



THE TWELVE OLYMPIANS

AND THEIR STORIES

**AN INTRODUCTION TO GREEK
MYTHOLOGY FOR KIDS!**

BY CARLIE RAMES AND DANIELLE PURPURA

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INTRODUCTION

Who are the Twelve Olympians you ask? What are their stories and what were the roles they played in classical Greek culture? Well you'll find the answers to all those questions here and more in this brief exploration into Greek mythology.

To specify, Greek mythology is the body of myths and teachings that belong to the ancient Greeks, concerning their gods and heroes, and the nature and origin of the world. When we say ancient Greece, we mean ancient! This period lasted from around 800 BCE until about 600 AD. Their mythology was a part of the religion in ancient Greece. Modern scholars refer to and study the myths in an attempt to understand the religious and political elements of Ancient Greece and its civilization. Greek mythology is told through a large collection of written texts, and in Greek representational arts, such as vase-paintings and sculpture. Greek myth attempts to explain the origins of the world, and details the lives and adventures of a wide variety of gods, goddesses, heroes, heroines, and mythological creatures. These accounts initially were spread in an oral-poetic tradition (passed on from generation to generation by parents telling their children these stories and poems); but today the Greek myths are known primarily from Greek literature.

The amount of myths and stories that the Greeks created is incredibly large. Each god has stories that not only relate to other gods, but to mortals (or regular humans like you and me) as well. The Greeks were very creative in the way that they chose to explain the world around them. Imagine not knowing why the seasons changed or why there were stars in the sky! The Greeks had to think up sometimes fantastical ideas in order to understand the world and its happenings.

The twelve gods and goddesses we will discuss here are called the Twelve Olympians. They are called Twelve Olympians because, you guessed it, there were twelve of them, and they all lived in the sky on top of a huge mountain called Mount Olympus. The Greeks believed that this mountain was so tall that it touched the sky. These twelve gods were the principal characters in many of the Greek myths and they all played important roles in everyday classical Greek life.

In this book, you'll meet all the major gods in Greek mythology and you'll even see how these stories affect us today!

THE TWELVE

OLYMPIANS

ZEUS

HERA

POSEIDON

DEMETER

ARES

HEPHAESTUS

APOLLO

ARTEMES

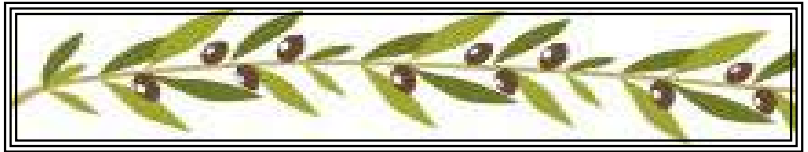
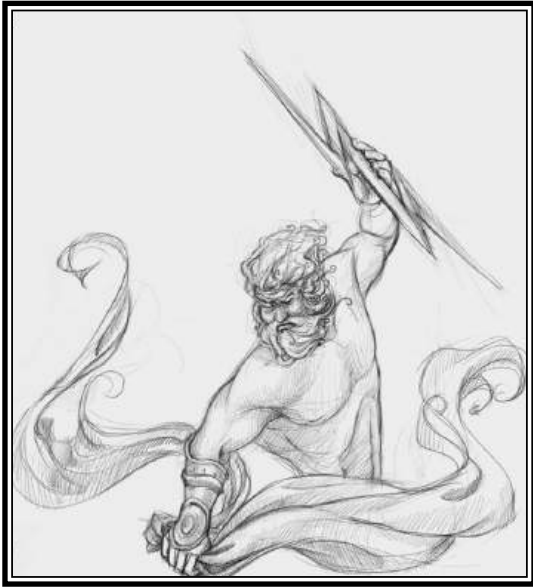
DIONYSUS

ATHENA

HERMES

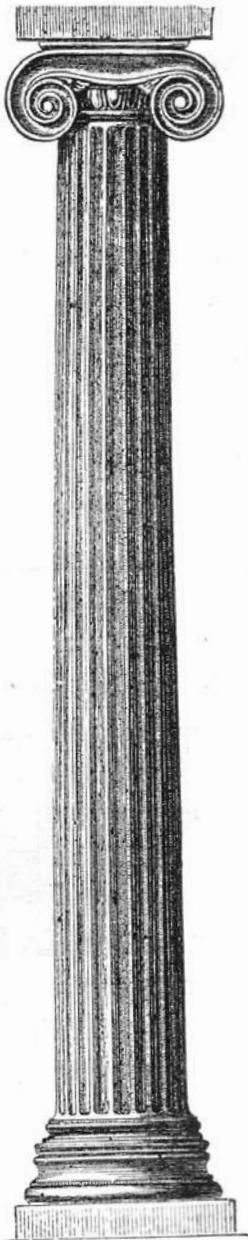
APHRODITE





ZEUS

KING OF GODS



HIS SYMBOLS ARE THE THUNDERBOLT, EAGLE, BULL, AND OAK

In addition, Zeus is frequently depicted by Greek artists in one of two poses: standing, striding forward, with a thunderbolt raised in his right hand, or seated in majesty.

Zeus is the «Father of Gods and men» who rules the Olympians of Mount Olympus as a father rules a family according to ancient Greek religion.

He is the god of sky and thunder. Zeus is the child of Cronus and Rhea, and is the youngest of his siblings. He is married to Hera, although, he is known to have fathered many children with other women.

These resulted in many godly and heroic offspring, including Athena, Apollo and Artemis, Hermes, **Persephone** (by Demeter), Dionysus, and Heracles; by Hera, he is usually said to have fathered Ares and Hephaestus. For a time, a nymph named Echo had

the job of distracting Hera from his affairs by talking incessantly, and when Hera discovered the deception, she cursed Echo to repeat the words of others.

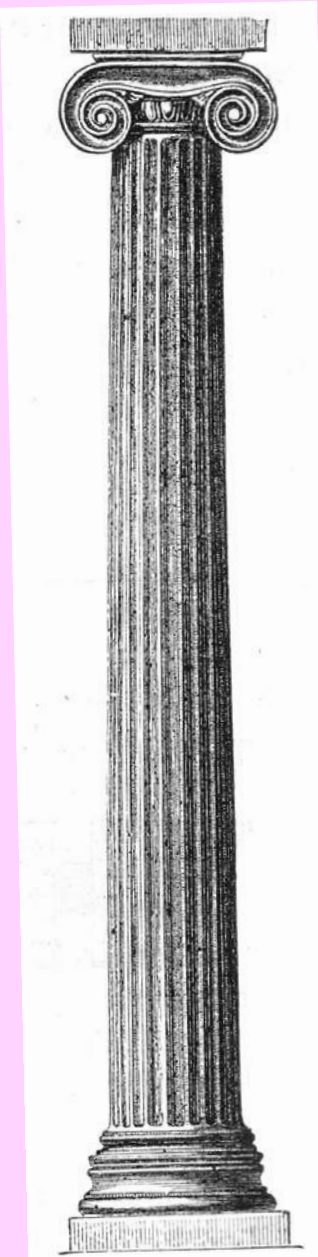
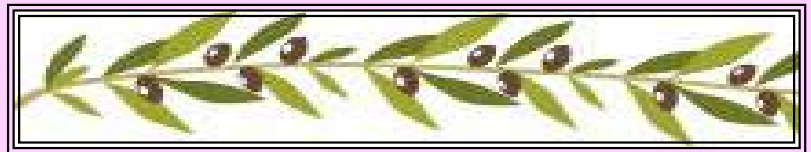
THE CYCLOPES GAVE HIM THE THUNDERBOLT AS A GIFT.





HERA

**QUEEN OF GODS
GODDESS OF MARRIAGE
AND FAMILY**



**HER SYMBOLS ARE
THE PEACOCK,
POMEGRANATE,
CUCKOO, LION AND
CROWN**

Hera is portrayed as majestic and solemn, often enthroned, and crowned, she usually is seen with a pomegranate in her hand, emblem of both fertility and death. Hera was known for her jealous and vengeful nature, most notably against Zeus's lovers and offspring, but also against mortals who crossed her.

Hera is the wife of Zeus. Her chief function is as the goddess of women and marriage.

She presides over the right arrangements of the marriage and is the archetype of the union in the marriage bed, but she is not notable as a mother.

The only child that she had with Zeus was Ares. Hera was jealous of Zeus' giving birth to Athena, so, according to the myth, she gave birth to Hephaestus without him. Hera was then disgusted with Hephaestus' ugliness and threw him from Mount Olympus to the earth below.

However, Hephaestus gained revenge against Hera for rejecting him

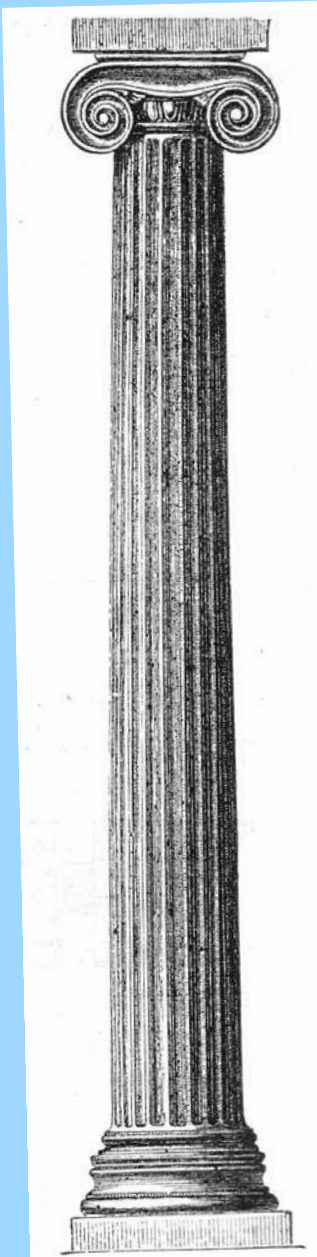
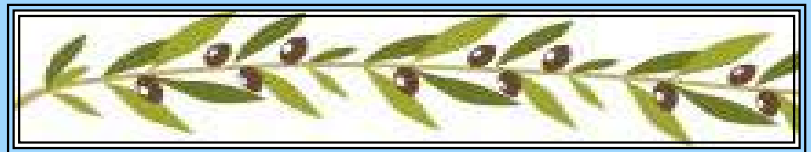
by making her a magical throne which, when she sat on, did not allow her to leave. The other gods begged Hephaestus to return to Mount Olympus to let her go, but he repeatedly refused. The god of wine, Dionysus persuaded him and took him back to Mount Olympus. Hephaestus then finally released Hera after being given Aphrodite as his wife. Hera was most known as the matron goddess, Hera Teleia; but she presided over weddings as well.





POSEIDON

GOD OF THE SEA



**HIS SYMBOLS ARE
DOLPHINS AND THREE-
PRONGED FISH SPEARS
(TRIDENTS)**

Poseidon rides a chariot that was pulled by horses that could ride on the sea. He lived in a palace on the ocean floor, made of coral and gems. He is usually depicted as an older male with curly hair and beard.

Poseidon was seen as the creator of new islands and calm seas. When offended or ignored, he supposedly struck the ground with his trident and caused chaotic springs, earthquakes, drownings and shipwrecks. Sailors often prayed to Poseidon for a safe voyage.

The City of Athens

Athena (see page 22) became the patron goddess of the city of Athens after a competition with Poseidon. At a festival at the end of the year in the Athenian calendar, the priests of Athena and the priest of Poseidon agreed that each would give the Athenians one gift and the Athenians would choose whichever gift they preferred. Poseidon struck the ground with his

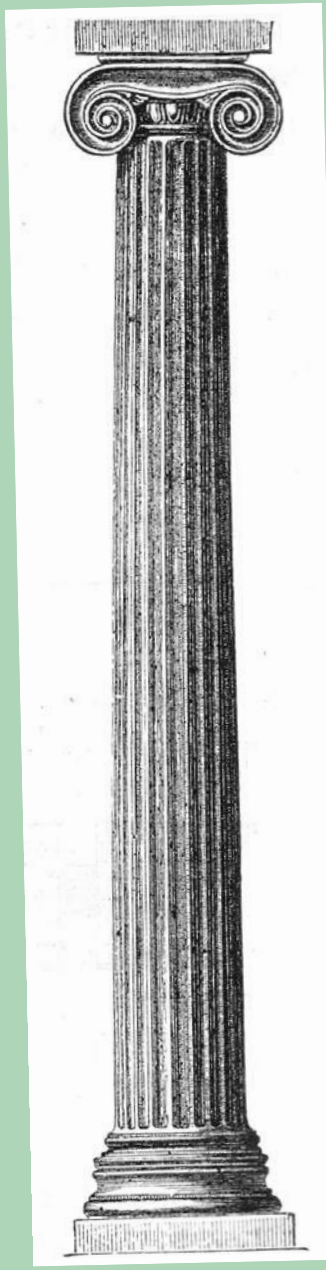
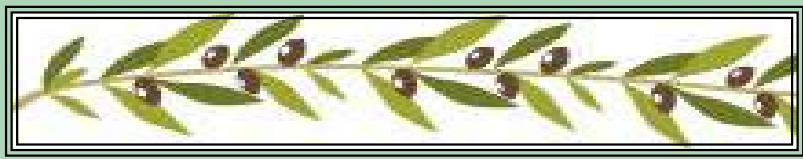
trident and a spring sprang up; the water was salty and not very useful, whereas Athena offered them an olive tree. The Athenians accepted the olive tree and along with it Athena as their patron, for the olive tree brought wood, oil and food. After the fight, infuriated at his loss, Poseidon sent a monstrous flood, to punish the Athenians for not choosing him. The contest of Athena and Poseidon was is now drawn above the entrance to the Parthenon, the first sight that all visitors see when they visit the **Parthenon**.





DEMETER

GODDESS OF THE HARVEST



HER SYMBOLS ARE THE POPPY, WHEAT, TORCH AND PIG

She presided over grains and the fertility of the earth. Though Demeter is often described simply as the goddess of the harvest, she presided also over the sanctity of marriage, and the cycle of life and death. Demeter's emblem is the poppy, a bright red flower that grows among the barley. Demeter was usually portrayed on a chariot, and frequently associated with images of the harvest, including flowers, fruit, and grain. She was also sometimes pictured with her daughter Persephone.

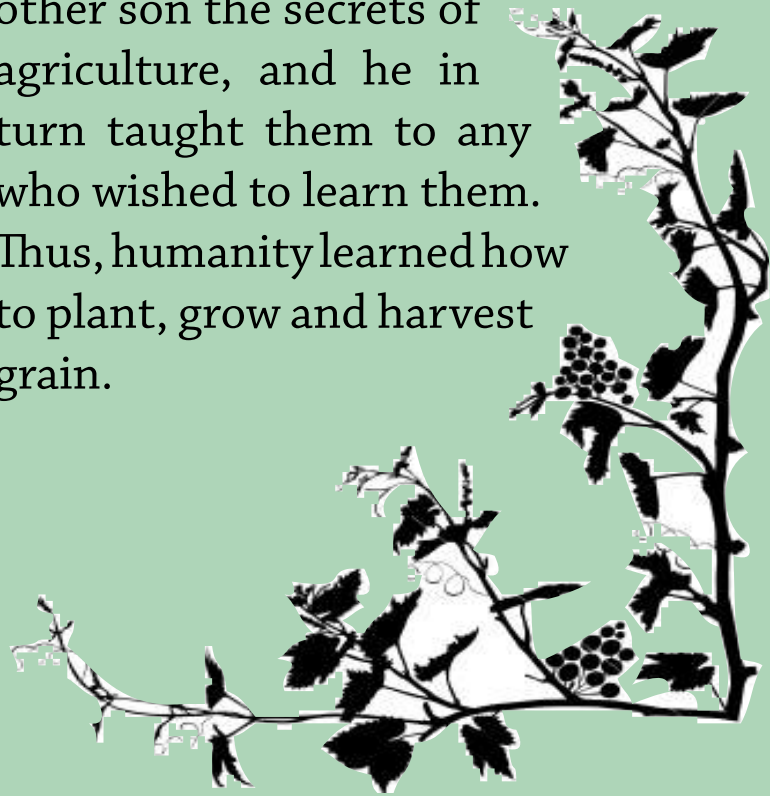
The seasons

Demeter's virgin daughter Persephone was abducted to the underworld by Hades after Hades fell in love with her upon seeing her beauty. Demeter searched for her without stopping, preoccupied with her loss and her grief. The seasons halted; living things ceased their growth, then began to die. Faced with the extinction of all life on earth, Zeus sent his messenger Hermes to the underworld to bring Persephone back. **Hades** agreed to release her, but tricked her into eating an enchanted pomegranate. When she ate the pomegranate seeds, she was bound to him for one fourth of the year. Thus, Demeter was allowed to be with her daughter for three fourths of the year (spring, summer, and fall) during which plants blossom and bloom and crops produce food because Demeter is happy. However, during the fourth part of the year when Persephone is away from her in the underworld (winter), nothing grows because

Demeter is so stricken with grief and missing her daughter.

How man learned to harvest crops

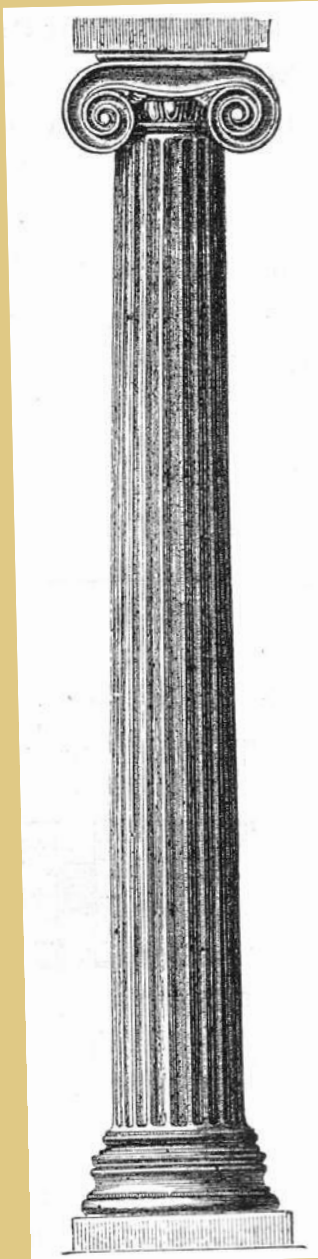
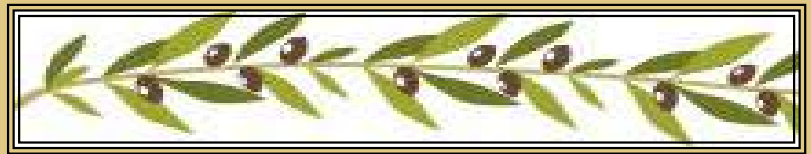
Demeter's search for her daughter lead her to an enormous king's castle. She assumed the form of an old woman, and asked the king for shelter. He took her in to help him care for his sons. To reward his kindness, she planned to make one of the sons **immortal**; she secretly anointed the boy with **ambrosia** and laid him in the flames of the hearth, to gradually burn away his mortal self. But suddenly, his mother walked in, saw her son in the fire and screamed in fright. Demeter abandoned the attempt. Instead, she taught the other son the secrets of agriculture, and he in turn taught them to any who wished to learn them. Thus, humanity learned how to plant, grow and harvest grain.





ARES

GOD OF WAR



**HIS SYMBOLS ARE
THE SPEAR, THE
HELMET, THE DOG, THE
CHARIOT AND THE
BEAR**

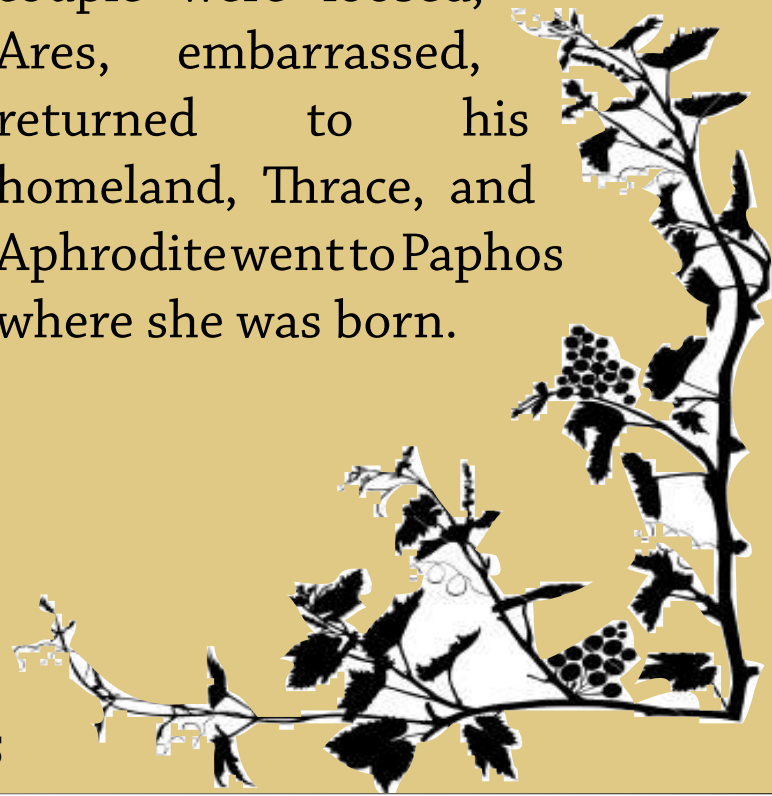
In Greek literature, he often represents the physical or violent and untamed aspect of war, in contrast to the armored Athena, whose functions as a goddess of intelligence include military strategy and generalship.

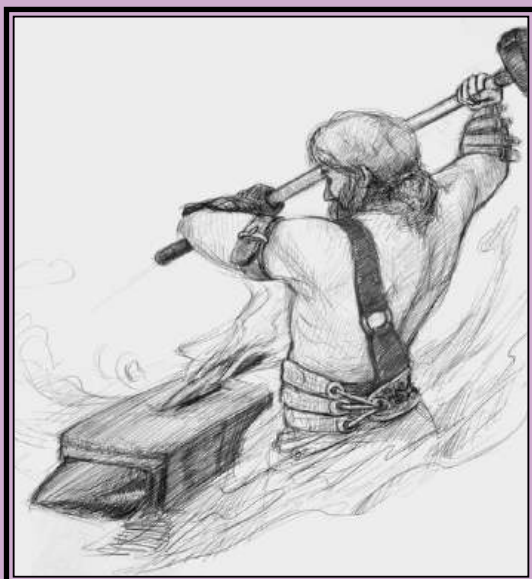
The Greeks were ambivalent toward Ares: although he embodied the physical valor necessary for success in war, he was a dangerous force, «overwhelming, insatiable in battle, destructive, and man-slaughtering.” Fear (Phobos) and Terror (Deimos) were the horses that pulled his battle chariot.

Ares is the son of Zeus and Hera, but he plays a relatively limited role in Greek mythology, though his numerous love affairs and abundant offspring are often alluded to. When Ares does appear in myths, he typically faces humiliation. He is well known as the lover of Aphrodite, the goddess of love (see page 26), who was married to Hephaestus, god of craftsmanship (see page 14). The most famous story related to Ares and Aphrodite shows them exposed to ridicule through the wronged husband’s

clever device. In the tale, the Sun-god Helios once spied Ares and Aphrodite kissing each other secretly. He reported the incident to Hephaestus. Contriving to catch them, Hephaestus fashioned a finely-knitted and nearly invisible net with which to snare them. At the appropriate time, this net was sprung, and trapped Ares and Aphrodite locked in very private embrace.

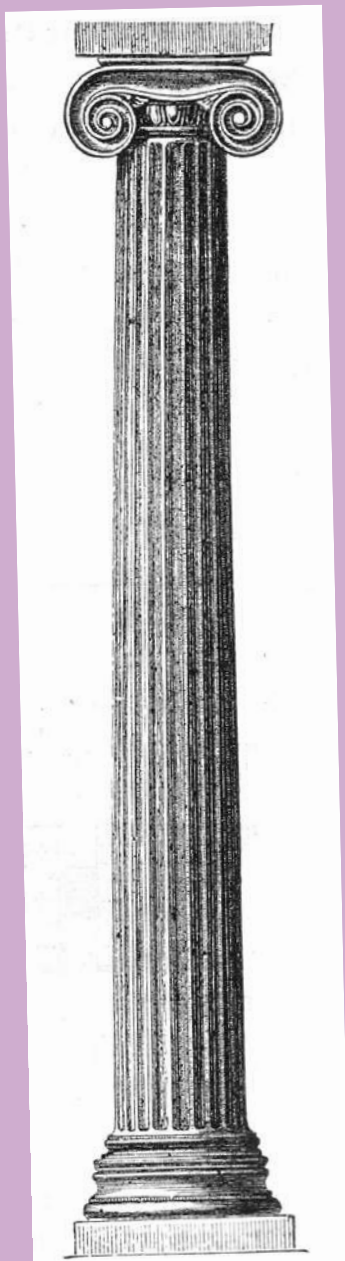
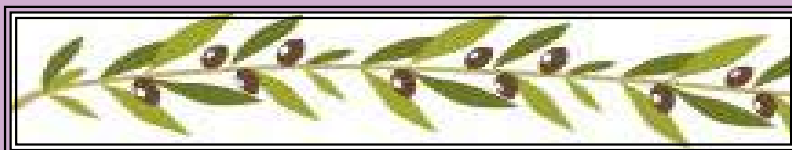
But Hephaestus was not satisfied with his revenge, so he invited the Olympian gods and goddesses to view the unfortunate pair in their shame. Once the couple were loosed, Ares, embarrassed, returned to his homeland, Thrace, and Aphrodite went to Paphos where she was born.





HEPHAESTUS

**GOD OF BLACKSMITHS,
CRAFTSMEN, ARTISANS,
SCULPTORS, METALS, FIRE
AND VOLCANOES**



**HIS SYMBOLS ARE A
SMITH'S HAMMER,
ANVIL, AND A PAIR OF
TONGS**

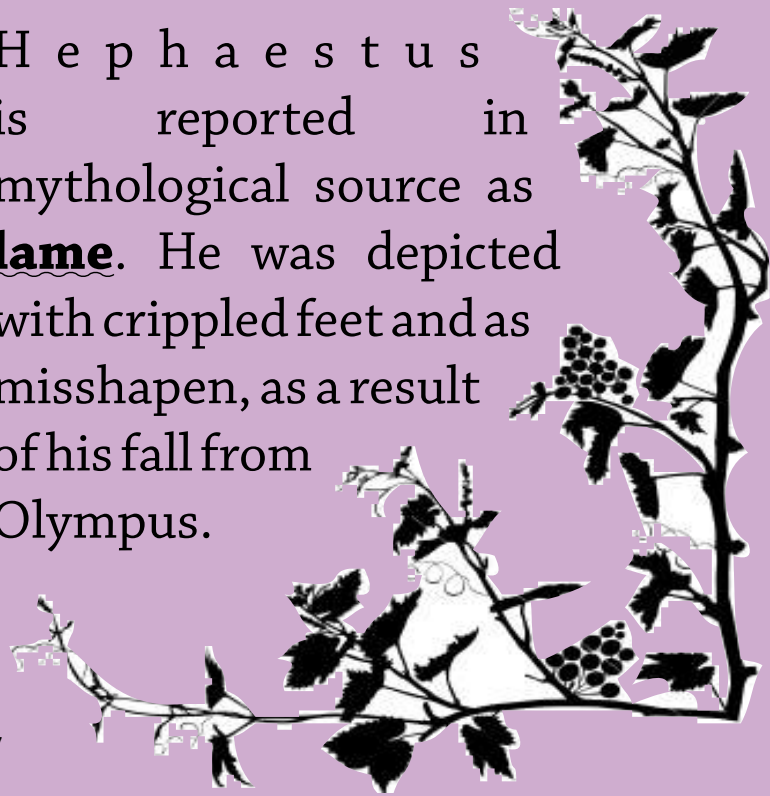
He is often depicted hunching or sitting
down because of his injuries

As a smithing god, Hephaestus made all the weapons of the gods in Olympus. He served as the blacksmith of the gods, and was worshipped in the manufacturing and industrial centres of Greece, particularly Athens. He designed Hermes' (see page 24) winged helmet and sandals, Aphrodite's famed girdle, **Achilles'** armor, **Helios'** chariot, and **Eros'** bow and arrows. **Prometheus** stole the fire that he gave to man from Hephaestus' forge. Hephaestus also created the gift that the gods gave to man, the woman **Pandora and her famous box.** Being a skilled blacksmith, Hephaestus created all the thrones in the Palace of Olympus.

According to different sources, he is either the son of Zeus and Hera together, or Hera gave birth to him

by herself. In both myths, Hera was then disgusted with Hephaestus' ugliness and threw him from Mount Olympus to the earth below. However, Hephaestus gained revenge against Hera for rejecting him by making her a magical throne which, when she sat on, did not allow her to leave. The other gods begged Hephaestus to return to Mount Olympus to let her go, but he repeatedly refused. The god of wine, Dionysus persuaded him and took him back to Mount Olympus. Hephaestus then finally released Hera after being given Aphrodite as his wife.

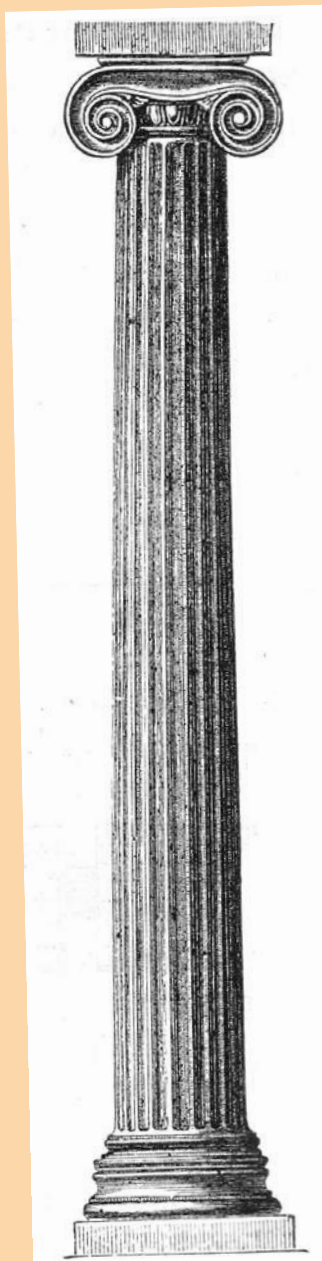
H e p h a e s t u s is reported in mythological source as **lame**. He was depicted with crippled feet and as misshapen, as a result of his fall from Olympus.





APOLLO

GOD OF LIGHT AND THE SUN



**HIS SYMBOLS ARE THE
LYRE, THE LAUREL
WREATH, THE RAVEN,
AND THE BOW AND
ARROW.**

The ideal of the kouros (a beardless, athletic youth), Apollo is the son of Zeus and **Leto**, and has a twin sister, the chaste huntress Artemis.

As the patron of **Delphi**, Apollo was an oracular god - the prophetic deity of the Delphic Oracle. Medicine and healing are associated with Apollo, yet Apollo was also seen as a god who could bring ill-health and deadly plague. Amongst the god's custodial charges, Apollo became associated with dominion over colonists, and as the patron defender of herds and flocks. As the leader of the **Muses** and director of their choir, Apollo functioned as the patron god of music and poetry. Hermes created the lyre for him, and the instrument became a common attribute of Apollo. Hymns sung to Apollo were called paeans.

When Zeus' wife Hera discovered that Leto was pregnant, she banned Leto from giving birth on land. Leto found the newly created floating island of Delos, which was neither mainland nor a real island. She gave birth there and was accepted by the people, offering them her promise that her son would be always favourable toward the city. Afterwards, Zeus secured Delos to the bottom of the ocean. This island later became sacred to Apollo. It is also stated that Hera kidnapped Eileithyia, the goddess of childbirth, to prevent Leto from going into labor. The other gods tricked Hera into letting her go by offering her a necklace, nine yards (8 m) long, of amber. Most believed that Artemis was born first and then assisted with

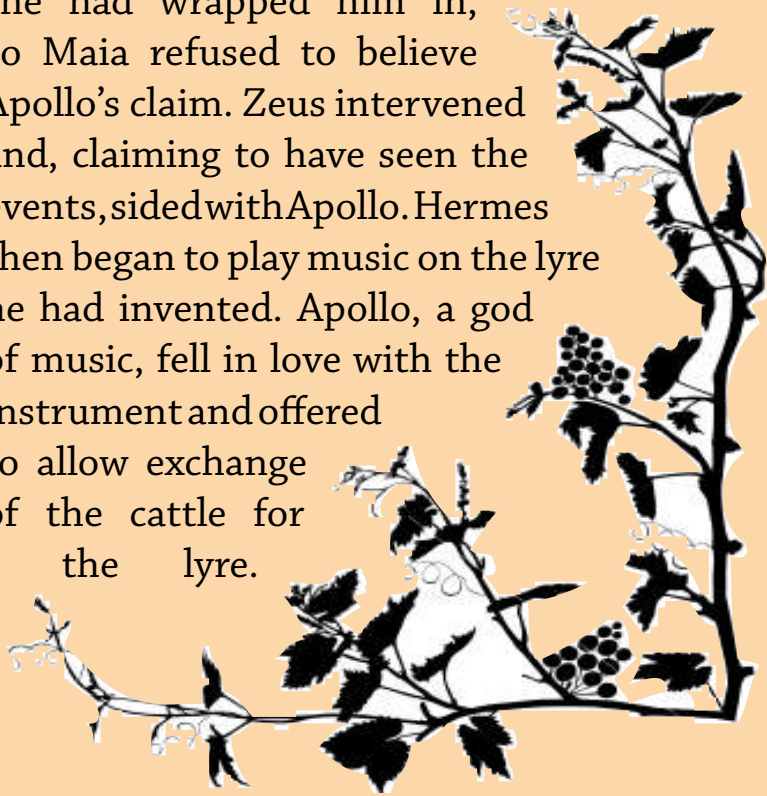
the birth of Apollo.

Four days after his birth, Apollo killed the dragon Python, which lived in Delphi. Hera sent the serpent to hunt Leto to her death across the world. To protect his mother, Apollo begged Hephaestus for a bow and arrows. After receiving them, Apollo cornered Python in the sacred cave at Delphi.

Apollo's Lyre

One night while Hermes was still a baby, his mother, **Maia**, had wrapped him in blankets but Hermes escaped while she was asleep. Hermes ran away, and stumbled upon where Apollo was grazing his cattle. The baby Hermes stole a number of his cows and took them to a cave. In the cave, he found a tortoise and killed it. He used one of the cow's insides and the tortoise shell and made the first lyre.

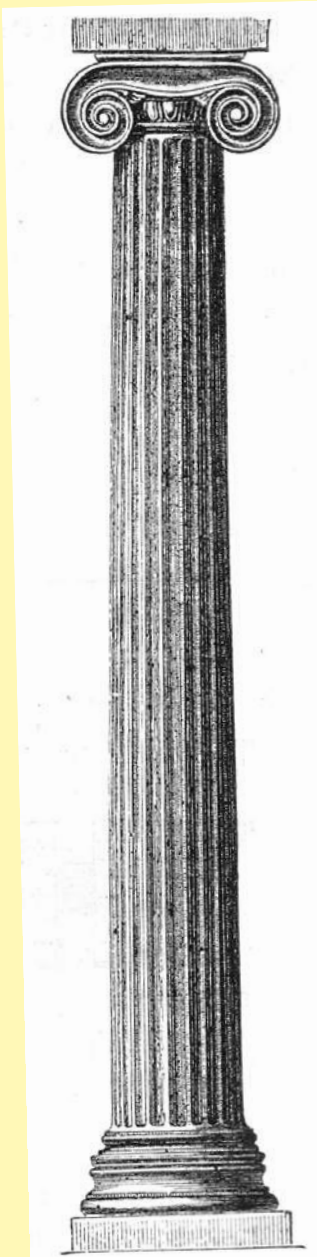
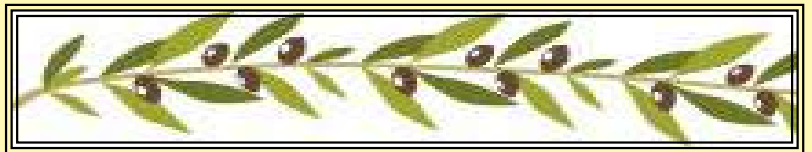
Apollo complained to Maia that her son had stolen his cattle, but Hermes had already replaced himself in the blankets she had wrapped him in, so Maia refused to believe Apollo's claim. Zeus intervened and, claiming to have seen the events, sided with Apollo. Hermes then began to play music on the lyre he had invented. Apollo, a god of music, fell in love with the instrument and offered to allow exchange of the cattle for the lyre.





ARTEMIS

**GODDESS OF THE HUNT, WILD
ANIMALS, WILDERNESS, CHILDBIRTH,
VIRGINITY**



**HER SYMBOLS ARE THE
STAG, THE CYPRESS
TREE AND THE MOON**

She is protector of young girls, bringing and relieving disease in women. She often is depicted as a huntress carrying a bow and arrows.

Artemis is the daughter of Zeus and **Leto**, and has a twin brother, Apollo. When Zeus' wife Hera discovered that Leto was pregnant and that Zeus was the father, she banned Leto from giving birth on land. In her wanderings, Leto found the newly created floating island of Delos, which was neither mainland nor a real island. She gave birth there and was accepted by the people, offering them her promise that her son would be always favourable toward the city. Afterwards, Zeus secured Delos to the bottom of the ocean. It is also stated that Hera kidnapped Eileithyia, the goddess of childbirth, to prevent Leto from going into labor. The other gods tricked Hera into letting her go by offering her a necklace, nine yards (8 m) long, of amber. Most believed that Artemis was born first and then assisted with the birth of Apollo.

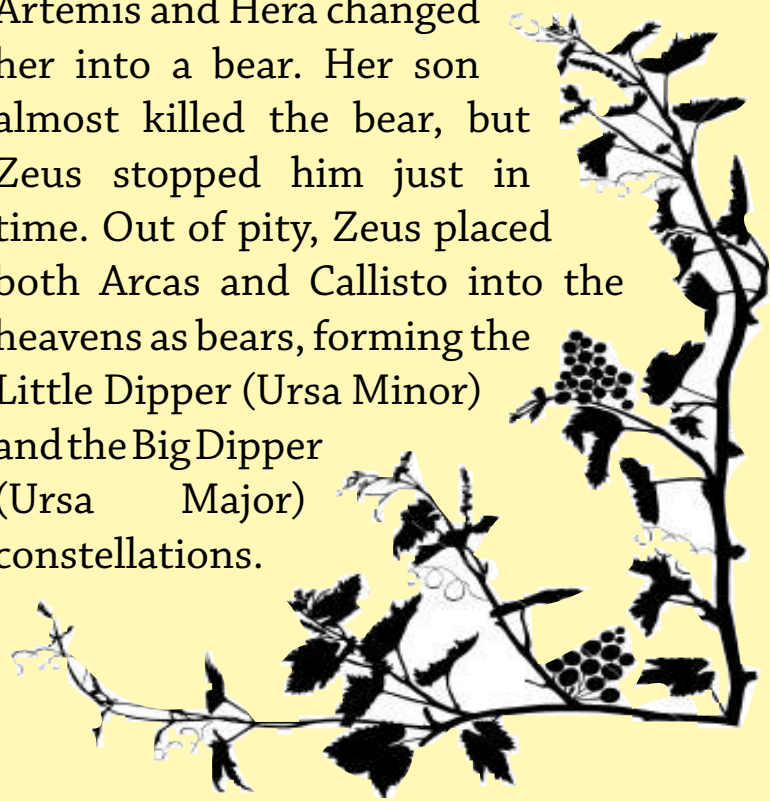
Actaeon

Actaeon was a hunting companion of the goddess. One day, he tried to spy on her bathing naked in her sacred spring. Upon seeing her natural beauty, he attempts to force himself on her. For this, Athena in her rage turns him into a stag and he is devoured by his own hunting dogs who no longer recognize their master.

The Aloadae: These twin sons, Otos and Ephialtes, grew enormously at a young age. They were aggressive, great hunters, and could not be killed unless they killed each other. The growth of the twins never stopped, and they boasted that as soon as they could reach heaven, they would kidnap Artemis and Hera and take them as wives. The gods were afraid of them, except for Artemis who changed herself into a doe and jumped out between them. The twins both threw their spears at the doe and so mistakenly killed each other.

Callisto

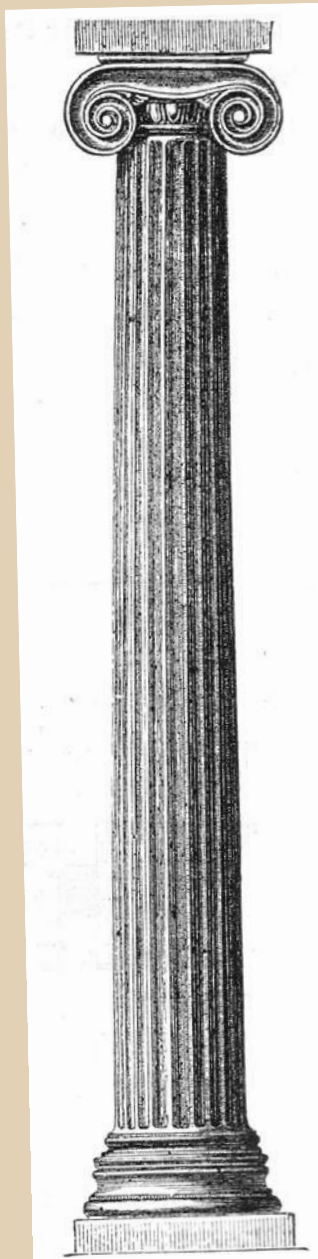
Callisto was a princess and also was one of Artemis's hunting attendants. As a companion of Artemis, she took a vow of chastity. Zeus appeared to her disguised as Artemis, gained her confidence, then took advantage of her. As a result of this encounter she conceived a son, Arcas. Enraged, Artemis and Hera changed her into a bear. Her son almost killed the bear, but Zeus stopped him just in time. Out of pity, Zeus placed both Arcas and Callisto into the heavens as bears, forming the Little Dipper (Ursa Minor) and the Big Dipper (Ursa Major) constellations.





DIONYSUS

**GOD OF THE GRAPE HARVEST,
WINEMAKING AND WINE, OF
RITUAL AND ECSTASY**



**HIS SYMBOLS ARE THE
BULL, SERPENT, IVY,
AND WINE**

In Greek mythology, he is presented as a son of Zeus and the mortal Semele, thus semi-divine. Dionysus was the last god to be accepted into Mt. Olympus. He was the youngest and the only one to have a mortal mother.

Semele was a priestess of Zeus, and he once watched her slaughter a bull at his altar and afterwards swam in a river to cleanse herself of the blood. Zeus fell in love with Semele and repeatedly visited her secretly.

Zeus' wife, Hera, discovered his affair when Semele later became pregnant. Appearing as an old, ugly woman, Hera befriended Semele, who told her that her lover was actually Zeus. Hera planted seeds of doubt in Semele's mind. Curious, Semele asked Zeus to grant her a favor. Zeus promised on the **River Styx** to grant her anything she wanted. She demanded that Zeus reveal himself in all his glory as proof of his godhood. Though Zeus begged her not to, she persisted and he was forced by his oath to comply. Mortals, however, cannot look upon Zeus in his true God form, and she perished upon seeing him. Zeus rescued Dionysus, and gave the infant to Hermes.

One version of the story is that Hermes took the boy to King Athamas and his wife Ino, Dionysus' aunt. Hermes bade the couple raise the boy as a girl, to hide him from Hera's wrath.

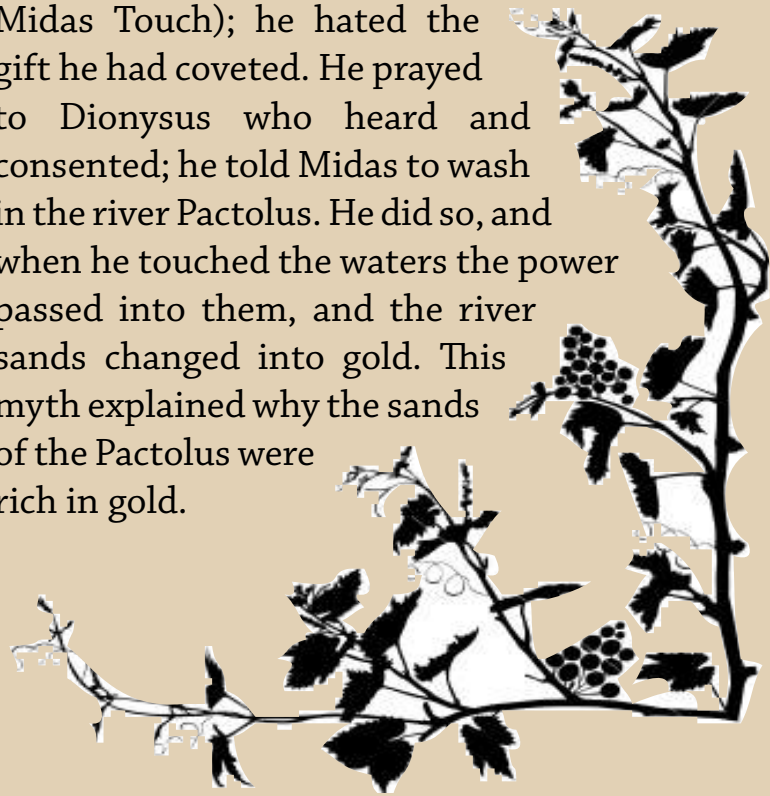
His festivals were the driving force behind the development of Greek theatre. When Dionysus grew up, he discovered the culture of the vine and the mode of extracting its precious juice; but Hera struck him with madness, and drove him to wander through various parts of the earth. **Rhea** was able to cure him and he set out on a journey through Asia teaching the people the cultivation of the vine. The most famous part of his wanderings is his expedition to India. Returning in triumph he

decided to teach all that he had learned to the Greeks, but was opposed by some who dreaded its introduction on account of the disorders and madness that alcohol lead to.

King Midas:

Once, Dionysus' old school master and foster father went missing and was found by some peasants who carried him to their king. King Midas recognized him, and treated him hospitably, hosting him for ten days and nights. On the eleventh day, he brought Silenus back to Dionysus. Dionysus offered Midas whatever reward he wanted.

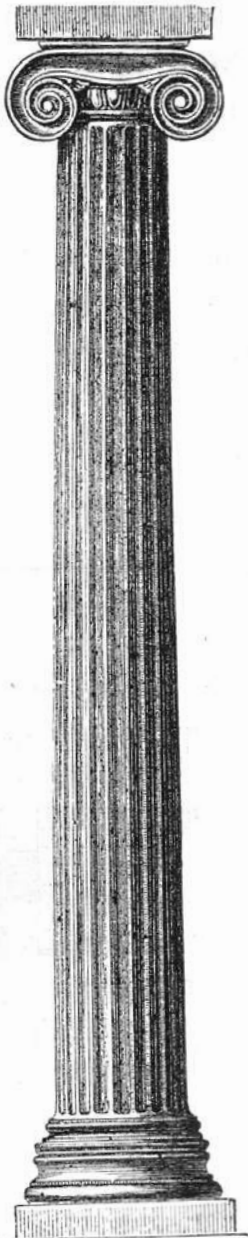
Midas asked that whatever he might touch should be changed into gold. Dionysus consented, though was sorry that he had not made a better choice. Midas excitedly touched and turned to gold an oak twig and a stone. As soon as he got home, though, he found that his bread, meat, and wine all turned to gold as soon as he touched it. Worst of all, when he brushed his daughter's hand with his own, she was turned to gold as well. Upset, Midas strove to rid himself of his power (the Midas Touch); he hated the gift he had coveted. He prayed to Dionysus who heard and consented; he told Midas to wash in the river Pactolus. He did so, and when he touched the waters the power passed into them, and the river sands changed into gold. This myth explained why the sands of the Pactolus were rich in gold.





ATHENA

GODDESS OF WISDOM,
COURAGE, CIVILIZATION,
LAW AND JUSTICE,
STRATEGY AND THE ARTS



HER SYMBOLS ARE
THE OWL, THE OLIVE
TREE, THE SNAKE, THE
HELMET AND THE
SPEAR

She is a companion of heroes and is the goddess of heroic endeavour. She is the virgin patron saint of Athens. The Athenians founded the **Parthenon** on the **Acropolis** of her namesake city, Athens (Athena Parthenos), in her honor.

Athena was the favorite daughter of Zeus, born fully armed from his forehead. Zeus lay with Metis, the goddess of crafty thought and wisdom, but he feared the consequences. It was prophesied that Metis would bear children more powerful than the father, even Zeus. In order to stop these dire consequences, after lying with Metis, Zeus 'put her away inside his own belly'. However, he was too late: Metis had already conceived. Eventually Zeus experienced an enormous headache, seeking Hephaestus for help. He struck Zeus's head with a double-headed axe. Athena then leaped from Zeus's head, fully grown, armed and armoured with a shout.

Athena never had a consort or lover and is thus known as Athena Parthenos, 'Virgin Athena'. It is not merely an observation of her chastity, but a recognition of her role as enforcer of rules of sexual modesty. The Athenians highly valued the goddess based on this pureness of virginity as it upheld the morals of female behavior in the patriarchal Greek society.

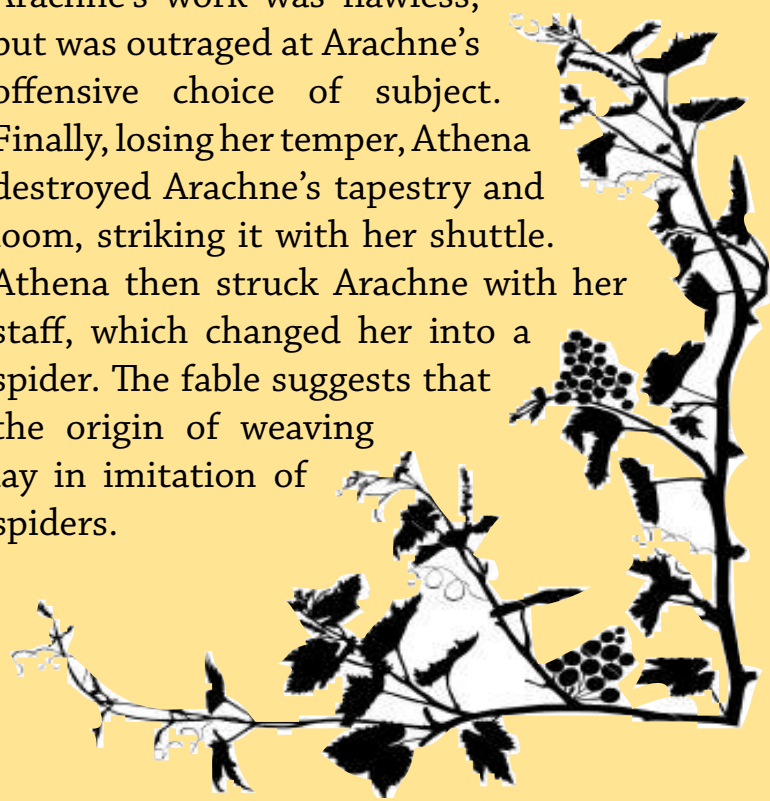
Athena became the patron goddess of the city of Athens after a competition with Poseidon. At a festival at the end of the year, the priests of Athena and the priest of Poseidon agreed that each would give the Athenians one gift and the Athenians would choose whichever gift they preferred. Poseidon struck the ground with his trident and a spring sprang up; the water was salty and not very useful, whereas Athena offered them an olive tree. The Athenians accepted the olive tree and along with it Athena as their patron, for the olive

tree brought wood, oil and food. After the fight, infuriated at his loss, Poseidon sent a monstrous flood, to punish the Athenians for not choosing him. The contest of Athena and Poseidon was drawn above the entrance to the **Parthenon**, the first sight that all visitors see when they visit.

The fable of Arachne / the Origin of Weaving

Arachne was the daughter of a famous dyer and a weaving student of Athena. She became so conceited of her skill as a weaver that she began claiming that hers was greater than that of Athena herself. Athena gave Arachne a chance to redeem herself by assuming the form of an old woman and warning Arachne not to offend the deities. Arachne scoffed and wished for a weaving contest, so she could prove her skill.

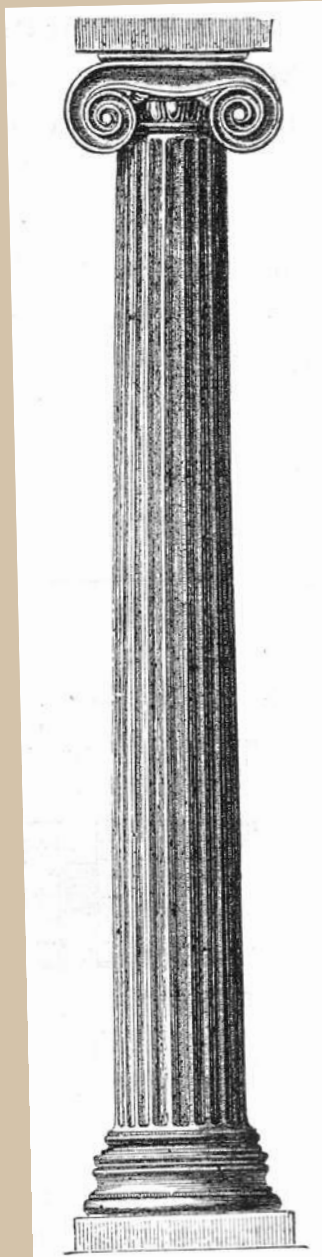
Athena wove the scene of her victory over Poseidon that had inspired her patronage of Athens. Arachne's tapestry featured twenty-one episodes of the infidelity of the deities, including Zeus being unfaithful with several women. Athena admitted that Arachne's work was flawless, but was outraged at Arachne's offensive choice of subject. Finally, losing her temper, Athena destroyed Arachne's tapestry and loom, striking it with her shuttle. Athena then struck Arachne with her staff, which changed her into a spider. The fable suggests that the origin of weaving lay in imitation of spiders.





HERMES

GOD OF TRANSITIONS AND BOUNDARIES



**HIS SYMBOLS ARE
THE ROOSTER AND
THE TORTOISE, PURSE
OR POUCH, WINGED
SANDALS AND WINGED
CAP**

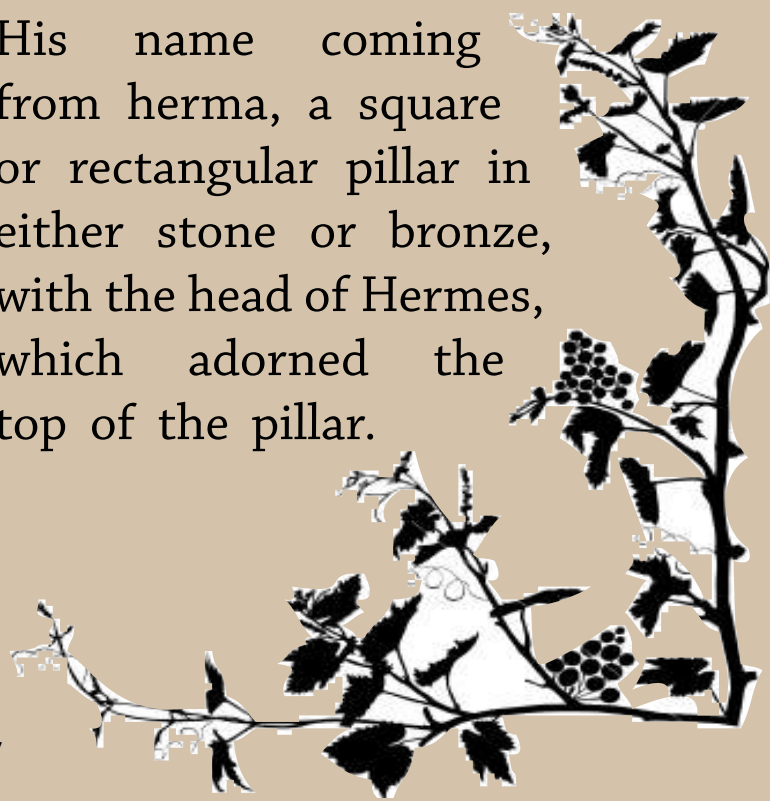
His main symbol was the herald's staff, caduceus which consisted of two snakes wrapped around a winged staff

He was quick and cunning, and moved freely between the worlds of the mortal and divine, as emissary and messenger of the gods, intercessor between mortals and the divine, and conductor of souls into the afterlife. He was protector and patron of travelers, herdsmen, thieves, orators and wit, literature and poets, athletics and sports, invention and trade. In some myths he is a trickster, and outwits other gods for his own satisfaction or the sake of humankind.

According to legend, Hermes was born in a cave on Mount Cyllene in Arcadia. Zeus had impregnated **Maia**, a mountain nymph, at the dead of night while all other gods slept. When dawn broke, amazingly, Hermes was born. Maia wrapped him in swaddling bands, then resting herself, fell fast asleep. Hermes ran away, and stumbled upon where Apollo was grazing his cattle. The baby Hermes stole a number

of his cows and took them to a cave. In the cave, he found a tortoise and killed it. He used one of the cow's insides and the tortoise shell and made the first lyre. Apollo complained to Maia that her son had stolen his cattle, but Hermes had already replaced himself in the blankets she had wrapped him in, so Maia refused to believe Apollo's claim. Zeus intervened and, claiming to have seen the events, sided with Apollo. Hermes then began to play music on the lyre he had invented. Apollo, a god of music, fell in love with the instrument and offered to allow exchange of the cattle for the lyre. Hence, Apollo then became a master of the lyre.

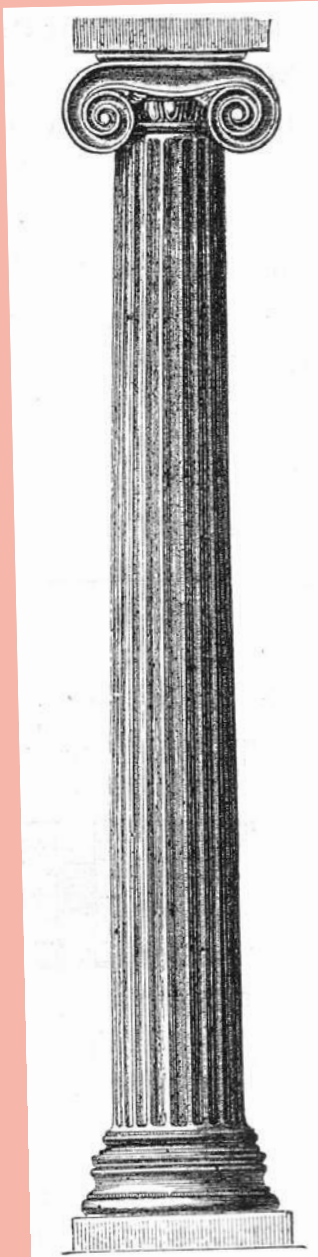
His name coming from herma, a square or rectangular pillar in either stone or bronze, with the head of Hermes, which adorned the top of the pillar.





APHRODITE

**GODDESS OF LOVE,
BEAUTY, PLEASURE,
AND PROCREATION**



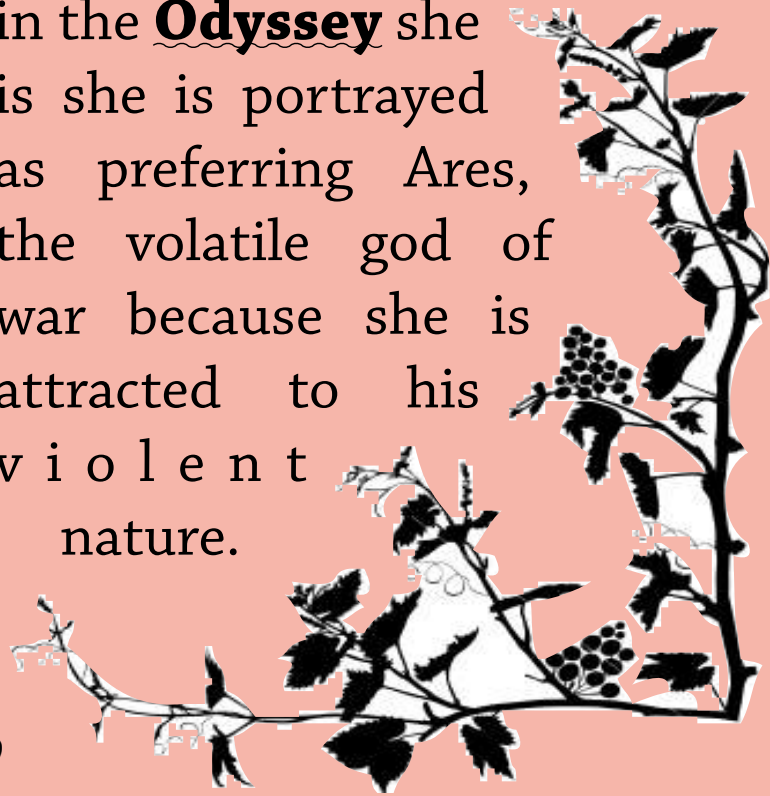
**HER SYMBOLS ARE THE
DOLPHIN, THE ROSE,
THE SCALLOP SHELL;
THE MYRTLE TREE, THE
DOVE, THE SPARROW,
THE GIRDLE AND THE
SWAN**

She is often depicted nude.

Aphrodite is usually said to have been born near her chief center of worship, **Paphos**, on the island of Cyprus. She was born out of sea foam as it washed upon the shore. Because of her beauty, other gods feared that their rivalry over her would interrupt the peace among them and lead to war, so Zeus married her to Hephaestus, who, because of his ugliness and deformity, was not seen as a threat. Hephaestus is overjoyed to be married to the goddess of beauty, and forges her beautiful jewelry, including the cestus, a girdle that makes her even more irresistible to men. But Aphrodite did not love Hephaestus and had many lovers - both gods, such as Ares, and men.

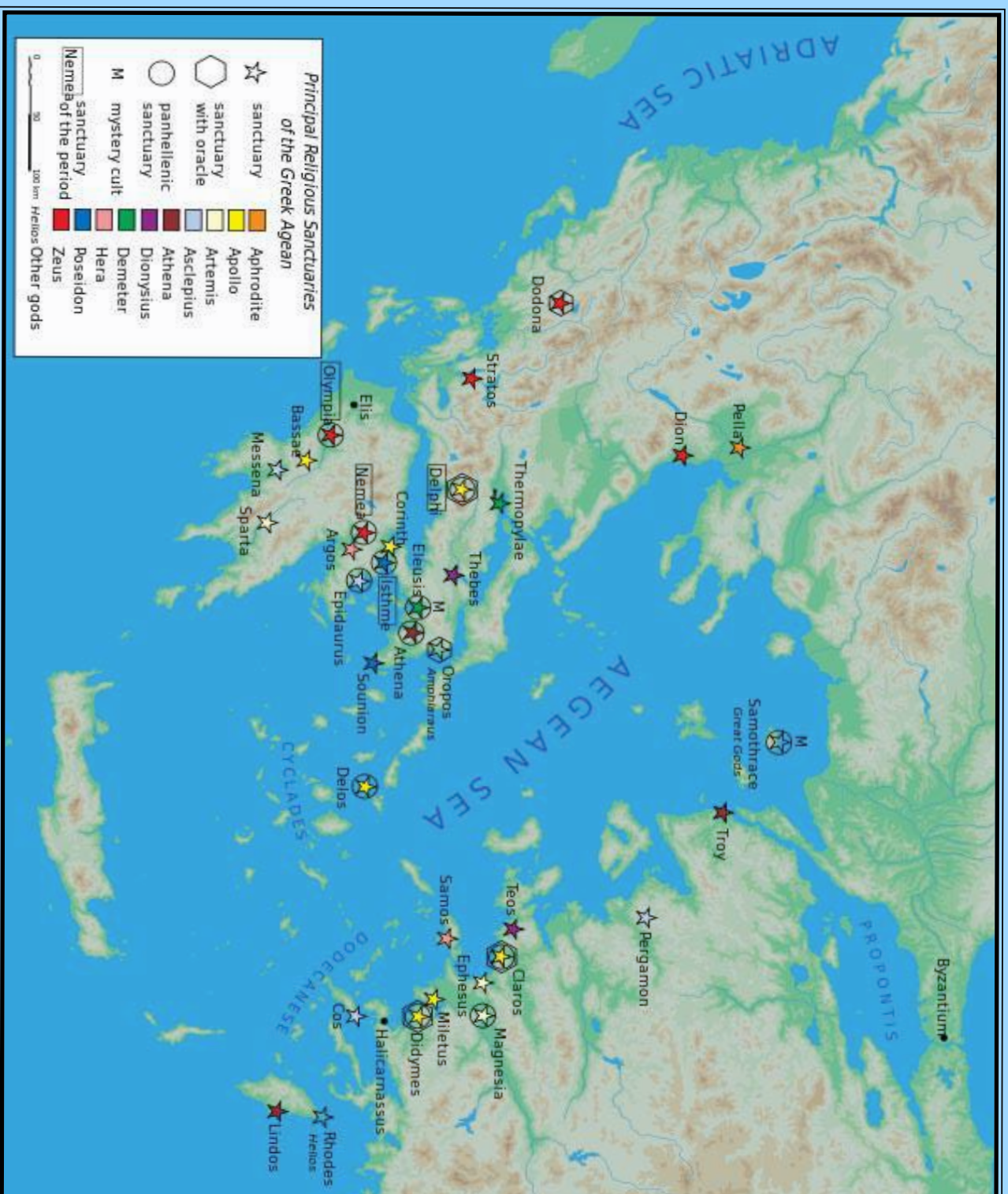
Aphrodite is consistently portrayed, in every image and story, as having had no childhood, and instead being born as a nubile, infinitely desirable adult. In many of the later myths, she is portrayed as vain, ill-tempered and easily offended. Although she is married - she is one of the few gods in the Greek **Pantheon** who is - she is frequently unfaithful to her husband.

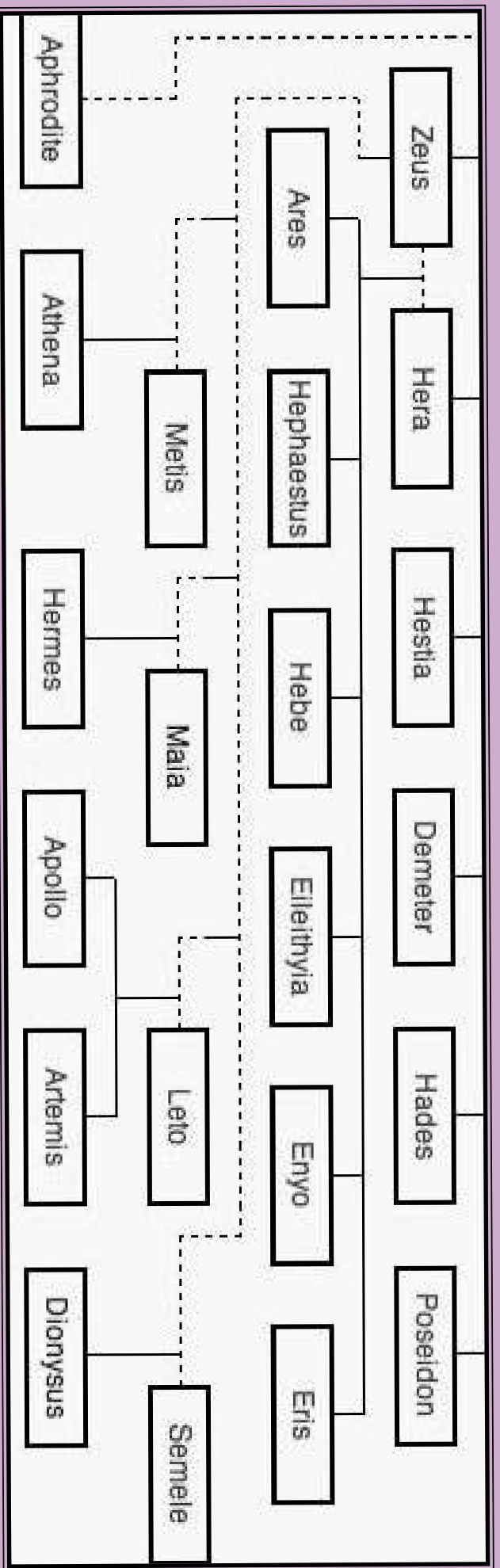
Aphrodite's husband is one of the most even-tempered of the Gods, but in the **Odyssey** she is she is portrayed as preferring Ares, the volatile god of war because she is attracted to his violent nature.



GREECE

This is a map of Greece. Various temples to certain gods and goddesses are shown with the cities where they were located. As you can see, most of the ancient Greeks lived in the south, near the water because their civilization was based on trade and the quickest way to get around back then was by a boat powered by hundreds of oarsmen. As you can see, Zeus had the most temples, as he was the most important figure in Greek mythology. He is followed by by Apollo, and notice how all of Poseidon's temples are located right next to the sea.





FAMILY TREE

Here is a picture of the family tree of the Twelve Olympians. As you can see, there are some other gods and goddesses who are related to the Twelve Olympians who aren't included in the twelve we listed. This is because these gods and goddesses are less important and were less worshipped than Aphrodite, Apollo, Ares, Artemis, Athena, Demeter, Dionysus, Hephaestus, Hera, Hermes, Poseidon, and Zeus. Hestia is the goddess of the home and architecture. Zeus and Hera's other children were Eileithyia (the goddess of childbirth), Enyo (the goddess of war), Eris (the goddess of chaos), and Hebe (the goddess of youth).

GLOSSARY

Achilles:

A Greek hero of the Trojan War and the central character and greatest warrior of Homer's Iliad. Achilles was said to be a demigod; his mother was a nymph, and his father was a king.

Acropolis:

A settlement, especially a citadel, built upon an area of elevated ground—frequently a hill with precipitous sides, chosen for purposes of defense.

ambrosia:

The food and drink of the Greek gods, often depicted as conferring ageless immortality (see immortal in Glossary) upon whomever consumed it.

caduceus:

A staff carried by Hermes. It is a short staff entwined by two serpents, sometimes surmounted by wings. The caduceus is often mistakenly used as a symbol of medicine and medical practice (especially in North America), due to historical confusion with the traditional medical symbol, the rod of Asclepius. The Rod of Asclepius has only a single snake and no wings, so it is similar in form to the caduceus. The Rod of Asclepius is wielded by the Greek god Asclepius, the god of healing and medicine.

Cyclopes:

A primordial race of giants, each with a single eye in the middle of his forehead.

Delphi:

Delphi is both an archaeological site and a modern town in Greece. Delphi was the site of the Delphic oracle, the most important oracle in the classical Greek world, and became a major site for the worship of the god Apollo.

Eros:

The god of love.

Hades:

The ancient Greek god of the underworld. Brother of Zeus and Poseidon.

Helios:

The personification of the sun.

immortal:

someone who can live forever (opposite of mortal, or someone who is liable or subject to death)

lame:

1. Unable to walk properly because of a problem with one's feet or legs.
2. Moving with pain or difficulty on account of injury, defect or temporary obstruction of a function: a lame leg, arm or muscle.

Leto:

The mother of Apollo and Artemis, which Leto conceived after her hidden beauty accidentally caught the eyes of Zeus.

Muses:

The goddesses of the inspiration of science and the arts, especially literature, dance, and music. They were considered the source of the knowledge, and are the nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (the personification of memory).

Maia:

A mountain nymph and mother of Hermes with Zeus.

The Odyssey:

The Odyssey is one of two major ancient Greek epic poems written by Homer. It is, in part, a sequel to the first major ancient Greek epic poem The Iliad, the other work by Homer. The poem is fundamental to the modern Western literature, and is the second oldest example of Western literature, the Iliad being the oldest. It is believed to have been composed near the end of the 8th century BC, somewhere in Ionia, the Greek coastal region of Anatolia.

Pandora and Pandora's box:

Pandora was the first woman on Earth. Zeus ordered Hephaestus to create her, using water and earth. The gods endowed her with many gifts: Athena clothed her, Aphrodite gave her beauty, and Hermes gave her speech.

Pandora was given a beautiful container – with instructions not to open it under any circumstance. Impelled by her curiosity (given to her by the gods), Pandora opened it, and all evil contained therein escaped and spread over the earth. She hastened to close the container, but the whole contents had escaped, except for one thing that lay at the bottom – the Spirit of Hope named Elpis. Pandora, deeply saddened by what she had done, feared she would have to face Zeus' wrath, since she had failed her duty; however, Zeus did not punish Pandora, because he knew this would happen. Today, the phrase «to open Pandora's box» means to perform an action that may seem small or innocuous, but that turns out to have severe and far-reaching consequences.

Paphos:

A coastal city in the southwest of Cyprus and the capital of Paphos District.

Parthenon:

A temple on the Athenian Acropolis, dedicated to the maiden goddess Athena, whom the people of Athens considered their patron deity. Its construction began in 447 BCE when the Athenian Empire was at the height of its power. It was completed in 438 BCE, although decoration of the building continued until 432 BCE. It is the most important surviving building of Classical Greece.

Prometheus:

A hero and a trickster figure who is credited with the creation of man from clay. He is most well-known for stealing the gift fire from the gods (namely Hephaestus) and giving to mankind, an act that enabled progress and civilization. He is known for his intelligence, and as a champion of humanity.

Rhea:

The mother of the Olympian gods and goddesses, but not as an Olympian goddess in her own right. Married to Cronus.

The River Styx:

A river in Greek mythology that formed the boundary between Earth and the Underworld. The gods were bound by the river and swore oaths on it that were unbreakable.

Semele:

A mortal priestess of Zeus and the mother of Dionysus with Zeus.

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