

The Greek Olympian Gods

Most ancient Greeks believed there were many gods and goddesses who looked and acted just like humans. Some were good and some were bad. The deities who lived on Mount Olympus were very real to the ancient Greeks. They represented many various aspects of life and nature.

The Olympians were a group of gods who ruled the world after the Titans. The Titans ruled for a long time, but they were overthrown by Zeus, the leader of the Olympians. When they were defeated in the rebellion, the Titans lost their powers.

The Olympian gods (who are all related to each other in some way) took over for the Titans and set up their home on Mount Olympus. Here is a short description of twelve of the most important Greek Olympian Gods.

Zeus:

Zeus was the leader of the rebellion that overthrew the Titans, who were commanded by the father of Zeus, Cronus. Zeus and his two brothers, Hades and Poseidon, drew straws to see which one would become the leader of the gods. Zeus won the draw and was named the Supreme Ruler of the Gods. He is lord of the sky and the rain god. His weapon is a lightning bolt, which he throws at people who make him angry. He is married to Hera, but he has had many other girlfriends. Zeus is known to punish those people who lie.

Poseidon:

Poseidon is the brother of Zeus and Hades. After the Titans were overthrown, he drew straws with his brothers and he became the Lord of the Sea. His weapon is a trident, which can shake the earth and destroy any object. He is a greedy person who has many arguments. When he becomes angry, he uses his trident to cause rough seas and earthquakes. He is the creator of the horse.

Hades:

Hades is the brother of Zeus and Poseidon. He drew straws with his brothers and he was given the task of Lord of the Underworld, the worst of the tasks. He is a greedy god who is always looking to increase the number of dead souls he rules over. He is pleased with people who help him accomplish this goal. He is also the god of wealth, because all of the precious metals used for money come from the earth. His wife is Persephone.

Hera:

Hera is the wife *and* sister of Zeus. She is the protector of marriage and takes special care of married women. Generally, Hera and Zeus did not get along, although they remained married. Occasionally, Hera would lead rebellions against Zeus, but she was never successful.

Hestia:

Hestia is the sister of Zeus. She plays almost no part in myths. She is the goddess of the Hearth, which is the symbol of the home. Each city has a public hearth sacred to Hestia, where the fires are never allowed to go out.

Ares:

Ares is the son of Zeus and Hera. Both of his parents disliked him. He is the God of War. While he is involved in many battles, he is generally considered a coward.

Athena:

Athena is the daughter of Zeus. She was born when she came straight from the forehead of Zeus, fully grown and dressed in full armor! She has no mother. She is brave in battle, but will only fight to protect her home. She is the goddess of wisdom, the city, agriculture, and arts and crafts. She invented the trumpet, the flute, the bridle (for horses), the pot, the rake, the plow, the ship, and the chariot. She was Zeus' favorite child who was actually allowed to use his lightning bolts. Her favorite city is Athens.

Apollo:

Apollo is the son of Zeus and Leto. His twin sister is Artemis. He is the god of poetry and music, and he plays a golden lyre. He is also the god of healing, and he is given credit for teaching the Greeks medicine. He is also the god of the sun and truth. He cannot speak a lie. It is his job to drag the sun across the sky behind his chariot. He is famous for his oracle at Delphi. People traveled from all over Greece to predict the future at his oracle.

Aphrodite:

Aphrodite is the goddess of love and beauty. She has the ability to make anyone fall in love with her. She is the daughter of Zeus and Dione, although there are myths that tell how she was born from the sea. She is the wife of Hephaestus.

Hermes:

Hermes is the son of Zeus and Maia. He is the messenger for Zeus. He is the fastest of all the gods and he wears sandals, a hat with wings, and he carries a magic wand. It is his responsibility to carry the souls of the dead to the underworld for Hades. He invented the lyre, pipes, the musical scale, astronomy, weights and measures, boxing, gymnastics, and caring for olive trees.

Artemis:

Artemis is the daughter of Zeus and Leto. Her twin brother is Apollo. She is the goddess of the hunt. She is often seen in the forest hunting with silver arrows. All wild animals are sacred to her, especially the deer. She is also the goddess of childbirth, because she caused no pain to Leto when she was born.

Hephaestus:

Hephaestus is the son of Zeus and Hera. He is the only god to be physically ugly. Because of his ugliness, it is said that Hera threw him from the heavens into the sea, which broke his legs. Thus, he is also crippled. He is the god of fire and the forge. He is responsible for making all the weapons and armor for the gods. He uses a volcano for his forge. His wife is Aphrodite.