



Jason and the Argonauts

ADAPTED AND ILLUSTRATED FOR CHILDREN
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ason was brought up by the centaur Chiron on the green slopes of Mount Pelion, where he had been sent by his father, Aeson, when he was just a baby, to hide him from his uncle, Pelias. Pelias had seized the throne of Iolcus from his brother, and Jason's parents were afraid that their son, who was Aeson's rightful heir, would be in danger from his wicked uncle.

Jason learned much from the wise Chiron, and having grown into a strong, handsome young man, he decided to return to Iolcus.

"I shall claim my father's crown. I cannot let this injustice go unpunished," he said to Chiron one morning, and set off on his journey.



On the way, he came to a river and sat down by the side of it to rest. His golden hair shone so brightly in the sun that the goddess Hera, all the way up on Mount Olympus, was dazzled by it. Leaning over to see where the brilliant light was coming from, she gasped at Jason's beauty.

In an instant, she transformed herself into a helpless-looking old woman standing by the side of the river, and pretended that she was unable to cross.

"Don't worry," said Jason, "I'll carry you to the other side." And so saying, he lifted her into his arms and stepped into the river.

When he reached the opposite bank, he realised that one of his sandals had got stuck in the mud of the riverbed. "Thank you, my brave lad!" said the old woman. "May Hera protect you."

When Jason arrived in Iolcus he made his way to the centre of the city, which was full of people. Everyone who saw him was astonished by his beauty. As a crowd formed around him, people began to ask who he was. It was at that moment that Pelias rode into the city on his horse. As soon as he saw Jason, he pulled on the reins and came to a halt, looking at him fearfully. This was not because he recognised his nephew, but because of a prophecy that he should beware a man wearing only one sandal.



“Who is this youth and what is he doing in our city?” Pelias asked.

The crowd parted and Jason, who realised that this was the king, walked up to Pelias and took hold of his horse’s bridle. “I am the son of the brother whose throne you sit on,” he said.

Pelias pretended to be pleased at Jason’s unexpected arrival. “The throne is indeed yours,” he said loudly, so that everyone could hear him. “That is only fair. But first you must prove that you deserve it. Come with me to the palace and I will tell you of a heroic deed I would like you to perform. It is really my responsibility, but I am old and infirm and cannot manage it myself.”

Jason fell into the trap. Flattered by the king’s words, he boasted that nothing was impossible for him.

“I want you to bring me the Golden Fleece. I had a dream that only then will the soul of your poor dead cousin Phrixus be able to return to Iolcus. He is buried in far-off Colchis, where the fleece of the ram that carried him there is hanging in a tree outside the king’s palace, guarded by a terrible dragon.”

The wily Pelias was certain that Jason would never return alive from this mission, for even if he survived the long and perilous journey and defeated the dragon, the King of Colchis would never allow anyone to take his most prized treasure.