

**Save Ancient Studies Alliance**

**January 2022 Texts-in-Translation Reading Group**

**The Search for the Golden Fleece: Jason and the Argonauts**



Scene from the 1963 movie, *Jason and the Argonauts*, showing the Argonauts fleeing from the bronze *automaton* (robot) Talos.

The Golden Fleece was a magical object held by King Aeetes of Colchis during the age of heroes before the Trojan War. After an omen about being killed by his son—a common trope in Greek mythology—King Pelias of Thessaly sends his son Jason on an impossible quest to retrieve the Golden Fleece.

In this reading group, we will read the *Argonautica*, a 4-book epic poem written by the Hellenistic scholar Apollonius of Rhodes who was the head of the famous Library of Alexandria during the 3rd century BC. We will consider the twists and turns of their adventure, the “Other” and conceptions of foreignness, conceptions of Greekness, allusions to Homer’s *Odyssey*, and Hellenistic attitudes toward ancient myth.

**Tuesdays in January, 2pm EST**

**Your SASA Educational Ambassador:**

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**Editions:**

There are many translations of the *Argonautica* out there. I will be using Richard Hunter's Oxford World's Classics translation (I got it for \$11 on Amazon). There are a bunch of free online translations as well. Seaton's 1912 prose translation can be found on [Theoi](#), [Project Gutenberg](#), [Sacred Texts](#), or [MIT Classics](#). Race's Loeb Translation can be found [here](#), but you can only access it if you have a university subscription. A very recent verse translation by Kelly can be downloaded free [here](#).

**Dates (3 weeks):** Tuesdays @ 2:00pm EDT

Session 1: January 4  
Session 2: January 11  
Session 3: January 18  
Session 4: January 25  
Makeup for session 2: February 1st

**Reading Schedule:**

Week 1 (Introduction and Book 1)  
Week 2 (Book 2)  
Week 3 (Book 3)  
Week 4 (Book 4)

**Location:**

Zoom Meeting Link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85181839208?pwd=T0t1Wk5kWGJselJwUXgxd05zU3ppUT09>

Zoom Meeting ID

851 8183 9208

Zoom Meeting Password 517368

### Additional Resources:

**Jason and the Argonauts through the Ages** (<http://www.argonauts-book.com/>): A website dedicated to the myth and its receptions. The map below showing the *possible* route of the Argonauts is taken from this site.



**Theoi** (<https://www.theoi.com/>): The *Theoi* online encyclopedia of Greek myths contains various articles on Jason and other aspects of the *Argonautica*. Entries also generally include ancient artistic representations of some of the myths.

**The Argonauts** (<https://theargonauts.com/>): A website about the myth of the Argonauts with additional resources.

**Mythweb** (<https://www.mythweb.com/heroes/jason/index.html>): An index of characters from the *Argonautica*.

### A Very Select (Mostly Recent) Bibliography:

Albis, Robert V. 1996. *Poet and Audience in the Argonautica of Apollonius*. Rowman & Littlefield.



- Clare, R.J. 2002. *The Path of the Argo. Language, Imagery and Narrative in the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius*. Cambridge.
- Clauss, J. 1993. *The Best of the Argonauts: The Redefinition of the Epic Hero in Book 1 of Apollonius's Argonautica*. University of California Press.
- DuBois, W. E. B. 1911. *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*. New York.
- Garson, R. W. 1972. "Homeric Echoes in Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica." *Classical Philology* 67 1: 1–9.
- Green, Peter. 1997. *The Argonautika by Apollonios Rhodios Translated with Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*. Berkeley.
- Hunter, R. 1993. *The Argonautica of Apollonius*. Oxford.
- Knight, V. 1995. *The Renewal of Epic: Responses to Homer in the Argonautica of Apollonius*. Leiden, New York, Cologne.
- Lovatt, Helen. 2018. "Gazing at Heroes in Apollonius' Argonautica." In *Gaze, Vision, and Visuality in Ancient Greek Literature*, edited by A. Kampakoglou and A. Novokhatko. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Morrison, A. D. 2020. *Apollonius Rhodius, Herodotus and Historiography*. Cambridge.
- Murray, Jackie. 2005. "[The Constructions of the Argo in Apollonius' Argonautica](#)." In *Beginning from Apollo: Studies in Apollonius Rhodius and the Argonautic Tradition*, edited by A. Harder and M. Cuypers, 88-106. Leuven: Peeters.
- Murray, Jackie. 2014. "[Anchored in Time: The Date in Apollonius' Argonautica](#)." *Hellenistica Groningana: Poetry in Context*, edited by M.A. Harder, R.F. Regtuit, and G. C. Wakker, 247-283. Leuven: Peeters.
- Papanghelis, Theodore D., and Antonios Rengakos. 2008. *Brill's Companion to Apollonius Rhodius: Second, Revised Edition*. Leiden.
- Phillips, Tom. 2020. *Untimely Epic: Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica*. Oxford University Press.
- Thalmann, W. 2011. *Apollonius of Rhodes and the Spaces of Hellenism*. Oxford.

Notes from Jan 4:

What dialect was the *Argonautica*?

Sam: Also, the form is an epic, which is meant to be songs (ἔπος) of recollection and listing of almost divine action. The relatively 'normal' and random crew seem to gain glory through the becoming of Jason's heroism. They are all human, who aspire to be great. But, it also brings out the rather unheroic side to Jason, who is doubtful of the upcoming quest. It seems to consciously not to deify the hero, until the main task is reached. I guess, in that way this epic is self-reflexive of its own tradition."

From Robyn - I didn't want to go down a rabbit hole too much - however, there were two interesting things I wanted to comment on:

1. Apollinorus being the chief librarian in Alexandria = I've just finished a novel by Charles Kingsley 'Hypatia' - a 'rattling good read' to be honest - that may interest others as to a rendering of the story around the library in Alexandria and also a highly important woman - albeit one that was a tragic example in the end.
2. It also struck me when reading the first part of Chapter 1, that the list of who's who was very similar in style to that used in the Bible. You know X begat Y, Y begat Z...is there some connection there to the Homeric style we talked about perhaps?

I have found another resource that is a nice summary of the story:

In *The Greeks myths - the complete and definitive edition* Robert Graves - section 148