

Into the Storm

The first day's sailing went well, and it was a satisfied Jason and crew that beached the ship at dusk beside the tomb of Dolops. The wind was beginning to turn, however, and the Argonauts found themselves stuck for two days with little to do but sacrifice some sheep to honour Dolops, and watch the anchored *Argo* ride the heavy swell. On the third morning, the wind switched round again, and the eager Argonauts set sail once more. So far, the great adventure had proved very uneventful, but that was about to change.

Boreas, god of the north wind, saw the square-sailed *Argo* ploughing its way through the sea and grew incensed at the audacity of Jason and his band of heroes in challenging his power. He gathered all his strength, drawing in the wind from all directions to unleash on the impertinent ship. The first inklings the Argonauts had of Boreas's wrath was when the sky turned black as night and the waves began to rise. Then the wind struck. Boreas's fury ripped the oars from the sailors' hands, and twisted the ship's head around so that the *Argo* turned broadside-on to the storm. Boreas tore the sail from its mast and dipped the yardarm into the water, much to the horror of the crewmen, many of whom now thought their last moments had arrived.

Worse was to come, however, as the south, west, and east winds joined in with Boreas to toss the *Argo* around like a child's toy. The ship's hull breached and began to break apart and water poured in over the sides. Then, just when

While it is impossible to determine the exact route of the *Argo*, this map gives a 'best guess' based primarily on the text of Apollonius. Over the years, many different routes have been theorized, including one that has the Argonauts going all of the way across mainland Europe, out into the Atlantic Ocean and back into the Mediterranean Sea through the Straights of Gibraltar.



it seemed that Jason's quest was about to reach a sudden and dramatic end, Poseidon himself rose up in a fury of his own, having been urged to protect the *Argo* by Athena and Hera. He immediately calmed the sea and sent the storm rushing off to the south. The relieved Argonauts were saved, but also reminded once again of the power of their gods.

Interlude on Lemnos

The rejuvenated Argonauts sailed on, with favourable winds billowing out the broad sail and pushing the *Argo* along. Past Meliboea they cruised, then Olympus, home of the gods; they cleared the headland of Canastra at night, and, as dawn broke, the *Argo* was well on its way to the isle of Lemnos. The breeze stayed fresh all that day, before dying down towards evening, leaving the crew to row the final leg into Lemnos harbour. Once in port, Jason sent Aethalides to the Queen of Lemnos, Hypsipyle, to ask her permission to come ashore. The impending visit of the Argonauts created a unique crisis on the island, however, because the inhabitants were all women and they hid a dark secret.

Sometime before the arrival of the *Argo*, the Lemnian women killed all the men on the island except one. The reason they did so was because the women were fed up with their men rejecting them, due to a curse imposed by Aphrodite, in favour of captive women brought home from their frequent raids. That sense of neglect grew into murderous rage until one night, the wives killed their husbands, the captives, and anyone on the island who might seek revenge. The one exception was the aging king of Lemnos, Thoas, whose daughter Hypsipyle threw him into an empty wooden chest and cast him adrift to suffer whatever fate had in store. Fortunately for the king, a passing fishing boat picked him up and dropped him off on the shore of the island of Oenoe.

After carrying out their grim deed, the Lemnian women took fright at the thought of Thracians arriving and asking about their men, the consequences of which could prove terrible. When they spotted the *Argo's* sail, the Lemnian women therefore donned their husbands' armour, and ran down to the beach. There they met the friendly Aethalides much to their relief, but they still had the dilemma of the Argonauts finding out what they had done, so they withdrew to the city to discuss their options.

Hypsipyle opened the assembly. She wanted to provide the Argonauts with food and wine so that they would sail on without asking too many awkward questions. The Queen's elderly nurse and seeress, Polyxo, foresaw a different problem from newly arrived warriors and their curiosity. By all means, she said, give the Argonauts food and wine, and, if they were lucky, their crimes would go unnoticed. But what would happen, she continued, when the women grew old and could neither defend themselves nor take care of the land? The answer was to trust the strangers and take them in as potential new husbands. The assembly agreed with Polyxo, urging Hypsipyle to send a messenger down to the ship and invite the Argonauts into the city.

The invitation delighted Jason and his crew, who made ready to leave the ship. Jason dressed for the occasion in a stunning purple cloak, given to him by the goddess Athena, which was richly embroidered with mythological scenes. He also picked up the spear given to him by Atalanta when she joined the crew. Jason then walked into the city surrounded by curious women. He ignored his crowd of apparent admirers, striding on until he came to the palace, where he sat in a throne opposite Hypsipyle. The Queen looked away under Jason's direct gaze, but she was first to speak. She told Jason a story of how the Lemnian men had turned against their wives, favouring captive women instead, until finally the Lemnian women refused to allow the men to come ashore after yet another raid on the Thracians. The men, she continued, asked for all the male children then left to live in Thrace. Hypsipyle next offered Jason her father's crown if he and his men stayed to father new sons.

Jason returned to the *Argo* to relate Hypsipyle's request to his crew. The Argonauts were only too willing to help, and made their way to the city where the Lemnian women took them to their homes. Heracles and a few others stayed behind, however, and missed out on the dancing and banqueting going on in the town. The legendary warrior grew increasingly frustrated as the weeks passed and the search for the Golden Fleece stalled.

Finally, he felt he had waited long enough, and he gathered the Argonauts together to harangue them and remind them of their duty. The crewmen shuffled their feet in shame under Heracles's admonishing gaze and looked around at each other rather than directly at the great hero. Suitably chastened, the Argonauts prepared to go back to their ship. The Lemnian women begged them to return, but even the queen herself could not stop the Argonauts leaving. She turned to Jason and pleaded for him to come back when he had finished his quest, so that she could be a proper mother to any child she might have as a result of their brief affair. Jason replied that if he did not return she was to send the child to Iolcus.

With that, Jason embarked followed by his Argonauts. Argus cast off the ropes, and the men pulled on their oars, leaving Lemnos in their wake. If any of the Argonauts thought they had left their troubles behind, though, they were about to receive a terrible shock.

The Monstrous Sacrifice

With Lemnos receding into the distance behind them, the Argonauts prepared for their voyage through the Hellespont. Good breezes brought the *Argo* quickly to the coast of Segeum, where the Argonauts drew in for the night. Heracles and Telamon set out to walk along the shore while the crew pitched their tents and lit fires for their meals. They had not gone far when

Statue of Jason holding
the Golden Fleece.
(Fabrizio Troiani / Alamy)



they heard the lament of a young woman, pleading for her life. The two Argonauts ran down the shore to a small village, where Heracles spotted a shackled woman on a crag. He shouted up to her, asking why she was in this predicament. She replied that she had been drawn by lot as a sacrifice to a sea monster that terrorized the area. She begged Heracles for help, but even as she did so a terrible roar rang out, and the monster emerged from the sea.

The serpentine creature's coils flowed along behind the upraised neck upon which its fearsome head jutted forward, displaying three rows of razor sharp fangs. On the monster came, driven by a howling wind and raging sea towards its sacrificial meal. Telamon glanced sidelong at Heracles, who was already incanting a prayer to the gods, and readying his weapons. Heracles leaped on to a rock between the monster and its target and loosed his bow, sending arrow after arrow into the raised neck of the beast. Still the monster ploughed on, ignoring the pinpricks on its thick hide. Heracles jumped into the water in a fury, smashing the monster with a rock, then following up with his war club to deliver the final crushing blows.

Telamon ran to fetch the rest of the Argonauts, who stared in amazement at the sea turned red with the monster's blood. Heracles, meanwhile, climbed up to free the young sacrifice that would no longer be needed. Below, the local inhabitants rejoiced, but the Argonauts did not tarry for long as they had to be on their way.

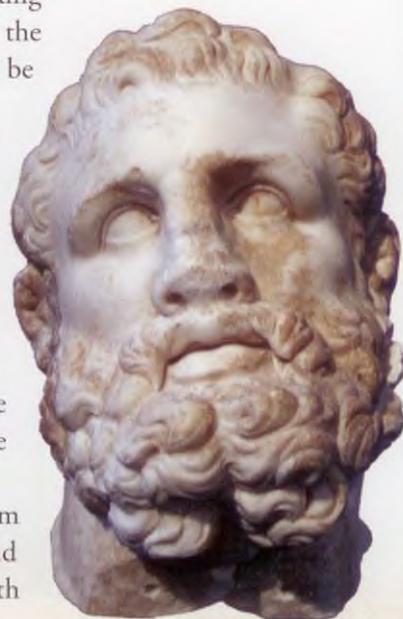
The Mount of Bears

Liberated from Lemnos and still agog from Heracles's killing of the monster, the Argonauts put their backs into rowing across the empty sea. At sunset, a south wind caught the sail, providing the men with relief and pushing the little ship into the Hellespont. On they sailed, through day and night, tacking their way up the narrow body of water until they broke through into the wider Propontis, the modern day Sea of Marmara. Their next stop would be an island known to locals as the Mount of Bears.

The sight that greeted Jason's crew as they sailed towards the island was one of fields blanketing the slopes of a prominent mountain and flowing down to a very shallow isthmus. It was a peaceful scene but one that belied the dangers ahead, because the inhabitants of the island, the Doliones, faced a fearsome enemy that lived on the high ground. They were the Gegenees, a fierce tribe of six-armed giants. The Doliones and their king, Cyzicus, lived on the plain around the isthmus under the protection of Poseidon, who kept the Gegenees at bay. When they saw the *Argo's* square sail rising over the horizon, the Doliones rushed down to the shore to greet the strangers.

Cyzicus was still a young man, newly married, and that placed upon him the duty of protecting his people. But he had heard a prophecy that a band of heroes would arrive, and that when they did, he was to meet them with

Heracles (better known in the modern world as Hercules) took a break from his labours to join the crew of the *Argo*.



friendship, not war. The king therefore ordered a banquet for his guests, and mingled with them, asking who they were and from where they had sailed. He found out quickly about the quest for the Golden Fleece, and he told the Argonauts in return about the peoples and places in the vicinity, but he did not know any more than local knowledge. The feast continued well into the night, but Jason was determined to climb the mountain in the morning and scout the horizons.

When dawn broke, he took some men and trailed up the mountain along a narrow track, not knowing that they were under hostile surveillance. Once at the top, their first action was to order the ship brought round to anchor in the harbour at Chytus, on the other side of the island. The watching Gegenees seized this opportune moment, however, to launch their attack on the ship.

The Gegenees raced down the mountainside to intercept the *Argo* from the crags around the harbour entrance. They hurled rocks down from their vantage point, but they had reckoned without Heracles, who had remained behind with some crewmen to guard the ship and steer it into safe harbour. He picked up his massive war bow and unleashed a storm of arrows, each one finding a target



The *Argo* painted by
Konstantinos Volanakis.

BRONZE AGE SHIPS AND SEAFARING

Not all Bronze Age ships received the direct blessings of a goddess as Jason's *Argo* did, but in all other aspects his ship was typical for the age. The Mycenaean Greeks were the pre-eminent seafarers during the time that Jason's voyage probably took place. Their warships, in particular, were suited for close-to-shore navigation and raiding into estuaries and up rivers. The *Argo* was such a vessel, at about ninety feet long and ten feet wide, with room for twenty-five rowers on each side, each occupying only three feet of space.

The only decking were two little areas fore and aft, connected by a walkway down the centre; therefore, the crew had to stow their equipment under their benches. Both the front and rear of the vessel were curved, though

a horizontal beam projected from the front at sea level; this was to aid stability and make it easier to beach the ship when required.

There was a single mast hoisted by ropes into the vertical position and secured by a mast box amidships, and a basic rudder system at the rear, made up of a tiller and steering oar. The single large sail was sewn from linen patches and operated by leather or papyrus ropes running fore and aft. The navigator pulled on the ropes to set the sail into the wind as desired. The ship also weighed very little, and was designed with a shallow draught. That made it difficult to negotiate rough seas, but was ideal for the river work so often found in the story of Jason and his Argonauts.

amongst the Gegenees. Meanwhile, Jason and his force of Argonauts sprinted down the mountain, unleashing a barrage of arrows and spears into the now-trapped Gegenees until all of them fell dead. Once the fighting was over, Jason ordered the Gegenees' corpses to be laid in rows along the beach, with their bodies half in the water so that both the fish and birds could feed on them.

After a brief rest, the reunited crew of the *Argo* decided to head out to sea, hoping to get back on track with their quest.

The *Argo* sailed away, all day and into the night. Unfortunately, the wind turned the ship around in the dark, so that when the tired Argonauts threw their hawsers onto the rocks and stepped ashore, they were unaware they had returned to the land of the Doliones. They weren't alone in their error, as the Doliones didn't recognize the returning Argonauts, believing them instead to be a Macrian war party. The Doliones hastily donned their armour and armed themselves before rushing down to repel the intruders.

The ensuing fight was fierce but short: the Doliones found themselves hopelessly outmatched by the Argonauts. Heracles killed two, as did Peleus; Acastus and Telamon took down one warrior apiece. More Doliones fell, but their greatest loss was their king, killed when Jason drove a spear through his breastplate. The rest fled back to the city as fast as they could run.

It was only when the sun came up that both sides realized their grievous error. The Argonauts were particularly shocked to discover the body of Cyzicus lying in front of them. For the next three days, they lamented along with the remaining Doliones. The king's body was buried with full funeral rites, his tragic death compounded by his new bride committing suicide in her grief.

Violent storms raged over the island for the next twelve days, preventing the *Argo* from sailing. On the twelfth night, while the Argonauts slept under the watchful guard of Acastus and Mopsus the seer, a bird hovered over Jason's head. Mopsus heard the bird's claim that the storm would soon abate, and immediately woke his captain. He told Jason that he must climb to the temple on Mount Dindymum and ask for help from Rhea, the mother of the gods.

The news energized Jason, who quickly woke the rest of the crew and told them of the prophecy. Some of the men gathered two oxen, and, after rowing the ship round to the next harbour, the Argonauts set off up the mountain. When they reached the summit, the crew set up an altar of stones and raised a fire for the sacrifice. While Jason offered libations, the others danced around in their armour, banging their swords on their shields. This pleased Rhea greatly, and she gave the Argonauts a sign by growing flowers round their feet and bringing out the woodland animals. The goddess also caused a spring to gush, forever after known as the Spring of Jason.

Satisfied, the Argonauts trekked back down the hill to the *Argo*. The storms abated overnight and the grateful heroes finally left the Island of Bears.

The Loss of Heracles

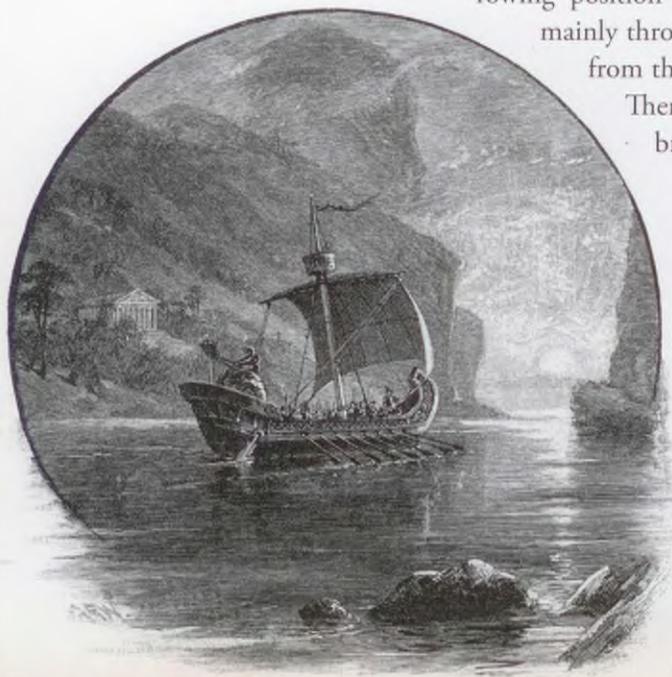
Despite not being the leader of the expedition, the great warrior Heracles had been the most influential crewmember. It was Heracles who stood guard whenever the ship was brought to anchor, and he had acted as the moral guide in Lemnos, reminding the Argonauts of their mission to bring back the Golden Fleece. At sea, when the wind dropped, Heracles powered the *Argo* from his rowing position amidships. Not surprisingly, therefore, it was mainly through Heracles's strength that the *Argo* raced away from the Island of Bears, towards the Mysian mainland.

Then, suddenly, to the legend's amazement, his oar broke in the increasingly rough sea.

This forced Jason to pull in near the outfall of the River Cius, but thankfully on land belonging to the friendly Mysians. The natives brought food and supplies down to the ship, and the Argonauts got on with preparing an appropriate feast for the occasion. The single-minded Heracles, however, only had thoughts for getting wood to make a new oar.

While the others prepared the feast, Heracles walked off into the woods, looking for a suitable tree without too many leaves or branches. He soon located a useful candidate for his oar, laid down his bow and quiver, and took off his lion-skin cloak. He swung his

Like most ships of the time, the *Argo* stayed within sight of land whenever possible. (Mary Evans Picture Library / Alamy)



bronze-tipped club at the base of the tree to loosen it; then, anchoring himself to the ground in a wide stance, Heracles pulled the trunk from the ground. Pleased with his work, he gathered his equipment and cloak, and, with the tree balanced on his shoulder, began his trek back to the ship.

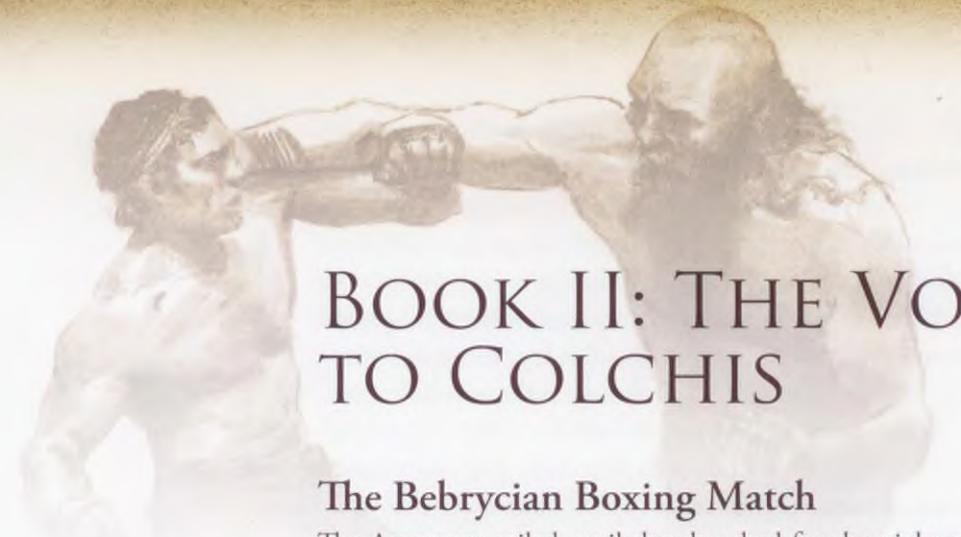
Heracles's youthful assistant Hylas had watched his hero walk off into the forest, and then busied himself getting ready for Heracles's return. He picked up his bronze pitcher and made his way to a spring that lay not too far inside the tree line. As Hylas knelt down to fill the pitcher, he did not see the water nymph rising nearby. Hylas's youth and beauty struck the water nymph with such force that she could not resist. She had to have him, and she reached up for a kiss, placing one arm round the startled young man's neck while the other drew him down into the water.

Back at the camp, Polyphemus was also waiting for Heracles when he heard Hylas cry out. Polyphemus drew his sword and ran into the woods, believing wild animals or robbers had attacked the youth. Rather than finding Hylas, however, Polyphemus ran into Heracles, whom he quickly told of his fear for Hylas. The legendary hero dropped the tree in sudden rage and sprinted along the path in the direction from which the startled cry had come, but the boy was nowhere to be seen. Heracles searched through the night, his shouts echoing through the trees, but none of the other Argonauts heard his cries, or knew what was going on down the beach from where they spent the night resting from their feast.

When dawn came, Tiphys urged the crew on board to catch the wind. The excited Argonauts drew up the anchors, cast off the lines, and hoisted the sail, which the wind filled to carry the *Argo* out to sea. Only then, with the Poseidian headland well behind them, did they notice the absence of Heracles, Hylas, and Polyphemus. Jason sat in shocked silence and horror at the loss of their talismanic hero. Telamon, however, thought he saw another motive in his captain, and turned on him, accusing Jason of deliberately leaving Heracles behind so that the legend could not steal all the glory if the mission proved successful. He jumped up and dashed towards Tiphys to make him turn the ship round and fetch Heracles.

Zetes and Calaïs tried to stop Telamon but, as they did, Glaucus, a god renowned for his prophetic abilities, rose from the sea and grabbed the ship's keel. He pointed out to the frightened Argonauts that to go back for the missing men was to interfere with Zeus's wishes: Heracles's destiny was to complete his twelve labours, while Polyphemus would found a great city. Glaucus then plunged back into the sea, rocking the little boat and its shaken crew. Glaucus's words had their desired effect on Telamon, and he immediately apologized to Jason, who equally quickly forgave the hotheaded Argonaut.

With calm restored on board, the *Argo* once more caught the wind and sailed on through the night, drawing Jason ever nearer to his rendezvous with the Golden Fleece.



BOOK II: THE VOYAGE TO COLCHIS

The Bebrycian Boxing Match

The Argonauts sailed until they beached for the night on land belonging to Amycus, the arrogant king of the Bebrycians. Amycus believed that no one could beat him at boxing, and had decreed that anyone attempting to leave his lands must fight him first. The king's many victories over his neighbours led him to believe that these newcomers would prove equally weak, and he set off down to the beach to confront the Argonauts. Jason's crew grew steadily angrier as they listened to Amycus's challenge. Polydeuces in particular became incensed, and he stepped forward to champion the Argonauts. Amycus glared

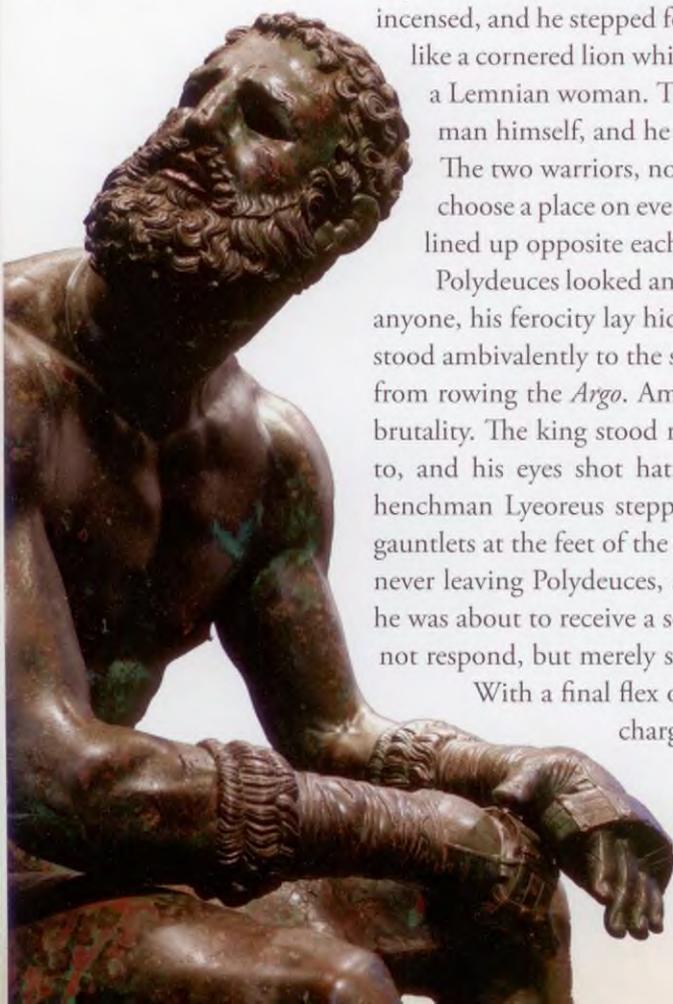
like a cornered lion while Polydeuces took off his fine cloak, a present from a Lemnian woman. The king's cloak was of much rougher cloth, like the man himself, and he threw it down in contempt.

The two warriors, now both fully committed to the fight, drew apart to choose a place on even ground. The rest of the Argonauts and Bebrycians lined up opposite each other, behind their respective champions.

Polydeuces looked an unlikely champion; although large enough to fight anyone, his ferocity lay hidden behind his youth and seeming innocence. He stood ambivalently to the side, flexing hands that were knotted and hardened from rowing the *Argo*. Amycus, on the other hand, could barely contain his brutality. The king stood ready to tear this upstart limb from limb if he had to, and his eyes shot hatred toward the young Argonaut. Then Amycus's henchman Lyeoreus stepped forward and placed two pairs of dry, rawhide gauntlets at the feet of the two fighters. Amycus picked his gloves up, his eyes never leaving Polydeuces, and he taunted the younger man, telling him that he was about to receive a severe lesson from a mighty warrior. Polydeuces did not respond, but merely smiled while Castor and Talaus fitted his gauntlets.

With a final flex of his fists, Polydeuces stepped back to wait for the charge he knew was coming from the bullish king.

Amycus crashed into Polydeuces like a stormy sea hitting the shore, his fists pummelling the Argonaut, blow after blow landing in unending attack. Polydeuces parried and pushed back against the onslaught, his punches slicing



The statue of the 'Thermae Boxer' from the 3rd-2nd century BC provides a good example of the boxing gloves worn by the Ancient Greeks.

BRONZE AGE WARFARE

Placing the voyage of the Argonauts in its correct historical context affects the range and nature of the weapons and armour available to Jason's warriors. Moreover, later interpolations into the legend may have introduced anachronistic methods of fighting not appropriate to Jason's era. As a result, we cannot know for certain what the Argonauts wore in combat, but we can hazard an educated guess.

The common weapons of the late Bronze Age were the spear, sword, dagger, and bow. Spears were probably the most common but lacked uniformity. Earlier spears held leaf-shaped blades up to 50cm long, but later spearheads were half that size and much narrower, suggesting they were lighter, and some might have been thrown in the style of javelins. Warriors may also have carried a pairing of a heavy spear and a lighter one. Swords too became shorter, from 90cm to 40cm, on average. Daggers, on the other hand, became longer, obscuring the differences between the two bladed weapons. We are told that one Argonaut sailed with a huge double-edged axe, perhaps emphasizing his legendary status, but these were not common weapons. The use of bows developed from hunting, and therefore most warriors would be familiar with their use, and they would have been the primary ranged weapon.

Plate armour in the form of cuirass, bracers and greaves was in use in Bronze Age warfare, but a small raiding party such as the Argonauts would have decried its use. They probably favoured more lightweight personal protection such as bronze greaves for their lower legs, a thick padded linen cuirass likely with a single bronze shoulderpiece, and probably bronze or leather forearm protectors. Head protection was afforded by leather helmets covered in boar ivory or small bronze discs; the full bronze helmets associated with later Greek hoplites were not yet developed.

Finally, the Argonauts carried shields, though exactly what kind is difficult to ascertain. Two types of shield were common in the Greek Bronze Age. Tower shields were large, hide-covered and wooden-framed, with flat bottoms and arched tops. The other shield was the figure-of-eight shield that was similarly wooden-framed and hide-covered. Either shield would have offered significant protection, and both were particularly useful for crouching behind with spear or sword at the ready.

through the king's rushing fists. Both men stood their ground, exchanging hit for hit, blow for blow. Heads butting, teeth rattling, punch after punch landed in search of the kill. The men and women on both sides cheered as their champions drew apart for a moment, but just a moment, before they lunged forward again to resume their death match. The battering continued, the weary fighters exchanging furious punches, pain and desperation etched on their faces.

(Overleaf) *The Boxing Match of Polydeuces and Amycus.*

Boxing is a reoccurring theme in the myths and legends of Ancient Greece. Most famously, it appears in the *Iliad* as one of the games held to honour Patroclus after his death. It is in his honour that boxing is later added to the Olympic Games.

Then, sensing his time had come, Amycus closed in for the kill. He stretched up on his toes to bring his fist down on the impertinent youth's head in a fatal hammer blow. At the last second, Polydeuces swerved, taking the king's strike on his shoulder while landing his own lightning counterpunch just above Amycus's ear. The bones inside the king's ear shattered, and he dropped to his knees. Swaying there, he then rolled on to the ground, his life already departed.

The Bebrycians stood mute, in shock, staring at their dead king for a moment, before picking up their spears and clubs and rushing at the unarmed Polydeuces. They were quick, but the Argonauts were quicker, drawing their swords and taking up positions in front of their champion. Castor struck first, cleaving an attacker's head in two. Polydeuces still had enough fight in him to drop-kick one man and then punch another so hard he tore off the man's brow above his eye. The Bebrycians drew blood too, but the battle ended when Ancaeus raised his massive war-axe and plunged into the barbarians, followed by Jason and two other furious Argonauts.

The leaderless tribesmen cowered under this sudden onslaught, then broke and fled. The Argonauts followed up their victory by plundering all around. One commented that if they had not abandoned Heracles there would have been no challenge from Amycus; others argued, however, that this latest test was the will of Zeus. The Argonauts returned to the beach to make their offerings to the gods and tend their wounded.

They set sail the next morning into the treacherous Bosphorus, relying on Tiphys's navigational skills to steer the *Argo* towards a safe harbour opposite Bithynia. Here they would encounter a tortured old man, and learn their destiny.



Polydeuces and Amycus by
José Daniel Cabrera Peña.

Phineas and the Harpies

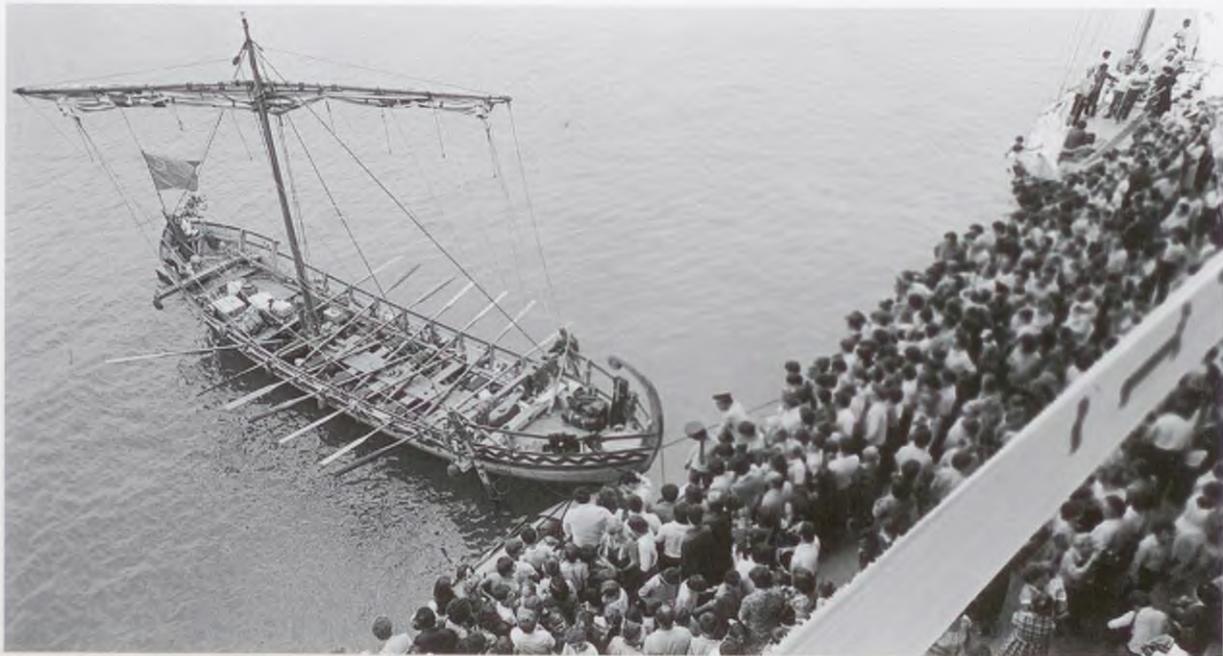
By any standards, Phineas had lived a strenuous existence. He had been given the gift of prophecy as a young man but, through divining the future indiscriminately, he had usurped a critical power of Zeus. Divine retribution came in the form of blindness and perpetual old age, to which Zeus added still more torment by means of the vile flying creatures known to all as the Harpies.

Whenever local people asked Phineas to divine the will of the gods, and left offerings in payment, the Harpies descended from the skies, tearing away the old man's food with their hooked beaks and leaving behind such a stench that any remaining scraps became so foully tainted that no one would come near Phineas to help him eat.

By the time the Argonauts approached his home, Phineas survived in a wretched state; his body, caked in filth, trembled with age, starvation and weariness, held together only by the strength of his gift. Hope burst within Phineas, however, upon hearing the trampling feet of his latest visitors, because Zeus had also declared that a band of warriors would help him finally taste his food. Phineas shuffled to the door, sat down, and waited.

The old prophet's physical condition shocked the Argonauts when they reached his home. Phineas took no notice of their concerns, and spoke resolutely. He knew who they were, and of their dangerous mission, but he begged them to first help alleviate his misery at the hands of the Harpies. Phineas added that an oracle had foretold that the sons of Boreas – Zetes and Calais – would do the deed. The old man's appeal reduced the adventurers to tears, and they all wanted to help him, but they were still wary of offending the gods.

In 1984, British writer and explorer Tim Severin retraced the voyage of Jason from Iolcus to Colchis in a specially built replica of the *Argo*. The next year, he released his book *The Jason Voyage*, recounting the the journey. (Topfoto)





Zetes stepped forward and, taking Phineas's hand, asked for reassurance that it was safe to give their assistance. The prophet replied that he would take responsibility for their actions and that the gods would not harm them. The brothers, comforted by the prophet's guarantee, drew back to plan the demise of the Harpies.

Zetes and Calaïs prepared an ambush for the Harpies by setting out a feast for Phineas in the customary fashion. When Phineas ambled up to the food, the warriors drew their swords and hid nearby. Barely had Phineas touched his first bite when the Harpies plunged through the clouds, with their talons and beaks extended to grab the food. The Argonauts leaped out of hiding, but the Harpies were too quick and grabbed all the food, leaving behind their distinctive stench.

Determined to end the Harpies's reign of terror on the old prophet, the winged brothers took off in pursuit. Hunters and hunted swooped through the sky, Zetes and Calaïs closing with every wing-beat until they came within inches of latching on to the terrified Harpies. Then, all of a sudden, the goddess Iris appeared. She told the two men that to kill the Harpies would indeed go against the will of Zeus, but she pledged that if the brothers spared them, she would see that they never came near Phineas again. Zetes and Calaïs, their mission accomplished, turned back to tell their comrades the good news.

While they waited for the brothers to return, the rest of the Argonauts tended to Phineas by bathing him and preparing one of Amycus's sheep for a suitable victory feast. The prophet, freed from his curse, ate ravenously alongside Jason's crew before joining them in their vigil for the returning Zetes and Calaïs. Suitably fed and rested by the fire, and surrounded by the

Zetes chasing after a harpy by José Daniel Cabrera Peña.

(Overleaf) The Harpies. Ancient sources usually describe the harpies as beautiful women with wings. It is not until the Middle-Ages that the harpies are re-imagined as the hideous bird-women that are more common in modern depictions. This artwork depicts them in the more modern style, which seems more appropriate to their role of tormentors and despoilers in the story of Jason.

Argonauts, Phineas began to speak. He first warned the men that he had learned his lesson about the use of prophecy, which only Zeus could impart in full. Therefore, what he had to tell them about their continuing journey must, by necessity, be incomplete. That said, he continued, they would soon come to the Symplegades, rocks at the junction of two seas.

These rocks were not anchored but clashed against each other, crushing anything caught between them. If the Argonauts tried to rush through blindly, moreover, they would surely die. Rather, they must send a dove through first, and if it made it, then the Argonauts must use all their strength on the oars to pull themselves through after the bird. Of course, if the bird got crushed, they would have to turn back and try again.

Phineas proceeded to tell the Argonauts what would come after they navigated safely through the rocks. Much of it was a travelogue of places and tribes they would encounter, and some that they should avoid, until they came to the end of their journey at the shady grove of Ares, where a massive and ever-vigilant serpent lay curled round the oak tree that held the Golden Fleece. The old man's declaration stunned the Argonauts into silence as the dangers ahead sunk in to their imaginations. Jason was clearly dismayed, and asked Phineas how they would ever get back to Greece even if they managed to secure the Fleece. The prophet told him not to worry about that, because a goddess would show them the way, though they would return by a different route. Before he could say more, however, Zetes and Calaïs flew in to tell the men of their success against the Harpies.



The harpies by José Daniel Cabrera Peña.

The Argonauts celebrated their victory before Jason turned again to Phineas. He said that it was obvious that at least one god cared for Phineas, and that maybe that meant the old man could regain his sight. But Phineas waved him off, proclaiming that his eyes were useless, and, besides, what he wished for most was a swift death to relieve his suffering.

Jason and Phineas made small talk for a while in the pre-dawn light, and, when the sun rose, the local Thynian people came to hear the old man's oracles. Phineas patiently dealt with each request throughout the rest of the day. When his friend Paraebius arrived, Phineas asked him to fetch two sheep fit for an evening feast. When it was time to prepare the fire for the sheep, Phineas called on Jason, Zetes, and Calais to perform the devotion to Apollo, god of prophecy. Their prayers complete, the crew settled down to their feast before turning in for the night.

They hoped to sail the next morning, but, while they slept, the Etesian winds began to blow, stranding the *Argo*. For days afterwards, Jason's crew had little to do but watch the daily procession of Thynians seeking Phineas's counsel. The winds eventually dropped, and the Argonauts were finally able to row out to sea, not forgetting to bring with them a white dove.

The Clashing Rocks

It did not take long for the *Argo* to reach the dreaded clashing rocks. A winding strait surrounded by cliffs marked the entrance to the channel where the rocks promised a violent welcome for unsuspecting travellers, but what truly heralded their location was the awful din created by the rocks constantly crashing together and then falling back. Euphemus grabbed the dove in anticipation, so that when they rounded the last bend he was ready to let the bird fly. The terrified Argonauts watched Euphemus release the dove,

The *Argo* heads for the Clashing Rocks. (Look and Learn)

