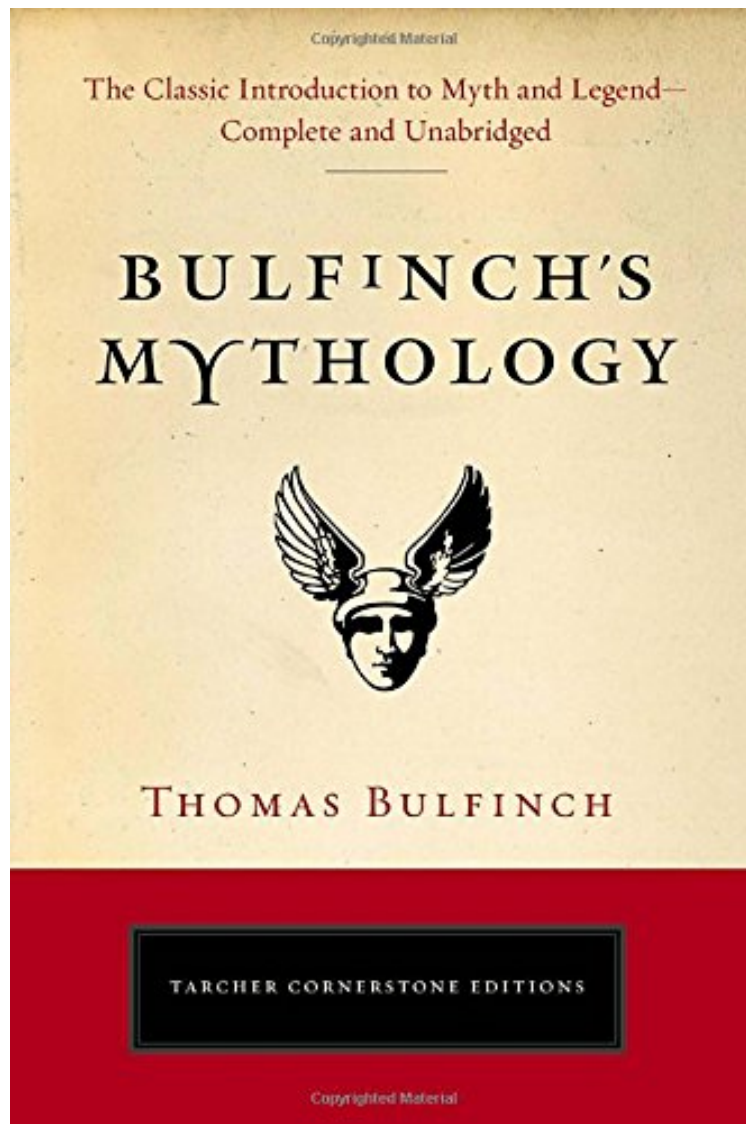


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Bulfinch's Mythology: The Classic Introduction to Myth and Legend-Complete and Unabridged (Tarcher Cornerstone Editions)

Thomas Bulfinch

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A beautifully packaged and affordably priced edition of this classic, accessible guide to world mythology, unabridged and complete. Thomas Bulfinch collected and interpreted the legends of the world for everyday people, so that those who lacked extensive schooling could still understand the mythological allusions that fill classic and contemporary literature. Bulfinch's Mythology began as three separate volumes in the 1850s and 60s. Bulfinch published "The Age of Fable, or Stories of Gods and Heroes" in 1855 and then moved on to publish two more collections: "The Age of Chivalry, or the Legends of King Arthur" in 1858; and "Legends of Charlemagne, or Romance of the Middle Ages" in 1863. When Bulfinch died in 1867, the three volumes were combined and retitled Bulfinch's Mythology and reprinted in 1881. It has remained one of the most trusted English-language interpretations of Greek and Roman mythology, Arthurian legend, and medieval romance ever since. Our Cornerstone Edition of Bulfinch's Mythology offers readers an easily portable, complete collection of all three volumes—the only such edition of this beloved anthology currently available.

"One of the most popular books ever published in the United States and the standard work on classical mythology for nearly a century" Carl J. Richard, *The Battle for the American Mind* About the Author Thomas Bulfinch (1796-1867) was a Massachusetts-based writer and banker who wrote and collected the first popular English-language retellings of Greek, Roman, Eastern, Scandinavian, Arthurian, and medieval myths. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Stories of Gods and Heroes CHAPTER I Introduction The religions of ancient Greece and Rome are extinct. The so-called divinities of Olympus have not a single worshipper among living men. They belong now not to the department of theology, but to those of literature and taste. There they still hold their place, and will continue to hold it, for they are too closely connected with the finest productions of poetry and art, both ancient and modern, to pass into oblivion. We propose to tell the stories relating to them which have come down to us from the ancients, and which are alluded to by modern poets, essayists, and orators. Our readers may thus at the same time be entertained by the most charming fictions which fancy has ever created, and put in possession of information indispensable to every one who would read with intelligence the elegant literature of his own day. In order to understand these stories, it will be necessary to acquaint ourselves with the ideas of the structure of the universe which prevailed among the Greeks—the people from whom the Romans, and other nations through them, received their science and religion. The Greeks believed the earth to be flat and circular, their own country occupying the middle of it, the central point being either Mount Olympus, the abode of the gods, or Delphi, so famous for its oracle. The circular disk of the earth was crossed from west to east and divided into two equal parts by the Sea, as they called the Mediterranean, and its continuation the Euxine, the only seas with which they were acquainted. Around the earth flowed the River Ocean, its course being from south to north on the western side of the earth, and in a contrary direction on the eastern side. It flowed in a steady, equable current, unvexed by storm or tempest. The sea, and all the rivers on earth, received their waters from it. The northern portion of the earth was supposed to be inhabited by a happy race named the Hyperboreans, dwelling in everlasting bliss and spring beyond the lofty mountains whose caverns were supposed to send forth the piercing blasts of the north wind, which chilled the people of Hellas (Greece). Their country was inaccessible by land or sea. They lived exempt from disease or old age, from toils and warfare. Moore has given us the Song of a Hyperborean, beginning I come from a land in the sun-bright deep, Where golden gardens glow, Where the winds of the north, becalmed in sleep, Their conch shells never blow. On the south side of the earth, close to the stream of Ocean, dwelt a people happy and virtuous as the Hyperboreans. They were named the Ethiopians. The gods favored them so highly that they were wont to leave at times their Olympian abodes and go to share their sacrifices and banquets. On the western margin of the earth, by the stream of Ocean, lay a happy place named the Elysian Plain, whither mortals favored by the gods were transported without tasting of death, to enjoy an immortality of bliss. This happy region was also called the Fortunate Fields, and the Isles of the Blessed. We thus see that the Greeks of the early ages knew little of any real people except those to the east and south of their own country, or near the coast of the Mediterranean. Their imagination meantime peopled the western portion of this sea with giants, monsters, and enchantresses; while they placed around the disk of the earth, which they probably regarded as of no great width, nations enjoying the peculiar favor of the gods, and blessed with happiness and longevity. The Dawn, the Sun, and the Moon were supposed to rise out of the Ocean, on the eastern side, and to drive through the air, giving light to gods and men. The stars, also, except those forming the Wain or Bear, and others near them, rose out of and sank into the stream of Ocean. There the sun-god embarked in a winged boat, which conveyed him round by the northern part of the earth, back to his place of rising in the east. Milton alludes to this in his *Comus*: Now the gilded car of day His golden axle doth allay In the steep Atlantic stream, And the slope Sun his upward beam Shoots against the dusky pole, Pacing towards the other

goal Of his chamber in the east. The abode of the gods was on the summit of Mount Olympus, in Thessaly. A gate of clouds, kept by the goddesses named the Seasons, opened to permit the passage of the Celestials to earth, and to receive them on their return. The gods had their separate dwellings; but all, when summoned, repaired to the palace of Jupiter, as did also those deities whose usual abode was the earth, the waters, or the underworld. It was also in the great hall of the palace of the Olympian king that the gods feasted each day on ambrosia and nectar, their food and drink, the latter being handed round by the lovely goddess Hebe. Here they conversed of the affairs of heaven and earth; and as they quaffed their nectar, Apollo, the god of music, delighted them with the tones of his lyre, to which the Muses sang in responsive strains. When the sun was set, the gods retired to sleep in their respective dwellings. The following lines from the *Odyssey* will show how Homer conceived of Olympus: So saying, Minerva, goddess azure-eyed, Rose to Olympus, the reputed seat Eternal of the gods, which never storms Disturb, rains drench, or snow invades, but calm The expanse and cloudless shines with purest day. There the inhabitants divine rejoice Forever. COWPER. The robes and other parts of the dress of the goddesses were woven by Minerva and the Graces and everything of a more solid nature was formed of the various metals. Vulcan was architect, smith, armorer, chariot builder, and artist of all work in Olympus. He built of brass the houses of the gods; he made for them the golden shoes with which they trod the air or the water, and moved from place to place with the speed of the wind, or even of thought. He also shod with brass the celestial steeds, which whirled the chariots of the gods through the air, or along the surface of the sea. He was able to bestow on his workmanship self-motion, so that the tripods (chairs and tables) could move of themselves in and out of the celestial hall. He even endowed with intelligence the golden handmaidens whom he made to wait on himself. Jupiter, or Jove (Zeus*), though called the father of gods and men, had himself a beginning. Saturn (Cronos) was his father, and Rhea (Ops) his mother. Saturn and Rhea were of the race of Titans, who were the children of Earth and Heaven, which sprang from Chaos, of which we shall give a further account in our next chapter. There is another cosmogony, or account of the creation, according to which Earth, Erebus, and Love were the first of beings. Love (Eros) issued from the egg of Night, which floated on Chaos. By his arrows and torch he pierced and vivified all things, producing life and joy. Saturn and Rhea were not the only Titans. There were others, whose names were Oceanus, Hyperion, Iapetus, and Ophion, males; and Themis, Mnemosyne, Eurynome, females. They are spoken of as the elder gods, whose dominion was afterwards transferred to others. Saturn yielded to Jupiter, Oceanus to Neptune, Hyperion to Apollo. Hyperion was the father of the Sun, Moon, and Dawn. He is therefore the original sun-god, and is painted with the splendor and beauty which were afterwards bestowed on Apollo. Hyperions curls, the front of Jove himself. SHAKSPEARE. Ophion and Eurynome ruled over Olympus till they were dethroned by Saturn and Rhea. Milton alludes to them in *Paradise Lost*. He says the heathens seem to have had some knowledge of the temptation and fall of man. And fabled how the serpent, whom they called Ophion, with Eurynome, (the wide-Encroaching Eve perhaps,) had first the rule Of high Olympus, thence by Saturn driven. The representations given of Saturn are not very consistent; for on the one hand his reign is said to have been the golden age of innocence and purity, and on the other he is described as a monster who devoured his children.* Jupiter, however, escaped this fate, and when grown up espoused Metis (Prudence), who administered a draught to Saturn which caused him to disgorge his children. Jupiter, with his brothers and sisters, now rebelled against their father Saturn and his brothers the Titans; vanquished them, and imprisoned some of them in Tartarus, inflicting other penalties on others. Atlas was condemned to bear up the heavens on his shoulders. On the dethronement of Saturn, Jupiter with his brothers Neptune (Poseidon) and Pluto (Dis) divided his dominions. Jupiters portion was the heavens, Neptunes the ocean, and Plutos the realms of the dead. Earth and Olympus were common property. Jupiter was king of gods and men. The thunder was his weapon, and he bore a shield called gis, made for him by Vulcan. The eagle was his favorite bird, and bore his thunderbolts. Juno (Hera) was the wife of Jupiter, and queen of the gods. Iris, the goddess of the rainbow, was her attendant and messenger. The peacock was her favorite bird. Vulcan (Hephstos), the celestial artist, was the son of Jupiter and Juno. He was born lame, and his mother was so displeased at the sight of him that she flung him out of heaven. Other accounts say that Jupiter kicked him out for taking part with his mother in a quarrel which occurred between them. Vulcans lameness, according to this account, was the consequence of his fall. He was a whole day falling, and at last alighted in the island of Lemnos, which was thenceforth sacred to him. Milton alludes to this story in *Paradise Lost*, Book I: . . . From morn To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve, A summers day; and with the setting sun Dropped from the zenith, like a falling star, On Lemnos, the gean isle. Mars (Ares), the god of war, was the son of Jupiter and Juno. Phbus Apollo, the god of archery, prophecy, and music, was the son of Jupiter and Latona, and brother of Diana (Artemis). He was god of the sun, as Diana, his sister, was the goddess of the moon. Venus (Aphrodite), the goddess of love and beauty, was the daughter of Jupiter and Dione. Others say that Venus sprang from the foam of the sea. The zephyr wafted her along the waves to the Isle of Cyprus, where she was received and attired by the Seasons, and then led to the assembly of the gods. All were charmed with her beauty, and each one demanded her for his wife. Jupiter gave her to Vulcan, in gratitude for the service he had rendered in forging thunderbolts. So the most beautiful of the goddesses became the wife of the most ill-favored of gods. Venus possessed an embroidered girdle called Cestus, which had the power of inspiring love. Her favorite birds were swans and doves, and the plants sacred to her were the rose and the myrtle. Cupid (Eros), the god of love, was the son of Venus. He was her constant companion; and, armed

with bow and arrows, he shot the darts of desire into the bosoms of both gods and men. There was a deity named Anteros, who was sometimes represented as the avenger of slighted love, and sometimes as the symbol of reciprocal affection. The following legend is told of him: Venus, complaining to Themis that her son Eros continued always a child, was told by her that it was because he was solitary, and that if he had a brother he would grow apace. Anteros was soon afterwards born, and Eros immediately was seen to increase rapidly in size and strength. Minerva (Pallas, Athene), the goddess of wisdom, was the offspring of Jupiter, without a mother. She sprang forth from his head completely armed. Her favorite bird was the owl, and the plant sacred to her the olive. Byron, in *Childe Harold*, alludes to the birth of Minerva thus: Can tyrants but by tyrants conquered be, And Freedom find no champion and no child, Such as Columbia saw arise, when she Sprang forth a Pallas, armed and undefiled? Or must such minds be nourished in the wild, Deep in the unpruned forest, midst the roar Of cataracts, where nursing Nature smiled On infant Washington? Has earth no more Such seeds within her breast, or Europe no such shore? Mercury (Hermes) was the son of Jupiter and Maia. He presided over commerce, wrestling, and other gymnastic exercises, even over thieving, and everything, in short, which required skill and dexterity. He was the messenger of Jupiter, and wore a winged cap and winged shoes. He bore in his hand a rod entwined with two serpents, called the caduceus. Mercury is said to have invented the lyre. He found, one day, a tortoise, of which he took the shell, made holes in the opposite edges of it, and drew cords of linen through them, and the instrument was complete. The cords were nine, in honor of the nine Muses. Mercury gave the lyre to Apollo, and received from him in exchange the caduceus.* Ceres (Demeter) was the daughter of Saturn and Rhea. She had a daughter named Proserpine (Persephone), who became the wife of Pluto, and queen of the realms of the dead. Ceres presided over agriculture. Bacchus (Dionysus), the god of wine, was the son of Jupiter and Semele. He represents not only the intoxicating power of wine, but its social and beneficent influences likewise, so that he is viewed as the promoter of civilization, and a lawgiver and lover of peace. The Muses were the daughters of Jupiter and Mnemosyne (Memory). They presided over song, and prompted the memory. They were nine in number, to each of whom was assigned the presidency over some particular department of literature, art, or science. Calliope was the muse of epic poetry, Clio of history, Euterpe of lyric poetry, Melpomene of tragedy, Terpsichore of choral dance and song, Erato of love poetry, Polyhymnia of sacred poetry, Urania of astronomy, Thalia of comedy. The Graces were goddesses presiding over the banquet, the dance, and all social enjoyments and elegant arts. They were three in number. Their names were Euphrosyne, Aglaia, and Thalia. Spenser describes the office of the Graces thus: These three on men all gracious gifts bestow Which deck the body or adorn the mind, To make them lovely or well-favored show; As comely carriage, entertainment kind, Sweet semblance, friendly offices that bind, And all the complements of courtesy; They teach us how to each degree and kind We should ourselves demean, to low, to high, To friends, to foes; which skill men call Civility. The Fates were also three—Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. Their office was to spin the thread of human destiny, and they were armed with shears, with which they cut it off when they pleased. They were the daughters of Themis (Law), who sits by Jove on his throne to give him counsel. The Erinnyes, or Furies, were three goddesses who punished by their secret stings the crimes of those who escaped or defied public justice. The heads of the Furies were wreathed with serpents, and their whole appearance was terrific and appalling. Their names were Alecto, Tisiphone, and Megra. They were also called Eumenides. Nemesis was also an avenging goddess. She represents the righteous anger of the gods, particularly towards the proud and insolent. Pan was the god of flocks and shepherds. His favorite residence was in Arcadia. The Satyrs were deities of the woods and fields. They were conceived to be covered with bristly hair, their heads decorated with short, sprouting horns, and their feet like goats feet. Momus was the god of laughter, and Plutus the god of wealth.