

HUNGRY STORIES



1. JONAH

God gave Jonah a task: he was to go to the great, wealthy, but wicked city of Nineveh and command its inhabitants to repent and change their ways. Otherwise, they would face punishment sent by God. Jonah was afraid of the journey and what might happen to him in sinful Nineveh. Instead of obeying God, he decided to flee and hide. While Jonah was peacefully sleeping aboard a ship heading for the farthest corner of the world, a terrible storm broke out at sea. The frightened sailors didn't know what else to do to save the ship and their lives. Jonah realised that the storm was sent by the angry God, who sees all and knows all. He told the sailors to throw him overboard to spare them further misfortune. When he fell into the water, the storm suddenly ceased, and a giant fish swam up to Jonah, eyed him, and swallowed him whole. Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the Leviathan before being spat out by the fish at God's command. After this experience, Jonah grew braver and wiser, resolving not to run away again. He went on to complete his mission in Nineveh. The task God had given him turned out to be much easier than Jonah had anticipated. The people of Nineveh listened to him and took his message seriously, and God was pleased.

2. ADAM AND EVE

God created the first humans: a woman named Eve and a man named Adam. The Almighty gave them a blissful life in the Garden of Eden, where they lived happily, unaware of fatigue, sorrow, or illness. They did as they pleased and probably slept in late. Adam and Eve were given only one condition by God – they were forbidden to taste the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, which grew in the heart of the garden. Unfortunately, a serpent lived among the tree's leaves, constantly tempting them to break this rule. It is said that Eve was the first to succumb, tasting the apple and then offering it to Adam. In that moment, the weight of the world's evil fell upon them. Tasting the fruit gave them self-awareness of good and evil. Satan had promised that after eating it, they would become equal to God. Instead, for the first time, they noticed they were naked and felt something entirely new: shame, despair, pain, and the burden of life. A saddened God banished them from Paradise, which neither they nor their descendants – meaning all of us – ever returned to. The serpent was also punished for its deceit and for tempting Eve. God took away its legs, condemning it to slither on its belly forevermore.

3. CRONUS

Cronus was a Greek god who, out of fear of losing his power, swallowed his own children. He was the son of Uranus and Gaia, the primordial deities who existed at the dawn of time. Cronus belonged to the generation of Titans – giants who appeared before the Olympian gods and were an unusually vast and extraordinary group of siblings. They were terrifying and had astonishing traits: some had a hundred hands, others a single eye in the middle of their forehead, while others were as large as mountains. Uranus feared them so much that he decided to imprison his offspring in Tartarus, the deepest and darkest corner of the underworld. Gaia sought to protect some of her children and helped Cronus rise up against his father. Cronus defeated Uranus, who cursed him with the prophecy that the story of the rebellious child and the humiliated parent would repeat itself. And so it did. Zeus, the youngest son of Cronus, overthrew his father, just as Cronus had once overthrown Uranus, and Zeus became the ruler of Olympus. Cronus believed he had swallowed Zeus at birth, but instead of the baby, his wife tricked him into swallowing a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes. She then hid baby Zeus in a cave, where he was cared for by the goat Amalthea and mountain nymphs, who rang bells to drown out the boy's cries and protect him from his dangerous father.

4. LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

Who doesn't know the tale of Little Red Riding Hood, the girl who walks through the forest with a basket of treats for her sick grandmother? Along the way, she meets a wicked wolf who learns where she is heading and arrives there first. After devouring the grandmother, the wolf dresses in her nightgown and waits in bed, wrapped in blankets for Red Riding Hood to arrive. When she gets there, after a brief conversation, the wolf swallows her too! Both are rescued from the wolf's stomach by a hunter, who chases the beast away. In some versions of the story, the hunter or a woodsman sews stones into the wolf's belly so that the cunning creature makes noise with every movement and can no longer sneak up or disguise itself.

Do you know it's best not to walk alone in the forest and that you might lose mobile signal there? Remember, you should be cautious around strangers and never share personal information (like your address) with just anyone, right? By the way, aren't wolves now a protected species? Or at least some of them?

5. BLACK HOLE

Black holes are among the most mysterious phenomena in the space. They are incredibly massive, which gives them such a strong gravitational pull that nothing that falls into them can escape. The point of no return is called the event horizon. Black holes devour everything within their reach and keep growing bigger and bigger. They can't even be seen because they completely absorb light – which is where their name comes from. Where do these strange space creatures come from? Sometimes, they form from dying stars, and sometimes they even give rise to entirely new celestial bodies. Some of them are so ancient that they've existed since the Big Bang. They are a bit like bottomless pits or waterfalls, but no one knows what lies at their core. Perhaps on the other side of a black hole, you might end up in... another universe. Did you know that many black holes are located at the centre of our galaxy – the Milky Way? But there's no need to worry; black holes cannot move, so none will come close to Earth.

6. THE SNAKE EATING ITS OWN TAIL

Have you ever seen the image of a snake devouring its own tail? This is the ancient symbol known as the Ouroboros, which dates back to Ancient Egypt. Its peculiar name comes from the Greek words "oura" meaning tail, and "boros", meaning eating. But why does the snake consume itself and then is reborn? The Ouroboros symbolises infinity, eternal recurrence, and the unity of life and death. Sometimes the end is immediately the beginning – for example, when a seed stops being a seed and becomes a plant, or when a chrysalis transforms into a butterfly. The Ouroboros represents the cyclical nature of the world, reflected in the changing seasons. After winter comes spring, water evaporates, condenses, and falls again as rain, and the seeds planted in a garden grow into beautiful flowers and delicious vegetables.

Long ago, the Ouroboros also symbolised the river that encircled the Earth, with no clear beginning or end, embodied by the snake wrapped around the planet. It was said that the Ouroboros also gave the gods eternal youth – its rejuvenating power came from the fact that snakes periodically shed their skin, as though they were being reborn.

7. HANSEL AND GRETEL

"We are lost!" said Gretel to Hansel after overhearing their stepmother urging their father to abandon them in the forest. The father was poor and struggled to feed his family, and the stepmother had no love for Hansel or Gretel. The father's heart was breaking, but he gave in to his wife's demands and left the children in the forest to perish. Knowing the wicked woman's plan, Hansel marked the path home by dropping crumbs of bread. Unfortunately, the birds ate the crumbs, and the siblings got lost. After three days and nights alone in the forest, they stumbled upon something extraordinary – a house made of bread, with sugar windows and a roof made of cakes. Hungry, they began nibbling on parts of the house when an old woman as ancient as time itself appeared. She invited Hansel and Gretel inside with a smile, but soon imprisoned them. Her plan was to feast on the children. The witch locked Hansel in a small pen and began fattening him up for the roast, while she forced Gretel to work in the kitchen. Luckily, the witch's plan failed, and instead of the children, it was she who ended up in the oven. Gretel tricked her and then freed her brother. The children filled their pockets with the witch's treasure and returned home to their father. After abandoning them, he had lived in torment, unable to find peace. When he saw Hansel and Gretel again, he wept with joy. Their stepmother was no longer there, for she had died. From that moment on, the three of them lived happily and in prosperity.

8. THE WAWEL DRAGON

The people of Krak's town couldn't sleep peacefully ever since a dragon took residence in a cave beneath Wawel Hill. This fearsome creature devoured livestock and even humans – he particularly fancied young maidens. Unfortunately, none of the brave and valiant knights could defeat the dragon in battle. Terrified, the townsfolk started offering the beast cattle as sacrifices, but even that didn't appease the creature's hunger. Then, unexpectedly, a clever shoemaker named Skuba decided to use trickery. He prepared a delicious-looking sheep stuffed with sulphur and presented it to the dragon for breakfast. The creature swallowed the sheep whole, licking its lips in satisfaction. However, soon after, the dragon roared in agony and began spewing fire, as its throat burned terribly. In desperation to quench his thirst, he drank almost all the water from the Vistula River – and then... he exploded. The townspeople were overjoyed and hailed the cunning Skuba as a hero. Over time, the once perilous settlement became a safe place to live, eventually growing into the city of Kraków.

9. ROMAN EMPEROR VITELLIUS

Vitellius was a Roman emperor with a great love for food. The writer Suetonius, who enjoyed gossip, described him in *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars* as both a tyrant and a glutton. Vitellius was constantly thinking about his next meal and would ask everyone he encountered if they had already had breakfast. He loved to feast, sometimes indulging in enormous meals up to four times a day, often crashing parties uninvited. When his brother hosted a banquet in Vitellius's honour, it was an extravagant affair with two thousand fish and seven thousand birds served! It was such a legendary feast that many attendees could barely move afterward from overeating. But that was nothing compared to when Vitellius himself organised a feast featuring rare delicacies like pheasant and peacock brains, flamingo tongues, and eels, which the Roman navy had to search for instead of defending the empire. Even when not at a banquet, Vitellius couldn't resist snacking, famously eating the entrails of sacrificial animals during religious offerings. Perhaps that's why the gods on Olympus decided that a single year of his rule was quite enough.

10. TANTALUS

Tantalus, the ruler of Lydia and son of Zeus, was once favoured by the Olympian gods, who invited him to their lavish feasts and even visited him in his wealthy kingdom. However, Tantalus didn't always behave appropriately during these gatherings. He would occasionally steal the treasures of Olympus – nectar and ambrosia, the divine substances that made the gods immortal and eternally youthful. Tantalus would then share this ambrosia with his court and divulge the gods' secrets. For a time, he got away with these transgressions, but he eventually crossed a line. Wanting to test whether the gods were truly all-knowing and all-powerful, he invited them to a feast where he served them a roast made from the flesh of his own son, Pelops. The gods quickly uncovered the horrific deception, though Demeter, distracted by grief over her lost daughter, accidentally consumed part of the meal. Zeus, enraged, restored Pelops to life and cast Tantalus into Tartarus to suffer eternal torment. Tantalus was condemned to stand in a pool of water, which receded whenever he tried to drink, with fruit hanging above his head just out of reach, and a rock perpetually poised to crush him at any moment.

11. THE LAST SUPPER

The night before he was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and later crucified, Jesus gathered his twelve apostles in Jerusalem to share his final meal. It was the eve of Passover, the most important Jewish festival commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. As Jesus sat at the table with his disciples, he declared that one of them would betray him – referring to Judas, who would later that night betray him for thirty pieces of silver. Jesus then offered a prayer of thanks, broke bread, and blessed it, saying it was his body, which he shared with his disciples. He also took a cup of wine, blessed it, and shared it with them, proclaiming that it was his blood, soon to be shed for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus asked them to repeat these actions in his memory after his death, thereby establishing the sacrament of the Eucharist and priesthood.

12. THE HORN OF PLENTY

Zeus, as a child, was the only one of Cronus's offspring to escape being devoured by his father, thanks to his mother Rhea's cunning. She hid the boy in a golden cradle in a cave on Crete, surrounded by a dense forest. There, Zeus was raised under the care of mountain nymphs and the nurturing goat, Amalthea, who fed him with its milk. One day, Amalthea's horn broke off. Zeus, who dearly loved the goat, took the broken horn, blessed it, and from that moment on, whatever he desired would appear inside the horn. This magical horn of plenty, or Cornucopia, was filled with fruits, flowers, precious jewels, and delicious foods – whatever young Zeus wished for. He grew up in the favour of nature, with doves bringing him ambrosia, an eagle delivering nectar, and bees sweetening his time in hiding with their honey. Though much time has passed since then, Amalthea's horn remains a coveted object, as it grants the wishes of anyone who becomes its owner.

13. ASHURBANIPAL'S LIBRARY

Ashurbanipal, the Assyrian king, established one of the oldest libraries in Nineveh. However, it didn't contain paper books like we have today. In those times, everything was written in cuneiform script on clay tablets, which meant that even a fire couldn't destroy the approximately 30,000 volumes stored there. Ashurbanipal was an ambitious and educated ruler – one of the first kings of Mesopotamia who could read and write – and he was deeply interested in many fields of knowledge. By the king's order, messengers travelled across the empire in search of valuable manuscripts. Thanks to this, Ashurbanipal's collection included such important works as the *Code of Hammurabi* and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. His library contained many texts on medicine, astronomy, physics, mathematics, history, and literature, as well as religion and magic, including divination, rituals, spells, and exorcisms. From this, we can deduce that Ashurbanipal was truly a king hungry for knowledge, seeking to secure his fortune and happiness through wisdom.

14. KING MIDAS

The legend of King Midas is a tale of great foolishness. Though there are different versions of the story, it goes something like this: One day, Midas, the king of Phrygia, encountered in his garden a bald man with a horse's tail, ears, and a rather large belly – likely from excessive wine and feasting. Midas recognised him as Silenus, a god of joy, nature, fertility, wine, and theatre. Silenus had apparently become separated from the entourage of Dionysus, the god of wine, who was on a journey to India. When Dionysus discovered that Silenus was having a grand time in Midas's palace, he decided to reward the king for his hospitality by granting him a wish. Without much thought, Midas asked that everything he touched turn to gold. And so it happened. However, the gift from Dionysus quickly became a curse, as the king found himself unable to eat or drink – as each dish hardened and clanked with metal in his hand. Worse yet, when he lovingly embraced his daughter, she was instantly transformed into a gleaming statue. According to the legend, a desperate Midas eventually begged Dionysus to take back his gift, or rather remove the curse, and restore those turned into gold to their original form.

15. NARCISSUS

Narcissus was a beautiful young man who lived in the forest and loved to hunt. He wasn't interested in matters of love, though many forest nymphs and girls fell for him because of his extraordinary beauty. One of the most smitten was a nymph named Echo. Unfortunately, Narcissus rejected her, and she wasted away in sadness until she became nothing more than a voice echoing the last words heard after the creatures through the woods. Narcissus had no idea how beautiful he was or how much emotion he stirred in others, as he had never seen his own reflection. His parents ensured that there were no mirrors in their home, as a prophecy stated that Narcissus would live a long life, provided he never gazed upon his own image. One day, however, tired from hunting and thirsty, he bent down to drink from a lake, brought his face close to the surface of the water and saw his reflection. Narcissus instantly fell in love with himself. Like Echo before him, he stopped eating and drinking, spending his days gazing at his reflection. Eventually, he took root like a plant and transformed into a white-and-yellow flower, which still bears his name.

16. THE WISHING TABLE

Once upon a time, there was a tailor who had three sons. The boys helped him around the house and were responsible for herding the family's goat – their source of sustenance. They were hardworking and did their duties well, but the goat was a cunning creature and a great liar. When the tailor asked the goat if she was full, she would whine, claiming she hadn't eaten all day! The tailor believed the goat and banished his sons. The boys set off into the world, where they learned many useful skills. One of them became a carpenter and crafted a truly magical table. Whenever someone said, "Table, deck yourself!", food and drinks would instantly appear on it. Unfortunately, the young carpenter wasn't careful enough with his treasure. On his way back home, a dishonest innkeeper swapped the enchanted table for an ordinary one. When the son returned home to show his father the wonderful table, nothing happened, and the tailor was disappointed once again. The same misfortune befell the second brother, whose magical gold-producing donkey was also switched by the innkeeper. Luckily, the third brother was more vigilant. When the innkeeper tried to steal his enchanted cudgel, the boy commanded, "Cudgel, out the sack!", and the magical staff gave the thief a well-deserved lesson. Thanks to this, the brothers recovered their stolen treasures and finally proved to their father that they had never lied. The family reunited for a grand feast at the magic table, and they never lacked anything ever again.



organizatorzy

mecenas

patron medialny