



Atalanta

When Atalanta was born, her father, King Iasus, was extremely disappointed. He had wanted a son. "Take this baby up into the mountains and leave her there," he ordered.

Fortunately, Atalanta was found by a mother bear that fed her and kept her warm. In time, some kind-hearted hunters discovered her and took her to live with them in their home. Atalanta grew to be strong and full of spirit. By the time she was a young woman, she could run more swiftly than a deer and shoot an arrow farther than many men.



One day Atalanta heard that heroes from all over Greece were going to Calydon to try to kill a ferocious wild boar. Eager for adventure, she set out to take part in the hunt. When she reached Calydon and joined the men in the forest, some of the heroes were **disgruntled**. "How insulting!" they shouted. "We won't hunt with a woman." But Prince Meleager, the son of Calydon's king, insisted that Atalanta was welcome.

Suddenly, the enormous boar came crashing through the trees, killing those who were nearest with its sharp tusks. Spears and arrows flew again and again, but all of them missed the beast. Atalanta, taking careful aim, shot an arrow. It struck the boar just behind its ear. Meleager rushed forward and killed the wounded boar with a spear. Although a few men objected, the prince awarded the boar's head to Atalanta for being the first to hit the beast.

Soon after Atalanta's triumph at Calydon, King Iasus proudly **reclaimed** his daughter. He was pleased that she was so brave and so bold. Atalanta received many proposals of marriage, but she had no interest in being married. To scare away her suitors, she came up with a plan. "I will wed the man who can beat me in a race. But anyone who loses must die," she declared.

In spite of the risk, a number of men agreed to race against Atalanta. All lost their lives. Then a young man named Hippomenes came to Iasus's palace. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, had given him three golden apples to help him win both the race and Atalanta's heart.

The next morning a signal sounded and their race began. As Atalanta sped ahead of him, Hippomenes tossed two of the apples in front of her. Unable to resist their golden gleam, she stopped and picked them up. Hippomenes dashed past her. But with a burst of speed, Atalanta was ahead of him again. They neared the end of the course, and Hippomenes threw the last apple far off to her side. Atalanta hesitated and then darted after it. Gasping for breath, Hippomenes joyously threw himself across the finish line.

Realizing that she had lost the race, Atalanta looked down at the glittering apples cupped in her hands. Then she looked over at Hippomenes. She slowly began to smile at the thought of having such a handsome and clever man as her husband.

Name: _____

COMPREHENSION CHECK

1. Why did King Iasus have Atalanta taken up into the mountains?
 - A. He wanted her to learn to hunt.
 - B. He wanted to protect her from the wild boar of Calydon.
 - C. He had no interest in raising a daughter.
 - D. He wanted her to find a husband.

2. Based on what you read in this myth, which of these skills do you think Atalanta was most likely to have learned from the hunters who raised her?
 - A. how to use a compass
 - B. how to make clothes out of bear skins
 - C. how to shoot with a bow and arrow
 - D. how to make baskets out of twigs

3. Why did Atalanta decide to go to Calydon?
 - A. She wanted to be reunited with her father.
 - B. She wanted to do something adventurous.
 - C. She wanted to marry Meleager.
 - D. She wanted to race against the heroes.

4. In paragraph three, it says that some of the heroes were disgruntled when they saw Atalanta. Which of these is the best synonym for *disgruntled*?
 - A. annoyed
 - B. respectful
 - C. alarmed
 - D. confused

5. Meleager thought that Atalanta deserved to be awarded the boar's head because
 - A. she had killed the beast with her arrow.
 - B. she was the last to arrive at the hunt.
 - C. she was the only woman in the hunting party.
 - D. she was the first of the hunters to strike the beast.

6. In paragraph five, it says that the king reclaimed his daughter. The word *reclaim* starts with the prefix *re*. Which of these is the meaning of this prefix?
 - A. before
 - B. again
 - C. against
 - D. after

7. Why was Hippomenes able to win his race against Atalanta?
 - A. He was a faster runner than Atalanta.
 - B. He was helped by her father, King Iasus.
 - C. He slowed Atalanta down by hitting her with golden apples.
 - D. He was helped by the goddess Aphrodite.

8. Which of these adjectives best describes how Atalanta felt when she realized that Hippomenes had won the race?
 - A. resentful
 - B. happy
 - C. sad
 - D. ashamed

Grade: _____

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