

GREEK GODS AND MYTHS – OVERVIEW

GAIA AND URANUS TO REIGN OF THE OLYMPIANS

ERA SUMMARY – GREEK GODS AND MYTHS

The myths and legends of Ancient Greece are such an essential part of Greek culture that the first three units of the Ancient Greece Classical Curriculum are dedicated entirely to myth and folklore. Greek mythology is important, not only because it reflects the pagan religion of the Ancient world, but also because it gives great insight into Greek thought and expression. References to Greek Gods and folklore are present throughout the recorded history of the ancient world, in religious symbols and ceremonies, in literature, in poetry, in art, in archeological artifacts, and in day to day life.

The Greeks worshiped Pagan gods but did not credit them with the same qualities of omniscience and goodness that Christians associate with their God. Greek Gods shared many human foibles so the legends that arose concerning them were almost invariably dramas involving jealousy, indulgence, revenge, debauchery, and misunderstandings. Greek myths were often quite humorous and frequently involved morals applicable to human relations.

The myths, heroes and legends of Ancient Greece are too numerous to list, but a few general categories of the types of heroes and stories can be given. The first category of Greek myths involves the Gods, or immortals, who have a human form, and decidedly human personality traits, but possess enormous powers over the earth. The twelve **Olympians** are the most important, and they include Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades who rule over the heaven, Sea, and Underworld respectively. Most of the rest of the Olympians are either sisters or children of Zeus, the King of Gods.

The Olympians are the third generation of Greek Gods, descended from the Titans, who in turn, descended from the Primordial "Mother Earth" and "Father Sky." Besides the twelve Olympians and their ancestors, there are hundreds of other lesser gods, fairies, and demigods that preside over a vast variety of entities, such as field and stream, poetry, music and medicine. A list of the fields of influence of the Titans, Olympians, and lesser gods is provided [here](#).



ATHENE CHANGES ARACHNE INTO A SPIDER

The second category of Greek myths involves human, or semi-human heroes, and a spectacular array of monsters and villains. Many legendary Greek heroes are demigods, who descended on one side from a human and from the other from a God and have superhuman power. But others are merely humans, whose lives were blessed or cursed by the gods, and whose feats were immortalized in Greek folklore and literature. The final category of Greek legends involves the famous characters who appear in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the two epic poems most closely associated with Ancient Greece.

This unit deals only with the legends surrounding the Greek Gods and Titans. It begins with the overthrow of the Titans by the Olympian descendants of Cronus and Rhea. It explains how Prometheus created the human race and gave it the gifts of craftsmanship, agriculture, and fire. The myth of Pandora's Box, explaining how evil entered the world of man, is similar in some ways to the story of Adam and Eve in the garden, while the story of Deucalion and the Flood has some similarities to the story of Noah's flood. The section also covers the founding of several important cities in Greece, and how the race of Hellenes—the original Greeks, came into existence.

CHARACTERS – GREEK GODS AND MYTHS

OLYMPIANS-SECOND GENERATION OF GODS, RELATED TO ZEUS

Zeus (Jupiter)	God of Heavens, Weather, Lightning - King of Gods
Poseidon (Neptune)	God of the Sea, Rivers, Earthquakes, Horses
Hades (Pluto)	God of the Underworld, Dead, Precious Metals
Hera (Juno)	Goddess of Marriage, Women - Queen of Gods - Mother (with Zeus) of Ares, Hephaestus, Hebe, and Eris
Hestia (Vesta)	Goddess of the Hearth, Home, Chastity
Ares (Mars)	God of War, bloodshed, violence
Athena (Minerva)	Goddess of Wisdom, Strategy, Handcrafts, Skill
Apollo (Apollo)	God of Light, Prophecy, Music, Healing
Artemis (Diana)	Goddess of the Hunt, Forest, Wild Animals, Maidens
Aphrodite (Venus)	Goddess of Love, Beauty, Desire, mother of Cupid
Hermes (Mercury)	God of Travel, Commerce, Speed, Diplomacy, Trickery - Messenger of Gods
Hephaestus (Vulcan)	God of the Forge, Fire, Craftsmanship
Demeter (Ceres)	Goddess of Grain, Agriculture, Harvest, Fertility - Mother (with Zeus) of Persephone
Dionysus (Bacchus)	God of Wine, Revelry, Festivals, Madness
Persephone (Proserpina)	Goddess of Spring - Wife of Hades
Hebe (Juventus)	Goddess of Youth - Cupbearer of the Gods
Eris (Discordia)	Goddess of Discord - Sister of Ares
Eros (Cupid)	God of Love - Son of Aphrodite
Pan (Faunus)	God of Nature, Shepherds, Flocks

Primordials and Titans: First Generation of Gods

- Gaia** Primordial Earth Goddess and mother of all Titans and Giants.
- Uranus** Primordial God of the Heavens and father of all Titans.
- Cronus (Saturn)** King of Titans and wife of Rhea; overthrown by his son Zeus.
- Rhea** Queen of Titans, mother of Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, Hestia, Hera, Demeter.
- Hyperion** Titan of Light, father (with Theia) of Helios (sun), Selene (moon), Eos (dawn).
- Mnemosyne** Titan of Memory, mother (with Zeus) of the nine muses.
- Oceanus** Titan of Oceans, father (with Tethys) of rivers, springs, streams, fountains.
- Prometheus** Titan of forethought and crafty council, creator of mankind.
- Epimetheus** Titan of afterthought and father of excuses.
- Leto** Titan of motherhood and mother (with Zeus) of Artemis and Apollo
- Metis** Titan of good council and Mother (with Zeus) of Athena.
- Atlas** Titan forced to carry the sky on his shoulders.

Sister Goddesses

- Mousai (Muses)** Sisters of Inspiration for Arts and Literature: (9) History, Astronomy, Dance, Song, Comedy, Tragedy, Epic Poetry, Lyric Poetry, Love Poetry
- Charities (Graces)** Sisters of Charm and Beauty: (3) Splendor, Mirth, Good Cheer
- Moirai (Fates)** Sisters of Destiny: (3) Spin Thread, Measure Thread, Cut Thread
- Horae (Hours)** Sisters of Order and Justice: (3) Order, Justice, Peace
- Erinyes (Furies)** Sisters of Vengeances: (3) Punishment, Grudge, Anger
- Graeae (Grey Witches)** Ancient Sisters who share one eye and one tooth: (3) Dread, Horror, Alarm
- Hesperides (Evening Nymphs)** Sisters who tend an island garden in the far west: (3) Red, Light, Sunset

Early Mortals

- Deucalion** Son of Prometheus who survives a world-wide flood with his wife Pyrrha, sent by the gods as punishment for the evils of humanity.
- Pyrrha** Daughter of Pandora and survivor of a world-wide flood with husband Deucalion.
- Pandora** The first human woman, created by the Gods, who opens a box that releases all of the evils in the world to plague humanity.
- Europa** Phoenician princess who was kidnapped by Zeus in the form of a white Bull, and carried off to Crete.
- Cadmus** Phoenician prince, brother of Europa, who goes to Greece in search of his sister and founds Thebes.
- Arachne** Celebrated weaver who boasted that her skill was great than that of Athena.

RECOMMENDED READING – GREEK GODS AND MYTHS

CORE READING ASSIGNMENTS

Haaren - <u>Famous Men of Greece</u>	<u>The Gods of Greece</u> to <u>Cadmus and the Dragon's Teeth</u> (3)
Guerber - <u>The Story of the Greeks</u>	<u>Founding of Important Cities</u> to <u>Story of Deucalion</u> (2)
Macgregor - <u>The Story of Greece</u>	<u>Wonderland</u> to <u>The Purple Flowers</u> (6)

SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Peabody - <u>Old Greek Folk Stories</u>	<u>The Wood-Folk</u> to <u>Apollo's Sister</u> (11)
Harding - <u>Greek Gods and Heroes</u>	<u>The Greeks</u> to <u>Eros, the Love-God</u> (20)
Baldwin - <u>Old Greek Stories</u>	<u>Jupiter and His Company</u> to <u>Cadmus and Europa</u> (9)
Francillon - <u>Gods and Heroes</u>	<u>Saturn</u> to <u>Man Who Never Died</u> (23)
Shaw - <u>Stories of the Ancient Greeks</u>	<u>The Gods of Greece</u> to <u>Sowing Dragon's Teeth</u> (11)
Lang - <u>A Book of Myths</u>	<u>Prometheus and Pandora</u> to <u>Pan</u> (27)
Hawthorne - <u>Tanglewood Tales</u>	<u>The Pygmies</u> to <u>The Pomegranate Seeds</u> (4)
Hawthorne - <u>The Wonder Book</u>	<u>The Golden Touch</u> (1)