

And sailed to Iolcos with the dancing-eyed girl
 And made her his wife, and in her bloom
 She was mastered by Jason, shepherd of his people,
 And bore a child, Medeios, whom the centaur Cheiron
 1010 Phillyrides raised in the hills. And Zeus' will was done.

Of the daughters of Nereus, the Old Man of the Sea,
 The bright goddess Psamathe bore Phocos to Aiacos,
 Out of love for him through golden Aphrodite.
 And silver-footed Thetis was mastered by Peleus
 1015 And bore Achilles, the lion-hearted killer of men.

And Cythereia, beautifully crowned, bore Aineias,
 After mingling in sweet love with the hero Anchises
 On the peaks above Ida's many wooded glens.

And Circe, daughter of Hyperion's son Helios,
 1020 Loved enduring Odysseus and bore to him
 Agrios and Latinos, faultless and strong,
 And bore Telegonos through golden Aphrodite.
 In a far off corner of the holy islands
 They ruled over all the famous Tyrsenians.
 1025 And the bright goddess Calypso bore to Odysseus
 Nausithoos and Nausinoos after making sweet love.

These are the goddesses who slept with mortal men,
 And immortal themselves bore children like gods.

Now sing of the women, Olympian Muses,
 1030 Word-sweet daughters of Zeus Aegisholder. . . .

FROM WORKS AND DAYS

The ostensible subject of this poem is the dispute Hesiod had with his brother Perses over the unequal division of their inheritance. While Hesiod's outward motivation is to turn his brother from a life of injustice to that of a hard-working farmer, he takes the opportunity to delve deeply into many aspects of the laborious way of life in rural Greece. Though the Works and Days is not primarily a mythological text, the opening section of the poem excerpted below uses myths centered on the rift that developed between humankind and gods to explore the reasons why man must toil and struggle to make ends meet. Two major myths are treated here. First is the tale of Pandora, the first mortal woman, created as punishment for Prometheus' theft of fire, a story he tells somewhat differently in the

Theogony (573–620). *Second he gives the famous account of the Five Ages of Mankind, developing a theme found in several Near Eastern traditions of a decline in human life tied to a scheme of metals of declining value (gold-silver-bronze-iron). Hesiod has, however, adapted this motif to a Greek context and innovated a fifth age, the Age of Heroes, to account for the great heroes who lived in the generations just preceding and during the Trojan War.*

Muses of the sacred spring Pieria
 Who give glory in song,
 Come sing Zeus' praises, hymn your great Father
 Through whom mortals are either
 5 Renowned or unknown, famous or unfamed
 As goes the will of great Zeus.
 Easy for Him to build up the strong
 And tear the strong down.
 Easy for Him to diminish the mighty
 10 And magnify the obscure.
 Easy for Him to straighten the crooked
 And wither the proud,

Zeus the Thunderer
 Whose house is most high.

15 Bend hither your mind,
 Hand down just judgments,
 O Thou!

And as for me,
 Well, brother Perses,
 20 I'd like to state a few facts.

Two Kinds of Strife

It looks like there's not just one kind of Strife—
 That's Eris—after all, but two on the Earth.
 You'd praise one of them once you got to know her,
 But the other's plain blameworthy. They've just got
 25 Completely opposite temperaments.
 One of them favors war and fighting. She's a mean cuss
 And nobody likes her, but everybody honors her,
 This ornery Eris. They have to; it's the gods' will.
 The other was born first though. Ebony Night
 30 Bore her, and Cronos' son who sits high in thin air

Set her in Earth's roots, and she's a lot better for humans.
Even shiftless folks she gets stirred up to work.

When a person's lazing about and sees his neighbor
Getting rich, because he hurries to plow and plant
35 And put his homestead in order, he tends to compete
With that neighbor in a race to get rich.

Strife like this does people good.

So potter feuds with potter
And carpenter with carpenter,
40 Beggar is jealous of beggar
And poet of poet.

Now, Perses, you lay these things up in your heart
And don't let the mischief-loving Eris keep you from work,
Spending all your time in the market eyeballing quarrels
45 And listening to lawsuits. A person hasn't any business
Wasting time at the market unless he's got a year's supply
Of food put by, grain from Demeter out of the ground.
When you've got plenty of that, you can start squabbling
Over other people's money.

50 Not that you're going to get
Another chance with me. Let's settle this feud right now
With the best kind of judgment, a straight one from Zeus.
We had our inheritance all divided up, then you
Made off with most of it, playing up to those
55 Bribe-eating lords who love cases like this.
Damn fools. Don't know the half from the whole,
Or the real goodness in mallows and asphodel.⁴⁰

Why Life Is Hard

You know, the gods never have let on
How humans might make a living. Else,
60 You might get enough done in one day
To keep you fixed for a year without working.
You might just hang your plowshare up in the smoke,
And all the fieldwork done by your oxen

⁴⁰ Plants considered food for poor people.

And hard-working mules would soon run to ruin.
 65 But Zeus got his spleen up, and went and hid
 How to make a living, all because shifty Prometheus
 Tricked him.⁴¹ That's why Zeus made life hard for humans.
 He hid fire. But that fine son of Iapetos stole it
 Right back out from under Zeus' nose, hiding
 70 The flame in a fennel stalk. And thundering Zeus
 Who rides herd on the clouds got angry and said:

"Iapetos' boy, if you're not the smartest of them all!
 I bet you're glad you stole fire and outfoxed me.
 But things will go hard for you and for humans after this.
 75 I'm going to give them Evil in exchange for fire,
 Their very own Evil to love and embrace."

That's what he said, the Father of gods and men,
 And he laughed out loud. Then he called Hephaistos
 And told him to hurry and knead some earth and water
 80 And put a human voice in it, and some strength,
 And to make the face like an immortal goddess' face
 And the figure like a beautiful, desirable virgin's.
 Then he told Athena to teach her embroidery and weaving,
 And Aphrodite golden to spill grace on her head
 85 And painful desire and knee-weakening anguish.
 And he ordered the quicksilver messenger, Hermes,
 To give her a bitchy mind and a cheating heart.
 That's what he told them, and they listened to Lord Zeus,
 Cronos' son. And right away famous old Gimpy
 90 Plastered up some clay to look like a shy virgin
 Just like Zeus wanted, and the owl-eyed goddess
 Got her all dressed up, and the Graces divine
 And Lady Persuasion put some gold necklaces
 On her skin, and the Seasons (with their long, fine hair)
 95 Put on her head a crown of springtime flowers.
 Pallas Athena put on the finishing touches,
 And the quicksilver messenger put in her breast
 Lies and wheedling words and a cheating heart,
 Just like rumbling Zeus wanted. And the gods' own herald
 100 Put a voice in her, and he named that woman

⁴¹ For the trick see the *Theogony* 537–572.

Pandora,⁴² because all the Olympians donated something,
And she was a real pain for human beings.

- When this piece of irresistible bait was finished,
Zeus sent Hermes to take her to Epimetheus
105 As a present, and the speedy messenger-god did it.
Epimetheus didn't think on what Prometheus had told him,
Not to accept presents from Olympian Zeus but to send any
Right back, in case trouble should come of it to mortals.
No, Epimetheus took it, and after he had the trouble
110 Then he thought on it.
- Because before that the human race
Had lived off the land without any trouble, no hard work,
No sickness or pain that the Fates give to men
(And when men are in misery they show their age quickly).
115 But the woman took the lid off the big jar with her hands
And scattered all the miseries that spell sorrow for men.
Only Hope was left there in the unbreakable container,
Stuck under the lip of the jar, and couldn't fly out:
The woman clamped the lid back on the jar first,
120 All by the plan of the Aegisholder, cloud-herding Zeus.
But ten thousand or so other horrors spread out among men,
The earth is full of evil things, and so's the sea.
Diseases wander around just as they please, by day and by night,
Soundlessly, since Zeus in his wisdom deprived them of voice.
125 There's just no way you can get around the mind of Zeus.

If you want, I can sum up another tale for you,
Neat as you please. The main point to remember
Is that gods and humans go back a long way together.

The Five Ages

- Golden was the first race of articulate folk
130 Created by the immortals who live on Olympos.
They actually lived when Cronos was king of the sky,
And they lived like gods, not a care in their hearts,
Nothing to do with hard work or grief,
And miserable old age didn't exist for them.
135 From fingers to toes they never grew old,

⁴² From *pan* "all" + *dora* "gifts."

And the good times rolled. And when they died
 It was like sleep just raveled them up.
 They had everything good. The land bore them fruit
 All on its own, and plenty of it too. Cheerful folk,
 140 They did their work peaceably and in prosperity,
 With plenty of flocks, and they were dear to the gods.
 And sure when Earth covered over that generation,
 They turned into holy spirits, powers above ground,
 Invisible wardens for the whole human race.
 145 They roam all over the land, shrouded in mist,
 Tending to justice, repaying criminal acts
 And dispensing wealth. This is their royal honor.

Later, the Olympians made a second generation,
 Silver this time, not nearly so fine as the first,
 150 Not at all like the gold in either body or mind.
 A child would be reared at his mother's side
 A hundred years, just a big baby, playing at home.
 And when they finally did grow up and come of age,
 They didn't live very long, and in pain at that,
 155 Because of their lack of wits. They just could not stop
 Hurting each other and could not bring themselves
 To serve the Immortals, nor sacrifice at their altars
 The way men ought to, wherever and whenever. So Zeus,
 Cronos' son, got angry and did away with them
 160 Because they weren't giving the Blessed Gods their honors.

And when Earth had covered over that generation—
 Blessed underground mortals is what they are called,
 Second in status, but still they have their honor—
 Father Zeus created a third generation
 165 Of articulate folk, Bronze this time, not like
 The silver at all, made them out of ash trees,⁴³
 Kind of monstrous and heavy, and all they cared about
 Was fighting and war. They didn't eat any food at all.⁴⁴
 They had this kind of hard, untamable spirit.
 170 Shapeless hulks. Terrifically strong. Grapplehook hands
 Grew out of their shoulders on thick stumps of arms,

⁴³ The wood of this tree was used to make spears.

⁴⁴ The Greek word means specifically food made from grain. The point is that the people of the Bronze Age do not practice agriculture.

And they had bronze weapons, bronze houses,
 And their tools were bronze. No black iron back then.
 Finally they killed each other off with their own hands
 175 And went down into the bone-chilling halls of Hades
 And left no names behind. Astounding as they were,
 Black Death took them anyway, and they left the sun's light.

So Earth buried that generation too,
 And Zeus fashioned a fourth race
 180 To live off the land, juster and nobler,
 The divine race of Heroes, also called
 Demigods, the race before the present one.
 They all died fighting in the great wars,
 Some at seven-gated Thebes, Cadmos' land,
 185 In the struggle for Oidipous' cattle,
 And some, crossing the water in ships,
 Died at Troy, for the sake of beautiful Helen.
 And when Death's veil had covered them over,
 Zeus granted them a life apart from other men,
 190 Settling them at the ends of the Earth.
 And there they live, free from all care,
 In the Isles of the Blest, by Ocean's deep stream,
 Blessed heroes for whom the life-giving Earth
 Bears sweet fruit ripening three times a year.

195 [Far from the Immortals, and Cronos is their king,
 For the Father of gods and men has released him
 And he still has among them the honor he deserves.
 Then the fifth generation: Broad-browed Zeus
 Made still another race of articulate folk
 200 To people the plentiful Earth.]

I wish

I had nothing to do with this fifth generation,
 Wish I had died before or been born after,

Because this is the Iron Age.

205 Not a day goes by
 A man doesn't have some kind of trouble.
 Nights too, just wearing him down. I mean
 The gods send us terrible pain and vexation.
 Still, there'll be some good mixed in with the evil,
 210 And then Zeus will destroy this generation too,

Soon as they start being born gray around the temples.
 Then fathers won't get along with their kids anymore,
 Nor guests with hosts, nor partner with partner,
 And brothers won't be friends, the way they used to be.
 215 Nobody'll honor their parents when they get old
 But they'll curse them and give them a hard time,
 Godless rascals, and never think about paying them back
 For all the trouble it was to raise them.
 They'll start taking justice into their own hands,
 220 Sacking each other's cities, no respect at all
 For the man who keeps his oaths, the good man,
 The just man. No, they'll keep all their praise
 For the wrongdoer, the man who is violence incarnate,
 And shame and justice will lie in their hands.
 225 Some good-for-nothing will hurt a decent man,
 Slander him, and swear an oath on top of it.
 Envy will be everybody's constant companion,
 With her foul mouth and hateful face, relishing evil.
 And then
 230 up to Olympos from the wide-pathed Earth,
 lovely apparitions wrapped in white veils,
 off to join the Immortals, abandoning humans
 There go Shame and Nemesis. And horrible suffering
 Will be left for mortal men, and no defense against evil.