

## Greek Mythology #34: MEDEA

by Joy Journey

The story of Medea reads like the rest of Greek Mythology: adventure, love, and intense drama which rivals modern soap operas and ends in tragedy. On our buttons, Medea is depicted with a distinctive headdress, and a layered wimple under her chin held in front of each ear by dangling decoration.

The one sentence answer to, "Who was Medea?" would be: Medea was a mortal, an enchantress, daughter of King Aeëtes of Colchis, niece of Circe, granddaughter of the sun god Helios, and wife to the hero Jason, with whom she had sons and a daughter.

However, the pathos and beauty of her existence can't be captured in the short version, and can only be introduced on this page.

According to myth, Jason and Medea existed before the long period of the Trojan War. They met when Jason was in search of the Golden Fleece. Hera, and/or Eros, intervened to cause Medea to fall for the young hero. She had a gift for prophecy, and offered to help in his quest if he would marry her upon its successful outcome. In Greek mythology, love stories are not all wine and roses.... Medea's father is not in favor of the lovers. Medea, with or without Jason, distracts her father's pursuit by killing her brother, chopping him into bits, and tossing him into the sea. Greek brotherly love is costly!

Much like Odysseus, Jason was tasked with impossible feats to gain the Fleece. He had capture and yoke fire breathing oxen, then use them to plow a field. He had to sow the teeth of a dragon in the field. And Jason had to kill the sleepless dragon guarding the Fleece.

Medea gave Jason an oily balm to cover himself and his weapons from the bull's fire. Once the dragon's teeth were sown into the field, they sprouted into warriors. Medea had warned Jason this would happen, and given him a way to defeat them. Jason threw a stone into the center of the horde, and not knowing who was responsible for the stone, they turned and killed each other. Lastly, Medea gave Jason a potion (valerian root?) to put the dragon to sleep.

Jason successfully retrieves the Fleece and sails away with Medea and marries her true to his word. The myths imply they had ten happy years. Then Greek "reality" returned once more.

The king of Corinth offers his daughter, and Jason willingly leaves Medea. The author wonders how much of an enchantress Medea could be if her husband's head can be turned so easily. Medea rewards Jason's betrayal by killing their children... and a few others in the process. Some versions of the myth say the killing of Medea's children was an accident.

Medea escapes Corinth, flying to Thebes in a golden chariot driven by dragons sent by her grandfather Helios. She continues on to Thebes where she heals Heracles from the curse of Hera. Heracles gives her a place to live in Thebes, but its citizens drive her away. She continues to Athens, where she marries Aegeus and has a son. To protect her son's inheritance, she tries to kill Aegeus' previous son, resulting in her expulsion once again.

Returning home to Colchis, she finds her father deposed by an uncle, whom she kills. IN another version, Medea and her son flee Athens to live on the Iranian plateau with the Aryans, who change their name to the Medes in her honor.



**Stamped brass with original tint, depiction of Medea. Wood background set in brass with a twisted rope border. Large and small.**



**Large stamped and tinted brass with a handkerchief border. Byron Buttons.**



**Tinted celluloid Medea on an engraved and acid etched steel button with a twisted brass rim border. Large.**



**LEFT: Stamped brass openwork Medea.**