

# Descent into hades



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In Greek mythology, Hades referred to both to the Greek underworld and the god of the underworld. Hades has however become more often used to refer to the underworld itself while the god of the underworld being referred to by the name Pluto. In earlier Greek myths, Hades was perceived to be a grim, misty and gloomy place where the dead lived, however, later Greek philosophy gave birth to the idea of life after death and the concept of judgment.

The concept that there is a land of the dead separate from the land of the living is intrinsic in almost all religious and social groups, ancient and current. This has led to the wide spread allusion in most literary works and religious doctrines and became sign of all true epics. In Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, Umbriel (from Latin umbra meaning shadow, the poem, a melancholy sprite), a gnome is described to be descend into the dark Cave of Spleen. The spleen was traditionally associated with the passions and particularly depression.

In the epic, Umbriel is given vial containing " Sighs, Sobs, and Passions, and the War of Tongues" and " fainting Fears, Soft Sorrows, melting Griefs, and flowing Tears" which he breaks and pours on Bellinda when he comes out driving her to further despair as she bemoans her fate. The Descent to Hades in the *Rape of the Lock* is a psychological allegory. The spleen was believed to be the source of depression. Pope also uses it show that all feelings affected by gods as a punishment for what we do.

Belinda, at first is displaying false grief but when stricken by the ' vial' she moans terribly to the Baron who is however not listening to her anymore. Other epics and stories where there is the descent to Hades are journeys

made by Odysseus, Aeneas. In Homer's book, Odysseus after a string of perilous journey is advised by Circe to travel to the land of ' where the dead journey to', after offering a sacrificial lamb in a pit for Tiresia, the spirit he wanted to talk to, he is told the dangers he will face on his journey back and also how he could ensure happy death when his time came.

Thus the descent to Hades (land of the dead) gives Odysseus a chance to look at what he is going to undergo and also as a way of advice. Basically to get help on how to get home. The story of Aeneas is recorded in the Iliad. Aeneas travels to the land of the dead to pay a duty call on his dead father Anchises. To do this he has to cross rive Styx which separates the mortal realm from the realm of the dead. He is advised on how to get to Hades by Sibyl. When he gets to the land of the dead he meets his father and even his wife Dido.