

Atlas

[Literature](#), [Mythology](#)



Atlas In Greek Mythology, the Titans were a race of giants. Atlas was the strongest of all the titans. His father was titan Iapetus and his mother was the Sea Nymph Clymene. His brothers were Prometheus and Cronus. Atlas was the father of the Hesperides (Daughters of the Evening,) the Hyades, and the Pleiades. He was also the king of the legendary Atlantis. In etymology Atlas means “ bearer” or “ endurer.” An image of Atlas is a person with the world on his back. Also a book of maps is called an atlas. Atlas played a major part in Greek Mythology. He was in the war with Titans against the gods (Olympians.) Atlas partnered with his brother Cronus in the war against Zeus. Atlas stormed the heavens and Zeus punished him. His punishment was to carry the earth, the heavens and the pillar that separates them on his back/shoulders for eternity. This punishment is Atlas’s role in The Odyssey. Hercules became involved with Atlas. Eurystheus, Hercules cousin, challenged Hercules to twelve Labors. The eleventh Labor was to retrieve the golden apples of the Hesperides. Hercules asked Atlas to help him obtain the Golden Apples. In return for Atlas’s help, Hercules took his burden from him while he retrieved the apples. Atlas agreed to Hercules’ proposal. Atlas secured the apples and realized how nice it was not to have the strain of keeping heaven and earth apart for eternity. Hercules deceived Atlas when he returned with the apples. Hercules told Atlas that he needed a cushion for his shoulders and asked Atlas to take back the earth momentarily while he can get pads. Atlas agreed and Hercules left never to return. Another part played in Greek Mythology was when Atlas refused to provide shelter to Perseus. Perseus changed Atlas into stone using Medusa. The huge stone is called Mount Atlas. Atlas has a very distinct appearance. In art, Atlas

is depicted as a man bearing a globe. He was strong and well built. His hair was shoulder length and he had a beard and mustache. He was usually depicted kneeling on one knee holding the world on his shoulders. Atlas had two main values. These values were his strength and his physical endurance. The main reference to Atlas in the modern world is a book of maps. A book of maps or an atlas is named after Atlas. A figure of Atlas supporting the earth was used in the title pages of early map collections. The name has also come to mean a volume of maps. Another reference is saying that one “ bears the weight of the world on its shoulders.” This saying refers to somebody carrying a burden throughout life. Atlantis, plural for Atlas, is the term used in architecture for the sculptured figure of a male used as a column to support a superstructure. It is said that Atlas carried his burden at the western part of the earth. The ocean beyond the Straits of Gibraltar is named the Atlantic Ocean after Atlas. Atlas’s role in Greek mythology is still referred to in today’s society. The image of Atlas holding the earth, the heavens and the pillar that separates them is recognizable to many people. How often do you hear someone say, “ He carries the world on his shoulders?” Atlas’s reference to a book of maps as an atlas is also something most people are familiar with. It is clear that Atlas’s role in Greek mythology has influenced society forever.