Hades (1) God of the dead, ruler of the Underworld, which was accordingly known as Hades. In various adventures, Hades abducted the maiden Persephone, tricked the heroes Theseus and Peirithous and managed to get himself handcuffed by Sisyphus. The god Hades was a dread figure to the living, who were quite careful how they swore oaths in his name. To many people, simply to utter the word "Hades" was a frightening proposition. Realm of the dead, either underground or in the far West of the world known to the early Greeks - or both. Named for the god Hades, its ruler.

Hades (2) As is not surprising, the ancient Greeks did not know what to expect after death. Notions of the afterlife were various and conflicting. Some thought that great heroes lucked out by traveling to the Elysian Fields, where they could hunt and feast and socialize in pleasant company for eternity, while commoners were consigned to a lifeless and boring abode in the Fields of Asphodel. First they'd drink the waters of Lethe, which caused them to lose all memory of their former lives and thus lack anything to talk about.

In its earlier depictions, the underworld kingdom of Hades was such a dank and dark and moldering place that were it laid open to the heavens, the gods themselves would turn away in disgust.

Persephone Beautiful daughter of Zeus and Demeter; sometimes considered an Olympian. While gathering flowers in a field one day, Persephone was abducted to the Underworld by Hades, who arose in his chariot from a fissure in the ground. Demeter, goddess of the harvest, was heartbroken, and while she wandered the length and breadth of the earth in search of her daughter, the crops withered and it became perpetual winter. At length Hades was persuaded to surrender Persephone for one half of every year, the spring and summer seasons when flowers bloom and the earth bears fruit once more. The half year that Persephone spends in the Underworld as Hades' queen coincides with the barren season.

The Abyss -

Minos - King of Crete whose insult to the gods eventuated in the birth of the Minotaur. The Greek gods (or the ancients who made up myths about them) sometimes showed a strange sense of justice. King Minos did a number of things which - one would have thought - disqualified him for a distinguished career in the afterlife. When challenged to prove his right to the Cretan throne, Minos asked the gods to send him a sign. The deities instantly obliged, causing a beautiful white bull to emerge from the sea. Minos was so delighted that he decided not to offer the bull for sacrifice as was expected. Instead he substituted another bull from his herd. This displeased the sea god Poseidon so much that he made Minos' wife fall in love with the bull from the sea. The Minotaur was born as a result.

According to the Athenians, Minos was a supremely wicked king. But others considered him wise and just. It is certain that the gods rewarded him in the afterlife, making him one of three great judges of the dead.

Orion bragged he would hunt down all the beasts of the earth, and so Mother Earth sent up a giant scorpion to destroy him. Both the giant and scorpion were placed amongst the stars, one rising as the other set.
Tityos (or Tityus) was a Phokian giant who assaulted the goddess Leto as she was on her way to Delphi. Her son Apollon came to the rescue and despatched the giant with his arrows and golden sword.

As further punishment for the crime, Tityos was condemned to eternal torment in the underworld. There he was staked to the ground and two vultures set to feed on his ever regenerating liver.

His name might be derived from the Greek word *tisis*, meaning "he who suffers retribution."

Tantalus The word "tantalize" comes from the plight of the mythological Tantalus, who so offended the gods that he was condemned in the afterlife to an eternity of hunger and thirst. He was made to stand in a pool in Tartarus, the Underworld zone of punishment. Each time he reached down for the water that beckoned to his parched lips, it drained away. Overhanging the pool were boughs laden with luscious fruit. But each time Tantalus stretched to pluck this juicy sustenance, the boughs receded from his grasp. For his crime, which may have entailed stealing ambrosia from the gods, this great sinner was tantalized indeed.

Sisyphus Sinner condemned in Tartarus to an eternity of rolling a boulder uphill then watching it roll back down again. Sisyphus was founder and king of Corinth, or Ephyra as it was called in those days. He was notorious as the most cunning knave on earth. His greatest triumph came at the end of his life, when the god Hades came to claim him personally for the kingdom of the dead. Hades had brought along a pair of handcuffs, a comparative novelty, and Sisyphus expressed such an interest that Hades was persuaded to demonstrate their use - on himself.

And so it came about that the high lord of the Underworld was kept locked up in a closet at Sisyphus's house for many a day, a circumstance which put the great chain of being seriously out of whack. Nobody could die. A soldier might be chopped to bits in battle and still show up at camp for dinner. Finally Hades was released and Sisyphus was ordered summarily to report to the Underworld for his eternal assignment.

Heracles Like most authentic heroes, Heracles had a god as one of his parents, being the son of Zeus and a mortal woman named Alcmene. By virtue of his spectacular achievements, even by heroic standards, Heracles was given a home on Mount Olympus and a goddess for a wife. But part of him had come not from his father Zeus but from his mortal mother Alcmene, and that part was sent to the Underworld. As a phantasm it eternally roams the Elysian Fields in the company of other heroes.

Study Questions (No Annotations tonight)

Read 133-138c; 143-145d; 147-end

1. What does Teiresias tell Odysseus that he and his men must do in order to reach home safely? (135d-136b)
2. What is significant about the order in which the ghosts came to Odysseus? (throughout Book 11)
3. What does Odysseus learn from the quote of Achilles, “Don’t bepraise death to me…?” (145c)
4. What does Odysseus learn from Minos, Orion, Tityos, Tantalos, Sisyphus and Heracles? (147c)
5. What does the trip to the underworld symbolize for our personal monomyths?