Urn Narration

[Beginning Narration]
Watch two popular Greek myths unfold to see how people have used poison to their advantage for thousands of years.

Sometimes poison can be useful. See how this is so in Hercules and the Hydra.

Hercules and the Hydra

Narration

Meet Hercules, a hero in the making. He's off to slay the serpent monster Hydra. But Hercules must be careful. One bite from the monster's nine heads could kill him.

Hercules takes out his trusty weapon, a bow and arrow. If he defeats the Hydra, he can harness its blood, which contains a powerful poison.

When the Hydra attacks, Hercules tries to kill the mighty serpent quickly by cutting off its heads. But for every head he lops off, two grow back in its place!

Hercules remembers a bright idea. Each stump is burned so no new heads can grow.

Hercules dips his arrows in the Hydra's poisonous blood. Each one is now a very potent weapon called a toxikon, which in Greek means, “poison arrow.” From this and other related terms come our modern words “toxic” or “toxin,” which both mean “something poisonous.”

[Transition narration]
Poison has not always been used in a positive way. See how it can be used for evil in Medea’s Gift.

Medea’s Gift

Final Narration (Curator-Approved)

During their many travels together, the sorceress Medea used her magical powers to help her ambitious husband Jason, who was famous for finding the golden fleece.
When the couple arrived in Corinth, the king and his daughter, Glauc, greeted them. The young princess immediately fell in love with Jason. And Jason, imagining even greater glory being married to a princess, abandoned Medea.

And so it was decided the lovers would marry, and Medea should be sent away.

Brokenhearted and betrayed, Medea sent her children to court to be looked after. To bribe Glauc, Medea gave her children presents for the princess.

Glauc agreed to care for Medea’s children and gladly accepted the gifts—a new gown and a crown.

But Medea’s gifts were a trick. She had poisoned them. The poison horribly burned Glauc, and when the king tried to help her, he was poisoned too. Triumphant in her revenge, Medea flew away in a golden chariot. Jason, shocked and saddened, was left with nothing.