

A Greek Myth Retold

Read the selection, and then answer the questions that follow.

- (1) Long ago, there lived in Greece a beautiful princess by the name of Atlanta. She was a swift runner ... as fast as lightning, they say. In fact, she was the fastest person in the kingdom. Whenever she ran down a mountain path, she was the wind that moved the trees.
- (2) When Atlanta reached the age when most girls were married, her father decided that she, too, should marry. To Atalanta, that idea was about as welcome as a skunk at an outdoor party! She didn't want to marry anyone yet. So at first, she was mad as a wet hen. "But Daughter," said her father, "you are the sun in my sky. I just want you to find someone who will make you happy."
- (3) Now Atalanta was as cunning as a fox, so she said, in a voice as sweet as honey. "I know you want the best for me, Father, so I will marry the man who can beat me in a foot race!"
- (4) Of course, Atalanta was sure she could beat any man, so she wouldn't have to marry ... until she was ready. The king sent out the word: Any man who could beat the princess in a running race would win her hand in marriage.
- (5) Many young men came to try their luck. Atalanta took them on, one at a time. Each competitor was given a head start, but since she was faster than a speeding bullet, Atalanta won each race! Then one day a handsome prince named Hippomenes came to the castle. He took one look at Atalanta and fell in love. Although she was as cold as ice to him, he was determined to win the race and marry her.
- (6) Aphrodite, the goddess of love, helped Hippomenes. "Take these three lovely golden apples that shine like the stars," she said. "Find some way to use them wisely during the race to win your true love."
- (7) The next morning, Hippomenes and Atalanta waited at the starting line. She offered him a head start, and he took off like a rocket. Before Atalanta could overtake him, Hippomenes threw a golden apple on the path in front of her. When she spotted the apple, Atalanta couldn't resist stopping to pick it up. Then on she ran, almost catching up, but then he threw the second apple. Again, she stopped to pick it up, then ran on. Hippomenes threw the last apple so far off the path that by the time Atalanta picked it up, it was impossible for her to catch up. He crossed the finish line a split second before her.
- (8) Atalanta congratulated her opponent. He smiled and winked, and suddenly she realized that she'd been tricked. But she was not angry for she also realized that he was a very clever man and could run very fast ... two things she admired. "You are very fast," she admitted. "Had I not stopped we might have had a tie!" Then she