he inspired the troops and boosted the morale of his fellow soldiers in contrast to Ajax's cowardly support of surrender.

Ulysses points out that no one trusts Ajax, whereas many heroes trust Ulysses. Ulysses once risked his life sneaking out at night, forcing an enemy to reveal the Trojans' plans, then ambushing a king's encampment and killing his entire army. Ulysses lists the Trojans he has killed and displays his wounds to prove his valor. On the other hand, Ajax spilled no blood for Greece. Ajax forgets that many others dared to duel with Hector, and that when Ajax dueled with Hector, he didn't even wound him.

Ulysses explains that he conquers with strategy rather than simply with brute force. For example, Ulysses's strategies uncovered the enemy's secrets and then allowed for a greater number of Trojans to be ambushed and killed. In speaking of war this way, Ulysses suggests that war is not simply an activity but an art that humanity cultivated and perfected over time.

Ulysses is devastated when he thinks of Achilles's death. When Achilles died, Ulysses carried his body and his armor home. The beautiful shield that depicts the whole world shouldn't be worn by a stupid person. As Ajax said, Ulysses joined the war late, but it was because he was with his devoted wife, just as Achilles joined late because he was with his devoted mother.

Ulysses suggests that his personal relationships make him more heroic. Ulysses's devotion to Achilles made him behave bravely and honorably, and his devotion to his wife—which made him choose her over war for a while—actually makes him more admirable than a bloodthirsty soldier.

Ulysses says that if Ajax blames him for marooning Philoctetes, he blames the Greek government. Ulysses suggested that Philoctetes withdraw to ease the pain of his wound, and Philoctetes had agreed; the removal saved Philoctetes's life. Ulysses swears his eternal devotion to Greece, offering to go and retrieve Philoctetes's arrows if that's what the Greeks want. Ulysses reminds the judges that he kidnapped the oracle and stole the statue of Pallas Athena, both of which helped the Greeks finally beat the Trojans.

Again, Ovid recounts some of the main events of the Trojan War, this time from Ulysses's perspective. It is unclear whether Ulysses's conduct with Philoctetes was just or not (whether Ulysses or Ajax has the right view of the situation). However, the fact that Ulysses gives his speech last gives him an upper hand: his perspective makes the last impression on the judges' minds.

Ulysses says that Ajax belongs to the category of manly warriors, but that he knows nothing of war tactics. Ajax's strength is mindless, whereas Ulysses is intelligent and strategic. Ulysses asserts that intelligence counts for more than strength and asks to be rewarded for his thoughtful devotion to Greece. He deserves the armor for his intelligent actions that led to the Greeks' victory. Finally, Ulysses points to the statue of Pallas and says that she's the only one who deserves the armor more than him.

To finish his speech, Ulysses shows his total devotion to the Greek goddess Pallas Athena. In this way, the icing on the cake of Ulysses's speech is his humility. The gods have shown themselves to value humility in human beings, and, in ending his speech on a note of humility, Ulysses assumes that the judges will also view it as an admirable quality.

BOOK 13: AJAX'S SUICIDE

The chiefs are moved by Ulysses' speech and award the armor to him. Ajax, who bravely survived the Trojan War, can't survive his own anger at losing. He grabs his sword and says that no one has the power to defeat Ajax except Ajax himself. He stabs himself in the chest. His blood soaks the earth where a purple hyacinth blooms.

Ajax kills himself in the end—defeats himself— in order to avoid being defeated by anyone else. Though it's unclear why, he is transformed into the same flower that Hyacinthus—the boy Apollo once liked and accidentally killed—became.

BOOK 13: THE FALL OF TROY

After winning Achilles's arms, Ulysses sails to the island where Philoctetes is marooned and retrieves the arrows which Hercules once gave Philoctetes. He returns to Troy where Priam—Hector's father—is sacrificed on an altar for Jupiter. Hector's son Astyanax is thrown from a tower. The Trojan women cling to the statues of Troy's gods and kiss their native soil, but the Greeks drag them on board the ships setting sail for Greece. Ulysses finds Hecuba—King Priam's wife—wandering among the graves of the Trojans. He drags her away, but she manages to smuggle Hector's ashes with her in her skirt.

This scene portrays how women are left desolate after war. On both sides of the conflict, women are left bereft of their husbands, fathers, and sons. On the losing side, the women are bereft of their homes as well as of their men. Not only do the women suffer all this loss, but they are also kidnapped by the winning army, taken away from their homes, and foreseeably raped. In this way, war increases the threats that women already face in the Metamorphoses.

BOOK 13: THE SUFFERINGS OF HECUBA

When the Trojan War began, King Priam sent his son Polydorus to Thrace so that he'd be safe. However, Polydorus's guardian was greedy for Polydorus's wealth. He killed Polydorus and threw his body into the sea, hoping to conceal the murder. As King Agamemnon sails into Thrace to rest, the ghost of Achilles appears from a cleft in the cliff and asks how the Greeks can sail off without honoring him. He says they must appease him by sacrificing Polyxena, King Priam's last daughter. The Greeks obey Achilles and seize Polyxena from Hecuba's arms.

The ghost of Achilles tells the Greeks to punish the bereaved women of Troy even more than they are already being punished. The Greeks respect Achilles's posthumous wish for complete revenge, indicating that they still believe Achilles is alive and guiding them through the war to a certain extent. In this way, no one in the Metamorphoses *is ever considered to have been annihilated in death, only transformed or transported.*

When Polyxena realizes she is about to be killed, she raises her throat to the sword. She says she wishes she could spare her mother the grief of her death. She asks that the guards leave their hands off her so that she can die untouched. She says that she is Priam's daughter, not a slave, and that Hecuba deserves to bury her after she dies. Moved by her speech, the Greek soldiers reluctantly kill Polyxena. They carry her to Hecuba, lamenting for all of Priam's dead children. Hecuba clutches Polyxena and weeps.

Compared to Polyxena's bravery in the face of death, the Greek's sacrifice of her at Achilles's bidding is cowardly, continuing the bloodshed of a war that is finally over. Achilles's posthumous wish suggests that victors of war seek to completely obliterate nations and that revenge always comes back around to complete itself.

Hecuba laments that she thought Polyxena would be safe from death because she was a girl. When Achilles died, Hecuba felt safe again, but now she realizes she must still fear Achilles; he is still taking her family from her. Hecuba used to be a powerful queen, but now she is a slave with no family. Hecuba feels she has no happiness now that her daughter has been killed. She envies Hector his death because he can't see Polyxena's murdered body. At last Hecuba consoles herself by remembering that one of her sons still lives: she believes Polydorus is safe in Thrace.

Although Ovid portrayed Troy as being on the wrong side of the Trojan War, this scene in which Hecuba is made a war prisoner and harshly punished portrays the Greeks as in the wrong. By listing the just causes and the wrongs on both sides of the Trojan War, Ovid seems to be making the claim that war itself is a horrible yet inevitable event that affects even noncombatants in unjust ways.

Hecuba steps off the ship in Thrace. Suddenly, she notices Polydorus's murdered body washed up on the beach. She is mute with grief and then with rage. Thinking only of vengeance, she sends for Polydorus's guardian, Polymestor, saying she has more gold to give him for her son. Greedy for more gold, Polymestor meets Hecuba. Hecuba grabs him, digging her fingers into his eyes and clawing apart his face. Furious, the Thracian people pelt Hecuba with stones. She growls at them, turning into a dog. To this day, Hecuba wanders Thrace howling with grief. Both the Trojans and the Greeks lament her fate.

Many times throughout the Metamorphoses, *anger and the thirst for revenge overwhelm a person's grief. Similar to the way grief led Procne and Philomela to seek brutal revenge against Tereus, Hecuba is sent into a frenzy when she finds out her son has been murdered and heads straight to avenge him. This frenzied state becomes so extreme that she transforms into a dog; she's unable to function as a human anymore.*

BOOK 13: MEMNON

All the gods mourn for Hecuba except Aurora. Aurora is busy mourning her own son Memnon, who was killed by Achilles. When Memnon is laid on the funeral pyre, Aurora goes to Jupiter and begs him to pay a tribute to Memnon; even though she is a woman and not a very important god, her son was valiant in the Trojan War. Jupiter grants her wish, causing a flock of birds to emerge from Memnon's funeral pyre. The birds amass into two groups that fight each other and fall to ashes over the tomb. Each year, these birds repeat their war as tribute to Memnon, and Aurora weeps each day, creating the morning dew.

The warring birds and the morning dew that Aurora creates in memory of her son become two symbols of war that recur in the world. These symbols, although routine and everyday, are reminiscent of the destruction and the sorrow that war causes. Moreover, the everyday nature of these symbols creates a continual pattern of mourning for all the people who died in the Trojan War who weren't famous, such as Aurora's son.

BOOK 13: THE WANDERINGS OF AENEAS (1)

Aeneas, a survivor of Troy, takes his father Anchises and the statues of Troy's gods and flees across the sea with a small group of Trojans. They stop at Thrace, but quickly leave and head to an island called Delos.

Although Troy was obliterated, Aeneas escapes the wreckage unseen by the Greeks. This gives Troy a small yet powerful lifeline through which the city can be rebuilt and transformed.

BOOK 13: THE DAUGHTERS OF ANIUS

Anius, the king of Delos, gives Aeneas and his companions a tour, and they attend a sacrifice to the gods. Afterwards, Anchises asks Anius where his children are. With sadness, Anius explains that his son—whom Apollo had blessed with prophetic powers—is far away on an island. His daughters—whom Bacchus gave the power to transform anything they touched into corn and wine—were kidnapped by King Agamemnon, who wanted to use their powers to supply his soldiers. The daughters escaped, fleeing to the island where Anius's son lived, but his son, alone and afraid, had given the daughters to an invading army. Before the daughters were re-imprisoned, Bacchus transformed them into doves.

This passage shows how the Trojan War disrupted the whole world, not just Greece and Troy. Greece kidnapped Anius's daughters to be of use to his army and were then re-imprisoned countless times to serve the war. As a result, Anius's children are scattered all around the world. This shows how war and travel reinforce one another and exacerbate the negative effects of each other. As two individual signs of corruption, travel and war work together to increase the dissension and corruption in humanity's development.

BOOK 13: THE DAUGHTERS OF ORION

The Trojans spend the night at Delos and visit the shrine of Phoebus in the morning. The god tells them to search for their "kindred shores." Before they depart, King Anius gifts Anchises a staff and Aeneas a mixing bowl that depicts a funeral taking place in a city. The daughters of Orion—girls who had died for their people—are depicted being carried out to the funeral pyre while the citizens lament. In return, the Trojans give the people of Delos gifts.

The wandering Trojans are looking for their "kindred shores," suggesting that they are searching for their true home—a home even more theirs than Troy was. This is reminiscent of how Cadmus found the land for the city that he founded after he was banished from his kingdom. Together, the two stories suggest that bad things can transform into good things.

BOOK 13: THE WANDERINGS OF AENEAS (2)

Aeneas and the Trojans sail to Crete, but they can't endure the climate. Next they head for Italy, but a storm blows them off course. They pass Ulysses's kingdom, an island owned by gods, and other places. They stop briefly on an island called New Troy, then continue on to Sicily. There, they sail into a cove between dangerous whirlpools on the left and Scylla—a ravenous monster with a girl's face—on the right. Scylla used to be a girl who liked to go to the bottom of the sea and tell the nymphs how she eluded all her suitors.

This passage shows how the Trojans are constrained by nature when it comes to finding their new home. They wander around the Mediterranean, landing on different shores and sailing through different straits, but climates and landforms turn them back. This shows how humanity is at the mercy of nature, not the other way around, when it comes to their wanderings and searches for a homeland.

BOOK 13: ACIS, GALATEA AND PLYPHEMUS

One day, Scylla is combing a sea-nymph Galatea's hair. Suddenly, Galatea cries that she wishes she could refuse her lovers without risking her life, as Scylla does. Scylla asks Galatea what is wrong. Galatea tells Scylla her story: Galatea is in love with Acis, the teenage son of a woodland nymph. Meanwhile, the Cyclops, a giant creature with one eye, falls in love with her and stubbornly pursues her. Galatea finds the Cyclops disgusting and barbaric, but he is so in love with her that he tries to trim his grizzly hair to look more attractive. He also ignores a visitor who prophesies that Ulysses will steal his eye and says his eye has already been stolen by Galatea.

While Scylla is brushing her hair, Galatea gives voice to what many of the female characters throughout the Metamorphoses *feel: that declining a lover means risking their life in some way. In this way, unwanted lovers' passion presents another threat to human life by being stubborn, forceful, and not taking no for an answer. Most of the destruction that love causes comes from a character attempting to refuse an offer of love, and being raped, killed, or transformed as a result.*

The Cyclops climbs to a high cliff over the sea, neglecting his herd of sheep. He pulls out a pipe and begins to whistle. He sings a song about Galatea's beauty, saying she is smoother than shells, brighter than ice, wilder than an untamed animal, and prouder than a peacock. He says that she should regret having shunned him, because he has grown huge orchards, stored huge harvests, and gathered huge flocks of sheep for her. He also stole her two bear cubs.

Although the Cyclops is crude and unattractive, his serenade is remarkably romantic. While other characters in love have pursued their love interests with the intention of having sex with them, the Cyclops sings about how he wants to provide for Galatea. Tragically, the Cyclops loves Galatea purely, but his bad looks prevent her from returning his affection.

The Cyclops calls to Galatea in his song, asking her to emerge from the water and live with him. He boasts that he is larger than Jupiter and that his hairiness is a sign of greatness. The Cyclops scorns the gods but worships Galatea. His heartbreak is made worse because Galatea has chosen Acis—a young and arrogant boy—as her lover. The Cyclops wants to dismember Acis and scatter him around the mountains.

The Cyclops is extremely jealous that Galatea wants to be with Acis, who is young, arrogant, and pretty. No matter how deeply the Cyclops loves Galatea, he will always lose to other lovers because his looks are not attractive. Fate, in the form of such mundane things as bad looks, can be an obstacle to love.

The Cyclops finishes his song, then lumbers away through the woods. Suddenly, he notices Galatea and Acis and gives out a roar. In her fright, Galatea dives into the sea. Acis flees, calling to Galatea for help. The Cyclops pursues Acis, tearing off a chunk of the mountain and hurling it at him, crushing him. Then Galatea transforms Acis into a river.

The Cyclops's heartbreak causes him to fly into a rage, tear apart a mountain, and crush his rival. This reaction shows how unrequited love can lead a person to madness and violence and cause them to destroy others around them.

BOOK 13: GLAUCUS AND SCYLLA (1)

Galatea ends her story, and Scylla returns to land and walks along the beach. Suddenly, a sea nymph named Glaucus notices Scylla and finds her very beautiful. He tries to talk to her, but she runs away up a nearby mountain. She looks down at Glaucus in the sea and wonders whether he is a god or a monster with his scaly fishtail and green body.

In the previous story, Galatea had remarked that she wished she could reject lovers without risking her life, as Scylla can. As a nymph, Scylla has many skills at her disposal for avoiding love's threats, suggesting that humans are more vulnerable to love's dangers.

Noticing Scylla's wonder, Glaucus beaches himself against a rock and calls up to her. Glaucus says that he is not a monster but a god. He used to be a mortal and spent his time fishing in the sea beside a lush green meadow, untouched by animals. One day, Glaucus laid his fish in the meadow to count them. Suddenly, the fish started to move across the ground towards the sea and jumped back in the waves.

Glaucus's story of the fish that jump back in the sea symbolizes humanity's vain attempts to tame nature. Fishermen might believe that they can easily subdue the life of the sea to their needs, but these transforming fish prove that nature's powers aren't always conquerable.

Glaucus wondered if the meadow had magical powers. He picked some grass and ate it. Suddenly, his heart fluttered, and he felt a strong urge to live in the sea. He said goodbye to the earth and dived into the sea, where the sea-gods welcomed him as their equal. Glaucus immersed himself in the water, and when he came back to his senses, his body had changed.

In becoming a god, Glaucus proves that there is some kind of passage between the life of a human and the life of a god. Glaucus's story shows that humans can transform into gods, a fact which suggests that humans contain something godly and eternal underneath their mortal bodies.

Glaucus wonders what good his new form is if it doesn't impress Scylla. Interrupting Glaucus's speech, Scylla turns and runs away. Furious at being rejected, Glaucus goes to visit Circe, the sun god's daughter.

From Glaucus's enamored point of view, Scylla's refusal is an offense. In this way, love shows itself to be a controlling and unsympathetic passion.

BOOK 14: GLAUCUS AND SCYLLA (2)

Glaucus swims across the sea to the green hills where Circe lives. He greets Circe and asks her to take pity on him. He explains that when he saw Scylla, he burned with passion for her, but she rejected him. He asks Circe to cast a spell that will make Scylla love him. Circe answers that Glaucus deserves someone who actively woos him. She looks into Glaucus's eyes and asks him to be hers.

In her response to Glaucus's plight, Circe suggests that love should be a mutual, consensual occurrence. Glaucus's refusal of Circe then perpetuates an idea of love that cannot attain to the happy state Circe describes; instead, love always plays out as nonconsensual, forced, and full of bitterness.

Glaucus explains that while Scylla is alive, he can't love anyone else. Circe is enraged by Glaucus's rejection. She mixes some magical herbs and travels to the pool where Scylla likes to bathe. Circe pollutes the pool with her potion and mutters a spell over its surface. When Scylla arrives at the pool and steps in up to her waist, her legs are turned into a cluster of rabid hounds. Glaucus weeps over Scylla's transformation and rejects Circe again. Scylla gets her revenge by seizing Ulysses's companions when they sail into port. She would seize Aeneas's companions too, but she is transformed into a rock first.

This passage describes a chain of revenges with unrequited love at their source. As revenge for Glaucus rejecting her, Circe curses Scylla instead of slipping her a love potion. In this way, Circe punishes a person who was only peripheral to the person who actually offended her. In her turn, Scylla then gets her revenge by attacking Aeneas and Ulysses, people who had nothing to do with her curse. Unrequited love causes a chain of revenge in which innocent people suffer.

BOOK 14: THE WANDERINGS OF AENEAS (3)

The Trojans steer their ship past Scylla's rock, but a storm blows them to an island off the Italian coast. When Aeneas leaves this island with his companions, a woman named Dido is so heartbroken that she kills herself. Then the Trojan ships are almost burned to ash by Juno, who is angry at how Aeneas treated Dido. After that the Trojans pass an island called Apetown, inhabited by creatures called Cercopians. The Cercopians had been so deceitful and wicked that Jupiter had transformed them into ugly human-like creatures who can only screech.

Similar to the previous story, this passage describes another destructive chain of heartbreak and revenge. This chain spurs the Trojans forward on their journey, turning them out of certain places and delaying them in others. In this way, the destructive action of love—like war—creates division but also causes momentum which, in this case, leads the Trojans closer to their "kindred shores."

BOOK 14: THE SIBYL OF CUMAE

Aeneas and the Trojans land on the shore of Cumae, a marshy land. Aeneas visits Sybil—a woman who possesses long life—to ask her if he can visit Hades to see his father. Sybil grants his wish and tells him to break off a golden branch from a nearby tree. Aeneas breaks off the branch, then descends through the trunk to Hades. There, he sees his ancestors and the ghost of Anchises. He then climbs back to land and thanks Cumae, telling her that he'll build her a temple even if she isn't really a goddess.

The fact that Aeneas can visit his deceased ancestors proves that no one in the Metamorphoses *ever truly passes away. When a character dies, they either transform into another animal or element of nature, or they travel to Hades where they live as a spirit who can still be visited and consulted. In this sense, things in the world change, but they never die.*

Cumae explains that she isn't a goddess. However, Apollo once gave her the opportunity to become immortal. Trying to seduce Cumae, Apollo had promised to grant her whatever she wished. Cumae had asked that she live as many years as there were grains of dust in a pile at her feet. Apollo granted her wish and said he'd give her eternal youth as well if she would sleep with him. Cumae rejected Apollo, and now she has 300 more years to live, shrinking and growing decrepit.

Sybil realizes that there is no reason to desire long life unless it also comes with agelessness. Although she has 300 more years to live, she is steadily decaying by the minute. This shows how nothing ever remains the same. Even when something remains untransformed—remains, like Sybil, in the same form for centuries—they are still transformed by the decay of time.

BOOK 14: ACHAEMENIDES' STORY: ULYSSES' MEN IN POLYPHEMUS' CAVE

The Trojans leave Sybil's island and land next on an unnamed island. Macareus—one of Ulysses's former companions—is stranded on the island. Macareus recognizes Achaemenides—a man left behind by Ulysses and taken in by Aeneas—among the group of Trojans. Macareus greets Achaemenides and asks him what he's doing here.

Aeneas and Ulysses—survivors from opposite sides of the Trojan War—are both currently wandering about the Mediterranean. In this way, although the war has ended, the Trojans and the Greeks are still engaging in a subtle battle with each other for their respective homeland.

Achaemenides explains that he would rather stay with Aeneas than rejoin the Greeks. Achaemenides reveres Aeneas and is deeply grateful to him. When Ulysses and the Greeks had sailed away, Achaemenides wanted to call after them, but he was afraid the Cyclops, who was wandering nearby, would hear him and kill him. The Cyclops tore through the forest, uprooting trees and rocks and cursing the Greeks. The Cyclops wished aloud that Ulysses would return so he could tear him to pieces.

Achaemenides's story connects the many storylines happening in the same area at the same time. Ulysses encountered the Cyclops who was angry after Galatea had rejected him. Ulysses leaves Achaemenides who then joins Aeneas, and finally runs into Macareus, who used to be with Ulysses. In having Achaemenides and Macareus meet, Ovid demonstrates how history is passed down orally, becoming a coherent story in the process.

Achaemenides was afraid the Cyclops would eat him, just as he ate several of the Greeks before they managed to sail away. Achaemenides hid in a cave, surviving on acorns, hopeless and lonely. When Aeneas's ship came, Achaemenides moved the Trojans to pity, and they took him on board.

Aeneas's conduct in this scene contrasts with Ulysses's conduct with Hecuba and Polyxena—the prisoners of Troy. Aeneas takes pity on Achaemenides—a Greek and a rival—and lets him join the crew rather than killing or imprisoning him.

BOOK 14: MACAREUS' STORY: ULYSSES AND CIRCE

When Achaemenides finishes his story, Macareus tells how, when he was with the Greeks, Ulysses visited Aeolus, god of the sea-winds. Aeolus gave the Greeks a bag of wind to help them sail. They sailed for nine days with good winds until they became convinced that the bag contained gold. They tore open the bag to find out, and the winds blew away. The Greeks then went to a city where Antiphates—the cannibal king—ate several of them. King Antiphates threw rocks at the rest of the Greeks as they escaped, sinking several of their ships. Ulysses brought the remaining Greeks to Circe's island.

The Greeks, led by Ulysses, succumb to the vice of greed, believing that the bag of wind contains something more valuable. This thought causes them to disobey a god and squander the gift he gave them. This is similar to Aglauros—the girl who once looked in the basket a goddess had told her not to look in and who wanted gold from Mercury. However, Aglauros is transformed by Minerva, whereas the Greeks are punished coincidentally by the cannibals.


Wary after their encounters with the Cyclops and King Antiphates, only a small group of Greeks went to Circe's palace. A pack of friendly lions and tigers greeted them at the entrance. Maidens escorted them to Circe's throne. Circe greeted them and mixed them drinks. As soon as they swallowed the drinks, Circe touched the Greeks with her wand. They all turned into bristly pigs. Only one companion had not tasted the potion, and he returned to tell Ulysses what had happened.

Circe, who is likely still upset that Glaucus rejected her, transforms Ulysses's men for no apparent reason. She deceives them by welcoming them inside with friendly maidens and animals and pretending to mix them refreshments. This shows how the gods' palaces are not always safe havens for those in need, but that the gods vent their feelings on those unlucky enough to wander in.


Ulysses entered Circe's palace with a magical flower given to him by Mercury. When Circe offered Ulysses her potion, he pushed her away. Ulysses then had sex with Circe in exchange for her reversing the transformation of his companions. Circe sprinkled the disguised Greeks with another potion and they turned back into humans. They wept and embraced Ulysses.

Circe only reverses the transformation of Ulysses's companions when Ulysses has sex with her. This shows that Circe was burning from the slight of being rejected and unwanted and was taking this emotion out on Ulysses's innocent companions.

BOOK 14: MACAREUS' STORY: PICUS, CANENS AND CIRCE

Macareus continues his story, explaining that he and the Trojans stayed in Circe's palace for a year. One day, while Ulysses was with Circe, one of Circe's nymphs showed Macareus a statue of a man with a woodpecker on his head. The nymph said that this man's name was Picus, the son of Saturn. Picus was a talented horseman and very handsome. Many nymphs tried to woo Picus, but he rejected them all because he was in love with a girl named Canens, who could sing beautifully. When Canens came of age, she and Picus married.

Macareus's conversation with Circe's nymph reveals other transformations that occurred in the world. Circe's nymph also explains that Picus is the son of Saturn—the god who was also Jupiter's father. This suggests that Picus must have lived a long time ago, before Saturn was banished and the world was flooded. This shows both how history isn't a strictly linear series of events, and how many transformations have occurred throughout the world's history.

One day, the nymph continues, Picus rides his horse into the fields in pursuit of a wild boar. Circe, who happens to be nearby, notices him and burns with passion. She wants to tell Picus how she feels, but he is riding too fast for her to follow. So, she creates a phantom boar with magic. She has the boar run through close-set trees so that when Picus gallops after it, he is forced to dismount his horse and pursue the boar on foot. Circe causes a mist to fall so that no gods can see to protect Picus, then goes to confront him. Circe confesses her desire and presses Picus to return her love.

Circe's action of drawing mist around Picus is similar to how Jupiter waylaid Callisto before raping her. Here, Circe also pressures Picus, and gives the impression that she would rape him if she could. She does not rape Picus either because she knows she can't overpower him the way a man can a woman, or because women, in pursuing men, seek something other than sex. Either way, both men and women are demanding in what they want from their love interests.

Picus rejects Circe, saying that his heart belongs to Canens, a girl he will never betray. Circe tries to change Picus's mind, to no avail. Angered, she threatens that he will pay for rejecting a woman in love. She strikes Picus with her wand and utters some spells. Frightened, Picus runs away, but he transforms suddenly into a woodpecker angrily pecking at tree trunks. Picus's companions search for Picus everywhere. They come upon Circe and demand to know what she's done to Picus. They draw their swords, but Circe sprays a poison that causes the earth to tremble. Picus's companions turn into wild beasts.

In previous stories, Jupiter and other gods have ignored their love interests' refusals or struggles to resist them and raped them. In this way, these gods forcefully avoided the slight of a rejection. Circe, who either cannot or won't force a connection with Picus, suffers rejection, threatens revenge, and transforms Picus into a woodpecker. In this way, refusing a person's advances is always dangerous: it always leads to rape or revenge.

As night falls, Canens waits anxiously for Picus. When he doesn't return, she tears at her clothes in anguish and sets out wandering in the woods. She wanders for six days until she comes to a riverbank where she lies down and weeps. She slowly transforms into water, and the riverbank is named after her. Macareus concludes the story Circe's nymph told him. He explains that, after a year, the Greeks were bored and decided to set sail again. Circe warned them of the dangers they would face on their journey and sent them on their way.

Canens seems to dissolve naturally into water because she is dissolved by her grief. Her transformation is not a punishment or a concealment. Canens is so overcome by her grief that she passes beyond hope of returning to her former state. In this way, she transforms as the result of a natural change that takes place in her. Instead of dying, she becomes an element that more closely resembles her new emotional state.

BOOK 14: THE WANDERINGS OF AENEAS (4)

After hearing Macareus's story, the Trojans bury Aeneas's recently deceased nurse on the island. In the inscription they place on her tomb, they credit her with nursing a hero. The Trojans then sail away, steering clear of Circe's island, and land on an Italian shore. Aeneas wins the right to stay and to marry the king Latinus's daughter, Lavinia, but not before warring with the native tribes led by Turnus, a man who was promised Lavinia previously.

The stories that Macareus tells of Ulysses and his crew help Aeneas and his crew avoid dangers in the Mediterranean. In this way, Aeneas uses his rival to benefit his own journey. He eventually lands in Italy where he fights for his place, hinting that the Metamorphoses *is getting close to Ovid's contemporary time period in Rome.*

BOOK 14: THE MUTINOUS COMPANIONS OF DIOMEDES

The war is fought between the Trojans (and several native tribes that side with them) and Turnus. Turnus sends a messenger to Diomedes, a king who had founded a large city, to ask for his aid. Diomedes refuses to help Turnus, explaining that he doesn't want to endanger his people in a war; they've seen too much hardship already.

While the Trojan War was the result of a personal offense, Aeneas's war with Turnus is about the practical matter of staking land. However, Diomedes's wariness is a reminder that war is never a simple matter; it creates lasting damage far and wide.

Diomedes tells the messenger of his army's tragedies after they won the Trojan War: when Troy was burning, Ajax had seized a girl from Pallas Athena's shrine and raped her. This angered the gods, who wrecked their fleet of ships in a violent storm when they tried to sail home. Diomedes was saved from the waves by Athena, but he was forced to abandon his homeland of Argos by Venus, who had held a grudge against him since the Trojan War.

Diomedes's story shows that the gods' personal stakes in the Trojan War prolonged the hardships that they faced following the war. Every god in turn was offended by certain actions or took particular likings to war heroes and responded according to these preferences. As a result, many people suffered arbitrary or unfair blessings and curses.

Diomedes's companions were low-spirited after these events. One of them, Acmon, encouraged them to scorn Venus and said there was nothing she could do to harm them anymore. This angered Venus, so she turned Acmon into a bird. Then, she transformed those who had agreed with Acmon into the same kind of birds. Diomedes explains that, because of these events, he can't risk the few citizens he has left in the war against Aeneas.

Acmon's fate is a reminder that no human being can ever get out from under the gods' power. It is also a reminder that one of the things that most offends the gods is a person's arrogant refusal to worship them. Venus transforms Acmon into a bird as a result of his confidence, showing that, no matter what, the gods always win with their sheer power.

BOOK 14: THE APULIAN SHEPHERD

Turnus's messenger returns to his master to deliver the news of Diomedes's refusal. On the way, he passes a cave where Pan now lives and where a bunch of nymphs used to live. Once, a shepherd had stumbled upon this cave and scared the nymphs away. When they realized the shepherd was harmless, they returned and struck up their dancing ritual. The shepherd jeered at their dancing and mimicked them, so they turned him into a bitter olive tree.

This interlude tells of another transformation that occurred nearby and contributes to the fact that everything in the world changes constantly. For a myriad of different reasons—punishment, preference, emotional extremity—creatures transform into new forms, reconstituting the world and unfolding its history.

BOOK 14: THE SHIPS OF AENEAS

Even without the help of Diomedes, Turnus proceeds to challenge Aeneas to a war. After days of bloodshed, Turnus attacks the Trojan's ships and lights them on fire. Cybele—the mother of the gods—notices the smoke and despairs because the Trojan ships are built from sacred wood. She shouts to Turnus that his efforts are in vain. Cybele gathers a sea-storm and plunges the burning ships into the waves. She transforms the vessels into giant sea-nymphs. These sea-nymphs live on in the ocean, supporting passing ships (except those that belong to Greeks) with their hands. Later, the nymphs rejoice when they see the wreckage of Ulysses's ship.

Cybele helps Aeneas and the Trojans not because she thinks their case in the war is more just, but simply because their ships are made out of sacred wood. This shows how the gods' concerns are not necessarily centered around the world's overall justice, but about small details that usually have to do with personal preference. Cybele's concern for the wood of the Trojan's ships ultimately destroys Ulysses's ships, showing that the gods' arbitrary preferences change the course of major events.

BOOK 14: ARDEA

Even after the transformation of the Trojan ships, Turnus continues to fight Aeneas. Gods fight on both sides of the battle. Turnus no longer hopes to win Lavinia's hand, but he is too ashamed to stop fighting now that he has started. Finally, Turnus is killed and Aeneas wins. The Trojans burn Turnus's city, Ardea. From the ashes, a new bird takes flight, carrying Ardea's grief and history with it.

The transformation of Ardea into a bird is the first instance of a location or city's metamorphosis into an animal form. This suggests that, as humanity has developed, creating kingdoms and legacies of rule, cities have become an almost personified part of the world.

BOOK 14: THE APOTHEOSIS OF AENEAS

Now that Aeneas has proved his courage and his son is reaching adulthood, his mother Venus asks the gods to make Aeneas a god, too. She throws her arms around her father Jupiter's neck and asks him to give his grandson Aeneas a place in heaven. Jupiter and all the gods agree, even Juno. Venus thanks Jupiter, then rides her chariot to the bank of a sacred river where she asks its god to purify Aeneas. The river-god cleanses Aeneas of his mortality. Venus then touches Aeneas's lips with ambrosia, and he is transformed into a god.

The fact that Aeneas becomes a god proves that there is a connection between all strata of beings. Humans easily transform into animals—a lower strata—and can also be transformed into gods—the highest strata. This suggests that human beings have an immortal part of themselves that can leave their body and take on new forms, even forms like the gods that live forever.

BOOK 14: AENEAS' DESCENDANTS

After Aeneas becomes a god, his son Iulus rules the new lands. Iulus is succeeded by his son, who is succeeded by his son; after six natural successions, Tibernus rules briefly, then drowns in a stream, leaving behind two sons, Remulus and Acrota. Remulus is struck by lightning, and Acrota hands the kingdom over to Aventinus.

This passage lists Aeneas's lineage and therefore points out the moment when Aeneas's kingdom leaves the hands of his descendants and falls into the hands of others. This passage shows how lineage as well as natural disasters affects the course of history.

BOOK 14: POMONA AND VERTUMNUS

During the reign of one of the kings, Pomona—the goddess of fruits—was a prominent dryad in the region. She was skillful at gardening. Instead of hunting or fishing, she spent all day pruning and watering fruit trees in her orchard. She had no reverence for Venus, and therefore no desire for love or passion. She was afraid of any peasant, satyr, or god that might try to assault her.

Pomona's story is another story about a woman who prefers to spend her time in other matters than those of love. In doing so, Pomona is refusing to worship Venus, who stands for love and marriage. This suggests that refusing love is akin to scorning a god and could likewise incur punishment.

A god named Vertumnus falls in love with Pomona, but she rejects him. He visits her orchard in different disguises so he can be close to her. One day, disguised as an old woman, he draws Pomona's attention to a grapevine climbing up a tree. He says that Pomona needs a mate the way the grapevine needs the tree. If she only realized this, she would have tons of suitors. Vertumnus says that he knows a man (meaning himself) who would not pursue lots of women but would devote himself to her alone. He says that this suitor is young and handsome and shares Pomona's interests. He warns Pomona that Venus is vindictive towards women who reject lovers.

To persuade Pomona to be with him, Vertumnus draws an analogy between Pomona's garden and marriage. In this way, Vertumnus uses nature to argue against her decision to remain a virgin, pointing out that, in nature, everything supports one another. He argues that humans should embrace nature's examples rather than stray from them. In other stories, the man woos the woman by force, but here Vertumnus uses an argument to persuade Pomona. All in all, his method of wooing Pomona is more humane.

BOOK 14: IPHIS AND ANAXARETE

To persuade Pomona to accept a lover, Vertumnus, disguised as an old woman, tells her this story: a low-class boy named Iphis falls in love with a beautiful princess, Anaxarete. Unable to control his desire, Iphis goes to Anaxarete's palace and pleads with her servants to let him see the princess. He sends her gifts and letters and delivers impassioned speeches on her threshold. Anaxarete arrogantly scorns him and mocks him harshly.

Iphis and Anaxarete's story shows a general trend towards using methods of persuasion, rather than force, to be with a beloved person. However, their story also shows that, when force leaves the picture, other things such as class disparity come into play to prevent men and women from reaching an understanding.

Utterly disheartened by Anaxarete's insults, Iphis wails that he will happily die. Iphis wants the princess to see his lifeless body and to repent that she scorned such a faithful lover. He knows that his name will go down in history. Iphis ties a noose to the doorway and hangs himself. Anaxarete's servants find his body and carry it to his parents' house. His mother weeps over his body, then leads a dismal funeral procession through the town.

In the first half of the Metamorphoses, *the passion of love led to rape, but the second half shows that the rejection of love leads to intense heartbreak. In this way, the* Metamorphoses *shows pity towards both men and women in love: love destroys women when their refusal is ignored, and love destroys men when their proposal is rejected.*

Anaxarete watches the funeral from her window. As she gazes at Iphis's corpse, she feels herself turn to stone. Her city preserves this statue as proof of what happens to those who have cold hearts. Vertumnus finishes his story by entreating Pomona to accept her lover, but she refuses. Vertumnus changes back into a human, planning to rape Pomona, but she is captivated by his transformation into a handsome youth and reciprocates his passion.

Venus punishes Anaxarete's heartless rejection of Iphis by turning her into a statue—a cold, heartless form. In this way, Venus claims that rejecting a person's heartfelt love is a crime worthy of severe punishment. Therefore, the Metamorphoses *portrays rape and rejection as comparable ways in which men and women wrong each other.*

BOOK 14: ROMULUS

After many generations, a king takes the throne who unjustly captures a city called Ausonia from his brother. Ausonia is later recaptured by Romulus, its former king's grandson, and renamed Rome. After Romulus's army captures women from the rival Sabine army, the women's fathers form an army, too, and silently approach Rome at dark. Juno had opened one of Rome's gates to help them enter. Venus wanted to close the gate but couldn't undo Juno's spell. So, Venus goes to some naiads who live in an icy spring and ask them to flood the passage through Rome's gates. The naiads agree and mix their flood with sulphur so it sprays flames. The invading army is delayed by the flood, giving the Romans time to organize their defense. The armies fight until they agree to a peace.

This passage shows both how the gods' personal preferences and a tension between men and women move the world's history forward. Romulus captures Ausonia, but wrongs the city's women along the way, causing their fathers to unite in revenge. In this way, the tension between men and women creates a war. Also, Venus (who supports the relations between men and women as positive) and Juno (who believes that men always wrong women) involve themselves in Rome's affairs. Their conflicting aims and values clash and therefore prolong the war.

BOOK 14: THE APOTHEOSIS OF ROMULUS

After the death of the Sabine king, Romulus rules both Rome and Sabine. Mars then goes to Jupiter and recommends that, now that Rome is firmly established, he reward Romulus, Jupiter's grandson, by making him a god. Jupiter agrees and causes a lightning storm to darken to sky. Mars takes his chariot to Romulus, who is dispensing justice among his people. Mars melts away Romulus's mortal qualities, transforming him into a god.

At the beginning of the Metamorphoses, *humans were mysterious creatures somehow created in the gods' image. Now, near the end of the work, human heroes are more consistently being transformed into gods, suggesting that the gods are both the creators of human beings but also the perfection of the human being.*

Romulus's wife Hersilie weeps, believing her husband is lost. Juno sends Iris to tell Hersilie to cease lamenting because her husband is now a god. Hersilie humbles herself before Iris and begs to be brought to her husband. Iris leads Hersilie to Romulus's new temple. There, a shooting star descends from the sky, catching Hersilie on fire and launching her into the sky. In this way, Romulus and Hersilie became the gods Quirinus and Hora.

Hersilie's humility before Iris shows that she is worthy of being made a god like her husband Romulus. The gods only make gods those people who don't consider themselves worthy enough to be among the gods. In this way, humility, which starts with lowering oneself, ironically leads to being raised up.

BOOK 15: MYSCELUS

Rome debates who should replace Romulus as ruler. A man named Numa is chosen who is curious about history and religion. His interest leads him to explore beyond his homeland, traveling to Croton. In Croton, he asks an elder who founded this Greek city on Italian land. The elder answers that Hercules once took refuge in Croton with his cattle and prophesied that the land would one day be home to a city.

When Numa goes to Croton, the elder mentions that it had once been prophesied that Croton would become a huge city. This shows that Fate—which is set in stone and out of the gods' control—not only contains the destinies of individuals, but also the rise and fall of major cities.

The elder says that Hercules appeared in the dream of a man named Myscelus. Hercules instructed Myscelus to leave Argos and head for Croton. Myscelus woke up and debated whether to forsake the laws of his country, which forbid its citizens to leave. When Hercules appeared in his dreams again, threatening terrible things if he disobeyed, Myscelus prepared to depart. When his fellow citizens found out, they voted to convict him. Myscelus prayed to Hercules, and Hercules altered the votes to be in favor of releasing Myscelus. Myscelus thanked Hercules and set sail for Croton where he established the new city.

This passage provides another example for how banishment or strife is necessary for progress. Similar to Cadmus and Aeneas who were outcast, Myscelus forsakes his kingdom in order to establish Croton. With this example, Ovid claims that bad things are the necessary conditions for a transformation into something good; in this way, transformation applies not only to beings but also to events and fortune.

BOOK 15: PYTHAGORAS

Pythagoras was born on an island ruled by tyrants and fled to Croton. He likes to contemplate nature's laws, the creation of the universe, and the gods. He shares his contemplations with the people of Croton. One day, he gives a speech urging them not to eat meat. He addresses the citizens as mortals and implores them not to defile their bodies with meat when nature provides an abundance of fruit, milk, and honey. Pythagoras points out that only savage beasts eat meat, and that it is wrong for one creature to eat the guts of another. He says that greed and gluttony cause people to eat meat.

In his speech, Pythagoras takes contemplations of the gods, the universe, and nature—the main themes of the Metamorphoses*—and formulates a philosophy. One of the points of this philosophy is that human beings should not eat meat. This point circles back to the early days of the universe's creation in which humans became corrupt by abusing nature. Similarly, the habit of eating meat is an abuse of nature's creatures.*

Pythagoras points out that, during the Golden Age, humans never ate meat. During that time, birds, rabbits, and fish lived without fear of human killers. A person can kill an animal out of self-defense, but they shouldn't eat it. People started to eat their foes, but then they started to eat their pigs, goats, and oxen—animals which provide wonderful services, such as milk and labor, to humans while they're alive. Even worse, humans started including the gods in their murders, believing that sacrificing animals pleased them. Pythagoras says it is horrible to kill an innocent animal and then to gorge on its flesh.

Pythagoras traces the slippery slope of corruption that started with human beings defending themselves and ended with them abusing innocent nature. Pythagoras illustrates how eating meat might seem like the natural use of nature's resources to satisfy human needs, but that it is actually the opposite. Killing an animal disregards the service that this animal naturally provides to humans, showing how eating meat is an abuse of nature rather than an embrace of it.

After this speech, Pythagoras says he will unveil the heavens, expose the errors of mortals, and correct them by revealing fate. Pythagoras wonders why human beings fear death and says that all things change but that nothing dies. After the body has decayed and burned, the soul wanders and enters new bodies. Like in a piece of wax, each form that the soul inhabits is only an impression on the unchanging wax. Therefore, a person should never live according to their bodily desires.

In his speech, Pythagoras creates a teaching from the fact of transformation. Since transformation proves that a person has a soul that can leave its body and inhabit new forms, a person should never live by the rules of their body but instead by rules more fitting for a soul. In this way, transformation is not only of aesthetic value to the Metamorphoses*, but also provides a philosophy of life.*

Pythagoras says that nothing in the universe remains unchanged. Like a river that can never stand still, time is constantly flowing. Night and day are different; the sun is different colors at different times, and the moon a different size and shape at different times. The year has four seasons, starting with youthful spring and ending with aged winter.

Pythagoras explains that no part of the universe remains stagnant in the same state. Not only do souls pass from one body to another, but the forms of nature are always waxing and waning. Also, time constantly moves. In this way, everything is always transforming.

The human body is also constantly changing and aging. A person begins as a seed until nature confines them inside a mother's womb and thrusts them into the light. Humans are born helpless until they gradually develop into self-supporting creatures. Their strength increases until their prime and then they start to diminish. In this way, time causes everything to decay. Even the elements are impermanent, with earth, water, air and fire always evaporating and condensing into one another. Nothing keeps its original form, but nothing dies, either. Things simply change form, the whole remaining constant.

Pythagoras points out that the claim that everything changes is the same as the claim that nothing ever dies. Even though it seems that everything, in changing, is constantly decaying and dying out, in reality these things are only undergoing the process of transformation. Because everything changes, there is no death. Death would constitute a stable state of non-changing—a state that doesn't exist in the constantly changing world.

Pythagoras says that he has seen evidence that places also change. He has seen land erode into water and has found shells far away from the seashore. Plains have become valleys and marshes have become dry land. Rivers that were once safe to drink are now contaminated; some are drinkable at their source but not farther down. Islands have become mainland and mainland has become islands; old cities exist under the sea; winds have become trapped in caves and formed hills.

Pythagoras points out that transformation, although it has a divine connotation, is actually a fundamental characteristic of nature. Natural processes always involve the reformation of land and the decay and rebirth of new forms. In this way, transformation in the human realm can be seen as a divinely motivated occurrence, but also as simply our part in nature.

Pythagoras says that water both affects and undergoes change. A certain spring is hot and cold at different times of day; a certain river turns whatever it touches to marble; a certain pool emasculates whoever swims in it, and another makes the bather go mad; there is a spring that causes anyone who drinks from it to detest wine, and another that makes the drinker drunk as if on wine.

Pythagoras points out that much of the universe's transformation is arbitrary. It is not that water affects a certain kind of change, only that water affects change. In this way, Pythagoras suggests that transformations occur for no other reason than the fact that everything changes.

Pythagoras says that volcanoes are evidence of change. Volcanoes might suggest that a living creature lurks in the earth's core, breathing flame through several holes in the earth's surface. On the other hand, volcanoes might be due to winds trapped in the earth's craters generating friction against the rock and starting fires. Or yet again, volcanoes may be a chemical reaction of minerals. When the creature moves, or the winds or minerals run out, the volcanoes change location or stop altogether.

Pythagoras explains that transformations have divine, mythological, and natural significance. A single instance of transformation—such as the volcano—can have three different explanations depending on which point of view they are seen from. In this way, metamorphosis is the driving force of the universe as it is a fundamental part of every worldview.

Pythagoras says time and decay turn material into animals. If a person digs a ditch and buries a dead bull, bees are born all over the decaying carcass. Leaves will house the cocoons that later become butterflies, and mud births the tadpoles that turn into frogs. When a bear gives birth, it gives birth to a living lump of flesh that slowly grows and forms itself into a full-sized bear. Most animals start as limbless bodies that develop with time, and all birds come from the yolk of an egg. Only the phoenix is not born from an alien form: the baby phoenix is born from its father's dead body and lives 500 years.

Pythagoras explains that the process that seems like death is actually the process of birth. This process mimics the process of the universe's initial creation: the universe began as an indistinguishable lump of chaos that was then organized into a world. In the same way, the bear cub is a lump before it is a bear. When something "dies" it simply return to formlessness, just as the universe did after the flood, and then reforms again.

Pythagoras says that there is not enough time in the day for him to recount all the transformations of the universe. He says that civilizations also rise and fall. Troy was wealthy and populated, but now is humbled and reduced to ancient ruins. Sparta and Athens are gone. Now, Rome is rising, changing its shape, and steadily growing. When Troy was falling, Priam foreshadowed that it wouldn't fall completely, but that it would live on in Aeneas, who would forge it anew on a strange land. Rome started in this way, and Iulus will go on to make it powerful before he is taken up to the heavens as a god. In this way, the Greeks won the Trojan War for the benefit of the Trojans.

The Metamorphoses *itself is a testament to Pythagoras's claim that he doesn't have the time to recount all the world's transformations. The* Metamorphoses *contains thousands of transformations— including the transformation of Troy into Rome, from a place of defeat into a state of prowess—and gave the impression, seeing as it was an oral history, that there were thousands left unsaid simply because those who'd witnessed them weren't encountered in Ovid's non-linear oral history.*

Pythagoras stops himself from straying too far off topic. He says that everything in the universe changes shape, including humans. Humans possess "winged souls" that inhabit different forms. For this reason, the animals a person encounters may be their parents or siblings. Therefore, people should respect animals and not eat them. When a person kills an animal, they are spilling human blood. Pythagoras says people should let goats produce milk and sheep produce wool and stop murdering them. Since all creatures are one, Pythagoras recommends a diet that is kind to all.

Pythagoras describes the human soul as "winged"—able to take flight into different forms. Pythagoras then gives another argument against the consumption of meat. Not only does eating meat abuse nature, but it abuses human beings as well whose winged soul might be perched in an animal body. Pythagoras claims that all creatures are one, having shown, with Ovid's work to illustrate it, that there is free passage between all creatures.

BOOK 15: EGERIA AND HIPPOLYTUS

Numa listens to the wise teachings of Pythagoras in Croton and then goes back to Rome to start his rule. He steers Rome away from its passion for war and towards a state of peace. When Numa dies, the Romans mourn. Egeria, Numa's wife, hides in the woods and wails, ignoring the nymphs who beg her to cease lamenting. One day, Theseus's son Hippolytus finds Egeria and urges her take comfort in the misfortunes of others. He tells her his own story: Hippolytus's stepmother Phaedra had once tried to inveigle him to be her lover. When he refused, Phaedra got angry, accused him of her own crime, and persuaded his father Theseus to banish him.

When Numa dies, Egeria is so overcome with grief that she can no longer function. Hippolytus tries to get her mind off her own suffering by telling her his story. In this way, Hippolytus attempts to draw Egeria away from the extreme state towards which her grief is leading her: a state, like Canens's, beyond that of a capable human being and a state that would result in her being transformed into something other than a human.

Hippolytus left his homeland and traveled to another city. On the way, a tidal wave rose up, and a giant bull with menacing horns appeared in the crest. Hippolytus's horses bolted in fright. Hippolytus managed to steer his chariot away from some rocks, but one of the wheels cracked against a tree. Hippolytus fell out of the chariot, got caught in the reins, and was dragged along the ground by the wild horses. He was mangled and beaten until his spirit descended into Hades.

Hippolytus's story explains how he died and descended to Hades and then—seemingly miraculously—came back to land and to life. His story shows that, in this world, no person dies in the true sense of the word. A person changes form or changes location, descending to Hades, but they remain untouched in the sense that they remain conscious and can be reformed.


Apollo's son healed Hippolytus in a magical river and allowed him to leave Hades. Shocked by his scarred appearance, Diana hid Hippolytus behind the clouds. Then she transfigured Hippolytus's features so he could reappear in public without causing alarm and settled him in the forest outside Rome. Hippolytus finishes his story, but Egeria is not comforted and continues to weep. Finally, Diana takes pity on her and turns her into a spring.

Egeria is not comforted by Hippolytus's story of grief, meaning that she is too overcome by her emotions to take solace in the camaraderie of her kind. This suggests that, before Egeria is literally transformed, her grief figuratively transforms her into someone who no longer belongs in the human world.

BOOK 15: TAGES, ROMULUS' SPEAR, CIPUS

Hippolytus is impressed by Egeria's transformation into water. A ploughman is amazed when a clod of earth transforms into a man who predicts the future. Similarly, Romulus was astonished when he saw the spear he'd thrown transform into a tree.

These examples of transformations that inspire awe point out that, as the world is more developed by humans, divine instances of transformation become more and more astonishing.

A Roman man named Cipus is surprised when he looks at his reflection and sees that he's grown horns. Cipus calls to the gods, praying that if the horns are a good omen, they will be for the good of Rome; if they are a bad omen, he hopes they are bad only for himself. The prophet who used to be the clod of soil then prophesies that when Cipus walks through the gates of Rome, he will be its king. Cipus sees this as a bad omen and would rather spend his life in exile than be Rome's tyrant.

In this scene, a prophet lays out the future of Rome. In previous instances, prophets always revealed the events that were fated to occur outside of any divine or human efforts to prevent them. In this instance, Cipus recognizes that the fate the prophet has revealed is a bad one. Instead of accepting it, Cipus uses his intelligence to find a loophole in the wording of his fate.

Cipus conceals his horns in a wreath, summons the Roman citizens, and delivers a speech. He says that there is a man present who will be Rome's tyrant unless the people drive him out of the city or put him to death. This man has two horns on his head. The citizens murmur, wondering who the man is. Cipus removes his wreath, revealing his horns, and the people gasp. They banish him from the city, but award him his own parcel of land and engrave horns on Rome's gateposts in his memory.

Cipus knows that the prophecy the prophet made cannot be altered by either gods or humans. However, he finds a way of blocking the bad consequences of this fate. Knowing he will be Rome's tyrant, he has the Roman citizens drive him out of the city before he can begin his reign. In this way, Cipus accepts unchangeable fate but manipulates it to suit his people.

BOOK 15: AESCULAPIUS

A terrible plague afflicts Rome. Medicine does nothing to prevent it, and the citizens are tired of performing funerals. They decide to ask for divine help, so they travel to Apollo's temple. Apollo calls out, telling the Romans to look for his son, Aesculapius, and ask him to heal them. The Romans sail to Epidaurus, the city where Aesculapius lives. They approach the Grecian Senate and ask them to part with their god, saying that Apollo gave them his blessing to take Aesculapius to Rome. The Grecian Senate defers the decision to the following day.

Although humanity has developed since the universe's creation to possess tools, cities, inventions, politics, and institutions, they still require help from the gods. The Roman plague proves that there are some tragedies and natural disasters too extreme for humans to solve on their own, and therefore establishes the continual importance of the gods, even in the contemporary world.

That night, Aesculapius comes to one of the Romans in his sleep and says he will go to Rome, and to look for him the next day in the disguise of a serpent. The next day, the Grecian Senate is still undecided. They go to Aesculapius's temple and ask him for a sign as to whether he should be sent to Rome or not. Aesculapius appears in the form of a giant snake and announces his intent to go to Rome. Afraid and amazed, everyone bows before the snake. Aesculapius slithers from his temple, across the city, and on board the Roman ship. The Romans sacrifice a bull in thanks, then set sail for Rome.

Instead of stealing Aesculapius from the Greeks and instead of the Greeks just handing him over, the Romans and the Greeks ask Aesculapius to choose which city he wants to protect. Aesculapius chooses Rome of his own accord, an action which seems to sanction Rome as the greatest city in the world. Also, Aesculapius's preference shows that Troy's fortunes have come full circle: they were defeated by Greece, but now they have established Rome—a city favored over Greece by the gods.

Aesculapius lays his head on the prow of the boat and watches as they pass all the places of history. Aesculapius deboards the ship at Apollo's temple where he stays for a while. Then Aesculapius boards the ship again and they continue on to Rome. The Roman citizens gather to greet him as the ship emerges and light incense on altars dripping with the blood of sacrificed animals. Aesculapius deboards the ship and makes his home on a nearby island. He ends the Roman plague.

Aesculapius's passage to Rome seems to cap off all the changes that have taken place in the world over the course of the Metamorphoses, *ending with the transformation of Troy through defeat into Rome. While on the ship to Rome, Aesculapius watches all the historical places pass him by, creating a grand finale for the changes that have shaped Rome.*

BOOK 15: THE APOTHEOSIS OF JULIUS CAESAR

While Aesculapius came to Rome from abroad, Julius Caesar was born in Rome. Caesar was a genius in matters of war and peace and did many heroic things, but his greatest achievement was fathering his son, Caesar Augustus. Before Augustus was born, Julius Caesar became a god. This is how it happened: Venus foresees that Julius Caesar is about to be murdered by traitors from his government and flies into a rage. She feels she has suffered an unfair amount of treachery: she had to fight against Juno's rage to protect Aeneas, and now Aeneas's only living descendent, Julius Caesar, is under threat.

Even though Rome comes to the height of its grandeur with Julius Caesar as its ruler, this state of glory cannot last for long, as no state in the Metamorphoses *lasts for long. Venus is furious that Rome's state has to change and that Caesar has to die, showing that the gods butt heads with the constantly changing nature of the universe. Since Venus can't control fate or time, she is unable to immortalize Caesar on earth.*

The gods are moved by Venus's despair. Although they can't alter Fate, they try to warn Rome of the imminent tragedy by filling the streets with omens. Blood rains from the clouds, owls hoot, dogs howl, priests botch the sacrifices, and the streets are haunted with ghosts. Despite these warnings, the two traitors enter the Senate hall holding swords. At this moment, Venus attempts to hide Julius Caesar in clouds.

The gods try to prevent Fate by filling the world with bad omens and signs. In contrast to the inflexible dictates of fate, the gods' powers are merely aesthetic. All the gods can do is alter the makeup of the universe—transforming creatures and landforms—but they can't affect actual historical changes.

Jupiter asks Venus why she is fighting Fate. He has read the tablets **written** with the destiny of the world and knows that Julius Caesar has come to the end of his time. Venus will make him a god, and Caesar Augustus will avenge his death. In the ensuing battles between Rome and "barbarian lands," Augustus will be the hero. When he has brought peace to the world, Augustus will return to Rome and rule it justly. When he dies, he too will be made a god. Jupiter tells Venus to rescue Julius Caesar's soul from his dead body and make him a comet.

Jupiter describes Fate as a written document of future events that is utterly unchangeable. The fact that inflexible fate is written down suggests that writing has something to do with permanence. As in the story of Byblis and Caunus, when something is written, it cannot be unwritten or undone. In this way, writing is the one thing with permanence in the world of the Metamorphoses.

Venus goes to the Senate hall in Rome and retrieves Caesar's soul. As she carries it up to heaven, she feels it blaze. It escapes from her arms and flies higher than the moon, where it becomes a star. The people in Rome say that Caesar Augustus is an even greater emperor than his father, although Augustus won't admit it. Throughout history, fathers yield their glory to their sons. Ovid calls on all the gods who fathered great men, praying that it will be a long time before the great Augustus leaves the world; he prays that, when Augustus does become a god, he will continue to listen to the prayers of his people.

After Julius Caesar is made a god, Rome hints that Caesar Augustus is a better ruler than his father was before him. In this way, lineage is a kind of transformative occurrence in which the social and political world ascends through generations. Ovid then asks the gods to delay Augustus's transformation for as long as possible so that the world can enjoy him in human form. In a sense, then, Ovid concludes his work on transformation by praying for its postponement.

BOOK 15: EPILOGUE

Ovid concludes his poem, saying that nothing—not Jupiter's anger, war, or time—can destroy his **writing**. One day, his body will die, but "the finer part" of him will live for eternity higher than the stars. Ovid knows that his name will never be forgotten, no matter how far Rome expands. As long as poets are seen as the prophets of truth, he will live on in his fame.

In concluding his work on the constant transformation of all things, Ovid asserts that his writing cannot be transformed, whether by the gods, time, or nature. Ovid then draws a connection between poetry and the "finer part" of himself, by which he means his "winged soul." This "winged soul," or his poetry, will leave his body when he dies and perhaps take on new forms, but it will never pass away.

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