



Pelops

Courage

This fable teaches us that even in the past people could tell the difference between good and evil intentions. Although the story is typical of the time in which the fable originated, the main theme is still relevant today.

Pelops longs for the beautiful Hippodamea and...



🕒 5 min



A war broke out in the heavens, and the gods threw the father of Pelops into the Underworld. Pelops himself was also expelled from Olympus. The young man eventually settled in Greece. When he was still very young, he decided to marry Hippodamia, the beautiful daughter of king Oenomaus. But many other men from all over the land also desired her hand. So her father declared: the one who defeated him in a chariot race would get his daughter. Those who lost, though, would pay with their lives.

These were the rules of the race: right after the start, the king would first **sacrifice a ram** to Zeus and only then would he begin chasing a suitor. If, despite the suitor's head start, he managed to catch up, he would pierce him with a spear.

The rules of the race seemed too **easy to all the suitors**: both because of the head start and the fact that the king himself was already very weak and old. One by one, they arrived at the palace, bowed to Hippodamia and asked her father for her hand. The king politely received each one of them, treated them to refreshment, gave them rest, and had a beautiful chariot with four horses called quadriga readied. After the starting signal, the king would first make for the altar and set off on the race only after sacrificing the ram, while a suitor was already on track. But every single time, his horses, faster than the wind, caught up with the suitors long before **reaching the finish line**.

After twelve suitors had paid with their lives, it was the turn of Pelops. Learning the fate of his predecessors, Pelops set off for the seashore on the eve of the race where he called on Poseidon, the ruler of all seas: "**Oh, mighty god!** Please help me beat the king. Give me strength, so that he can never catch up with my chariot and pierce me with his spear. Show me the fastest route and grant me victory."

The water started boiling, a crash of thunder **roared in the distance**, and a beautiful golden chariot drawn by four winged horses emerged from the waves. Pelops expressed his thanks and got into the chariot. The divine horses were faster than the wind.

Even though king Oenomaus could see that the new suitor had arrived in a golden chariot pulled by divine horses, he did not take fright and gave Pelops a head start just like the other suitors. After he had sacrificed his ram, he got into his chariot and set off in pursuit of Pelops. The young man was only a stone's throw away from the finish line when Oenomaus finally caught up with him and drew his spear, swinging it to deliver a mortal blow to his opponent. But in that moment, Poseidon, who had been keeping a protective eye over Pelops, appeared out of thin air and intervened. The wheels on the king's chariot tore off at full speed and the quadriga **broke into a thousand pieces**. Oenomaus could not have survived such a terrible fall.

A second later, Pelops crossed the finish line and won the hand of **his beautiful bride**.