

Entry for 'Cyclopes' from William Smith,  
*A Classical Dictionary of Biography, Mythology, and Geography*.

Cyclōpes (Κύκλωπες), that is, creatures with round or circular eyes, are described differently by different writers. Homer speaks of them as a gigantic and lawless race of shepherds in Sicily, who devoured human beings and cared nought for Zeus: each of them had only one eye in the centre of his forehead: the chief among them was Polyphemus. According to Hesiod the Cyclops were Titans, sons of Uranus and Ge, were 3 in number, Arges, Steropes, and Brontes, and each of them had only one eye on his forehead. They were thrown into Tartarus by Cronus, but were released by Zeus, and in consequence they provided Zeus with thunder-holts and lightning, Pluto with a helmet, and Poseidon with a trident. They were afterwards killed by Apollo for having furnished Zeus with the thunderbolts to kill Aesculapius. A still later tradition regarded the Cyclopes as the assistants of Hephaestus. Volcanoes were the workshops of that god, and Mt. Aetna in Sicily and the neighbouring isles were accordingly considered as their abodes. As the assistants of Hephaestus they make the metal armour and ornaments for gods and heroes. Their number is no longer confined to 3; and besides the names mentioned by Hesiod, we also find those of Pyracmon and Acamas. The name of Cyclopian walls was given to the walls built of great masses of unhewn stone, of which specimens are still to be seen at Mycenae and other parts of Greece, and also in Italy. They were probably constructed by the Pelasgians ; and later generations, being struck by their grandeur, ascribed their building to a fabulous race of Cyclops.

William Smith (1859) *A Classical Dictionary of Biography, Mythology, and Geography*, London: John Murray &c. p.200.