

# CLASSICAL MYTHS

## APOLLO

Apollo was one of the Olympians, the major Greek gods, so called because they lived on Mount Olympus. God of the sun, music, medicine, prophecy and more, he and his twin sister Artemis were the children of Zeus by Leto, a mortal woman.

Apollo is often depicted riding a chariot with white horses across the sky, representing the journey of the sun during the day. Sometimes he holds a small instrument called a lyre, to demonstrate his status as god of music and the arts.

People travelled from all over the ancient Greek world to consult his oracle at Delphi in the belief that they could learn the future.

### KEY WORKS



*Long Case Clock with Apollo and Chariot, 1780*



*François Boucher, The Rising of the Sun, 1753*



*François Boucher, The Setting of the Sun, 1753*



*Salvator Rosa, River Landscape with Apollo and the Cumaean Sibyl, 1657-58*

*Attributed to André-Charles Boulle, Wardrobe with Apollo and Daphne, 1700*



# THE RISING OF THE SUN

CLASSICAL MYTHS  
APOLLO



**TITLE** The Rising of the Sun  
**DATE** 1753  
**SIZE** 318 x 261 cm  
**MATERIALS** Oil on canvas

**ARTIST** François Boucher  
**ARTIST'S DATES** 1703-1770  
**PLACE** France



# THE SETTING OF THE SUN

CLASSICAL MYTHS  
APOLLO



**TITLE** The Setting of the Sun  
**DATE** 1753  
**SIZE** 318 x 261 cm  
**MATERIALS** Oil on canvas

**ARTIST** François Boucher  
**ARTIST'S DATES** 1703-1770  
**PLACE** France

## THE PAINTINGS

These magnificent paintings are displayed above the grand staircase in Hertford House. They were actually created as designs for tapestries hung in the Château de Bellevue, home of Madame de Pompadour, official mistress of King Louis XV of France.

The central figure in both paintings is the god Apollo; he is getting ready for his daily journey across the sky bearing the sun in his golden chariot drawn by white horses, and then returning again at sunset. This is what causes the sun to appear to rise from and set into the sea, according to the Roman poet Ovid.

Supposed to be among the most beautiful of the gods, he is shown with flowing golden locks. He was also the god of music, and his lyre is presented to him by one of the sea nymphs (nereids) in *The Rising of the Sun* and set down behind him in his chariot in *The Setting of the Sun*.

At sunrise, a sea god rises from the waves blowing a conch shell to awaken the world. The sea and sky are filled with frolicking infant putti (winged cherubs) who at sunrise push back the dark clouds of night above Apollo's head, and at sunset pull them back again to cover the sky while the first star of evening appears.

The nymph Tethys, one of Apollo's many lovers, helps prepare him for his journey and then welcomes him back at the end of the day with open arms. In both paintings the soft pink and blue palette reflects the colours of the sea, sky and clouds at dawn and dusk.

## THE ARTIST

Boucher was a personal friend and favourite artist of Madame de Pompadour, mistress of Louis XV. His painting was typical of the Rococo style in all its prettiness, lightness of tone and pastel colours. Madame de Pompadour's residences were filled with his work, several examples of which can be found in the Wallace Collection.

*The Rising and Setting of the Sun* are painted on canvas stretched over a wooden frame. These paintings would have taken many months to complete and Boucher would have been helped by a team of pupils in his studio who might paint some of the background and less important details as part of their training.

## DISCUSS



- What is happening in each picture? What are the similarities, and differences?
- Which are the most important figures in each picture?  
How has the artist shown this?
- How are the sea nymphs helping Apollo get ready for his journey?
- Can you spot Apollo's lyre in each picture?
- What are the little putti doing?
- What colours can you see? What sort of mood do these colours create for you?
- How important do you think the sun was in the ancient world?  
How important is it today?

## ACTIVITY



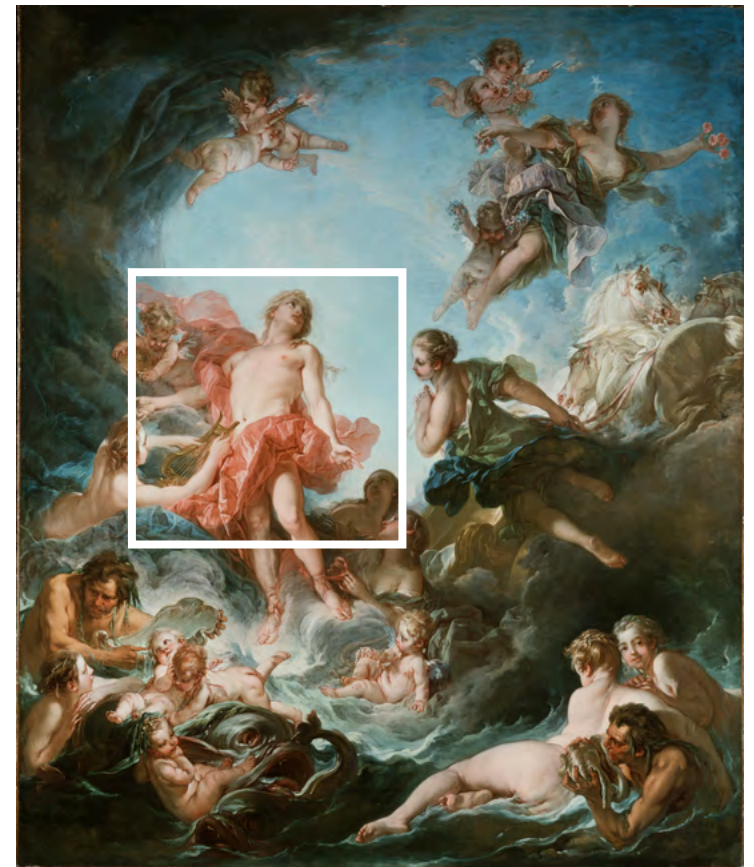
- Investigate the colours of sunrises and sunsets.  
Use coloured pencils, paints, or paper collage to create gradients from pale pink to a deep blue, or from light yellow to deep red.



# THE RISING OF THE SUN

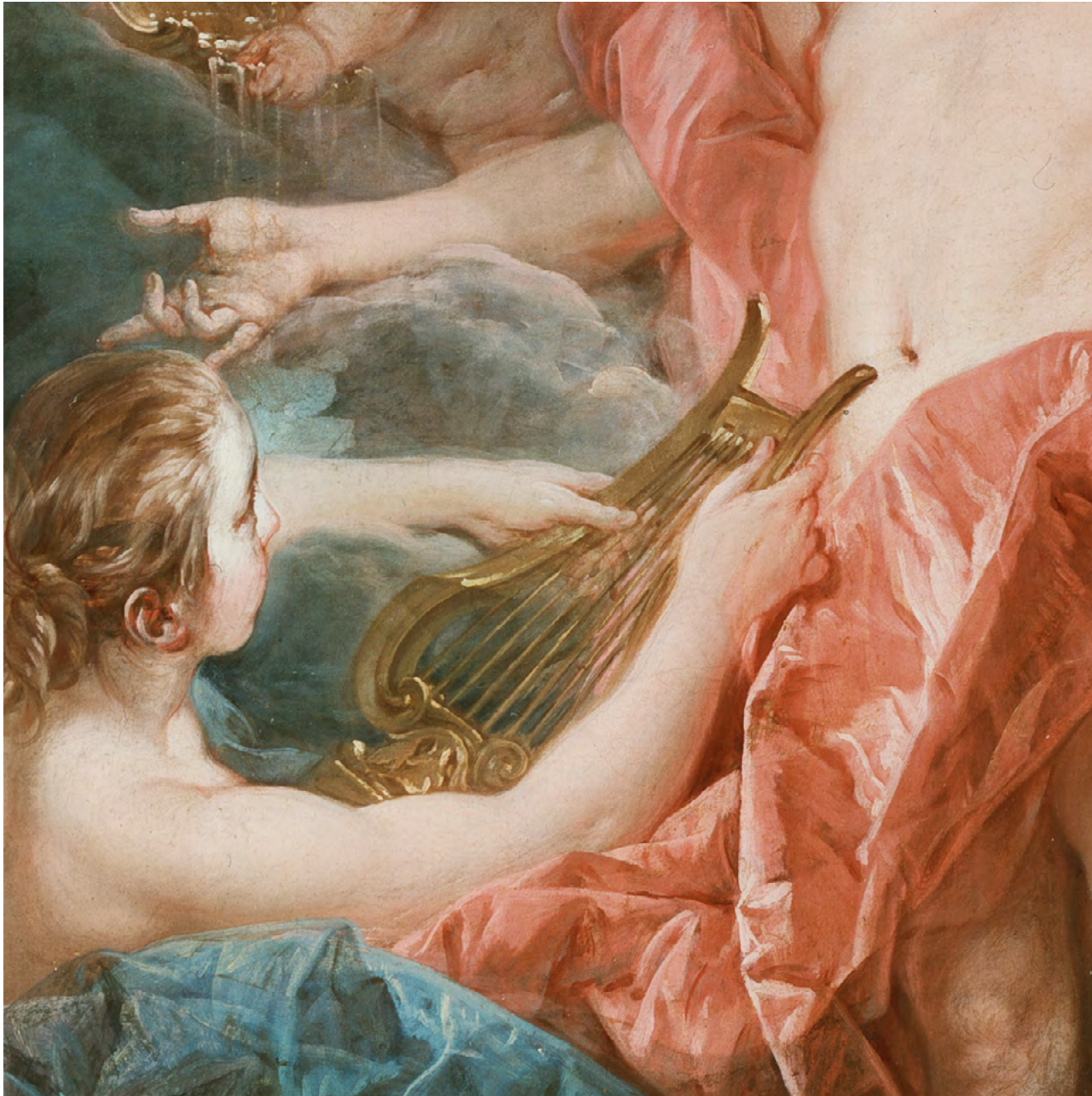


## IN DETAIL





# THE RISING OF THE SUN



## IN DETAIL





# THE RISING OF THE SUN



## IN DETAIL





# THE RISING OF THE SUN



## IN DETAIL





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## IN DETAIL

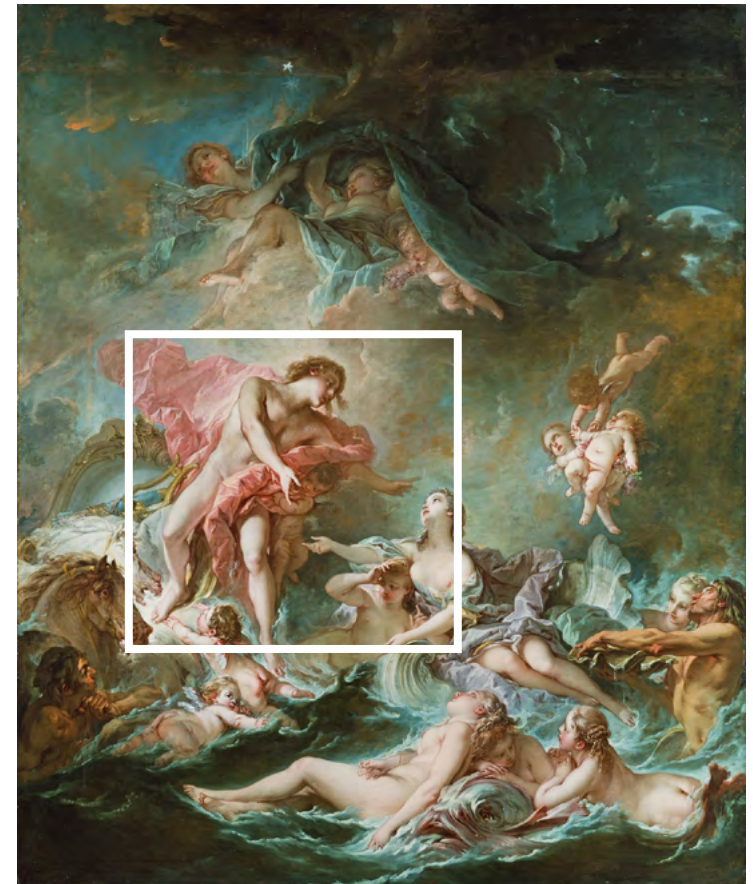




# THE SETTING OF THE SUN



## IN DETAIL





# THE SETTING OF THE SUN



## IN DETAIL





# THE SETTING OF THE SUN



## IN DETAIL

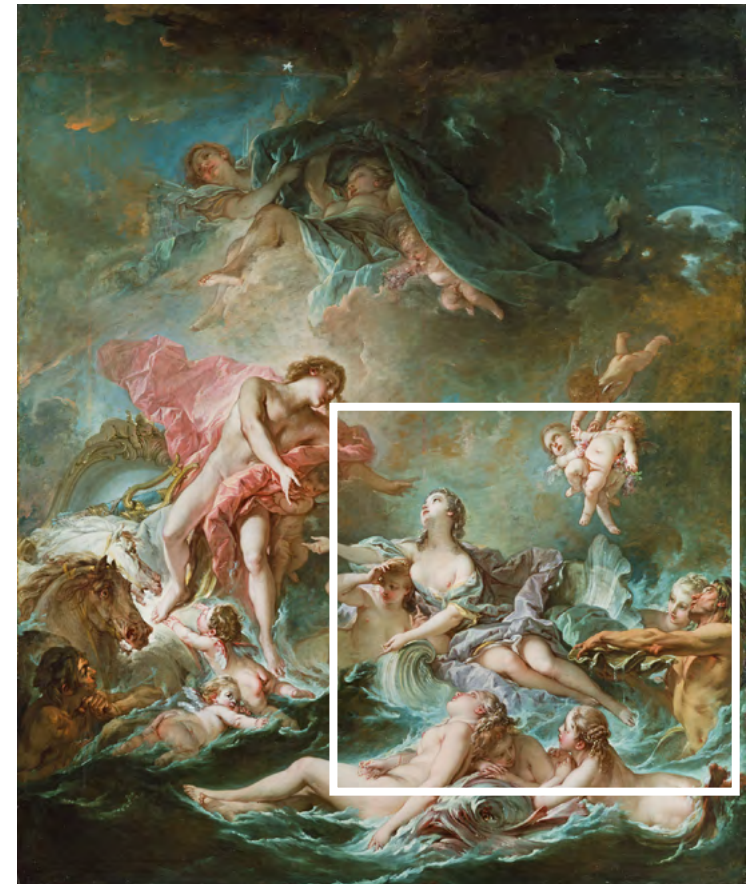




# THE SETTING OF THE SUN



## IN DETAIL





# LONG CASE CLOCK WITH APOLLO AND CHARIOT

CLASSICAL MYTHS  
APOLLO



**TITLE** Long Case Clock with Apollo and Chariot  
**DATE** c.1780  
**SIZE** 221.2 x 56.8 x 34.5 cm  
**MATERIALS** Oak, veneers of tulipwood and satiné, gilt bronze

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**MAKERS** Nicolas Petit: Case Maker  
Jacques-Joseph Lepaute: Movement Maker  
Elie Barbezat: Dial Enameller  
Mounts cast after Philippe Caffiéri  
**PLACE** France



# LONG CASE CLOCK WITH APOLLO AND CHARIOT



## IN DETAIL





## THE CLOCK

The gilt bronze figure on top of the clock is Apollo driving his chariot pulled by his four horses across the sky. He stands in his chariot and controls the horses with golden reins. He is moving at speed with his long hair and cloak flowing behind him. Under the horses' hooves appear billowing shapes — the waves from which he has risen or the clouds across which he travels.

## MAKERS

A number of French artists and craftsmen collaborated in making this clock. A master carpenter made the wooden case. A skilled clock maker worked on the mechanism, while the figure of Apollo and his chariot were modelled from bronze which was then covered with a thin layer of gold leaf.

## DISCUSS



- How has the sculptor shown that the chariot is travelling fast?
- Why is Apollo a suitable god to represent on a clock?
- What kind of person might have this clock in their house?

## ACTIVITY



- Apollo carried the sun across the sky with his chariot. Supposing that the myth is true — that he starts out in Greece and comes back to Greece travelling west around the Equator — see if you can make a list of the countries he passes over and in which order. If he looks down, what would he see below him?

Make a chart and mark the rivers, mountains, towns, seas that Apollo passes over.

If people call up to him, what languages would he hear? What kind of music? What food might they be eating?



# WARDROBE WITH APOLLO AND DAPHNE

CLASSICAL MYTHS  
APOLLO



**TITLE** Wardrobe with Apollo and Daphne  
**DATE** c. 1700  
**SIZE** 255 x 163.5 x 61 cm  
**MATERIALS** Oak, ebony, marquetry of brass and turtleshell, gilt bronze

**MAKER** Attributed to André-Charles Boulle  
**DATES** 1642-1732  
**PLACE** France



# VENUS AND CUPID

CLASSICAL MYTHS  
APOLLO



**TITLE** Venus and Cupid  
**DATE** c. 1510-1515  
**SIZE** 110.5 x 138.4 cm  
**MATERIALS** Oil on canvas

**ARTIST** Attributed to Titian  
**DATES** 1485-1576  
**PLACE** Italy



# WARDROBE WITH APOLLO AND DAPHNE & VENUS AND CUPID

## THE WARDROBE AND PAINTING

The figures on this wardrobe show the story of Apollo and Daphne. The nymph Daphne was the daughter of Peneus, a river god. Trouble started when Cupid, the infant god of love, decided to play a trick.

Cupid is usually shown in paintings and statues with a little pair of wings and carrying his bow and arrows. He was the son of Venus, goddess of love, and they are shown together in the painting ascribed to Titian.

One day, Cupid fired one of his golden arrows at Apollo to cause Apollo to fall in love. Then, he used an arrow made of lead to shoot Daphne which had the opposite effect. Apollo, full of passion, pursued Daphne. Daphne fled in fear, calling out to her father to save her when she could no longer outrun the god.

Peneus was unable to stop Apollo, so instead he used his power to turn his daughter into a laurel tree. Daphne is shown here flinging up her arms which are already sprouting branches while her hair becomes leaves. She remained rooted to the spot. In Daphne's honour, Apollo thereafter often wore a laurel wreath. This is the origin of the laurel wreath's use as a symbol of distinction in sport and the arts.

## MAKER

André-Charles Boulle, the cabinetmaker who created this wardrobe, made many pieces of decorated furniture for the French royal family.

He became well known for a special technique for inlaying gilt brass decorations and figures into wood and the flattened shells of turtles.

Turtleshell is used here along with rare woods like ebony. This technique is known as Boulle marquetry.

## DISCUSS



- What is happening in this scene?
- How might you be able to recognise the figure of Apollo?
- Apollo frightens Daphne as he chases her. What do you think of Apollo's actions? Is it strange that as a god, he behaves badly? Should he be setting a good example instead?
- Who is most responsible for Daphne's fate?

## ACTIVITY



- Imagine what it would be like to become a tree. Write about how you would feel if you were rooted to one spot.  
What sort of tree would you be?  
Might you have animals, birds or insects living in your branches?  
Would you lose your leaves in the winter?

# WARDROBE WITH APOLLO AND DAPHNE



## IN DETAIL





# WARDROBE WITH APOLLO AND DAPHNE



## IN DETAIL





# APOLLO AND THE CUMAEAN SIBYL

CLASSICAL MYTHS  
APOLLO



<b>TITLE</b>	River Landscape with Apollo and the Cumaean Sibyl
<b>DATE</b>	1657-58
<b>SIZE</b>	173.7 x 259.5 cm
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Oil on canvas

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<b>ARTIST</b>	Salvator Rosa
<b>DATES</b>	1485-1576
<b>PLACE</b>	Italy



## THE PAINTING

This painting is full of mystery, darkness and foreboding. The rocks look ancient and threatening as they hang over the figures beneath. Some of the trees are gnarled or dead. Far in the distance is a building on a mountain top which may be Apollo's temple at Cumae in southern Italy.

In the foreground, some figures can be seen. One of them is Apollo sitting on a rock. He can be identified by his long flowing hair, his draped garments and the lyre beside him. The woman with him seems to have scooped up a handful of sand some of which spills from her grasp.

The Roman poet Ovid tells the story of how Apollo fell in love with a Sibyl (a name given to some women with the gift of prophecy) who tended to his temple at Cumae. He promised that if she returned his love he would grant her whatever she wished for. She scooped up a handful of sand and asked that however many grains of sand she held, then she should live for that many years.

He granted her wish but then she refused to become his lover. His gift turned into a punishment, because as time went on it became clear that she had forgotten to add something very important - she had forgotten to ask for eternal youth.

She retired to a cave in the rocks and lived for a thousand years, becoming older and older until her body faded away and only her voice remained.

## THE ARTIST

Rosa was not only a painter, but a poet, an actor and a musician too. He was even said to be a bandit for a while (but that probably is not true). He came from near Naples but worked in Rome and Florence. He was well known for his landscapes, battle scenes and religious and historical subjects.

## DISCUSS



- How can you tell that one of the figures is Apollo?
- Does the landscape look a happy, sunny place? How do you think you would feel if you went there?
- The Sibyl went to live in a cave in the rocks. Can you spot it in the painting?
- What do you think someone would look like if they were a thousand years old? How might they feel?
- If someone granted you one wish what would it be?

## ACTIVITY



- Write a letter from the point of view of the Sibyl on her 500th birthday.  
How do you feel after all this time?  
What do you think of Apollo?



# APOLLO AND THE CUMAEAN SIBYL



## IN DETAIL



# APOLLO AND THE CUMAEAN SIBYL



## IN DETAIL

