

# Cygnus (the Swan)

Cygnus (SIG-nus)

Phaethon (FAY-uh-thun)

Helios (HEE-lee-os)

A boy named Cygnus

had a good friend named Phaethon.

Phaethon's father was Helios

the sun god. Phaethon really wanted to drive the golden chariot that pulls the sun across the sky.

Helios refused because he was afraid his son would not be able to control the winged horses that led the chariot. Phaethon wouldn't listen and one morning, he took off on the chariot without asking his father.

Phaethon ended up zigzagging across the sky, out of control. He drove too low and caused fire damage on earth.

Then he drove too high and angered constellations in the sky.

To save the earth from burning up and to restore order in the sky, Zeus threw a thunderbolt at the chariot, knocking Phaethon out of the sky. Phaethon crashed to the earth, falling into a raging river.

Cygnus his friend, began looking for him, and found his body trapped by the roots of a tree at the bottom of the River.

He tried to recover his friend's body so they could give it a proper burial. Cygnus repeatedly dove into the river but was not able to bring Phaethon up from the tree roots.

He was very sad as he sat on the bank of the river. Cygnus begged Zeus to help him. Zeus told him that if he changed Cygnus into a swan, he would be able to dive deeply enough to find Phaethon.

However, if Cygnus became a swan, he would also give up his immortality and would only live as long as a swan would normally live.

Cygnus agreed and was able to bring Phaethon's body back for a proper burial. In honor of this great unselfish act, Zeus placed the swan image of Cygnus into the night sky.