

# Classical mythology essay example

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



Laius was the father of the infamous tyrant, Oedipus and the first husband to Jocasta. Because he broke arguably the most important custom in ancient times, the guest-host relationship, he was fated to be killed by his own offspring. His role in the story of Oedipus was described in pages 72 and 73 and it is a very interesting one for several reasons. He played a versatile character because not only is he the cause of all of Oedipus' woes, but he was also a motif which often appeared in Greek tragedy, which is the "absent father." Laius was also the very reason for the initial conflict in Oedipus Rex. The miasma that plagued Thebes at the beginning of the play was there in part because the king's murderer was on the throne.

Perseus was one of the many sons of Zeus born of a mortal woman. Perseus is similar to Oedipus in that he too was prophesized to kill a family member, his grandfather, Acrisius. Perseus was an undeniably important figure to the archetype of the hero and the obedient son. On page 87 Perseus also shows how important he is to the Greek Pantheon of myth in the excerpt from Hesiod's Theogony. Not only does the hero slay Medusa but the gorgon's death results in the birth of Pegasus as well, the famous steed that helps Bellerophon slay the Chimera. Perseus was a multifaceted hero as well. Like Odysseus, he used cunning and technology to accomplish goals but was also strong and decisive in battle like Heracles and Achilles.

Helen of Troy was another icon born from a union between Zeus and a mortal. Zeus came to Leda and coupled with her while in the form of a swan. Afterwards, Helen, the most beautiful woman in Greek myth, was born. Page 94 details how Helen was promised to marry Menelaus but was stolen away by a prince of Troy, Paris. Helen's many different appearances are an

informative glimpse into the portrayal of women in ancient literature. The circumstances seem to a modern audience to be out of Helen's control. However, in most of the stories she was depicted, she was given almost full blame for the tragic events of the Trojan War. Helen also seems to be a polar opposite to her half-sister, Clytemnestra. While Helen was a woman without agency or choice, Clytemnestra was a woman who plotted revenge on her husband and assassinated him.

Heracles is arguably the most famous figure from Greek myth. His most famous myths concern his twelve labors. On page 121, an early version of the labors is given where Heracles goes mad and kills his wife and children. In order to atone for slaying his own family, Heracles was forced to complete twelve tasks for Eurystheus. Poets ranging from the ancient comedian, Aristophanes to the Roman poet Ovid have written about Heracles in a number of ways. The Nemean Lion is probably the most famous and iconic labor. Heracles slayed and then skinned the beast and from that point on wore its skin. Because of the story's popularity, the Nemean Lion's skin became a mark of Heracles in paintings and sculpture and it one of the easiest ways to identify the hero in artwork.

Theseus was the hero of Athens, who, according to page 110, was the son of Poseidon in some versions and others was the son of Aegeus, king of Athens. In the versions where Aegeus is his father, the king leaves his sword and sandals under a rock for his son to claim once he came of age. Like Heracles, Theseus was forced to complete labors while on his way to meet his father in Athens. However, Theseus was comparatively more cunning during in his

ordeals than Heracles, which seems to be indicative of how Athenians saw themselves compared with the rest of ancient Greece.

## **Works Cited**

" Classical Mythology." - Windows to the Universe. N. p., n. d. Web. 28 Oct. 2014. .