

Strong's Concordance

iris: a rainbow

Original Word: ἴρις, ἰδος, ἴ

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: iris

Phonetic Spelling: (ee'-ris)


Short Definition: a rainbow

Definition: a rainbow or halo.

<http://biblehub.com/greek/2463.htm>

Iris (mythology)

This article is about the Iris of Greek mythology. For other uses, see [Iris \(disambiguation\)](#).

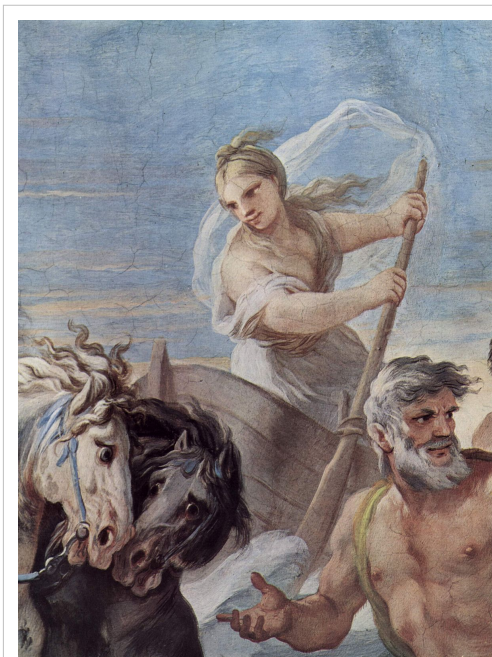
Iris	
Goddess of the Rainbow	
	
<i>Morpheus and Iris</i> , by Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, 1811	
Abode	Mount Olympus
Consort	Zephyrus
Parents	Thaumas and Electra
Siblings	Arke, Aello, Celaeno and Ocypete
Children	Pothos
Roman equivalent	Arcus

In Greek mythology, **Iris** (/ˈaɪrɪs/; Greek: Ἴρις)^[1] is the personification of the rainbow and messenger of the gods. She is also known as one of the goddesses of the sea and the sky. Iris links the gods to humanity. She travels with the speed of wind from one end of the world to the other,^[2] and into the depths of the sea and the underworld.

In myths

According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, Iris is the daughter of Thaumas and the cloud nymph Electra. Her sisters are Arke and the Harpies; Aello, Celaeno, and Ocypete.

Iris is frequently mentioned as a divine messenger in the *Iliad* which is attributed to Homer, but does not appear in his *Odyssey*, where Hermes fills that role. Like Hermes, Iris carries a caduceus or winged staff. By command of Zeus, the king of the gods, she carries an ewer of water from the River Styx, with which she puts to sleep all who perjure themselves. According to Apollonius Rhodius, Iris turned back the Argonauts Zetes and Calais who had pursued the Harpies to the Strophades ('Islands of Turning'). (This eventful 'turning' may have resulted in the islands' name. Wikipedia:Citation needed) The brothers had driven off the monsters from their torment of the prophet Phineas, but did not kill them upon the request of Iris, who promised that Phineas would not be bothered by the Harpies again.



Iris, by Luca Giordano



Iris stands behind the seated Juno (right) in a Pompeii fresco

Iris is married to Zephyrus, who is the god of the west wind. Their son is Pothos (Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*). According to the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnos, Iris' brother is Hydaspes (book XXVI, lines 355-365).

In Euripides' play *Heracles*, Iris appears alongside Lyssa, cursing Heracles with the fit of madness in which he kills his three sons and his wife Megara. In some records she is a sororal twin to the Titaness Arke (*arch*), who flew out of the company of Olympian gods to join the Titans as their messenger goddess during the Titanomachy, making the two sisters enemy messenger goddesses. Iris was said to have golden wings, whereas Arke had iridescent ones. She is also said to travel on the rainbow while carrying messages from the gods to mortals. During the Titan War, Zeus tore Arke's iridescent wings from her and gave them as a gift to the Nereid Thetis at her wedding, who in turn gave them to her son, Achilles, who wore them on his feet. Achilles was sometimes known as *podarkes* (feet like [the wings of] Arke.) Podarces was also the original name of Priam, king of Troy.

Iris also appears several times in Virgil's *Aeneid*, usually as an agent of Juno. In Book 4, Juno dispatches her to pluck a lock of hair from the head of Queen Dido, that she may die and enter Hades. In book 5, Iris, having taken on the form of a Trojan woman, stirs up the other Trojan mothers to set fire to 4 of Aeneas' ship in order to prevent them from leaving Sicily.

Epithets

Iris had numerous poetic titles and epithets, including *Chrysopteron* (Golden Winged), *Podas ôkea* (swift footed) or *Podênemos ôkea* (wind-swift footed), *Roscida* (dewey), and *Thaumantias* or *Thaumantos* (Daughter of Thamas, Wondrous One). Under the epithet *Aellopus* (Ἀελλόπους) she was described as swift-footed like a storm-wind.^[3] She also watered the clouds with her pitcher, obtaining the water from the sea.

Representation

Iris is represented either as a rainbow, or as a young maiden with wings on her shoulders. As a goddess, Iris is associated with communication, messages, the rainbow and new endeavors.



Winged female figure holding a caduceus: Iris (messenger of the gods) or Nike (Victory)

Derivations

In language

- The word *iridescence* is derived in part from the name of this goddess.
- "Arco iris" and "arco-íris" are the words for "rainbow" in Spanish and Portuguese, respectively, where "Arco" means "bow" in English.
- The iris of the eye is named after her as she was the goddess of the rainbow, to reflect the many colours of the eye.

Namesake

- The asteroid 7 Iris.
- The element Iridium.
- Iris (plant)
- The hormone Irisin

Artwork

- In 1946, Iris was depicted on a 50-franc airmail stamp in France. This was accompanied the same year by a 40-franc airmail stamp depicting a centaur shooting an arrow into the sky.

Fictional adaptations

- Iris appears as a character in William Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* (1611).
- Iris appears in the Disney movie *Fantasia* at the end of the segment featuring the Pastoral Symphony by Beethoven.
- Iris is a character used in the Percy Jackson and The Olympians and Heroes of Olympus series by Rick Riordan.
- Iris appears in Michael Scott's "The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel"
- Iris appears in "Ransom" by Australian author David Malouf.

Notes

[1] R. S. P. Beekes has rejected previous Indo-European derivations and suggested a Pre-Greek one (*Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, Brill, 2009, p. 598).

[2] The Iliad, Book II, "And now Iris, fleet as the wind, was sent by Jove to tell the bad news among the Trojans."

[3] Homer uses the form , *Iliad* viii. 409

References

- Grimal, Pierre, *The Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (http://books.google.com/books?id=iOx6de8LUNAC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false), Wiley-Blackwell, 1996, ISBN 978-0-631-20102-1. "Iris" pp. 237–238 (http://books.google.com/books?id=iOx6de8LUNAC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=Iris&f=false)
- Peyré, Yves, "Iris." 2009. In *A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Classical Mythology* (2009-), ed. Yves Peyré. <http://www.shakmyth.org/myth/129/iris>
- Smith, William; *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, London (1873). "Iris" (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0104:alphabetic+letter=I:entry+group=9:entry=iris-bio-1>)

External links



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- The Iliad by Homer (<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/2199>) (English translation at Project Gutenberg)
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