



# Historically Speaking

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## Archery - Making and Using

The primary weapons of ancient times included spears, swords, knives and bows and arrows. In the first draft of ANISSI, it became clear to me that I needed to know how bows were made and used. Animal horns (such as antelope), wood and sinew were most often used to make bows of various shapes. Anissi has a bow made of palm wood. It would have been reinforced by laminating it with sinew. The main issue for me was around the bowstrings. Anissi has her husband's bow, but the string was destroyed in the fire. Ancient bowstrings were often made of sinew and leather (rawhide), but also commonly made from the fibers of linen, hemp and other vegetable fibers. I searched and found a YouTube video that actually showed the whole process of making a bowstring from the fibers of the flax plant. It involved twisting the fibers together and coating them with beeswax as the fibers are added. I worked that process into the story for credibility and realism. The next challenge was around the arrows. My research led me to have the women create their arrows from cane. Since they had chickens in the village, I had them use those feathers for the fletching. They improvised by sharpening the tips as they had no arrowheads and would not have known how to attach them even if they did have them. Later in the story, some warriors give them arrowheads and show them how to finish their arrows. Among the videos I found was one that demonstrated the effective use of bows in rapid firing of arrows. I had never considered that a possibility, but once I saw how it was done, I incorporated that in a couple of scenes in the book when Anissi and Duwana shoot several arrows in quick succession.



In ancient art Artemis was usually depicted as a girl or young maiden with a hunting bow and quiver of arrows. Bows and arrows figure prominently into Greek mythology and legends.



### Famous archers from Greek mythology

Paris, the prince of Troy, killed Achilles with an arrow that hit Achilles heel. That arrow was guided by Apollo. Achilles mother, Thetis, dipped him in the river Styx to make him invulnerable. She held him by his heel and so that part remained untouched by the water of the Styx and therefore remained vulnerable.

Atalanta was a woman who was a great hunter. She participated in the Calydonian Boar hunt and was the first to wound the beast.

Philoctetes was a legendary archer who was given the bow and arrows of Heracles. He killed Paris which played a key role in the fall of Troy.

Poeas was the father of Philoctetes, and was second only to Heracles as an archer from Crete. He killed the bronze giant named Talos by shooting him in the heel. (Kind of makes you wonder what is up with heels in ancient times.)

Artemis and Apollo teamed up during the Trojan war and actually fought on the side of the Trojans using their bows and arrows.

Less lethal is the marksmanship of Eros (Cupid), the young god of love. The Romans often depicted Cupid as a baby, but the Greeks saw Eros as an adolescent youth with the "fuzzy dew of youth" on his cheeks.

We often see a heart with an arrow through it to represent love. That would be the arrow of Eros (Cupid), whose arrows make a person fall in love.

