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This charming myth talks about the platonic love of god Apollo for the beautiful nymph Daphne. It is said that Daphne was the first love of Apollo but unfortunately the girl never responded his love. It was not usual or possible for a nymph or a mortal woman in the Greek mythology to resist to the love of a god, but Daphne did so and in fact, she lost her life trying to escape this love. Discover the myth of Apollo and Daphne Trying to win her love The myth says that once Apollo, the god of light and poetry, found Eros, who is nowadays known as Cupid, dealing with his bows and arrows. Eros was using his bows to struck people into love. Apollo had just won Python, a horrible earth-dragon that was living in the area of Delphi, and had got so arrogant from his victory that he abruptly told Eros to leave war-like weapons to mighty gods like him and stick to his own pastimes, devaluing his duty to inflate love and passion to others. This infuriated the headstrong Eros who decided to take his revenge on the audacious Apollo. Eros climbed on a rock of Mt Parnassus and unleashed two arrows: one sharp and gold-tipped and another blunt and lead-tipped. The sharp, gold-tipped arrow pierced the heart of Apollo inflaming his love for Daphne, a beautiful nymph, daughter of the river god Peneus, while the blunt, lead-tipped arrow struck the nymph creating an intense aversion for love in the her heart. She was constantly rejecting the love of the glorious Apollo, despite his repeated pleadings and cajoleries. She similarly detested all the other men who were trying to get her. It is said that Leucippus, a handsome man, had been so desperate to win Daphne that he disguised himself into a girl and mixed her company. However, the nymphs understood his trickery and killed him. The escape In the meanwhile, Apollo was persistently pursuing Daphne. The poor girl, in order to escape from him and to protect his virginity, pleaded for help from her father, Peneus (or from Mother Earth, according to another version), who drew back to Daphne's prayers and transformed the nymph into a nice short plant with excellent smell. This plant was the laurel, which is called "daphne" is Greek, after the nymph's name. Apollo was heart-broken at the loss of Daphne and to remember her for ever, he made the laurel the symbol of tribute to poets. The laurel became therefore the symbol of the god. Note that Pythia, the priestess in the oracle of Delphi, was chewing leaves of laurel to communicate with Apollo and give her prophecies to people. Previous myth: Asclepius, the god of medicine | Next myth: Alcylene and Coeyx Share – copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt – remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution – You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike – If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions – You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Apollo and DaphneThe Myth of Apollo and DaphneThe mythical story of Apollo and Daphneby Lilian Stoughton HydeThe Myth of Apollo and DaphneOne day Cupid, the little god of love, sat on the bank of a river, playing with his arrows. The arrows were very tiny. Some had points of gold, and others had points of lead. None of them looked as if they could do much harm. That day Apollo, the great sun-god, walked along the bank of the same river, when returning from his fight with the serpent of darkness, called the Python. He had just used a great number of his wonderful golden arrows in killing this gigantic serpent. Feeling very proud of his victory over the Python, he said, when he saw Cupid at his play, "Ho! What are such little arrows as these good for?" Cupid's feelings were very much hurt at this. He said nothing, but he took his little arrows and flew to the top of Mount Parnassus. There he sat down on the grass and took a leaden-pointed arrow from his quiver. Looking all about him for some mark for his arrow, he saw Daphne walking through a grove. Daphne was the daughter of Peneus, the river-god. She was so beautiful that the sleeping flowers lifted their heads and burst into full bloom at her coming. Cupid shot the leaden-pointed arrow straight at Daphne's heart. Although it did her no other harm, this little blunt arrow made Daphne feel afraid, and without knowing what she was running away from, she began to run.Picture of Apollo and DaphneThen Cupid, who was very naughty, took a golden-pointed arrow from his quiver, and with this wounded Apollo. The golden-pointed arrow had the power to make Apollo love the first thing he saw. This chanced to be Daphne, the river-nymph, who came running by just then, with her golden hair floating out behind her. Apollo called to Daphne that there was nothing to fear; then, as she would not stop running, he ran after her. The faster Apollo followed the faster Daphne ran, and she grew more and more afraid all the time, for the little leaden-pointed arrow was sticking in her heart. She ran till she came to the bank of her father's river, and by this time she was so tired that she could run no farther. She called on her father for help. The river-god heard, and before Apollo could overtake her, changed her into a tree, a beautiful tree with glossy evergreen leaves and blossoms as pink as Daphne's own cheeks. When Apollo came up with Daphne, there she stood, on the bank of the river, not a nymph any longer, but a beautiful tree. Apollo was broken-hearted, at first, to see how he had lost Daphne. It was all the fault of the little golden-pointed arrow. Since this tree was all that was left of Daphne, Apollo loved the tree, and said that it should be planted by the side of his temple. He made himself a crown from its evergreen leaves, which he always wore for Daphne's sake. This tree still grows in Greece, and is called the Laurel of Apollo. The Legend and Myth of Apollo and Daphne The myth of Apollo and Daphne is a captivating tale from Greek mythology that explores themes of unrequited love, transformation, and the consequences of unchecked desire. This myth has been retold and reinterpreted throughout history, inspiring many works of art and literature. This article delves into the myth's origins, different versions, symbolism, and interpretations, offering a comprehensive understanding of this enduring story. The most well-known version of the myth comes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* . It begins with Apollo, the god of music, poetry, light, and the sun, boasting about his recent victory over the Python, a monstrous serpent that terrorized mankind. After slaying the Python, Apollo founded the sacred Pythian Games, named after the serpent, and the sanctuary of Delphi, home to the famous oracle, was built on top of the Python's dead body. In this moment of triumph, Apollo encounters Eros (whom the Romans called Cupid), the god of love, and mocks him for wielding a bow and arrows. Apollo, puffed up with pride, boasts in the words of A.S. Kline's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Book 1, lines 452-465): "What business of yours are brave men's arms, you lustful boy? The bow suits my shoulder, since I can hit wild beasts with it, and wound my enemies, I who have lately slain with a myriad arrows the swollen Python that covered acres of ground with his pestilential bulk. You should be intent on stirring the hidden fires of love with your torch, not laying claim to my glories!" Eros, stung by the insult, retorts: "Your bow may strike everything else, Apollo, but mine will strike you: and as all living creatures are less than gods, so your glory is less than mine." Eros, angered by this disrespect, planned his revenge. He took two arrows from his quiver: one golden-tipped, which he shot at Apollo, igniting within the sun god a raging inferno of love for the nymph Daphne. The other, tipped with lead, he aimed at Daphne, making her averse to love. John William Waterhouse. Apollo and Daphne (1908). Source Consumed by passion, Apollo pursued Daphne relentlessly. He praised her beauty, his words attempting to woo her. But Daphne fled in terror, her heart a fortress against his advances. She was known for her independence. The handsome Leucippus, desperate to win her, had once disguised himself as a woman to join her company, but the nymphs discovered his trickery and killed him. As Apollo gained on her, Daphne cried out to her father, the river god Peneus. "Help me, father!" she pleaded. Peneus answered her plea, transforming her into a laurel tree. Her limbs grew heavy, her skin hardened into bark, her hair sprouted into leaves, and her feet sank into the earth, taking root. Apollo, reaching out to grasp his beloved, found only rough bark and rustling leaves. Unable to claim Daphne as his bride, he declared the laurel sacred. "Since you cannot be my wife," he said, "you shall surely be my tree. I will wear you at my brow, and your leaves will crown the brows of my heroes." Thus, the laurel became a symbol of Apollo and was used to crown victors in the Pythian Games and honor poets and heroes. Interestingly, no unambiguous texts or images of the Apollo and Daphne myth survive from the classical period (between the Persian wars in the early 5th century B.C. and the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C.). This suggests that the myth is likely Hellenistic in origin. It was later retold by Roman authors, most notably the poet Ovid, in the 1st century CE. While the exact origins remain unclear, the myth reflects ancient Greek societal values and beliefs, particularly concerning gender roles and expectations. Daphne, a nymph who valued her freedom and independence, represents a rejection of traditional female roles. Her transformation into a laurel tree can be seen as a symbol of her desire for autonomy in a patriarchal society. It is also worth noting that Apollo was associated with the laurel tree even before the Daphne myth emerged, adding another layer to the myth's connection to the laurel. While the basic narrative of the myth remains consistent, there are some variations in different versions. In some accounts, Daphne is the daughter of Ladon, another river god, or Gaia, the earth goddess. In these earlier versions, Daphne was said to be swallowed up by the earth instead of being transformed into a tree. Ovid's version, first written in 8 CE, is the first to introduce Cupid's role in the myth and his use of the leaden arrow to make Daphne despise Apollo. He also portrays Apollo initially wooing Daphne with song before resorting to pursuit . Writer Version Parthenius Earliest known source of the myth (1st century BCE) Pausanias Greek travel writer who mentioned the myth (2nd century CE) Ovid Most well-known and lyrical version in *Metamorphoses* (8 CE) Father Mother Source(s) Peneus Unidentified Ovid (*Metamorphoses*) Peneus Creusa Hyginus (*Fabulae*), First Vatican Mythographer, potentially Servius (commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid* by implication) Ladon Gaia Parthenius (*Erotica Pathemata*), others Ladon Stymphalis Parthenius (*Erotica Pathemata*) (alternative) Amyclas Unknown Pausanias (*Description of Greece*) (alternative tradition) Daphne makes it very clear she's not interested in Apollo, but he ignores her feelings and keeps chasing her. The myth shows us that forcing yourself on someone who doesn't want you is wrong. Everyone has the right to choose their own path, especially when it comes to love and relationships. True love can not be forced or coerced. Daphne's choice to turn into a tree might seem extreme, but it underlines how important it is to have control over your own body and life. Her transformation is a powerful statement about the need to respect personal boundaries. Apollo's arrogant behavior, both in mocking Eros and in pursuing Daphne against her will, leads directly to his own unhappiness. He learns the hard way that you can't just take what you want without facing consequences. The myth teaches us to think about how our actions affect others. Apollo's pursuit causes Daphne immense distress and forever changes her life. Apollo, a powerful god, is initially very proud and looks down on Eros. This pride blinds him to the potential consequences of his actions. The myth serves as a warning against arrogance and reminds us that everyone, no matter how powerful, can make mistakes and experience loss. Humility and respect for others, even those seemingly weaker than ourselves, are presented as important virtues. While Daphne's transformation is a result of a desperate situation, it also shows the power of change and adaptation. She finds a new form of existence, even if it's not the one she initially envisioned. This suggests that even in difficult circumstances, there can be unexpected paths to a different kind of peace. Apollo eventually learns to accept Daphne's transformation. He turns the laurel into a symbol of honor, finding a way to move forward. This shows us that acceptance, even of things we don't like, can be a path to healing and growth. The myth makes a clear distinction between Apollo's possessive obsession and what true love should be. True love respects the other person's freedom and well-being. Apollo's infatuation is all about his own desires, not about Daphne's happiness. This highlights the importance of empathy and selflessness in genuine relationships. The myth of Apollo and Daphne has been a popular subject in art and literature throughout history. Some notable artistic representations include: Apollo and Daphne by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1622-1625). Source Gian Lorenzo Bernini's Apollo and Daphne (1622-1625): This Baroque sculpture captures the moment of Daphne's transformation, with her limbs turning into branches and leaves as Apollo reaches for her. Apollo and Daphne by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (c. 1755-1760). Source Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's Apollo Pursuing Daphne (c. 1755-1760): This Rococo painting depicts a more playful and dynamic chase scene, with Daphne fleeing through a lush landscape. Tiepolo's use of light and color adds a dramatic flair to the scene. John William Waterhouse's Apollo and Daphne (1908): This Pre-Raphaelite painting portrays a more sensual and romantic interpretation of the myth, with Daphne depicted as a beautiful and ethereal figure. Apollo and Daphne by Antonio del Pollaiuolo (c. 1470-1480). A tempera painting that captures the urgency of Apollo's pursuit and Daphne's desperation, reflecting the humanist ideals of the Renaissance. Apollo and Daphne by Nicolas Poussin (1625). A Baroque painting that focuses on the inevitability of Daphne's transformation, using muted tones and a serene composition to convey the myth's tragic undertones. Apollo and Daphne by François Lemoyne (18th century). A Rococo painting that emphasizes the sensual and emotional aspects of the myth, using soft contours and pastel tones to create a dreamlike quality. Apollo and Daphne by Jean-Etienne Liotard (1736). A pastel drawing that reinterprets Bernini's sculpture, adding a landscape and stormy sky to the scene. Apollo and Daphne by Odilon Redon (1909). A Symbolist lithograph that reimagines the myth with an ethereal, surreal quality, focusing on themes of transformation and unattainable love. Apollo and Daphne by Peter Paul Rubens. A Baroque painting that captures the dynamic energy of the chase, with Apollo's forceful pursuit contrasted against Daphne's desperate flight. In essence, the myth of Apollo and Daphne is a powerful reminder to treat each other with respect, to consider the consequences of our actions, and to understand the difference between selfish desire and genuine care. It's a timeless story that transcends its ancient origins, continuing to resonate with audiences today because of its exploration of unrequited love, transformation, and the repercussions of unchecked desire. The myth offers valuable insights into human nature and the complexities of relationships, while also reflecting broader cultural anxieties about gender roles, desire, and the power of nature, particularly within the context of ancient Greek society. Daphne's pursuit of autonomy and her resistance to male advances provide a compelling perspective that resonates with contemporary discussions about consent and female empowerment. Ultimately, the myth's popularity across cultures and time periods highlights its profound relevance, reminding us of the importance of respecting boundaries, accepting rejection, and finding healthy ways to express love and admiration as we navigate our place in the world. Read more: Christopher Francese, "Daphne, Honor, and Aetiological Action in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *The Classical World*, vol. 97, no. 2, 2004, pp. 153-57. [link] Nethercut, William R. "Daphne and Apollo: A Dynamic Encounter," *The Classical Journal*, vol. 74, no. 4, 1979, pp. 333-47. [link] Yannis Samatas, "The Myth of Apollo and Daphne," *greekmyths-greekmythology.com*, 21 Jan. 2025. , Share on Facebook Share on Pinterest Share on X (Twitter) Share on Email It was Apollo's job to pull the sun across the sky in his 4-horse chariot every day. He has also been referred to as the God of music, poetry, art, medicine, knowledge, plague and archery.Apollo was the son of Zeus (the God of Thunder) and Leto. He had a twin sister, Artemis, who was the Goddess of Hunting.Apollo was also famous for being an aracular god, and had two cults in Delphi and Delos. People would come from all over the world to learn from Apollo what their future held. It was believed that, as the God of both medicine and plague, Apollo could heal people as well as cause disease by shooting people with his arrows.Daphne was a Naiad Nymph in Greek Mythology, and was the daughter of a river god. She was famous for being incredibly beautiful and for catching the eye of Apollo. However, Daphne was determined to remain unmarried and untouched by a man by the rest of her life.Greek Mythology states that Apollo had been mocking the God of Love, Eros (also known as Cupid). In retaliation, Eros fired two arrows: a gold arrow that struck Apollo and made him fall in love with Daphne, and a lead arrow that made Daphne hate Apollo. Under the spell of the arrow, Apollo continued to follow Daphne, but she continued to reject him. Apollo told Daphne that he would love her forever.Daphne turned to the river god, Peneus, and pleaded for him to free her from Apollo. In response, Peneus use metamorphosis to turn Daphne into a laurel tree. Apollo used his powers of eternal youth and immortality to make Daphne's laurel leaves evergreen. It's believed that Daphne had to sacrifice her body and turn into a tree as this was the only way she could avoid Apollo's sexual advances.After Daphne had been transformed into a Laurel, Apollo made the plant sacred and vowed to wear it as clothing.Eros fired the two arrows into Apollo and Daphne because Apollo had been making fun of him. Apollo had recently been victorious and won Python, an earth dragon, and told Eros that his godly talents were useless compared to his own.Eros fired the arrows from the top of Mount Parnassus.In the Greek language, the word for 'Laurel' is 'Daphne'.The Laurel became the symbol of Apollo and the symbol of poetry.Every 4 years, a Laurel wreath would be given to winner of the Pythian Games. These Games were held in honour of Apollo.Link/cite this pageIf you use any of the content on this page in your own work, please use the code below to cite this page as the source of the content.