

Introduction to Greek Mythology

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Baldwin's Mythology

A Theatrical Introduction...



Greek Mythology

- Greeks were polytheistic in their religious beliefs. Polytheistic means they believed in and worshipped different gods.
- Their religion/mythology had no formal structure with the exception of various festivals held in honor of the gods.
- There was no sacred book or code of conduct to live by.

Gods and Goddesses

- The gods often represented different forms of nature.
- The most powerful Greek gods were known as the Olympians.
- The Greeks believed that the Olympians lived on the highest mountain in Greece, Mt. Olympus.
- The Olympian gods included: Zeus, Hera, Apollo, Aphrodite, Ares, Artemis, Athena, Demeter, Hades, Hermes, Hephaestus, Poseidon and Hestia.

Zeus (King of the gods)

Roman name: Jupiter

Parents: Cronos and Rhea

Brothers: Hades, Poseidon

Sisters: Hestia, Demeter, Hera

Zeus was the king of the gods as well as the ruler of the heavens where he controlled the weather and the skies. He created thunder and could hurl lightning bolts at those who angered him. The thunderbolts were given to Zeus by a Cyclops to help aid him in his war against the Titans.



Hera (Queen of Heaven, Goddess of Women, Marriage, and Childbirth)

Roman name: Juno

Parents: Cronos and Rhea

Brothers: Zeus, Poseidon, Hades

Sisters: Demeter and Hestia



In Greek mythology, Hera was the reigning female goddess of Olympus because she was Zeus's wife. But her worship is actually far older than that of her husband. It goes back to a time when the creative force we call "God" was conceived of as a woman. The Goddess took many forms, among them that of a bird. Hera was worshipped throughout Greece, and the oldest and most important temples were consecrated to her.

Aphrodite (Goddess of Love and Beauty)

Roman name: Venus

Parents: Zeus and Dione



Aphrodite was the goddess of love, beauty and fertility. She was also a protectress of sailors.

The poet Hesiod said that Aphrodite was born from sea-foam. Homer, on the other hand, said that she was the daughter of Zeus and Dione.

When the Trojan prince Paris was asked to judge which of three Olympian goddesses was the most beautiful, he chose Aphrodite over Hera and Athena. The latter two had hoped to bribe him with power and victory in battle, but Aphrodite offered the love of the most beautiful woman in the world.

Apollo (God of Light, Truth, Healing, Archery, and Poetry)

Roman name: Apollo

Parents: Zeus and Leto

Twin Sister: Artemis



Apollo was normally shown as a very strong, extremely handsome young man. He was well liked among the gods and humans alike.

Apollo was famous for his musical abilities. He was credited with inventing the lyre (while other stories have Hermes creating it and trading it with Apollo), and would often entertained the gods on Mount Olympus with it.

Ares (God of War)

Roman name: Mars

Parents: Zeus and Hera

Siblings: Hephaestus, Hebe, Eileithyia



Ares was known for his thirst for battle and blood. Athena was a goddess of war, but preferred peace if possible. She would support war when it was over issues of justice. Ares, on the other hand, was not concerned with justice. He loved the thrill of battle. Ares lived among the people of Thrace, who were known for their constant wars and battles between tribes.

Artemis (Virgin Goddess of the Hunt)

Roman Name: Diana

Parents: Zeus and Leto

Twin Brother: Apollo



Artemis was the virgin goddess of the hunt. She helped women in childbirth but also brought sudden death with her arrows.

Artemis and her brother Apollo were the children of Zeus and Leto. In some versions of their myth, Artemis was born first and helped her mother to deliver Apollo.

Athena (Goddess of Wisdom and War)

Roman Name: Minerva

Parents: Zeus and Metis



Athena was the goddess of crafts and the domestic arts and also those of war. Her symbol was the owl. She is known most specifically for her strategic skill in warfare and is often portrayed as companion of heroes. Athena was born from Zeus after he experienced an enormous headache; she sprang fully grown and in armour from his forehead.

Demeter (Goddess of Agriculture)

Roman name: Ceres

Parents: Cronos and Rhea

Brothers: Hades, Poseidon, Zeus

Sisters: Hestia, Hera



Demeter was one of the original six Olympians, the daughters and sons of Cronos and Rhea. She did not spend all her time on Mount Olympus, but instead wandered the fields in her role as the goddess of grain and harvest. Though she was away from Mount Olympus, she was still very involved with the happenings of the other Olympian gods, unlike her brother Hades.

Hades (God of the Underworld)

Roman name: Pluto

Parents: Cronos and Rhea

Brothers: Zeus and Poseidon

Sisters: Hestia, Hera, Demeter



Hades was the lord of the underworld and one of the original six Olympians. He was later excluded from the group of twelve Olympians because he stayed in the underworld for the majority of his time. Hades was ruler of the dead. This was not necessarily looked upon as evil as is often portrayed in modern times. In the Greek belief system, all people good or evil went into the underworld where there were distinct parts to the realm. Hades had complete control of the underworld— even Zeus would not challenge his power in this realm.

Hephaestus (God of Fire and Crafts)

Roman name: Vulcan

Parent: Hera

Hephaestus was the lame god of fire and crafts or the two together, hence of blacksmiths. Hephaestus was the son of Zeus and Hera or, in some accounts, of Hera alone. He limped because he was born lame, which caused his mother to throw him off Mount Olympus.

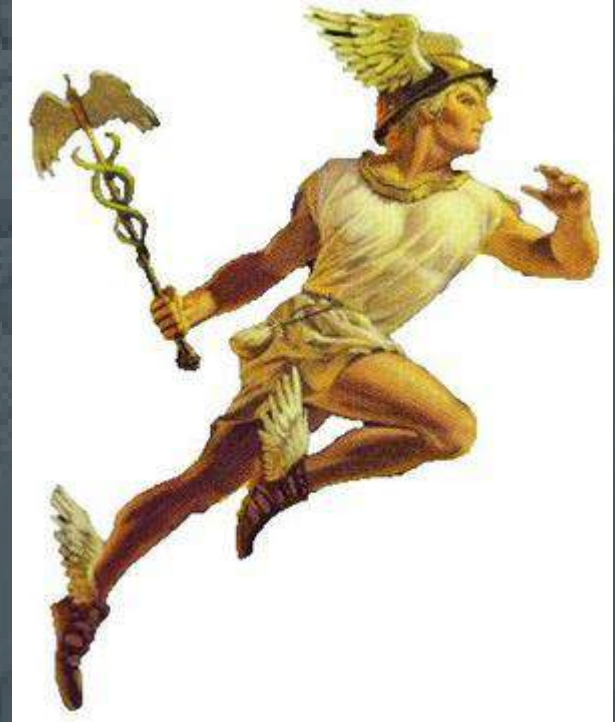


Hermes (Messenger of the Gods)

Roman name: Mercury

Parents: Zeus and Maia (daughter of the Titan Atlas)

Hermes was the messenger of the gods and guide of dead souls to the Underworld. A prankster and inventive genius from birth, Hermes aided the heroes Odysseus and Perseus in their quests. Hermes was the son Zeus and a mountain nymph.



Hestia (Goddess of the Home)

Roman name: Vesta

Parents: Cronus and Rhea

Brothers: Zeus, Poseidon, Hades

Sisters: Hera, Demeter

Hestia was the first child of Cronus and Rhea. She was the goddess that looked after the family. She was known for her warmth, generosity, and kindness and was typically worshipped in households throughout Greece. Hestia was known to stay on Mount Olympus, venturing out only on rare occasions.



Poseidon (God of the Sea, Earthquakes, and Horses)

Roman name: Neptune

Parents: Cronus and Rhea

Brothers: Zeus, Hades

Sisters: Hera, Demeter, Hestia

Although he was officially one of the supreme gods of Mount Olympus, he spent most of his time in his watery domain. Poseidon was brother to Zeus and Hades. These three gods divided up creation. Zeus was ruler of the sky, Hades had dominion of the Underworld and Poseidon was given all water, both fresh and salt.

