

# DEATH AND THE UNDERWORLD

The ancient Greeks believed that when they died their souls were taken to Pluto's kingdom, known as Hades, or the Underworld. It was supposed to lie deep under the Earth's surface. People thought caves and cracks in the ground were doors leading into this secret world.

## DRIFTING AWAY

The god Hermes guided the dead person's soul through one of these entrances, down to the banks of a river called the Styx. This marked the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead. People were buried with a coin to pay the ferryman, whose name was Charon, to take them across the river. Once across the water, they were met by a three-headed dog called Cerberus.

*This is an imaginary view of the Underworld, painted by a 16th century artist from the Netherlands.*

His duty was to keep the living out of the Underworld and prevent dead souls from escaping. Next, they reached a crossroads, where their destinies would be decided. Three judges inspected the new arrivals and directed them to one of three places: the Elysian Fields, the Asphodel Fields, or Tartarus.



*Cerberus, from Greek vase*

The next life could be blissful, horrifying, or just plain dull. It all depended on how the person had behaved when he or she was alive.

