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Naiads (*Naiiáδες*). Naiads were nymphs of fresh-water rivers, lakes, wells and fountains, belonging to the pantheon of nature deities who represented various features of the natural world. The Naiads tended to personify the particular spring or stretch of water which they inhabited, and became inseparably identified with their specific locality; because every town and village honoured its own particular spring or river, the presiding spirits were important to genealogists in the ancient world. Many ruling families claimed legendary descent from a Naiad, emphasising the connection between a noble house and its locale, and thus its entitlement to the land. In Sparta for example the eponymous Lacedaemon married Sparta, a grand-daughter of the Naiad Cleocharia, in Athens Erichthonius married the Naiad Praxithea by whom he had a son Pandion, and in Argos the ill-fated children of *Thyestes were born of a Naiad. Other mythographers used complex stories to explain geographical puzzles, such as the myth of the Naiad *Arethusa which accounted for the identical names of springs as far apart as Elis and Sicily; the Naiad *Cyrene, beloved of Apollo, was the daughter of the river god Peneius in Thessaly, and eventually gave her name to the city in Libya. In Homer the Naiads are given as the daughters of Zeus, whereas other sources explain them as the daughters of Oceanus or of the river with which they are associated. They lived as long as the lakes and springs with which they were associated continued to flow, and, as might be expected of water nymphs, were often represented as sexually dangerous. The myth of the kidnapped *Hylas illustrates the threat to an attractive youth in Naiad territory, and that of *Hermaphroditus their vengeance if rejected. Although springs were thought to have healing powers, in some instances their waters could be polluted if humans bathed in them. This is shown in myths which allude to the dangers of antagonising the indigenous Naiad, and also by historical references to instances where the Naiad was thought to have been angered. Nero bathed in the source of the Marcian Aqueduct in Rome and was held to have polluted the sanctuary; his subsequent illness was believed to have been a divine punishment. The danger of madness was also a threat to those who caught sight of these nymphs, as with the Roman Naiads called Lymphae. [Apollodorus 1.7.66, 9.6, 3.14.6, *Ep* 2.13; Homer *Il* 6.22; *Od* 13.104; Ovid *Met* 4.285-388, 5.576-641; Pausanias 8.4.2]. *See* Nymphs.

Nana (*Nána*). According to the Phrygian legend of *Attis, Nana, daughter of the river-god Sangarius, was impregnated by the castrated genitals of Agdistis falling into her lap. She subsequently gave birth to Attis, the devotee of Cybele. A later version of the myth relates that an almond tree grew from the severed genitals, Nana picked a flower from it and placed it in her bosom, and so became pregnant. [Pausanias 7.17.10-11]

Narcissus (*Nάρκισσος*). Son of the water nymph Liriope and the river-god Cephissus in Boeotia. The most detailed version of this myth is in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* with its haunting images of the destructive power of obsessive love. In this narrative the mother of Narcissus enquired of the seer *Teiresias what the boy's future held; the prophet enigmatically replied that the child would have a long life 'if he never knows himself'. This was later proved to be accurate and the prophet's reputation soared. The boy grew to be extraordinarily handsome and won the admiration of many prospective lovers of both sexes. He felt nothing for them in return. The nymph *Echo fell in love with him but, as she was only able to imitate the last few words of what others said, she was unable to tell him of her passion. Narcissus dismissed her without pity and consequently she hid herself in shame in woods and caves, wasting away until all that remained was her voice. Young men also were spurned, including one who was particularly persistent. Narcissus finally tired of his pleading and sent him a sword; the boy accordingly killed himself with it, calling on Nemesis for vengeance that Narcissus too would

suffer from unrequited love, and the goddess answered his prayer. While Narcissus was drinking from a clear pool in an idyllic setting he saw his own reflection in the water; he became entranced with his own image, never leaving the spot where he could gaze at his reflection looking back at him, without at first understanding its origin. The passion so consumed him that in time he died of grief and the longing for himself that was continually frustrated; even after death he tried to see himself in the waters of the *Styx. His body was transformed into the flower which bears his name, to be found on the banks of rivers and pools, bent towards its reflection. From the myth of Narcissus comes the word 'narcissism', and, in Narcissus' soliloquy, Ovid draws out the paradox and the pain of such self-obsession: 'I am on fire with love of my self, I kindle the flames and suffer them; what I desire is with me, and my riches have impoverished me'. In a minor variant of his death Narcissus is said to have stabbed himself and the flower arose from his blood. Pausanias records, in a less dramatic interpretation, that Narcissus had a twin sister who had tragically died. When Narcissus saw his reflection in the spring he was comforted by the resemblance to her; he fell into the habit of continually looking into springs and thus pined away. [Conon 24; Ovid *Met* 3.339-510; Pausanias 9.31.7-9]

Nauplius (*Ναύπλιος*). There are two heroes by this name who are frequently confused. **1.** The son of Poseidon by Anymone, a daughter of Danaus, who was the eponymous founding hero of the city of Nauplia near Argos. **2.** The younger Nauplius, his descendant, also a sailor-hero. He was one of the *Argonauts, and took over the helm after the death of Tiphys, but he was also known as a slave-trader. When Herakles had seduced *Auge, her father wanted her drowned, but Nauplius sold her to the king of Pergamon. Similarly, when told to dispose of the daughters of the king of Crete, Nauplius sold one, *Aerope, to Atreus, but married the other, Clymene. She bore him three sons – Oeax, Nausimedon, and the famous *Palamedes. When Palamedes became a victim of Odysseus' vindictiveness, and was wrongfully stoned to death for treachery by the Greek army at Troy, Nauplius failed to persuade the Greek leaders to reinstate his son posthumously. He then became an archetype of the vengeful father, devoting the rest of his life to avenging his son. It is said that he persuaded the wives of the Greek commanders to take lovers in their husbands' absence, and succeeded with the wives of Agamemnon, Diomedes and Idomeneus, but Penelope, wife of Odysseus, characteristically defied him. Nauplius executed his main act of revenge on the Greek fleet as it was returning from Troy. He lured the ships on to the rockiest part of the shore near Cape Caphereus, on the south of Euboea, by lighting a beacon on the headland to deceive the Greeks into believing that there was a safe landing there. The ships headed for the beacon and the fleet was destroyed with many casualties, among them the Locrian Ajax; Nauplius killed the survivors and was subsequently known as the 'Wrecker'. There were two main versions of his death: according to Apollodorus he died appropriately on a ship which was lured onto rocks by a false beacon, while in other sources he committed suicide either after hearing that Diomedes, Odysseus and Agamemnon had escaped his trap, or when *Anticleia wrongly reported the death of his surviving two sons to divert his attention from Penelope. [Apollonius 1.133-8.; Apollodorus 2.1.5, 7.4, 3.2.2, *Ep* 6.7-11; Euripides *Helen*, 766-9, 1126-30; Hyginus 116]

Nausicaa (*Ναυσικαῖα*). The beautiful young daughter of *Alcinous and Arete, rulers of the Phaeacians. Under the influence of Athena, she was the one to rescue *Odysseus and offer him the hospitality he needed. Odysseus had been shipwrecked after leaving the isle of Calypso, and was left naked and exhausted on the shore. Athena, appearing in a dream to Nausicaa, had persuaded her to ask her father for permission to take the family's fine clothes and wash them in the river estuary. So Nausicaa and her maidens set off for the day's expedition in a mule-drawn carriage, the princess described by Homer as being as tall and fair

as Artemis among her nymphs. After the washing, while the laundry was drying in the sun, the girls played a game of ball; but one of them missed her catch (under the influence of Athena) and the ball rolled into the sea. The resulting squeals woke Odysseus, who hastily covered his nakedness with a branch and tried to address the fleeing girls. Only Nausicaa stood her ground, and replied with dignity to his well-crafted plea for help. She left him oil and clean clothes, and, after he had bathed, Athena enhanced his beauty and grace. Nausicaa then gave Odysseus food and drink, and with quiet competence arranged for him to follow her to the city-gates, and then to find his way to the palace and appeal for assistance to her mother in a way that would not be refused. There was an obvious immediate attraction between the girl and the older man, with mutual respect and admiration, and their dignified and touching parting, reported in *Odyssey* 8, does credit to them both. In a later conventional 'happy-ending' myth, Nausicaa eventually became the wife of Odysseus' son *Telemachus, and bore a child Persepolis. [Homer *Od* 6 *passim*, 8.457-68, Pausanias 5.19.9]

Nausithous (*Ναυσίθοος*). **1.** A son of Poseidon and Periboea, the youngest daughter of the ruler of the giants, Eurymedon. He was the first king of the Phaeacians, with the Homeric epithets of 'god-like' and 'great-hearted', who had led his people from Hyperia, where they had been harried by their neighbours, the Cyclopes, to settle at Scheria (Corfu). Nausithous purified Heracles after he had murdered his own children, and, while Heracles was staying in Scheria, he had a son *Hyllus by the water-nymph Melite. When the boy grew to manhood Nausithous helped him to found his own city; he himself was succeeded by his son *Alcinous. [Homer *Od* 6.7-12, 7.56-68] **2.** The pilot of the boat that took *Theseus and his companions to Crete as tribute to *Minos. He came from Salamis, which then had more experienced sailors than Athens, and the grandson of the ruler of Salamis, Scirus, was one of the youths chosen as tribute. Theseus later built a shrine at Phalerum and dedicated it to Nausithous. [Apollonius 4.539-51; Plutarch *Thes* 17.5] **3.** One of the sons (with Nausinous) which *Calypso bore to Odysseus. [Hesiod *Theog* 1017]

Naxos (*Νάξος*). The largest island in the Cyclades, named after the Carian king who conquered the land; previously it had been called Strongyle, and then Dia. The father of Naxos was given variously as Polemon, *Endymion (with his mother as *Selene) or Apollo (resulting from the god's love for Minos' daughter *Acacallis) in order to account for the Carian, Thracian and Cretan strains in its earliest settlers. The grandson of Naxos was ruling when Theseus was said to have abandoned *Ariadne on the island, where she was found by Dionysus who made her his consort. The island subsequently became a wine-growing region and a centre for the cult of the god. *Otus and Ephialtes were said to have died there. [Apollodorus *Ep* 1.9, Catullus 64.50-266; Diodorus 5.51.3-4]

Necklace of Harmonia. A necklace of gold made by Hephaestus and given with a bridal dress to *Harmonia on her marriage to *Cadmus by Athena, Aphrodite, or Cadmus himself. The necklace supposedly conferred beauty on the wearer, but became proverbial for the gift that brings destruction. After the death of Oedipus, his son *Polyneices was denied his inheritance by his brother *Eteocles at the end of the first year and went into exile in Argos, taking with him the dress and the necklace. There he married Argea, the daughter of the king Adrastus. Since Polyneices needed the support of Amphiaraus in the campaign against Thebes he bribed Amphiaraus' wife *Eriphyle with the necklace to influence her husband to march with Adrastus against Thebes. Amphiaraus had foreknowledge of his death there, but was bound by oath to yield to Eriphyle. He asked his sons to avenge his own forthcoming death by killing their mother, and the murder was subsequently carried out by his son *Alcmaeon. Driven by his mother's Erinyes (her spirit's Fury), Alcmaeon eventually came to Phegeus in

Arcadia, who purified him and gave him his daughter Arsinoe in marriage; and Alcmaeon presented her with the necklace and dress. But driven on again, Alcmaeon was purified a second time by the river-god *Achelous, and took his daughter Callirhoe as a second wife. But Callirhoe demanded the necklace for herself, and, on the pretext of dedicating it at Delphi, Alcmaeon went back to retrieve it from Arsinoe. When his true motive was disclosed, Alcmaeon was killed by the sons of Phegeus, and they in turn dedicated the necklace at Delphi. It remained there until the fourth century BC, when it was carried off by the Phocian leader Phayllus, who gave it to his wife; the curse on the necklace continued when she subsequently plotted his downfall. [Apolodorus 3.4.2, 6.2, 7.5-7; Diodorus 4.65.5, 5.49.1]

Nectar (*Νέκταρ*). The wine-red drink of the gods (as *ambrosia was their food). Themis gave it to Apollo as a baby when *Leto was unable to nurse him; Demeter fasted from it when she was searching for her daughter, and *Tantalus, according to Pindar, suffered his eternal torment for the theft of nectar and ambrosia. Like ambrosia, nectar could be used for embalming, as Thetis puts nectar through the nostril of Patroclus' corpse, so that it would not decompose. [Homer *Il* 1.597-8, 4.3, 19.38-9, *Od* 5.93, 9.359; *Hom Hymn* 2.49, 3.123-9; Pindar *Ol* 1.60-64]

Neda (*Νέδα*). A nymph, one of the oldest daughters of Oceanus. A river was named after her in Messenia in the Peloponnese, where, with the nymph Ithome, she was said to have nursed the baby Zeus when he was hidden from his father by the *Curetes. In another version *Rhea, needing water to purify herself and the child Zeus after the birth, struck the earth with her sceptre, whereupon a spring bubbled up which Rhea then called Neda. [Callimachus *Hymn* 1.33-8; Pausanias 4.20.1-2, 33.1]

Neleus (*Νηλεύς*). **1.** A hero connected closely to water and the sea, twin brother of *Pelias and son of *Tyro and Poseidon. Poseidon was attracted to Tyro, and tricked her into intercourse with him by disguising himself as her lover, the river Enipeus; when she subsequently gave birth to the twin boys in secret, she exposed them because of her imminent marriage to Cretheus, king of Iolchos. The twins were found and reared by horse dealers, and Neleus' twin Pelias obtained his name from the livid mark (*pelion*) left on his face by a kick from a mare. According to some accounts, the twins were actually suckled by a mare, or Pelias by a mare and Neleus by a bitch. When the boys grew to manhood they learned their true identity by means of the container in which they were originally abandoned. (This mythic theme of the exposure of twin boys, their nurture by a wild animal and subsequent rediscovery bears a strong resemblance to the story of Romulus and Remus.) The young men found that their mother was being ill-treated by her stepmother Sidero and so plotted to kill Sidero, violating the sanctuary of Hera to which she had fled. Neleus later quarrelled with his brother, was exiled by him and eventually settled in Messenia, then ruled by his cousin Aphareus, who gave him the city of Pylos and its adjoining coastal strip. Neleus expelled the city's founder, Pylas, and became a powerful king. He married Chloris, the daughter of Amphion, said to be the only surviving child of *Niobe. She, like her mother, bore many children, including a daughter, Pero, and twelve sons – Taurus, Asterius, Eurymenes, Evagoras, Alastor, Pylaon, Deimachus, Eurybius, Epilaus, Phrasius, *Nestor and Periclymenus. Pero married *Bias, the son of Neleus' half brother Amythaon. The downfall of the family came about because of the wrath of Heracles, who had asked Neleus to purify him for the death of *Iphitus. Neleus refused as he had been a friend of Eurytus, the murdered man's father. Heracles consequently led an expedition against Pylos in which he killed Neleus, his wife and eleven of his sons; Nestor, who was growing up in Gerenia, was the only one to escape. Although Periclymenus had been given the ability to be a shape-shifter by Poseidon, he too was killed; Heracles

swatted him when he changed into a fly. In some traditions Neleus survived the attack to die of an illness in Corinth, where his grave was a closely guarded secret. [Apollodorus 1.9.8, 2.6.2, 7.3; Diodorus 4.31.4; Homer *Od* 11.235-97; Hyginus 10] **2.** A son of *Codrus, king of Athens and founder of Miletus. [Pausanias 7.2.1]

Nemea (*Νεμέα*). A city of the Argolid, and the scene of the first of the *Labours of Heracles. The area was once terrorised by the Nemean lion, a monster born of *Echidna and Orthus (or Typhon), and suckled by Selene, although according to Hesiod the nurse was Hera. The lion was killed by Heracles who strangled it with his bare hands, and afterwards always wore its pelt over his shoulder; Heracles also cut his wooden club in Nemea. There were two versions of the founding of the Nemean Games, which were held in the second and fourth year of every Olympiad – either they were instituted by Heracles after this labour, or later by the *Seven against Thebes, in honour of *Opheltes, the infant son of King Lycurgus, who died in strange circumstances during the passage of the armies of the Seven through the territory of Nemea on their way to Thebes. The games were held near a sanctuary of Zeus, and consisted of athletic contests, horse-racing, and minstrel competitions; the prize at the games was a crown of fern-like celery or parsley. [Apollodorus 5.1, 3.6.4; Hesiod *Theog* 326-32]

Nemesis (*Νέμεισις*). The goddess was the personification of divine retribution, with little mythology other than her eponymous role. She was the deity who curbed and punished pride and excess, and anyone who rose to great power and wealth risked reprisal from her, if the balance of the natural order, of which she was the guardian, was being threatened. Such was the situation of Croesus, the fabulously wealthy king of Lydia, who was persuaded by Nemesis to raise an army against the might of Persia, which led to his downfall. The excessive arrogance of *Niobe was another case of tempting the goddess, and so inviting a terrible vengeance. There was a famous sanctuary of Nemesis at Rhamnus in Attica, and the marble used for Pheidias' statue of the goddess there was originally intended for use as a victory trophy by the Persians to celebrate the conquest of Attica, another example of pride before a fall. Nemesis was represented holding a sword or balance, with a wheel and a ship's rudder by her, but the only myth in which she is involved as an individual names her as the daughter of *Nyx (Night), and the object of Zeus' attentions. She changed into a goose to avoid him, but he took on the likeness of a swan and mated with her. Nemesis laid an egg which was found by a shepherd, who in turn gave it to *Leda. The egg was kept in a chest until it hatched and *Helen was born. In another version of this myth, the *Dioscuri were also hatched from this egg, but the more common tradition has Zeus appearing directly to Leda as a swan, and the two eggs are hers. [Apollodorus 3.10.7; Herodotus 1.34; Hesiod *Theog* 223; Homer *Il* 3.156, 6.335, *Od* 1.350, 2.136; Pausanias 1.33.2, 7-8; Sophocles *Phil* 601-2]

Neoptolemus (*Νεοπτόλεμος*). The son of *Achilles and Deidamia, he was conceived during the time when Achilles was in hiding at the court of Lycomedes, king of Scyros and father of Deidamia. The fact that Achilles was then disguised as a girl in the women's quarters made it easier to conceal his liaison with her. As Achilles was also known by the name of *Pyrrha their child was named Pyrrhus (as well as Neoptolemus), and was brought up in his grandfather's court. After the death of Achilles, the Greek leaders discovered from the captured Trojan seer, *Helenus, that there were three requisites for their victory at Troy: the Palladium had to be stolen from the Trojan citadel; Neoptolemus was needed to fight on the Greek side, and the bow and arrows of *Heracles, now in the possession of *Philoctetes, must be used in the final stages of the war. Odysseus and Phoenix, Achilles' old tutor, went to Scyros to bring Neoptolemus back to Troy, and there Odysseus gave him his father's armour. On their journey they landed on the isle of Lemnos to persuade Philoctetes to go with them

for the final assault on Troy. Philoctetes refused to accompany Odysseus since he had abandoned him on the outward voyage because of Philoctetes' foul wound. In some versions it was Odysseus and Diomedes who persuaded Philoctetes to go with them, but, according to Sophocles' tragedy *Philoctetes*, Neoptolemus accompanied Odysseus, but refused to take part in Odysseus' treacherous plan to steal the bow, offering instead to return Philoctetes to his homeland. It was only the appearance of the deified Heracles that persuaded Philoctetes to go to Troy and thus fulfil the terms of the prophecy. The noble character of Neoptolemus as portrayed by Sophocles is not found in other accounts of his military exploits at Troy. He was as valiant as his father Achilles but also inherited his violence, destroying his opponents mercilessly. One of these included *Eurypylos (2); Neoptolemus gloried in the slaying of the handsome Trojan ally and danced around the corpse (and hence the proverbial 'Pyrrhic war-dance'). He was one of the Greeks hidden in the wooden horse when it was taken into Troy, and it was he who killed *Priam while the old king was seeking sanctuary at the altar of Zeus. Neoptolemus also defeated the warriors Elatus and Astynous in battle, and later threw Hector's young son *Astyanax from the walls of Troy. He enslaved Hector's widow *Andromache as his share of the spoils, and, to complete his vengeance on the Trojans for the death of his father, he sacrificed Priam's daughter *Polyxena on Achilles' grave.

The return journey from Troy is variously related. According to Homer Neoptolemus reached home safely and unscathed; he married Menelaus' daughter *Hermione, and the couple lived in Phthotis, the home of Achilles' family. Neoptolemus' good fortune was attributed to the wise advice of *Thetis who instructed him to remain two days longer after the departure of the Greek fleet from Troy, or to return by land. The version of the land journey led to Neoptolemus' connection with Epirus on the north-west coast of Greece, where he was said to have settled on his homeward journey. Tradition strongly supported his conquest of Epirus, where he was encouraged by the Trojan prophet Helenus, who accompanied him and told him to settle in a land where the houses had iron foundations, wooden walls and roofs of canvas – this description corresponded to the tents of the native Epirotes. The friendship that arose between the two men resulted in Neoptolemus entrusting Andromache to Helenus on his deathbed. A further variant was that Neoptolemus left Epirus for Phthia to marry Hermione, relinquishing his kingdom, Andromache and their three sons, *Molossus, Pielus and *Pergamus to Helenus. The family reigned in Epirus down until the time of Olympias, the mother of Alexander the Great.

The accounts of the death of Neoptolemus vary as much as those of his return. He was said to have been killed by *Orestes, either in Phthia or in Epirus, after Orestes' wife Hermione had been taken from him during the period of his madness following the matricide of *Clytemnestra, and had been given to Neoptolemus. Euripides further complicates the myth in his tragedies, in which Neoptolemus was said to have been killed at Delphi, either by Orestes, or by the people of Delphi, after Orestes claimed that Neoptolemus was intent on demanding redress from Apollo for his father's death at Troy. In yet one more version Orestes played no part in the incident at Delphi, but a dispute arose between Neoptolemus and the priests at Delphi when he objected to the ceremonial procedure whereby the priests kept the entire carcass of the sacrificial animal. He was consequently killed by the priest Machaereus to protect the privileges of the sanctuary – perhaps under the influence of Apollo, who still continued his vengeance against the family of Achilles for the defeat of Troy. Neoptolemus was buried beneath the temple precinct at Delphi where he was paid divine honours to protect the sanctuary. His ghost was one of three terrifying figures said to have routed the invading Gauls there. His death at the altar of Delphi was seen as divine punishment for his slaughter of Priam at the Trojan altar, such instances of poetic justice being subsequently known as 'the punishment of Neoptolemus'. [Apollodorus 3.13.8; *Ep* 5.10-11, 6.12-14; Euripides *Orestes*,

Andromache, Troades; Homer *Il* 19.326-33; *Od* 3.188-9, 4.5-9, 11.506-16; Hyginus 123; Sophocles *Philoctetes*; Vergil *Aeneid* 2.453-558, 3.294-336]

Nephalion (*Νηφαλίων*). A son of Minos and the nymph Paria, and brother to Eurymedon, Chryses and Philolaus. The four brothers were all killed by Heracles in retaliation for the murder of two of his crew on Paros while he on his way to complete the ninth of his *Labours – fetching the girdle of the Amazon queen Hippolyte. [Apollodorus 2.5.9, 3.1.2.]

Nephele (*Νεφέλη*). **1.** The wife of *Athamas and mother of *Phrixus and Helle. Athamas took a second wife *Ino who plotted against Nephele's children; she engineered a famine and then, with a false message from Delphi, made sure that Phrixus was the human sacrifice required to avert it. But as the boy was brought to the altar Nephele gave him the legendary ram with the *Golden Fleece, which she had received from Hermes, and the children were both carried away by the ram. [Apollodorus 1.9.1.] **(Ci.) 2.** The cloud in the shape of Hera which Zeus created when *Ixion was obsessed with a passion for the goddess. From this strange mating with Ixion, Nephele the cloud bore Centaurus, the father of the *Centaurus. [Pindar *Pyth* 2.21-48]

Neptune (lat. Neptunus). The Roman god of water and the sea who was assimilated to the Greek god Poseidon. Neptune was not a deity of great importance to the early Romans as, unlike the Greeks, they were not sailors or interested in sea-faring; and after his later identification with Poseidon Neptune acquired that god's mythology and attributes but without the related cults. His main festival was the Neptunalia, held in July in the height of summer – which probably focused on his original Italian role as a god of fresh water rather than the sea. Because of Poseidon's connection with horses, Neptune was also associated with *Consus in whose honour horse races were held; during the festival working horses were given a day of rest. Vergil gives the god a Roman aspect when he compares his calming of the stormy sea to a statesman bringing a seditious crowd to order. [Cicero *ND* 2.66; Varro *LL* 5.72, 6.19; Vergil *Aen* 1.124-56]

Nereids (*Νηρηίδες*). Water nymphs of the Mediterranean, and the beautiful daughters of the sea god *Nereus and *Doris, the daughter of Oceanus. They are usually cited as a band of fifty, and their names are given in Homer, Hesiod, Apollodorus and Hyginus. The following is an amalgam of the four lists, in which many of the names have meanings relate to their functions: Actea, Agave, Amatea, Amphinome, Amphithoe, Amphitrite, Apseudes, Autonoe, Callianassa, Callianira, Calypso, Ceto, Clymene, Cranto, Cymatolege, Cymo, Cymodoce, Cymothoe, Dero, Dexamene, Dione, Doris, Doto, Dynamene, Eione, Erato, Eucrante, Eudora, Eulimene, Eumolpe, Eunice, Eupompe, Galatea, Galene, Glauce, Glauconome, Halia, Halimede, Hipponoe, Hippothoe, Iaera, Ianassa, Ianira, Ione, Laomedia, Leagore, Limmorea, Lysianassa, Maera, Melite, Menippe, Nausithoe, Nemertes, Neomeris, Nesaea, Neso, Orithyia, Panope, Pasithea, Pherusa, Plexaure, Polynoe, Pontomedousa, Pontoporeia, Pronoe, Proto, Protomedia, Psamathe, Sao, Speio, Thalia, Themisto, Thetis, Thoe, Xantho. With a few exceptions the Nereids did not play a major part in myths, but were portrayed as living in their father's palace on the sea bed, occupied with spinning, weaving, and singing. Sometimes they were spectators, as when they wept with Thetis for Achilles in the *Iliad*, or they might give assistance to heroes, advising Herakles for example on how to obtain from *Nereus the route to the garden of the Hesperides. The exceptional Nereids were *Galatea, *Psamathe, *Oreithyia and *Thetis, who often took the role of their leader, *Amphitrite. It was Thetis who helped to steer the Argo through difficult waters and aided Dionysus when he is pursued into the sea by Lycurgus, as well as being the comforter and support of her son Achilles.

[Apollodorus 1.2.7; Apollonius 4.859, 930; Hesiod *Theog* 240-64; Homer *Il* 18.35-69; Pausanias 2.1.8, 3.26.7; Pindar *Nem* 4.65-8, 5.35-7, *Pyth* 11.2, *Isth* 6.6; Vergil *Aen* 5.825-6]

Nereus (*Nηρεύς*). He was one of the most ancient pre-Olympian sea-gods, the 'old man of the sea' in Homer and Hesiod. Considered a just and merciful deity, he was more sympathetic to sailors than the unstable and volatile Poseidon. Pontus ('sea') and Gaia ('earth') were his parents, Doris the daughter of Oceanus his wife, and their children were the fifty *Nereids, including *Thetis the mother of Achilles, *Galatea and *Amphitrite. Like other sea deities such as *Proteus or his own daughter Thetis, Nereus had powers of prophecy and metamorphosis. When Heracles, seeking the golden apples of Hesperides for his eleventh *Labour, came upon Nereus while he slept, he changed into many forms, but could not escape the grip of the hero, and Nereus was forced to tell him where the apples were. The myth is similar to that of Menelaus' encounter with Proteus in *Odyssey* 4. [Apollodorus 2.5.11; Hesiod *Theog* 233-64; Homer *Il* 1.556; Pindar *Pyth* 3.92, 9.93-6]

Nessus (*Νέσσος*). A centaur who was driven from Arcadia by *Heracles and settled as ferryman on the river Evenus. Here he had a second encounter with Heracles, who had to cross the river with his wife *Deianira. Heracles swam across, but entrusted his wife to Nessus to ferry on his back. The centaur attempted to rape Deianira during the crossing, but was stopped by Heracles' arrow shot from the far bank. As he was dying Nessus instructed Deianira to make a love charm from the blood from his wound mixed with his spilled semen, which would ensure Heracles' faithfulness if ever his clothing was impregnated with the mixture. When Deianira later used this in a desperate attempt to win back her husband's love the 'shirt of Nessus' was found to be a malignant gift, a poisonous robe which caused excruciating agony to Heracles, and eventually brought about his death. [Apollodorus 2.5.4, 7.6; Hyginus 34; Ovid *Met* 9.101-210; Sophocles *Trachiniae*]

Nestis (*Νῆστις*). A Sicilian goddess, perhaps even a local form of *Persephone, connecting her with underground streams. Empedocles uses her name for the element of water, partnering her with Aidoneus as earth, and contrasting the two with the Olympians Zeus (fire) and Hera (air). [Empedocles frs 6, 96]

Nestor (*Νέστωρ*). The youngest of the twelve sons of *Neleus, king of Pylos, and Chloris, daughter of Niobe. He was the only one to survive when Heracles invaded Pylos and killed his father and brothers. There were two explanations for Nestor's survival – either he was away from the area during his time at Gerenia in Messenia (and in the *Odyssey* he is referred to as 'Gerainian horse-breaker'), or he was the only one of the brothers who did not attempt to take the oxen of Geryon from Heracles. Nestor was famous for his longevity, reigning in Pylos for three generations; this was said to have been in recompense for the slaughter of his mother's brothers and sisters by Apollo and Artemis in their anger at Niobe's boasting. With his advanced years came respect for his wise counsel, so that Nestor became the paradigm of the older statesman – somewhat long-winded, looking back nostalgically to the exploits of his youth, and always ready to give advice with persuasive words 'sweeter than honey'. He first tried unsuccessfully to arbitrate between Agamemnon and Achilles in the opening quarrel of the *Iliad*, but other interventions and advice as peacemaker in the Greek camp were more successful. He had been a famous warrior (as he liked to relate), taking part in many skirmishes with his neighbours the Epeians, and in one battle killing over 100 men; despite his age he showed himself an active fighter and experienced strategist at Troy. His athletic prowess as a young man won him many prizes at the funeral games of Amarynceus in Elis. He took part in the hunt for the *Calydonian boar as well as in the battle between the Centaurs

and the Lapiths, and he was successful in single combat with the Arcadian giant Ereuthalion. Nestor had brought a contingent of ninety ships to Troy after accompanying Menelaus around Greece to gather the Greek forces, and was accompanied on the expedition by two of his sons *Antilochus and *Thrasymedes; on the way he assisted Achilles in the capture of Tenedos off the coast of Troy. During the fighting at Ilium Nestor was only once in serious danger when he was attacked by *Memnon; he survived when his son Antilochus intervened and was killed in his place. Nestor returned safely from Troy and resumed his throne without difficulty with his wife who was still alive. She was *Eurydice, daughter of Clymenus, although one source gives his wife as Anaxibia, daughter of Cratieus. He had seven sons: Perseus, Straticlius, Aretus, Echephron, Pisistratus, Antilochus, and Thrasymedes, as well as two daughters Pisidice and Polycaste. *Telemachus was his guest while on his search of news of his father Odysseus, and heard a long report of the later adventures of the Greek heroes. There was, however, no tradition preserved regarding Nestor's own end. [Apollodorus 1.9.9, 2.7.3; Homer *Il* 1.245-86, 4.292-316 and books 19-14, 23 *passim*, *Od* 3.78-478; Ovid *Met* 8.365-9, *Q Smyrn* 2. 260-341; Pindar *Pyth* 6.28-42]

Nicaea (*Νίκαια*). A naiad, daughter of the river Sangarius and sister to Midas. She was a follower of Artemis and the hunt and spurned all lovers, shooting one of them, Hymnus, when he refused to stop pursuing her. Eros in revenge made Dionysus fall in love with her, and when she spurned even the god's attentions, he turned the water of her spring into wine and made her drunk, which weakened her resistance. So he had intercourse with her, and the union resulted in a daughter named Telete. Nicaea tried to hang herself in shame, but was eventually reconciled to Dionysus, who named the city of Nicaea after her. [Nonnus 15.169-16.405]

Nicostrate (*Νικοστράτη*). A nymph from Arcadia, the daughter of the river Ladon. Although she was married to Echenus, she bore *Evander to Hermes. She persuaded her son to murder her husband, and then fled with Evander to Italy, where she founded the city of Pallantium on the Tiber, later the centre of Rome. Nicostrate, called *Carmenta in Italy, also taught Evander the Latin alphabet. [Plutarch *Romulus* 21.1-2]

Nicostratus (*Νικόστρατος*). A son of Menelaus, whose mother was either Helen or, according to the tradition that Helen had only one child Hermione, a slave woman Pieris. His brother, perhaps his twin, was called Megapenthes, and together they were said to have driven Helen from Sparta after their father's death. [Apollodorus 3.11.1; Hesiod *Cat* 70; Pausanias 2.18.6; 3.19.9]

Night. *See* Nyx.

Nike (*Νίκη*, Latin 'Victoria'). One of the original pre-Olympian gods, daughter of the Titan Pallas and the underworld river Styx, and the personification of victory. With her brothers Cratus (Strength), Bia (Force) and Zelus (Glory) she remained in the house of Zeus after the defeat of the Titans as a reward for siding with him in the battle against the older generation of gods for world dominion. She was a popular figure in sculpture, represented winged, usually holding out a wreath for the victorious, and with robes billowing behind her in the speed of her passage. Athena was closely associated with her as Athena Nike; she held a winged Nike in her hand in the grand statue in the Parthenon, (as did the statue of Zeus at Olympia) and it is likely that the temple on the right of the gateway into the Acropolis was dedicated to Athena under this title rather than to Nike as a separate divinity. [Apollodorus 1.2.5; Hesiod *Theog* 383-8; Pausanias 1.22.4, 5.11.1] (**GII**) *See* Victoria.

Niobe (*Νιόβη*). **1.** The daughter of *Phoroneus and a nymph (named variously as Laodice, Teledice, Peitho or Cero). Phoroneus was traditionally named as the first human male, and Niobe was therefore the first woman with a human father. She was also the first mortal woman to mate with Zeus and bore him two sons, Argus and Pelasgus. The former was the founder of Argos in the Peloponnese, and Pelasgus was the ancestor of the tribe of the Pelasgi, the most ancient people of Greece. [Apollodorus 2.1.1; Hyginus 145; Pausanias 2.22.5; Plato *Tim* 22a] **2.** The archetype of inconsolable grief, Niobe was daughter of the Lydian king, Tantalus, and wife of *Amphion, ruler of Thebes. She had by Amphion seven sons and seven daughters, although in Homer the number is twelve, in Hesiod fourteen. The boys were named (with variations) as Amyclas, Agenor, Damasichthon, Ismenus, Phaedimus, Sipylos, and Tantalus, and the girls Astykratia, Astyoche, Cleodoxa, Eudoxa, Ogygia, Pelopeia and Meliboea (Chloris). The tale of Niobe is a prime example of the crime of *hubris* and the divine vengeance of *Nemesis. The women of Thebes were sacrificing to Leto, mother of Apollo and Artemis, to atone for Niobe's disparagement of the goddess for having only two children compared to her own family. Niobe interrupted the sacrifice, and again mocked Leto for her relative infertility. So Leto sent Apollo and Artemis to punish the Niobe for her arrogance, which they did by shooting down with their arrows all her children, Artemis killing the girls and Apollo the boys. Amphion their father also took his own life in despair. Apollodorus tells us of two who survived – a boy, and the youngest girl Meliboea who afterward was called Chloris because she went white with fear. According to Homer, the children lay unburied for nine days and nights, when the Olympians themselves conducted the funeral rites. Niobe, in her terrible grief, returned to her father in Lydia, and there, while praying to Zeus, was transformed by the god into a stone, the famous Rock of Niobe in Asia Minor, from which her tears were said to flow continuously. The shooting of the children by the divine pair was a favourite subject for painters and sculptors, especially the representation of Artemis slaying the youngest child as she clung to her mother's skirts. Plato condemned the incident as totally inappropriate behaviour to be attributed to gods. [Apollodorus 3.5.6; Hesiod *Cat* 23; Homer *Il* 24.605-17; Hyginus 9; Ovid *Met* 6.146-312; Plato *Rep* 380a; fragments of plays on Niobe by both Aeschylus and Sophocles] **3.** The wife of Philotus and daughter of Assaon, who had an incestuous passion for his daughter which she repulsed. In revenge, he burned Niobe's children alive and she threw herself from a rock to her death. This may be a variant of the main myth rather than a reference to a separate individual. [Parthenius 33]

Nisus (*Νῆσος*). **1.** The son of the second Pandion, the ruler of Athens, born while his father was in Megara. Nisus took over the rule of Athens, which was later besieged by the all-powerful Minos, king of Crete. The oracle had foretold that the purple lock which grew on Nisus' head in some manner held his life force, and when it was pulled out he would die. His daughter *Scylla (2) betrayed him by taking the lock and giving it to Minos, with whom she had fallen in love. Minos refused her love and after he had taken the city he left for Crete without her. According to Ovid, Scylla clung to his ship but Nisus turned into an osprey and forced her to release her grip, but before she drowned she also turned into a bird, Ciris. which means 'shearer'. More realistically, Apollodorus relates how Minos tied her to the stern of his ship and drowned her for her treachery. [Apollodorus 3.15.8; Ovid *Met* 8.1-151] **(K.) 2.** A companion of Aeneas and close friend of *Euryalus. At the funeral games of Anchises, Aeneas' father, Nisus cheated in the foot-race to make sure that Euryalus was the victor. In the expedition with Euryalus to spy out the Rutulian camp Euryalus was caught by the enemy and Nisus attempted in vain to save him; Vergil promised eternal glory for the two young men in his poetry. [Vergil *Aen* 5.315-44, 9.176-449]

Nixi. The personification of the final pangs of childbirth when the child actually enters the world. They were represented in Rome as a trio of female statues in front of the temple of Minerva on the Capitol, perhaps related to the goddess as having the skills of a healer. [Ovid *Met* 9.294]

Nostoi (*Νόστοι*). A post-Homeric poem of the Epic Cycle, which dealt with the various heroes and their adventures as they returned from the Trojan War following and supplementing Homer's *Odyssey*. Only fragments of verse remain and a prose summary.

Notus (*Νότος*). The personification of the south wind. He was the son of Eos (the dawn) and Astraeus, and brother to Boreas and Zephyr. According to Hesiod these winds come from the gods and are refreshing, but Ovid writes of the south wind destroying crops with storms and heavy rain, and so ruining the farmer's year-long work. [Homer *Il* 11.306, 21.334; Hesiod *Theog* 380, 870; Ovid *Met* 1.264-73]

Numa Pompilius. After the mysterious death of *Romulus, Numa, from the Sabine town of Cures, was invited by the Romans to be their second king. He was said to have ruled for forty-three years during which he brought peace and order to the new city, and established its patterns of legal and religious practices. He was said to have talked with Pythagoras in South Italy (which involved a considerable anachronism) and also to have been advised by his lover, the nymph *Egeria. In a tale of an imaginary conversation with Jupiter he outwitted him and brought to an end the custom of human sacrifice to the god. [Livy 1.18.1-21.5; Plutarch *Numa passim*]

Numitor. A king of Alba Longa in Latium, son of Procas, and more importantly, the father of *Rhea Silvia, and so an important link in the lineage of the founders of Rome. He reigned jointly with his younger brother Amulius, but was then deposed by him. The usurper exiled Numitor, killed his son Lausus and forced his daughter Rhea Silvia to be dedicated to Vesta, which would enforce her virginity until she was too old to bear a child. But the god Mars fell in love with her, gained access to her and so fathered the twin boys *Romulus and Remus. The children were exposed in a basket on the Tiber, but survived. They eventually killed Amulius, and restored their grandfather to the throne of Alba Longa. [Livy 1.3; Plutarch *Romulus* 3.1-3; Vergil *Aen* 6.768]

Nycteis (*Νυκτιήϊς*). Daughter of *Nycteus and sister to Antiope. She married into the royal house of Thebes, with Polydorus as her husband and *Labdacus her son. [Apollodorus 3.5.5]

Nycteus (*Νυκτεύς*). A son of Chthonius, one of those born from the teeth of the dragon sown by *Cadmus at the foundation of Thebes. In another version Nycteus and his brother Lycus were exiled to Thebes from Euboea because of a homicide. They rose to prominence and were even regents for *Laius during his minority. Nycteus had a daughter *Antiope who had been seduced by Zeus and, when pregnant, fled through fear of her father, to Sicyon, where she married Epopeus. Nycteus entrusted his brother Lycus with the task of punishing Antiope and Epopeus; he himself committed suicide in grief at her disgrace. [Apollodorus 3.5.5, 10.1.]

Nyctimene (*Νυκτιμένη*) The daughter of an Epopeus who was king of Lesbos; she had an incestuous relationship with her father and fled into hiding in the forest; Athena took pity on the girl and transformed her into an owl. Still cursed by guilt the owl shuns the daylight and only ventures out by night. [Hyginus 204; Ovid *Met.* 2.589-95]

Nyctimus (*Νύκτιμος*). The youngest of the fifty sons of *Lycaon, king of Arcadia. He was the only one to be saved by the prayers of *Gaia when Zeus destroyed his father and brothers for tempting him to eat unwittingly a child's intestines mixed with sacrificial meal. But in another version of the myth Nyctimus himself was the murdered child, and his father was changed into a wolf for an eight-year period. The flood which *Deucalion survived occurred during the time of Nyctimus, and it may have been sent as a punishment for his family's impiety. [Apollodorus 3.8.1; Pausanias 8.2.3.]

Nymphs (*Νύμφαι*). Minor female deities or spirits of great beauty, belonging to particular natural features of the landscape. In Homer, they are the children of Zeus, but clearly connect with the earliest life on earth. There are several separate categories: Meliae – nymphs of the ash trees, the most ancient, created from the blood of the castrated genitals of *Uranus, and in one myth the source of the human race; *Oreads – mountain nymphs; *Dryads – tree nymphs; *Hamadryads – the nymphs of a particular tree who die with the tree if it is destroyed; *Oceanids – daughters of *Oceanus; Alseids – spirits of sacred groves; *Nereids – daughters of Nereus and nymphs of the calm sea; *Naiads – water nymphs, often of a particular river, stream or spring. As well as being deities of a place or natural feature, nymphs were also found as attendants of a goddess, especially of Artemis, or sometimes of a higher-ranking nymph, such as Calypso, Circe, or Thetis. These more important nymphs had considerable power in their own right, and were often skilled in magic or healing. In general nymphs were associated with other nature deities like Pan, the satyrs, and Priapus, but they also had sexual encounters with the greater gods – Zeus, Apollo, Hermes, and Dionysus, with the eponymous founding heroes of a city in their territory or with handsome strangers. These love affairs were sometimes tragic, as they were for Daphnis and Echo, or brought tragedy on others, such as Hylas. Although the word *νύμφη* means simply 'young girl' or 'bride', in general it was the eroticism associated with their mythology that led to the connotations of 'nymphomania'. [Calimachus *Hymn* 4.79-85; Hesiod *Theog* 129-30; Homer *Il* 20.8-12, 24.615, *Od* 10.348-74, 17.240; Ovid *Fasti* 230-2; Porphyry *Antr. Nymph*]

Nysa (*Νύσα*). One of the nymphs, the daughter of Aristaeus; Zeus entrusted her with the rearing of the young god *Dionysus. Dionysus had been changed into a young goat to escape the murderous plans of Hera, and the nymphs kept him safe on their green mountain, feeding him with honey. As a reward for their care, the nymphs were changed into the stars called the Hyades, and the mountain was named after Nysa. In another form of the myth the nymphs were rejuvenated by Medea. The location of the mountain itself was a subject of great dispute in antiquity, placed variously in Ethiopia, Libya and Thrace. The myth is transparently an attempt to provide an explanation for the obscure name of Dionysus ('born of Zeus from Nysa'). [Apollodorus 3.4.3; Apollonius 4.1131; Diodorus 3.70]

Nyx (*Νύξ*, Latin 'Nox'). The goddess and personification of night, understood originally as a dark and powerful force rather than the mere absence of sunlight. She was one of the primeval elemental powers first emerging out of *Chaos with her brother Erebus (Dark Space). From mating with him she gave birth to Hemera (Day) and Aether (Bright Space), but also unaided Nyx brought forth from herself Thanatos (Death), Moros (Doom), *Hypnos (Sleep) and the tribe of dreams, as well as Deceit and Lust, Old Age, Famine, Murder, Discord and many of the other troubles afflicting the human race; these evils were represented as tracing their origins back to the primeval darkness at the very formation of the world's structure. In complete contrast, Nyx was also the mother of the *Hesperides, who tended the golden apples by the shores of Ocean in the far West. Her abode is in *Tartarus, deep below the earth; when Hemera (Day) returns there, Nyx (Night) starts her journey, and the two are never at home

together. The only tale told of Nyx is that she saved her son *Hypnos when Zeus was about to throw him from Olympus. [Hesiod *Theog* 123-5, 211-25, 744-57; Homer *Il* 14.256-61]