

## Contextualization of *Phaethon*

My lines of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are part of the story of Phaethon. This story is at the start of the second book of the *Metamorphoses*, and tells the story of the boy Phaethon, who claims that his father is Apollo. Other children call him a liar, leading Phaethon to go to his mother for proof of his lineage. His mother assures him that she told him the truth, and tells Phaethon to go to Apollo if he needs more proof. Phaethon goes to Apollo, who greets him as his son and swears on the river Styx to provide Phaethon with any gift. Phaethon immediately asks to drive the sun chariot for one day. Apollo tries to convince Phaethon otherwise, but fails. Phaethon rides the chariot incorrectly, causing him to burn a lot of land, what is now the Sahara desert, into ash. Jove, seeing that the sun was about to destroy the entire planet, killed Phaethon with a lightning bolt. My chosen lines take place after Phaethon asks to drive the chariot, and are Apollo's attempts to convince his son otherwise.

This story takes place after the story of Io and Jove. That story leaves Io in Africa, where she has a child, Epaphus, with whom Phaethon was friends. That friendship serves as the transition from the last story to this one. After Phaethon burns the earth and is killed, Jove is flying around checking for any remaining damages when he notices Callisto. This is the transition into the next story, Jupiter and Callisto.

Ovid's telling of Phaethon is not the first occurrence of this story. The Greek tragedian Euripides told an account of this story. This telling was largely the same as Ovid's, with the biggest difference being the identity of Phaethon's father. In Euripides' telling, Phaethon's father is Helios, as opposed to Ovid's Apollo. Most tellings use

Helios as the father, leaving Ovid somewhat alone in his use of Apollo. This story falls near the beginning of the *Metamorphoses*, placing it far before Roman history, as it gives the reason for major geographical features, like the Sahara.

Sources:

Loeb, James, and Jeffrey Henderson. "EURIPIDES, Dramatic Fragments." *Loeb Classical Library*, 12 July 2016, [www.loebclassics.com/view/euripides-dramatic\\_fragments/2008/pb\\_LCL506.325.xml](http://www.loebclassics.com/view/euripides-dramatic_fragments/2008/pb_LCL506.325.xml).