

Heroes of Mythology

We've discussed some weird and interesting mythological monsters. The ancient Greeks balanced these powerful creatures out in their stories by creating heroes to defeat the monsters. Heroes were characters that the common people could look up to, and aspire to be like. It was impossible for a human to be a deity, but to be a hero ... with a lot of hard work and maybe a little luck, that was possible! And even if an average person couldn't be a hero, he could at least try to be like a hero. Greek heroes were role models for the common man.

Remember that the ancient Greeks believed that how they lived their lives determined to which part of the Underworld their shades would go when they died. Everyone wanted to go to the Elysian Fields, of course, and in order for that to happen, they had to live very good or heroic lives on Earth. The heroes of myths gave them ideas as to how to do that. And of course, the ultimate goal was to live three good lives, go to the Elysian Fields three times, and finally get to go to the Isle of the Blessed.

It should be noted that in Greek mythology, the heroes were almost always men. Remember that the role of women was marriage and childbirth. Very few women, even in stories, had the freedom to go out, roam the world, and slay monsters. But that doesn't mean that women had nothing to do with the whole hero thing. Many of the heroes in myths who went out and faced terrible risks and deadly monsters did so for the sake of the women in their lives. To prove his love, to show he was worthy of her love, to protect her, to protect what she loved (people, home, etc.), all of these were ways women inspired men to become heroes.

So, could any guy who was in love and wanted to prove himself to the object of his desire become a hero? The answer is no. Two important criteria had to be met in order for a man to become a hero.

The first was something almost anyone could try to achieve. In order to be a hero, a man had to risk his life in some way in order to prove himself. There had to be a real chance of his dying. The better the chance (the more dangerous his quest, in other words), the more likely he would become a hero if he survived.

But that wasn't enough. The second criteria was the one that disqualified most men. In order to be a hero, a man had to have at least one of two connections to a deity. The first was that he had to be related to a deity. In other words, he had to be a demigod himself. Considering that there weren't that many demigods roaming Greece, there was a second way a man could be connected to a deity. That was that he was a recipient of deity favor. "Deity favor" means that for some reason some deity took a special interest in a human, and wanted to help him in some way.

To sum it up, then, in order to become a hero, a man had to risk his life to prove himself, and he had to have deity favor or be a demigod.