

Greek Mythology: PAN & THE SATYRS by Joy Journeyay

The Greek satyrs are woodland deities and followers of Bacchus. They are part human and part horse or goat, and noted for misbehavior and lust. In Greek art they were depicted as a man with a horse or goat's ears and tail. In Roman art they were a man with goat ears, tail, legs and horns. In their Greek part-horse form, they are distinguished from the centaurs because the centaurs had a full horse body with four horse legs—where the satyrs walk on two legs.

The satyr's leader Silenus, was a minor god associated with fertility. In some depictions satyrs will be shown carrying a thyrsus, the pinecone-tipped rod wrapped in ivy or grape vines carried also by the maenads. The satyrs were flute and pipe players, and roamed the woods to chase the nymphs and maenads. They are often holding wine cups and other wine objects.

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Nymphs & Satyr. 1873.
William-Adolphe Bouguereau



Satyrs with a nymph. Painting under glass. 18th Century.



Satyr. Leaf border.
Metal medium.



Satyr playing pipes. Leaf border. Metal medium.

Head of a satyr.
Copper.
Medium.



Satyr playing pipes here also. Paris back: TW&W PARIS. Large



Pan playing his pipes.
Wahaba walrus ivory.



Pan playing his pipes.
Brass. Medium.
Collection of Lou Yeargain





Satyr brandishing a thyrsus sits atop a lion. Toile border. Courtesy of Byson Buttons

The best known satyr Pan, companion of the nymphs, was god of the wild and hunting. He did not have a temple but was worshipped in the forests, caves and glades of the wild. The word "panic" comes from Pan's name. His voice was supposedly very frightening and caused panic in those who heard it.

Pan chased the nymphs to seduce them but was too ugly to be accepted. One day Pan pursued the beautiful nymph Syrinx, who ran to her sisters for protection. They changed her into a reed, and when the wind blew a beautiful melody sounded from the reed. Pan could not find the one which was Syrinx, so he took several and joined them side by side to create the pipes which he is often depicted playing.



Brad Elfrink studio button. Carved pre-ban ivory with bakelite and other OME.

Satyr brandishing a thyrsus sits atop a lion. Bead border crossed by straps. Brass. Small. Collection of Lou Yeargain



LEFT TO RIGHT: The same depiction in a large openwork brass with cut steels on the border. Brass above a wood background. Pewter in a brass cup. Courtesy of Byson Buttons.