

Jason and the Golden Fleece (part 2)

Here is how to say some of the more difficult names in this myth. In brackets, I've broken the names down into sounds to help you to say them.

Colchis- (kol kiss)

Calais- (kall lass)

Zetes- (zeet eez)

Aeetes- (eye ee teez)

The Argonauts felt sorry for the starving king. They told him to have his table set, and when the Harpies swooped down again, Zetes and Calais, the sons of the North Wind, took to their wings. They could fly faster than the Harpies, and when they caught them, they whipped the evil pests so hard that they barely escaped with their lives. The Harpies flew to the south, never to be seen again.

At last the starving king could eat in peace. He could not thank the Argonauts enough and told them how to set their course and what dangers they would encounter. He told them that no ship had yet been able to reach the shores of Colchis, for the passage to the Black Sea was blocked by two moving rocks. The rocks rolled apart and clashed together, crushing whatever came between them. But if a ship could move as fast as a bird in flight, it might get through.

The king gave Jason a dove and told him to send the bird ahead of the ship. If the dove came through alive, they had a chance, he said. If not, they had better give up and turn back.

The Argonauts took leave of the king and sailed toward the clashing rocks. From afar they could hear the noise of them and the heroes trembled, but as the rocks rolled apart, Jason released the dove and the bird flew between them like a dart. Only the very tips of its tail feathers were clipped off when the rocks clashed together.

"All men to the oars!" Jason shouted.

Orpheus grasped his lyre and played and his music inspired the heroes to row as never before. The Argo shot ahead like an arrow when the rocks rolled apart, and only the very end of its stern was crushed as they clashed together. Again, the rocks rolled apart and stood firmly anchored.

The spell was broken, and from then on ships could safely sail in and out of the Black Sea.

The Black Sea was a dangerous sea to sail upon, and Hera had her hands full, guiding the Argonauts through perils. But with her help, Jason brought his ship safely through raging storms, past pirate shores and dangerous islands, and the Argonauts finally arrived in Colchis.

King Aeetes of Colchis was a very inhospitable king. In fact he was so unfriendly that he killed all foreigners who came to his country. When he saw the Argo landing he was furious, and when Jason led his men to his palace and said that they were all great heroes and had come to offer the king their services in return for the Golden Fleece, he fumed with rage.

"Very well," he said to Jason. "Tomorrow, between sunrise and sunset, you must harness my fire breathing bulls, plough up a field, and plant it with dragon's teeth. You must then battle the 'bone warriors' that shall rise from those teeth. If you succeed, the Golden Fleece is yours. But if you fail, I shall cut out the tongues and chop off the hands of you and all your great heroes."

King Aeetes knew well that no man could withstand the searing heat that blew from the bulls' nostrils.

What he did not know was that Hera was helping Jason.

