



Arachne and Athena By Antonio Tempesta ca. 1600

Myth: Arachne and Athena

Arachne was a girl who lived in Greece a long time ago. She was a very good weaver and spinner. She wove all sorts of beautiful pictures into her cloth, and people came from all around to see her beautiful cloth. But Arachne knew that she was good, and had too much pride. Arachne began telling people she was better at spinning and weaving than the goddess Athena was. Athena was also known as a good spinner and weaver.

Athena was mad that Arachne would say that, and she challenged Arachne to a weaving contest. The two of them set up their looms in the same room and they wove from early in the morning until late at night. Then they compared what they had done. Athena had woven a beautiful cloth showing the gods and goddesses sitting together on Mt. Olympus and doing good deeds for people. But Arachne thought she was so smart, she wove a cloth making fun of the gods and goddesses, showing them getting drunk and falling down and making a mess of things. Still it was clearly a better weaving than Athena had done.

When Athena saw it she was even angrier than she had been before. Even though Arachne's weaving was better, Athena didn't care. She pointed her finger at Arachne and suddenly Arachne's nose and ears shrank up, her hair all fell out, her arms and legs got long and skinny, and her whole body shrank until she was just a little tiny spider (Arachne means spider in Greek). "You want to spin," cried Athena, go ahead and spin!"

