

# Analysis of the book norse mythology: great stories from the eddas by hamilton wr...

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Myth is not simply the realm of ancient stories but more likely the insights of wisdom. *Mythology*, written by Edith Hamilton, resembles various myths of ancient Greece and Rome with detailed analysis and explanations. Moreover, the Norse mythology is discussed in a large portion of the book. Especially in this form of Greek or Roman literature, the themes and archetypes are extremely essential to recognize in order to understand the hidden representation and symbols in stories. This book provides us with a wide range of themes and archetypes not only in stories but author's comments.

One of the most common themes found in Greek or Roman literature is the danger of ignorance. In many myths, mortals, usually humans, are more likely to behave arrogantly with a strong egocentrism. As expected, they often end up being punished seriously. In the literature, this theme is heavily displayed in the conflict between humans and god since mortals intentionally raise their status as equals to the gods'. For example, Hamilton wrote, " here Phaethon lies, who drove the Sun-god's car. Greatly he failed, but he had greatly dared." This is the story of Phaethon, the son of Apollo, the sun-god, and a mortal woman. Phaethon was confused and doubtful about his origin: who his father is. Thus, he visited the sun-god. Nevertheless, he ended up messing on the Sun's car once the sun-god promised him to make one of his wishes come true. Unfortunately, he was shot down by Zeus after losing control of the car. This story is an archetypal case of a mortal being arrogant recklessly. As expected, tragedy falls on those mortals who want to raise their position to the God's. Furthermore, " She flung into his face drops from her wet hand and as they fell upon him he was changed into a stag. Not only outwardly. His heart became a deer's heart and he who had never known

fear before was afraid and fled. His dogs saw him running and chased him. Even his agony of terror could not make him swift enough to outstrip the keen-scented pack. They fell upon him, his own faithful hounds, and killed him." According to this quote, there was a mortal called Actaeon, who was also a hunter. He accidentally came across a forest and saw Artemis naked in a bath. Undoubtedly, Artemis was so furious and suddenly turned Actaeon into a stag. In the end, Actaeon was chased and killed by his own loyal hunting dogs. Thus, we can see that the Gods have no mercy towards mortals who despise their divinity. Moreover, the dominance of fate is also a commonly appearing theme in myths. For example, there are countless characters trying to alter their fates no matter how hard or impossible it seems. However, the result is always similar as those people fail to change anything and even lose more than they expected. This widely-known theme stems from the three Fates as explained in the book. Clotho, the youngest of the three Sisters of Fate, is the spinner of the Threads of Fate, which is also referred to the Threads of Life. Lachesis is another sister of the three Fates, whose name derives from the meaning of "to obtain by fate, lot, or divine will". Her task is to measure the thread of life and decide each person's destiny. The oldest sister is called Atropos, who carries scissors to end mortal's lives by cutting their thread of life in the end. As a result, no matter how many efforts you put and how hard you attempt to alter your fate, it is all in vain. For instance, there is a quote from the book, "Zeus and his brothers drew lots for their share of the universe." Hamilton introduces the supreme power of fate by stating the fact that even those mighty Gods, such

as Zeus and Poseidon, had to draw lots to decide their positions. This quote emphasizes the randomness and uncontrollability of fate.

One another common themes of myths can be considered as “ death upon death”. “ If I must slay. The joy of my house, my daughter. A father’s hands. Stained with dark streams flowing. From blood of a girl. Slaughtered before the altar.” These words were spoken from Agamemnon after he noticed that he has to sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia, to the angry Artemis in order to continue sailing to Troy. For Agamemnon, performing his duty as a soldier and bring back the victory were far more important than murdering his own blood. In other words, he felt like persisting his oath and sacrificing to the God is necessary and even mandatory that he could kill his own girl for the Greeks’ future. Unexpectedly, when he returned home, he was slaughtered by his wife, Clytemnestra, in revenge for their daughter. Sarcastically, Clytemnestra also did her own choice between avenging her daughter and murdering her husband. In addition, there is a tale called Pyramus and Thisbe from Ovid. Pyramus and Thisbe were two lovers who wanted to get married but their parents disagreed. Eventually, they decided to elope and met outside the city. Thisbe got there first but encountered a lion. She ran away dropping her cloak on the ground. The cloak was torn apart by the lion. After Pyramus arrived and saw the cloak, he was depressed and killed himself. From my perspective, this story is similar to Romeo and Juliet, which talks about a tragedy due to a misunderstanding. Thus, this is called the “ death upon death”, which seems like a slippery slope of conflicting ethnics accompanied with bloods.

As what I believe, ancient Greek mythology stories are not only a part of the literature class but also a great lesson for the ancient history and culture. Someone might say that the mythology has been outdated in our modern world, and it is just a bunch of fake stories around ancient people's fantasy; however, there are still a great amount of literatures and movies related to the ancient mythology, so I would conclude that the modern world is still intrigued by those mysterious and attractive stories. It is somehow essential to know about the Greek mythology because they are stories that have been passed down through generations, and there must be reasons for that. These myths help people to find their own way in this chaotic world. They teach us what is right and wrong, such as being brave but also humble. One of the most important reasons to study ancient myths is that they commonly passed down in the form of symbols appearing all over the modern literature. It shows the progress and development of literature, one of the most valuable heritages ancestors left for us. Myths give us a sense of identity and help answer the question, "who am I?"