

Aphrodite

Greek Goddess of Love, Beauty & Eternal Youth

Aphrodite is the Goddess of Love and Beauty and according to Hesiod's *THEOGONY*, she was born from the foam in the waters of Paphos, on the island of Cyprus. She supposedly arose from the foam when the Titan Cronus slew his father Uranus and threw his genitals into the sea.

However, according to Homer, in *Iliad*, Aphrodite may instead be the daughter of ZEUS and Dione. As with so many Greek deities, there are many stories about the origins of the gods.

Many gods believed that her beauty was such that their rivalry over her would spark a war of the gods. Because of this, Zeus married Aphrodite to HEPHAESTUS – he wasn't seen as a threat because of his ugliness and deformity.

Despite this marriage to Hephaestus, Aphrodite had many lovers. Her lovers include both gods and men – including the god ARES and the mortal Anchises. She also played a role in the story of Eros and Psyche in which admirers of Psyche neglected to worship Venus (Aphrodite) and instead worshipped her. For this, Aphrodite enlisted EROS (Cupid) to exact her revenge but the god of love instead falls in love with the girl.

Later, Aphrodite was both Adonis's lover and his surrogate mother. This led to a feud with Persephone in which Zeus decreed ADONIS should spend half of the year with Aphrodite and half of the year with Persephone.

Facts about Aphrodite

- Aphrodite was the goddess of fertility, love, and beauty.
- Two different stories explain the birth of Aphrodite. The first is simple: She was the child of Zeus and Dione.
- According to the second story, however, Aphrodite rose from the foam of the sea.
- Aphrodite was married to Hephaestus, but Aphrodite did not enter into this union of her own volition.
- She and Ares conceived Harmonia, who eventually married Herodotus.

- She was the mother of Hermaphroditus by HERMES.
- Aphrodite and her son Eros (Cupid) teamed up to cause Zeus to fall in love with a human named Europa.
- Aphrodite loved Adonis. She saw him when he was born and determined then that he should be hers. She assigned Persephone to his care, but Persephone fell in love with Adonis also and would not give him back. Finally, Zeus had to mediate. He judged that Adonis should spend half the year with each.
- Aphrodite used a swan-drawn car to glide easily through the air.
- Although Aphrodite and Hera were not friends, HERA went to the Goddess of Love for help as she endeavored to assist the heroes in their Quest of the Golden Fleece.
- Aphrodite, Hera, and ATHENA were the top three contenders for a gold apple marked "For the Fairest." They asked Zeus to judge the contest, but he refused. Paris, son of the King of Troy, judged the contest instead. Each of the three goddesses promised him something in return; he chose Aphrodite as the winner of the apple. This story of the Judgment of Paris was considered to be the real reason behind the Trojan War.
- During the Trojan War, Aphrodite fought on the side of Paris.
- Aphrodite rescued Paris from Menelaus by enveloping him in a cloud and taking him back to Troy.
- Aphrodite owned a girdle that contained her enchantments; Hera borrowed it once to seduce Zeus in order to distract him from the Trojan War.
- Aphrodite gave Harmonia a necklace that brought disaster to a later generation.
- Prostitutes considered the Goddess of Love their patron.
- Aphrodite had a few mortal lovers. One of the most notable was the Trojan shepherd Anchises. The two of them conceived Aeneas.
- Corinth was the center of Aphrodite's worship.
- Early Greek art depicted the goddess as nude.
- She was the model for the famous sculpture Venus de Milo.
- Aphrodite and Cupid initiated the love between Jason (hero of the Quest of the Golden Fleece) and the daughter of the Colchian King.

Artemis

Greek Goddess of the Hunt, Forests and Hills, the Moon, Archery

Artemis is known as the goddess of the hunt and is one of the most respected of all the ancient Greek deities. It is thought that her name, and even the goddess herself, may even be pre-Greek. She was the daughter of [ZEUS](#), king of the gods, and the Titaness Leto and she has a twin brother, the god [APOLLO](#).

Not only was Artemis the goddess of the hunt, she was also known as the goddess of wild animals, wilderness, childbirth and virginity. Also, she was protector of young children and was known to bring and relieve disease in women. In literature and art she was depicted as a huntress carrying a bow and arrow.

Artemis was a virgin and drew the attention and interest of many gods and men. However, it was only her hunting companion, Orion, that won her heart. It is believed that Orion was accidentally killed either by Artemis herself or by Gaia, the primordial goddess of the earth.

In one version of the stories of Adonis – who was a late addition to Greek mythology during the Hellenistic period – Artemis sent a wild boar to kill Adonis after he continued to boast that he was a far greater hunter than her.

Facts about Artemis

- Artemis was daughter of Zeus and Leto and twin sister of Apollo.
- According to one source, Artemis was born a day before Apollo. She then served as a guardian to him, which provided a context for her desire to protect and nurture.
- She was primarily a virgin huntress, goddess of wildlife and patroness of hunters.
- The bear was sacred to her.
- She guarded her virginity carefully. Actaeon and Orion tried to dishonor or rape her, but anyone who threatened her purity met with a violent end.
- She was an important goddess in the lives of women, especially when it came to marriage and young creatures.
- When one of her nymphs was seduced by Zeus, Artemis transformed her into a bear and then killed her.
- She was sometimes associated with the goddess of the moon.
- Artemis acted out in anger whenever her wishes were disobeyed, especially if anyone transgressed against the animals that were sacred to her.
- She punished Agamemnon, for example, when he killed a stag in her sacred grove.
- Artemis appealed to Zeus to grant her eternal virginity.

- Apollo and Artemis teamed up to kill the children of Niobe. Niobe bragged that she had birthed more children than Leto (the mother of Apollo and Artemis). The twins then hunted her children and killed them with their bows and arrows.
- Artemis was worshipped widely in Greece but only as a secondary deity.
- A temple built in her honor became one of the “Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.”
- At least two festivals were celebrated in her honor of Artemis: Brauronia and the festival of Artemis Orthia.
- Homer referred to her as a mistress of wild animals.
- Artemis spent most of her time roaming the forests with her nymphs. She was described as both hunting animals and protecting them.
- She armed herself with a bow and arrows made by Hephaestus and Cyclops.
- In art, Artemis is often accompanied by a stag or hunting dog.
- She is the protector of chastity and a nurturer of the young.

Athena

Greek Goddess of Wisdom and War

Athena, also referred to as Athene, is a very important goddess of many things. She is goddess of wisdom, courage, inspiration, civilization, law and justice, strategic warfare, mathematics, strength, strategy, the arts, crafts, and skill.

She is known most specifically for her strategic skill in warfare and is often portrayed as companion of heroes and is the patron goddess of heroic endeavour.

Athena was born from [ZEUS](#) after he experienced an enormous headache and she sprang fully grown and in armour from his forehead. She has no mother but one of the most commonly cited stories is that Zeus lay with *Metis*, the goddess of crafty thought and wisdom, and then swallowed her whole as he feared she will give birth to a child more powerful than him because of a prophecy – but she had already conceived.

Facts about Athena

- Athena was the Goddess of War, the female counterpart of [ARES](#).
- She was the daughter of Zeus; no mother bore her. She sprang from Zeus's head, full-grown and clothed in armor.
- She was Zeus's favorite child.
- According to Homer's account in the Iliad, Athena was a fierce and ruthless warrior. In the Odyssey, she was angry and unforgiving. In the course of the Trojan War, she struck Ajax with madness.
- Known for protecting civilized life, she was the Goddess of the City.
- According to some sources, Athena was praised for her compassion and generosity.
- Athena was a patron of the arts and crafts, especially when it came to spinning and weaving.
- In later poetry, Athena embodied wisdom and rational thought.
- Athena served as a guardian of Athens, where the Parthenon served as her temple.
- Zeus trusted her to wield the aegis and his thunderbolt.
- Her most important festival was the Panathenaea, which was celebrated annually at Athens.
- She is referred to in poetry as "gray-eyed."
- The owl was her bird, and the olive tree was hers.
- She turned the weaver [ARACHNE](#) into a spider after the mortal woman insulted Athena and the Olympian gods.
- Athena reared Erichonius, son of [HEPHAESTUS](#). He was half man, half serpent. Athena put the infant in a chest and gave it to others to watch over, forbidding them to open it. When they did, she drove them mad as punishment.

- She is one of three virgin goddesses; the other two were HESTIA and ARTEMIS.
- Athena invented the flute, but she never played it.
- Hermes and Athena went to the aid of PERSEUS IN HIS QUEST TO KILL MEDUSA. Looking directly at MEDUSA would turn any man to stone, so Athena provided PERSEUS with her polished shield. Using it, he was able to see Medusa as if looking in a mirror. Again, Athena guided his hand as he cut off Medusa's head with his sword.
- HERA and Athena fought against Paris in the Trojan War since he had awarded the Golden Apple to APHRODITE.
- The sacred image of Athena, a wood statue called the Palladium, protected the Trojans as long as they had it.
- ODYSSEUS and Diomedes executed a plan to steal the image, greatly encouraging the Greeks in their hopes to end the long-suffering war.
- Athena helped HERCULES when, as a part of his penance, he was required to drive away the Stymphalian birds. She got them moving, and Hercules shot them.

Calypso

Calypso is a figure from Greek mythology that has very unclear origins. While it's not completely clear exactly who or what she is, she is perhaps most famous for her role in Homer's *Odyssey*. Her role in that tale composes one of the more important movements in the book, and is her biggest appearance in mythology.

Who is Calypso?

Calypso's origins are very confusing in Greek mythology. According to Homer, Calypso was a nymph, a kind of minor female goddess that is deeply connected to a specific place. In his account of her past, she is the daughter of the Titan Atlas and she takes order directly from the Olympian gods.

According to Hesiod, though, Calypso is the daughter of Tethys and Oceanus. In this telling, she is one of the Oceanids, a kind of sea nymph. There is some discussion that this might be an entirely different Calypso from the one found in Homer's tale.

Finally, Apollodorus gives her an entirely different parentage. She is the daughter of Nereus and Doris according to him, and is thus one of the Nereids. In this form, she would be more closely connected to POSEIDON.

The Odyssey

Regardless of her origin, Calypso is best remembered for her appearance in Homer's *Odyssey*. In that tale, she lived on the island of Ogygia. When Odysseus' journey took him there, she kept him prisoner. As with most things that concern Calypso, there's some disagreement as to how long ODYSSEUS was there. What is known, though, is that Calypso wanted to keep him for her husband.

Calypso fell in love with Odysseus, much as GREEK GODS tended to do with Greek women. She used her powers to enchant him as she wove, keeping under her spell for most of the time he was on the island. While Odysseus may have wanted to go home, he certainly didn't make much of an effort to leave on his own.

Eventually, Odysseus would get Athena to intervene on his behalf. She was ordered to let Odysseus go by the Olympians, though she wasn't particularly happy about that fact. Fortunately for Odysseus, she was relatively kind to him – not only did she let him go, but she also gave him supplies so he could complete his journey home. Not only was Calypso expected to act differently than the male Greek gods, but she also went out of her way to be kind when she was forced to let her prisoner go.

Children

There's some disagreement as to whether Calypso and Odysseus had children while he was on the island. In some tales, Calypso is the mother of the Etruscan ruler Latinus. In other stories, Odysseus and Calypso have two sons named either Nausithous and Nausinous or Nausithous and Hyginus.

There is also a few classical sources that say that Calypso and Odysseus had an unnamed daughter. This girl would go on to marry her half-brother Telemachus, the son of Odysseus and Penelope. While this is not found in the *Odyssey*, it is a fairly common note in folk mythology.

Demeter

Greek Goddess of Agriculture, Fertility, Sacred Law and the Harvest

Demeter is the goddess of the harvest and presides over grains and the fertility of the earth. Although she was most often referred to as the goddess of the harvest, she was also goddess of sacred law and the cycle of life and death.

Her virgin daughter **PERSEPHONE** was abducted by the god of the underworld, **HADES**, and Demeter endlessly searched for her, preoccupied with loss and grief. The seasons halted and living things stopped growing and died. At this point, **ZEUS** had to intervene and send his messenger **HERMES** to the underworld to bring Persephone back and prevent the extinction of all life on Earth.

Hades agreed to Persephone's relief but gave her a pomegranate as she left. When she ate the pomegranate seeds, she was bound to him for one third of the year, either the dry Mediterranean summer, when plant life is threatened by drought, or the autumn and winter.

Demeter and Persephone were also the central figures to the Eleusinian Mysteries – a series of large and secretive concerts held every five years. These mysteries represented the abduction of Persephone by Hades in three phases. The “descent” (loss), the “search” and the “ascent”. The main theme is the “ascent” of Persephone and the reunion with her mother.

Facts about Demeter

- Demeter was the daughter of Cronos and Rhea.
- She was the goddess of harvest and fertility.
- She had one daughter, Persephone; Zeus was Persephone's father.
- After Hades abducted Persephone, Demeter grieved. The earth became barren through her neglect; thus, the winter season and its manifestations were a reflection of Demeter's emotional state during Persephone's absence.
- She revealed to man the art of growing and using corn.
- Only women attended the Thesmophoria, a fertility festival held in honor of Demeter.
- The fields of grain and the threshing-floor were under her protection. They were temples at which she could occupy at any moment.
- Her chief festival came at the harvest time. It began as a humble feast and over time morphed into a mysterious worship. This great festival occurred only every five years.
- Demeter and Dionysus were worshipped at Eleusis, a little town near Athens. Their worship was referred to as the Eleusinian Mysteries.
- Demeter was older than Dionysus. They were the two great gods of **THE EARTH**.

- Metaneira, a mother herself, comforted Demeter in Persephone's absence. In fact, Demeter nursed one of Metaneira's children. She doted on the child and anointed him with ambrosia on a daily basis. Demeter's attachment to the child alarmed Metaneira, and the two ultimately went their separate ways.
- Still angry over the abduction of Persephone, Demeter subjected the world to famine. Zeus sent the gods to Demeter one by one to try and bring her out of her despondency. Demeter and Persephone were ultimately reunited at Zeus's decree.
- Demeter was granted four months per year with Persephone; her daughter would remain with Hades for the remaining months.
- Men called Demeter the "Good Goddess" despite the desolation she had brought about as a result of her grief.
- She named Triptolemus her ambassador to men.
- She taught Triptolemus and Celeus her sacred rites.
- In ancient art, Demeter was pictured wearing a wreath made of ears of corn.
- The snake and the pig were sacred to her.
- The torch is often depicted in connection with Demeter because of her persistent search for Persephone.
- Demeter came to Eleusis during the reign of King Erechtheus of Athens.

Gaea

In Greek mythology, Gaea (or Gaia), the primordial earth or mother goddess was one of the deities who governed the universe before [THE TITANS](#) existed.

In the creation myth, [CHAOS](#) came before everything else. He was made of Void, Mass and Darkness in confusion; and then earth in the form of Gaea came into existence. From “**Mother Earth**” sprang the starry heavens, in the shape of the sky God Uranus, and from Gaea also came the mountains, plains, seas and rivers that make up the Earth we know today.

Gaea first appears as a character of divine being in the Homeric poems, in the *Illiad*, black sheep were sacrificed to her, and people were declaring oaths to invoke her.

The Greek Historian Hesiod wrote that the union of Gaea and Chaos created Uranus. From there Gaea and Uranus gave birth to the Giants, the Titans, Oceanus and the whole world. Uranus decided to stop Gaea from creating anything else and sent his children inside her, imprisoning them in her womb, therefore infuriating Gaea and causing her allegiance to her Titan son Cronus, and together they overthrew Uranus.

[CRONUS](#), using a great iron sickle created by his mother attacked Uranus, castrating him, the drops of blood fell from him and onto Gaea, the earth, and became the seeds of the Erinyes (the spirits of punishments), the Gigantes and the Melian nymphs. Another myth is that Cronus threw Uranus organs into the ocean and the mixing of the blood and sea foam birthed Aphrodite.

Gaea’s allegiance switched to [ZEUS](#) due to the cruelty of Cronus, who had imprisoned the same sons and had an insatiable endless determination for domination. Gaea foretold a prophecy that one of Cronus’s sons would dethrone him, due to his distrust; Cronus swallowed each of his children whole to prevent a coup. Zeus was successfully hidden, and when he was older, he returned to his father, forced him to throw up his siblings and together they overthrew him.

Zeus’s toppling of Cronus marked the end of the age of the Titans. Gaea would not be without conflict with Zeus; she was angered by his binding of her Titan sons in Tartarus, so she birthed the tribe of Giants and later the monster Typhoeus (a storm giant) to overthrow Zeus though both were unsuccessful. Her final attempt to dethrone Zeus was by telling him that his next son, birthed to him by Metis would depose him, so he swallowed her causing [ATHENA](#) to spring from his head.

Other versions show Gaea was the great mother of all creation; the heavenly gods were descended from her union with Uranus (the Sky), the sea-gods from her union with Pontos (the Sea), the Giants from her mating with Tartarus (the Pit) and mortal creatures born from her earthly flesh. In ancient Greek cosmology, the earth was believed to be a flat disk, encircled by

the River and encompassed by the heaven on one side and Tartarus on the other. In a Greek vase painting Gaea was portrayed as a buxom, motherly figure rising from the earth but inseparable from her element. In some mosaic artworks, Gaea is a full figured woman, reclining on the land, clothed in green and surrounded by fruits and the Seasons.

Gaea was the source from which arose the vapours producing divine inspiration and was regarded as an oracular divinity and was said to have had the oracle of Delphi in her possession first.

Gaea was seen as the all-producing and all-nourishing mother; her worship universal amongst the Ancient Greeks.

She had temples at Athens, Sparta, Delphi, Olympia, Bura, Tegea and Phlyus to name a few. Due to her mother like presence she presided over marriages, oaths and was honoured as a prophetess.

Other Interesting Facts About Gaea

- Gaea may have formerly been worshipped in Greece as a mother goddess before the Hellenes introduced the cult of Zeus
- Gaea was described as the giver of dreams and the nourisher of plants and young children
- Gaea was renamed by the Romans as Terra
- In modern times, Earth scientist use the term Gaea to describe the earth as a complex living organism

Hera

Greek Goddess of Marriage and Queen of Olympus

Hera is the Queen of the GODS and is the wife and sister of ZEUS in the Olympian pantheon. She is known for being the Goddess of Marriage & Birth. Despite being the Goddess of Marriage, she was known to be jealous and vengeful towards the many lovers and offspring of her husband Zeus.

She was also known to turn her anger towards mortals who crossed her as well – for example, *Paris*, who chose APHRODITE over Hera as the most beautiful goddess at the marriage of the sea-nymph Thetis to a mortal called Peleus.

In images and statues, Hera is portrayed as being majestic and solemn, crowned with the *polos* – a high cylindrical crown worn by many of the Great Goddesses.

Even before her marriage with Zeus, she ruled over the heavens and the Earth. This is one reason why she is referred to as 'The Queen of Heaven' – ruling over *Mount Olympus* where all the gods and goddesses live.

Even the great Zeus feared his wife Hera. Her never-ending hatred of Heracles, the illegitimate son of Zeus and the mortal Alcmene stemmed from his continuous adultery and, amongst other things, Hera raised a storm at sea in order to drive Heracles out of his course to kill him.

Zeus became so angry that he hung her in the clouds by a golden chain, and attached heavy anvils to her feet. Her son Hephaestus tried to release his mother from her humiliating position, for which Zeus threw him out of heaven, and his leg was broken by the fall.

Facts about Hera

- Hera was Queen of the OLYMPIAN GODS.
- She was the wife and sister of Zeus.

- Hera was a jealous wife, and she fought with Zeus frequently over his extramarital affairs and illegitimate children. For this reason, Hera was known for punishing offending husbands.
- She was the protector of women, presiding over marriages and births.
- While Hera was worshipped in all parts of Greece, temples were erected in her honor at Argos and Salmos.
- The peacock was sacred to her.
- Hera had few, if any, redeeming qualities. She never forgot an injury.
- The Titans Ocean and Tethys brought her up.
- Hera is often described as “cow-faced,” although she was also called the chief among the immortals in beauty.
- Though she may have been physically attractive, her vindictive personality makes her less so.
- The Trojan War would have ended in peace, but Hera had a vested interest in its outcome and influenced Zeus to either switch sides or remain neutral.
- Hera had no concept of justice when angry or jealous; she could not forgive the women with whom Zeus had sexual relations—even if they were innocent of wrongdoing.
- Ilithyia, a daughter of Hera’s, assisted women in childbirth.
- In the story of the Quest of the Golden Fleece, Hera was a gracious protector of the heroes.
- Paris awarded Aphrodite the Golden Apple over Athena and Hera.
- Hera punished one of Zeus’s love interests, Io, by putting her in the charge of Argus. Argus had a hundred eyes and kept vigilant watch over her so that Zeus could not come to her aid.
- Hera turned Callisto into a bear because Zeus fell in love with her.
- Hera arranged the death of Semele, another of Zeus’s mortal conquests, although she did not directly cause it.
- Hera never forgave HERCULES for being Zeus’s son, but when Hercules died and was taken to heaven, he and Hera reconciled. While in heaven, Hercules married Hera’s daughter Hebe.
- In some stories, it was at Hera’s orders that DIONYSUS was torn to pieces. He was brought back to life, and it is this resurrection that was celebrated in theatres.

Hestia

Greek Goddess of the Hearth and Domestic Life

Hestia was the goddess of the hearth, home, architecture, domesticity, family, and the state. She was one of only three virgin goddesses, next to [ATHENA](#) and [ARTEMIS](#). Although both [POSEIDON](#) and [APOLLO](#) wanted to marry her, Hestia made an oath to [ZEUS](#) that she would remain forever pure and undefiled, never entering into a union with a man.

She is a goddess of the Olympian generation, daughter of Cronus and Rhea and sister to Zeus, Poseidon, [HADES](#), [DEMETER](#) and [HERA](#). When Cronus swallowed his children for fear one would dethrone him, Hestia was the eldest and thus swallowed first.

After Zeus forced his father to disgorge his children, Hestia was the last to be yielded up, making her both the oldest and the youngest daughter.

As the goddess of the hearth she personified the fire burning in the hearth of every home in Greece. Hestia receiving the first offering at every sacrifice in the household with families pouring sweet wine in her name and dedicating the richest portion of food to her.

The hearth fire in the household was not allowed to go out by any family unless it was ritually distinguished. Though Hestia did not have a public cult, she was worshipped at any temple, regardless of the god the temple was dedicated to. Hestia is described as a kind, forgiving and discreet goddess with a passive, non-confrontational nature.

Hestia was the eldest daughter of Cronos and Rhea.

As with the rest of his children, Cronos ate her but eventually regurgitated her.

She was a sibling to Demeter, Hades, Poseidon, Hera, and Zeus.

She was primarily known the Goddess of the Hearth.

Of all the gods and goddesses, she was considered the gentlest and mildest. Others, critically, have called her colorless because there is little information provided in regard to her character.

Although Hestia appeared in a few stories, she was not overly significant in Greek mythology.

Hestia is completely omitted from the works of Homer, author of the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Poets such as Apollodorus, Hesiod, and Ovid allude to her in their works.

Each city had a public hearth that was sacred to Hestia; the fire kindled there was never allowed to go out.

New colonies took fire from the hearth in the prytaneion (also known as the town hall) and kept the fires going in those new locations.

Every meal began and ended with an offering to Hestia.

Like Athena and Artemis, Hestia was referred to as a virgin goddess.

Although Apollo and Poseidon proposed marriage to Hestia, she requested of Zeus to remain a maiden forever.

Domestic life was her dominion in spite of her desire to remain a virgin.

She was one of only twelve Olympian deities.

Her name literally means “hearth”; appropriately, her priorities were family and community.

Children were accepted into the family by being presented at Hestia’s hearth. This observed first step ensured the goddess’s blessing on the new addition.

Vesta was the Roman equivalent to Hestia.

Public and private worship of Hestia was widespread.

She represented communal security and personal happiness.

Because Hestia remained a virgin, it follows that she had no children.

Nike

In Greek Mythology, Nike was the **GODDESS** of speed, strength and victory. Also known as Winged Goddess, Nike is most often pictured as having wings. She was the child of Pallas (Titan) and Styx. In most beliefs, Styx is the name of the river that separates Planet Earth from the Gates of Hell (Hades). The River Styx was named for Nike's grandfather Tethys. Nike and her three sisters, Zelus (Zeal/power), Bia (Force) and Kratos (Strength) were brought by Styx to Zeus to assist him in the great **TITAN BATTLE** whose ultimate goal was to gain control of Mount Olympus.

Ancient Greeks worshiped Nike because they believed she could make them never to die and was able to grant to humans strength and the speed needed to be victorious in any task they undertook.

Although Pluto is no longer considered a planet by some planetary experts, in 2013 Styx was recognized as a moon of Pluto.

Nike allied herself with the Chief Greek God Zeus during the great Titanomachy conflict. During this event, she functioned as his chief charioteer. Nike's reward for doing this was that Zeus promised to keep her near him and to protect her forever. She is often seen seated beside Zeus on Mount Olympus.

In Roman Mythology, Nike was known as Victoria, after Greece fell to the Roman Empire. She appears with Zeus on statues in places such as the Temple of **ZEUS** in Attica and on the west portico of the Temple of **ATHENA** in Athens.

When Nike appeared alone, she always had wings and sported a palm branch in her right hand. If she was seen with another god, Nike was always wingless. According to many accounts, Nike is portrayed without wings in Athens so that she could never fly away from their city.

A sculpture dating back to 424 to 203 BC known as "Nike of Samothrace" that was unearthed in 1863 may be seen at the Louvre Museum in Paris. The oldest Nike sculpture known to exist believed to date back to 550 BCE and is located on the Greek island of Delos.

Most sculptures of Nike were made from the core of a piece of wood encased in ivory and gold. One is estimated to be 29 feet tall. Many sculptures of Zeus and/or Athena hold a smaller Nike in their right hand.

Nike's typical attire in paintings, sculptures and other art media was a flowing gown of gold and wings symbolizing her right to grant victory or to remove it later should the victor not remain worthy. She always carried a palm branch in her right hand as a symbol of peace. Another very

important thing she carried was a wreath, always ready to crown a victor in battle or games of challenge. When she is pictured with the Staff of Hermes, this means that one of Nike's roles was to serve as a messenger from the gods.

Nike being depicted holding wreath reminds us that as the Goddess of Victory she was always ready to encase a winner's neck and shoulders in a garland of victory. She was also often seen with a cup or pitcher and a bowl from which a victory toast was consumed.

Nike is often seen with a shield upon which it was said that she inscribed the name of each victor of a battle.

How Nike Relates to the Modern World

- Regardless of whether it is 2017 or 250BC, mankind has equated success and triumph with being regarded as #1 in some pursuit whether it be a sport or in our career.
- Since 1928, the Olympics Medal has sported Nike on the obverse side bearing her wreath of victory and the shield upon which the victor's name is inscribed.
- A portion of the hood ornament on all Rolls-Royce vehicles includes a depiction of Nike.
- Honda motorcycles use a symbol of Nike as part of the company's logo.
- Nike has been the symbol used since 1945 by America's Anti Aircraft Missile System.
- Statues of her often include a lyre or kithara used to celebrate a victory with song and dance.
- In keeping with Zeus's promise to make Nike to live forever as the Goddess of speed, strength and victory, people of all ages have the opportunity to wear Nike shoes. As proof of the power of Nike, many sports stars maintain they owe their success to Nike shoes. Thirty per cent of sports footwear sales belong to Nike. For example, Michael Jordan is said to have made more money from his Nike endorsements than all of its manufacturing labor force.
- Headquartered in Oregon, Nike has been the leader in the world of sports equipment and apparel since 1978 and is estimated to employ 44,000 workers around the globe. The name Nike was chosen by company founders because of her attributes of speed and victory.
- For the swoosh symbol that appears on the side of each Nike shoe, Nike employee Carolyn Davis was paid \$35 for the design. Rumor has it she later received an undisclosed amount of stock options as well.

Persephone

Persephone's story actually focuses more on her mother, [DEMETER](#), and what happens when Persephone disappears. The young goddess is also the daughter and niece of [ZEUS](#), and the wife and niece of [HADES](#) when she becomes the queen of the Underworld.

Daughter of Demeter

Persephone is a true nature child, being the daughter of the goddess of the harvest. Her mother is also affectionately known as Mother Nature. Persephone is a living example of youth, beauty, and life, and draws the attention of the king of the dead (Not to be confused with death itself, who is Thanatos). While picking flowers with her companions, Persephone is lured away from the group by the most interesting, beautiful, and sweet-smelling blooms she has ever encountered. As she attempts to gather them, a great chasm opens in the earth and Hades bears upon her riding his monstrous chariot pulled by magnificent black stallions. He sweeps her away to the depths of the kingdom of the dead.

Demeter looks everywhere for her child, causing mayhem and destruction as she goes. At first Zeus does not see a need to seek out Hades and confront him about the abduction of Persephone, but when Demeter's horrible sadness causes her to neglect her duties as a goddess, the earth begins to suffer. Crops die, animals become barren, and the land becomes cold and lifeless. Zeus appeals to Hades, but finds out that the problem is a lot more complicated than just asking for her release.

The underworld has many rules, one of which is that should a mortal consume anything while in the underworld, that mortal cannot leave it. Supposedly unbeknownst to Hades, Persephone has swallowed several pomegranate seeds. Zeus is usually a stickler for the rules, unless it restricts him from getting something that he truly wants, but in this instance, he has to consider the fate of the world. He decrees that Persephone must be returned to Demeter for everyone's sake, and that she and Hades must share their time with her. They each get six months of the year with her.

When Hermes guides her out of the underworld and back to her mother, the earth begins to thaw. The earth experiences spring and summer while Persephone and Demeter are together. While she is with Hades, the earth feels Demeter's lament during autumn and winter. There is also a story about these two seasons that concerns Persephone as the queen of the Underworld.

Queen of the Underworld

While Persephone is more reasonable and compassionate than her fierce, but fair husband, she causes conflict when she does a favor for [APHRODITE](#). Apparently the goddess of love has fallen for the beautiful youth [ADONIS](#). When he dies, Aphrodite gives him to Persephone for

safekeeping, but the goddess falls in love with him herself. When she refuses to give him up, Zeus must again intervene with a similar resolution. The two goddesses must share him for six months out of the year, with Persephone claiming him during the autumn and the winter.

Apollo

God of the Sun, the Light, the Music and Prophecy

Apollo is one of the most complex and important gods, and is the god of many things, including: music, poetry, art, oracles, archery, plague, medicine, sun, light and knowledge. He is the son of ZEUS and the Titan Leto, and was born in the Greek island of Delos, along with his older twin sister ARTEMIS – goddess of the hunt.

Apollo is the ideal of the *kouros*, which means he has a beardless, athletic and youthful appearance. He is also an oracular god as a patron of Delphi and could predict prophecy through the Delphic Oracle *Pythia*.

Both medicine and healing are associated with Apollo and were thought to sometimes be mediated through his son, Asclepius. However, Apollo could also bring ill-health and deadly plague.

Apollo also became associated with dominion over colonists, and as the patron defender of herds and flocks. He was the leader of the Muses (also known as Apollon Musegetes) and was director of their choir – functioning as the patron god of music and poetry.

The god HERMES create the lyre for Apollo and this instrument became a known attribute for him. When hymns were sung to Apollo they were called *paeans*

At the drinking parties held on Olympus, Apollo accompanied the Muses on his cithara, while the young goddesses led the dance. Both Leto and Zeus were proud of their son, who was radiant with grace and beauty.

Apollo was one of the few gods that the ROMANS KEPT THE SAME NAME. In Greek mythology, he was most widely known as the god of light. Within Roman mythology, he wasn't known as much as the god of light and was focused mainly as the god of healing and prophecy.

Facts about Apollo

- Apollo was the son of Leto and Zeus. He was born on the island of Delos.
- He and his twin sister Artemis, also an Olympian, shared an aptitude for archery.
- His forename, Phoebus, means “bright” or “pure” and connects him to his grandmother, the Titan Phoebe.

- Apollo, a masterful magician, was known for delighting Olympus with tunes played on his golden lyre. His lyre, a stringed instrument that resembles a small harp, was made by Hermes.
- The nine Muses were companions of his; they were goddesses known for inspiring art and music.
- Apollo taught men the art of medicine, so he is often referred to as “The Healer.”
- Apollo is alternately referred to as the God of Light and the God of Truth.
- Apollo served as an intermediary between the gods and men.
- Because of his truthfulness and integrity, he was granted the gift of prophecy and oracles.
- Apollo defended the oracle at Delphi against Hercules, who was angry at the priestess for having denied him a prophecy.
- Apollo killed a serpent named Python as a result of a contest; it was conquered by a single arrow.
- According to Homer’s Illiad, Apollo played a major part in the Trojan War. He infected the Greek encampment with a plague and aided Paris in killing Achilles.
- Ironically, Apollo was also a purifier, able to cleanse even those stained with the blood of their relatives.
- The dolphin and swan were the animals sacred to him.
- The laurel, used in Greece as a status symbol, was Apollo’s tree.
- Apollo accidentally killed his dearest companion, Hyacinthus, in a discus throwing contest.
- Apollo is credited with killing the Cyclops in retaliation for arming Zeus with the thunderbolt.
- He had many love affairs with both mortals and goddesses. Perhaps the most famous of these women was a mortal named Hecuba, who was married to the King of Troy. The union between Apollo and Hecuba produced a son named Troilus.
- Apollo’s affections were rejected by Cassandra, yet another mortal, so he punished her by arranging it so that her prophecies would never be believed.
- Asclepius is probably Apollo’s most well-known son, although he had many offspring.

Ares

Greek God of War

Ares is the god of war, one of the Twelve [OLYMPIAN GODS](#) and the son of [ZEUS](#) and [HERA](#). In literature Ares represents the violent and physical untamed aspect of war, which is in contrast to [ATHENA](#) who represents military strategy and generalship as the goddess of intelligence.

Although Ares embodied the physical aggression necessary for success in war, the Greeks were ambivalent toward him because he was a dangerous, overwhelming force that was insatiable in battle.

He is well known as the lover of [APHRODITE](#), who was married to [HEPHAESTUS](#), and though Ares plays a limited role in literature, when he does appear in myths it is typically facing humiliation. For example, one famous story of Ares and Aphrodite exposes them to ridicule by the gods when her husband Hephaestus trapped them both naked in a bed using a clever device he made.

The [ROMAN COUNTERPART](#) to Ares was [MARS](#), who was known as a [FATHER TO THE ROMAN PEOPLE](#). Because of this, he was a less aggressive and physical form, revealing a more calm and understanding demeanour.

Facts about Ares

- Ares was most notably referred to as the God of War; he represented the unpleasant aspects of battle.
- He was the son of Zeus and Hera, both of whom hated him (according to Homer).
- Ares was most often characterized as a coward in spite of his connection to war; he responded to even the slightest injury with outrage.
- According to some sources, Ares was described as Aphrodite's lover and was held in contempt by her husband, Hephaestus. The affair between them was not a secret among the Olympians.
- Ares was never very popular—either with men or the other immortals. As a result, his worship in Greece was not substantial or widespread.
- He came from Thrace, home of a fierce people in the northeast of Greece.
- His bird was the vulture.
- The Amazons, warrior women, were his daughters. Their mother was a peace-loving nymph named Harmony.
- Otus and Ephialtes, twin giants, imprisoned Ares for a lunar year by binding him with chains of brass; he was eventually rescued by Hermes.

- Ares always took the side of Aphrodite in the Trojan War. He fought for Hector (a Trojan) until a Greek warrior pierced him with a spear that was guided by Athena. He then departed the battlefield in order to complain to Zeus about Athena's violence.
- Harmonia, Goddess of Harmony, was the daughter of Ares and Aphrodite.
- Eros (more commonly known as Cupid) was also the child of Ares and Aphrodite.
- Tereus, a son of Ares, was known to have inherited his father's abhorrent qualities.
- Ares was the biological father of at least three of Hercules' enemies: Cycnus, Lycaon, and Diomedes.
- Ares had a sister named Eris, who was the Goddess of Discord.
- Hebe, another sister of his, was the Goddess of Youth.
- Ares rarely figures into mythology stories, but when he does, he usually suffers some form of humiliation.
- Ares was associated with two other war deities: Enyalios and Enyo.
- Ares had many offspring, which is characteristic of nearly all of the notable Greek gods. He conceived more mortal children than divine children.
- In art, Ares is generally depicted wearing a spear and a helmet.

Cronus

Cronus is possibly the most famous of the **TITANS** as he was the King and leader of his brothers fighting against Uranus and eventually the **OLYMPIAN GODS**. Born of Uranus and **GAIA**, he was the williest and youngest of their offspring and perhaps the most powerful. Cronus would gain by power by overthrowing his father and eventually lose it by being beaten by his son **ZEUS**.

In Greek mythology, Cronus was the primordial God of time, in which time was described as a destructive, all-devouring force. With the help of his Titan brothers, Cronus was able to depose his father Uranus and rule the cosmos, ruling during the mythological Golden Age. Hesiod in his Theogony recorded this saga; Cronus envied the power of his father, the ruler of the universe. **URANUS** angered Gaia when he hid her children, the Hecatonchires and the **CYCLOPES** in Tartarus, and they were imprisoned unable to see the light. Gaia created a great stone sickle and persuaded Cronus and his Titan brothers to castrate Uranus.

Only Cronus was willing to commit the act, and when it was all over the blood that fell onto the Earth from Uranus created the Gigantes, Erinyes and Meliae. The blood that fell into the sea created white foam from which the goddess **APHRODITE** emerged.

After dispatching Uranus, Cronus once again incarcerated his youngest siblings, the Hecatonchires and the Cyclopes and commanded the dragon Campe to guard them. He and his sister Rhea took the throne as King and Queen and ruled during a Golden Age, as the people of the time had no need for laws and immorality were absent. Cronus had many famous children, one of them was born through his infidelity with Philyra, daughter of Oceanus, when upon being found out by his wife Rhea, Cronus leapt out of bed and galloped off in the form of a stallion. Philyra in shame retreated to the Pelasgian ridges where she gave birth to Chiron, the wise and half divine centaur.

A prophecy, predicted by Uranus, decreed Cronus would be overthrown by his son, to prevent this from occurring Cronus swallowed each of his children; **DEMETER**, **HESTIA**, **HERA**, **HADES** and **POSEIDON**, as they were born. Rhea, his sister and wife, managed to save the youngest, Zeus, by hiding him away on the island of Crete and feeding Cronus a stone swaddled in cloth. Some versions of the story have Zeus raised by a goat named Amalthea or the nymph Adamanthea on Mount Ida. When Zeus was full-grown he forced Cronus

to vomit up his siblings and led the Olympians in a ten-year war against the Titans; Zeus was based on Mount Olympus and the Titans on Mount Othrys. The stone that had been disguised as baby Zeus was set in the earth at Pytho, under the glens of Parnassus, to be a sign and a marvel to mortal men. Eventually, the Olympians were successful and drove their opponents into the pit of Tartarus. After freeing his siblings, Zeus also released the Hecatonchires and the Cyclopes; who forged for him his lightning bolts, Hades' helmet and Poseidon's trident.

Cronus is often depicted with a scythe or a sickle, which was what he used to castrate and overthrow Uranus. He is also associated in Athens with the twelfth day of the Attic month when a festival called Kronia was held in his honour to celebrate the harvest. This celebration is likely due to his association with the virtuous Golden Age of his rule. Thus he continued to preside as a patron of the harvest even though he was ousted from power.

The fate of Cronus differs across texts, in Homeric text, Cronus is imprisoned with the other Titans in Tartarus. In Orphic poems, he is incarcerated in the cave of Nyx, a cave of night or darkness. In later myths, according to Pindar, Zeus was said to have released Cronus and his brothers from their prison and make his father the King of the Elysian Islands, home of the blessed dead in the Underworld. This was the final resting place of the souls of heroes and virtuous men such as Orpheus and Lycus, and the Trojan War heroes like Achilles, Patroclus, Ajax and Menelaus. This list is exhaustive as in ancient Greece it was presumed that any hero who possessed a hero cult would be transferred to Elysian.

Other Interesting Facts About Cronus

- In Roman mythology, Cronus is depicted as their deity named Saturn, his period of rule was honoured every year by the Saturnalia feast
- Saturn was worshipped far more widely, as the God of Agriculture, by the Romans than Cronus had ever been
- During the Renaissance, the depiction of Cronus gave rise to 'Father Time' wielding a harvesting scythe
- There have been no temples dedicated to Cronus found in Greece

Dionysus

Greek God of Wine & the Grape Harvest

Dionysus was the god of the grape harvest, winemaking and wine, of ritual madness, religious ecstasy and theatre. He may have been worshipped as early as 1500-100BC by Mycenaean Greeks according to very old scripts inscribed with his name.

Earlier images and descriptions of Dionysus depict him as a mature male, bearded and robed holding a fennel staff tipped with a pine-cone. However, in later images the god is shown to be a beardless, sensuous, naked or semi-naked androgynous youth. He is described in literature as womanly or “man-womanish”.

He was the son of ZEUS and the mortal Semele, making Dionysus semi-divine or a hero.

Facts about Dionysus

- Dionysus was primarily known as the God of the Vine.
- He was also referred to as Bacchus.
- Dionysus and DEMETER, the Goddess of the Corn, were the supreme deities of the earth.
- Unlike the immortal gods, who were often hostile toward human beings, Dionysus and Demeter were benevolent toward mankind.
- Dionysus was the younger of the two, and little is known about how he came to take his place beside Demeter to be worshipped.
- Dionysus and Demeter were worshipped at Eleusis, a little town near Athens.
- Dionysus was a happy god during the harvest, but during the winter he languished along with the rest of the Earth.
- Dionysus was the last god to enter Olympus.
- Dionysus was the son of Zeus and the Theban princess Semele. He was the only god who had a mortal parent.
- He was born in Thebes.
- He was born of fire and nursed by rain. His birth corresponds to the development of grapes: heat ripens the fruit and water keeps it alive.
- Upon reaching adulthood, Dionysus wandered the Earth, teaching men the culture of the vine.
- Many festivals were held in honor of Dionysus: the Lesser or Rural Dionysia, the Greater or City Dionysia, the Anthesteria, and the Lenaea.
- Dionysus was variously represented in art as a full-grown bearded man, as a beast, and as a slight youth.
- Dionysus was insulted by Lycurgus, one of the kings in Thrace. Dionysus initially retreated and took refuge in the sea, but later he imprisoned Lycurgus for opposing his worship.
- Performances of tragedy and comedy were a part of the festivals thrown in his honor.
- Dionysus was also honored in lyric poetry.
- Dionysus was once captured by pirates because he looked like the son of a king. They kidnapped him, envisioning the ransom his parents would pay upon his return. Aboard the ship, the pirates were unable to confine him; the ropes fell apart when they touched Dionysus.

- Dionysus rescued the princess of Crete, Ariadne, and subsequently fell in love with her. Upon her death, Dionysus placed the crown he had given her among the stars.
- Though Dionysus was mostly a kind and generous deity, he could be cruel when necessary. Pentheus, a king of Thebes, tried to stop the frenzied worship of Dionysus. He attempted to imprison the God of Wine, while hurling insults and accusations at him. Dionysus explained his own eminence calmly, but Pentheus was unreceptive. Dionysus caused the Theban women to go mad so that they thought Pentheus a wild beast. They tore Pentheus limb from limb.

Hades

Greek God of the Dead and King of the Underworld

Hades was the god of the underworld and the name eventually came to also describe the home of the dead as well. He was the oldest male child of CRONUS and Rhea.

Hades and his brothers ZEUS and POSEIDON defeated their father and the TITANS to end their reign, claiming rulership over the cosmos. They agreed to split their rule with Zeus becoming god of the skies, Poseidon god of the sea and Hades god of the underworld.

He was later known to the Greeks as Plouton, which the ROMANS pluralized to Pluto. The god of the underworld was married to PERSEPHONE, the daughter of DEMETER, whom he obtained through deception after abducting her to the underworld and giving her the forbidden fruit pomegranate, forcing her to remain in the underworld with him for one third of each year.

Facts about Hades

- Hades is best known as the ruler of the underworld. It became his dominion after he and his brothers drew lots for their share of the universe.
- According to Iliad, Hades' dominion lies between secret places of the earth. According to the Odyssey, one must cross Ocean to get there.
- Though Hades supervised the dead assigned to his realm, he was not one of its judges. Three demi-gods served that purpose instead.
- Hades was depicted as stern and unyielding, unmoved by prayer and sacrifice.
- Hades had a cap or helmet that made its wearer invisible.
- His wife was Persephone, Demeter's only daughter, whom he kidnapped and made his queen.
- He was also called the God of Wealth or "the rich one" because he possessed the precious metals of the earth.
- Pirithoüs, friend of Theseus, determined to have Persephone (the most carefully guarded lady in all the universe) as his bride. To this end, the two friends journeyed to the underworld, but Hades thwarted their plan. He invited them to sit on the Chair of Forgetfulness, which cause its occupant to forget everything. HERCULES rescued THESEUS, but the King of the Dead held Pirithoüs there for trying to steal his queen.
- CERBERUS was a three-headed dog who guarded his realm; the ferryman Charon was another one of the underworld's attendees.
- Though Hades is the King of the Dead, he should not be confused with Death itself, which is personified by Thanatos.
- CRONUS and Rhea were his parents.
- Poseidon and Zeus were his brothers.

- Hades rarely left the underworld. His presence was not welcomed by men or by gods.
- Hades took pride in collecting “subjects” for his kingdom and was disinclined to let anyone leave.
- His dominion was separated from the land of the living by the following rivers: Styx, Lethe, Acheron, Phlegethon, and Cocytus.
- Hades employed the Furies, who were responsible for torturing the guilty.
- Hades is described by some sources as the god of the earth’s fertility.
- The narcissus and the cypress are sacred to him.
- In his kingdom, Hades sat on a throne made of ebony and carried a scepter.
- Hades was known for his involvement with Sisyphus, the man condemned to the underworld to forever roll a boulder uphill. According to legend, Hades allowed SISYPHUS to return to earth long enough to arrange his own funeral.

Hephaestus

Greek God of Fire and Metalworking

Hephaestus was the god of fire, metalworking, stone masonry, forges and the art of sculpture. He was the son of [ZEUS](#) and [HERA](#) and married to [APHRODITE](#) by Zeus to prevent a war of the gods fighting for her hand. He was a smithing god, making all of the weapons for Olympus and acting as a blacksmith for the gods.

He had his own palace on Olympus where he made many clever inventions and automatons of metal to work for him. Hephaestus's ugly appearance was the reason Zeus chose him to marry Aphrodite, but despite this she had many affairs with both gods and men.

In one story, Hephaestus builds a tricky invention which catches Aphrodite laying with the [ARES](#), the god of war, trapping them both in the bed to be laughed at and ridiculed by the other gods.

He is similar to [ATHENA](#) in his giving skill and help to mortals – in his case artists. It was believed that Hephaestus taught men the arts alongside Athena. However, he was also considered far inferior to that of the goddess of wisdom.

Facts about Hephaestus

- Hephaestus was known as the God of Fire.
- In some accounts, he was said to be the son of Zeus and Hera; in others, he was the son of Hera alone, conceived in order to get back at Zeus for bringing forth Athena.
- Hephaestus was the only ugly god among perfectly beautiful immortals.
- Hephaestus was born deformed and was cast out of heaven by one or both of his parents when they noticed that he was imperfect.
- He was the workman of the immortals: he made their dwellings, furnishings, and weapons.
- In his workshop, Hephaestus had assistants who were made out of gold and who helped him with his work.

- His forge or workshop was located under a volcano, and the work he did within it caused frequent eruptions.
- In most accounts, Aphrodite is named as his wife, although she was unfaithful to him (with Ares, for one). Theirs was an arranged marriage.
- Hephaestus was a patron of the arts.
- He was a kind and peace-loving god.
- In art, Hephaestus is usually depicted as bending over an anvil or walking with the assistance of a cane.
- He was worshipped primarily in Athens, where he had a temple.
- Hephaestus manufactured the aegis (or shield) that Athena is known for carrying.
- The arrows of Eros (known also as Cupid) were fashioned by Hephaestus as well.
- Hephaestus was the god of the ceremony when children were officially admitted to the city organization.
- According to a story told both by Homer and Hesiod, Hephaestus married Aglaia, one of the three Graces.
- Hephaestus was known for making a gold basket that Europa, daughter of the King of Sidon, used to gather flowers when she happened upon Zeus in the meadow.
- Hephaestus crafted the armor that Achilles wore in the Trojan War. The same arms, despite their connection to divinity, brought about the death of Ajax.
- Aphrodite gave Harmonia an extraordinary necklace made by Hephaestus. The piece of jewelry brought disaster to later generations.
- Erichthonius was the son of Hephaestus: he was half man, half serpent.

Heracles

Heracles is one of the most recognised and famous of the divine **HEROES** in Greek mythology. The son of **ZEUS** and the mortal woman Alcmene, he was considered the greatest of the heroes, a symbol of masculinity, sire of a long line of royal clans and the champion of the Olympian order against terrible monsters.

Heracles was known for his extraordinary strength, courage and cleverness. When his brawn would not suffice, he would call upon his wits to outsmart the King Augeas of Elis or tricking **ATLAS** into taking the weight of the heavens once again. With **HERMES**, Heracles was the patron and protector of gymnasia, and he was a playful individual playing games and entertaining children. He was often portrayed with a lion skin and a club. The most famous stories of his life were The Twelve Labours of Heracles.

Heracles was born to the mortal woman Alcmene and Zeus, who disguised himself as her husband Amphitryon home early from the war. Heracles' existence was proof of Zeus' illicit affairs and **HERA**, his wife, enraged by this conspired against him as revenge for her husband's infidelities.

Heracles was born with a mortal twin, Iphicles, whose father was the real Amphitryon. Fearful of Hera's revenge, Alcmene exposed Heracles but he was taken to Hera by **ATHENA** (the protector of heroes), and Hera not recognising him nursed him out of pity.

With this divine milk, Heracles acquired supernatural powers and Athena returned him back to his parents who raised him and named him Alcides, and it was only later that he would become known as Heracles as an attempt to pacify Hera. This attempt did not work, and when Heracles and Iphicles were eight months old, Hera sent two giant snakes to their chambers. Heracles, even at a young age, was, able to grab and strangle the snakes.

In Thebes, Heracles married King Creon's daughter Megara. Hera, still spiteful, induced a fit of madness in Heracles and he killed his children. After his madness had been cured by hellebore, he fled, ashamed, to the Oracle, of Delphi. Unfortunately for Heracles, Hera guided the Oracle, and he was directed to serve his sworn enemy, King Eurystheus for ten years and perform any task asked of him in repayment for his crime of killing his children.

The Twelve Labours of Heracles

Heracles was given Twelve Labours which would purify him of his sins and grant him immortality. The Twelve Labours were:

1. Slay the Nemean Lion
2. Kill the nine-headed Lernaean Hydra

3. Capture the Golden Hide of Artemis
4. Capture the Erymanthian Boar
5. Clean the Augean stables in a single day
6. Slay the Stymphalian Birds
7. Capture the Cretan Bull
8. Steal the Mares of Diomedes
9. Obtain the girdle of Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons
10. Obtain the cattle of the monster Geryon
11. Take the apples of the Hesperides
12. Capture and bring back CERBERUS, the Guardian of the Underworld

After completing these tasks, with help and encounters from numerous prominent figures in Greek mythology, Heracles joined the Argonauts in a search for the Golden Fleece. Heracles would fall in love with Princess Iole of Oechalia, her father King Eurystheus promised her hand in marriage to anyone who could beat his sons in an archery contest. Heracles won, but the King abandoned his commitment, and Heracles' advances were spurned by the King and his sons, except for the son Iphitus. Heracles killed the king and his sons, abducted Iole and Iphitus became Heracles' best friend. However, once again, Hera would drive Heracles mad, and he threw his best friend over the city wall to his death. To purify himself of this sin Heracles served Queen Omphale of Lydia for three years dressed in women's clothes and doing women's work. Eventually, he was freed and married his captor, some sources mention a son born to the two of them.

Heracles would go on to be apart of many more adventures and tribulations; his life ended when he was married to Deianira, who tricked by a former foe of Heracles, accidentally poisoned her husband via a shirt dipped in venom. Since Heracles was a demi-god, he suffered a painful and slow demise. He would go on to climb Mount Etna where he built his funeral pyre and lay down with his head resting on his club and Nemean lion's skin covering him. Eventually, Zeus enveloped him in a cloud and took him to dwell in the stars amongst the CONSTELLATIONS.

Other Interesting Facts:

- In Rome and the modern West, he is known as Hercules with whom Roman emperors including Commodus and Maximian would identify themselves with
- The Romans adopted the Greek stories describing Heracles' life to their mythology and details of his cult were adapted in Rome as well, of course, some anecdotal details have been changed and modified to better support the Roman life and legacy
- In Hesiod's Theogony, he recorded that Heracles shot and killed the eagle that tortured Prometheus (the hero who stole fire from the Gods and gave it to mortals), freeing the hero and Prometheus, in turn, made predictions regarding the future great deeds of Heracles
- Heracles was the only hero in Greek mythology who had cults established all over Greece dedicated to him, his super feats in overcoming monsters made him a protector of many city states

Heracles

Greek God of Trade, Eloquence and Messenger of the Gods

Hermes was one of the 12 Olympian Gods and was god of trade, thieves, travelers, sports, athletes, and border crossings, guide to the Underworld. He was the second youngest Olympian god and was the son of [ZEUS](#) and Maia, one of the seven Pleiades and daughter of the Titan Atlas.

As the god of boundaries and transitions, Hermes was known to be quick and cunning and had the ability to freely move between the mortal and divine worlds. It is this skill that made him a luck-bringing messenger to the gods and intercessor between mortals and the divine.

He is also the patron and protector of travelers, herdsman, thieves, orators and wit, literature and poets, athletics and sports, invention and trade. In some myths Hermes is also depicted as a trickster where he would outwit the gods either for the good of humankind or for his own personal amusement and satisfaction.

Both Homer and Hesiod portrayed Hermes as the author of skilled or deceptive acts, and also as a benefactor of mortals.

Facts about Hermes

- Hermes was the son of Zeus and Maia, one of the Pleiades.
- He primarily served as the herald or messenger of the gods.
- Hermes was the god of shepherds, land travel, and literature. More specifically, he was known as a patron of poetry.
- His interests were varied and widespread.
- In his role as herald, it also fell to him to conduct souls to [HADES](#).
- As was the case with other gods, Hermes was known for abundant love affairs with mortals, goddesses, and nymphs.
- According to some sources, Hermes was associated with fertility and good fortune.
- Hermes is most often presented as a graceful youth, wearing a winged hat and winged sandals. This is how he appeared to Perseus when he and Athena arrived to help the hero kill Medusa.
- Hermes was considered a “trickster” due to his cunning and clever personality.
- Hermoea was the name given to the riotous festivals thrown in his honor.
- Hermes was born in a cave on a mountain in Arcadia; he was conceived and born within the course of one day.
- His son [PAN WAS HALF MAN, HALF GOAT](#). Pan’s mother was named Dryope, and she was terrified of her son’s strange appearance.
- Abderus, another of Hermes’ sons, was a friend to [HERCULES](#). He met his fate when he was devoured by the Mares of Diomedes.
- Hermaphroditus (also known as Aphroditus) was an androgynous deity and the offspring of Hermes and Aphrodite.

- The tortoise is a symbol of Hermes.
- Hermes freed Io, one of Zeus' lovers, from the giant Argus.
- Hermes talked the nymph CALYPSO into releasing ODYSSEUS.
- Hermes played a part in the infamous love story of Orpheus and Eurydice. After Eurydice is granted one day on earth with her husband, it is Hermes who escorts her back to the underworld.
- He was a patron of thieves. On the day of his birth, Hermes stole cattle from APOLLO.
- He was the only one other than Hades and Persephone who was allowed to leave the underworld without consequence.
- He was the god of boundaries, both literal and figurative.

Poseidon

Greek God of the Sea

Poseidon was god of the sea, earthquakes, storms, and horses and is considered one of the most bad-tempered, moody and greedy Olympian gods. He was known to be vengeful when insulted.

He is the son of Cronus and Rhea and was swallowed by his father along with [HADES](#), [DEMETER](#), [HESTIA](#) and [HERA](#). However, in some folklore stories it is believed that Poseidon, like [ZEUS](#), was not swallowed by Cronus because his mother Rhea who concealed him among a flock of lambs and pretended to have given birth to a colt, which was devoured by [CRONUS](#) instead.

After the gods defeated the Titans, the world was divided into three and Zeus, Hades and Poseidon drew straws to decide which they would rule. Zeus drew the skies, Hades the underworld, and Poseidon the seas. There is only one reference to this divide, by Homer in the *Iliad*.

Facts about Poseidon

- Poseidon was most notably the God of the sea and the protector of all waters; sailors relied upon him for safe passage.
- Poseidon was allotted his dominion after the fall of the Titans.
- Zeus and Hades were his brothers.
- It stands to reason that, because of his influence on the waters, he was worshipped in connection with navigation.
- Poseidon was worshipped as a fertility god.
- His name is Greek for “husband.”
- He wielded the trident or three-pronged spear, and this image of him is reflected in art.
- Poseidon could strike the ground with his trident to produce an earthquake. This earned him the nickname “Earth-shaker.”
- Poseidon possessed a palace, made of gems and coral, located on the ocean floor. He was at Mount Olympus more often than his palace.
- Poseidon was moody by nature: his temperament was unstable at best, and his emotional fluctuations often resulted in violence.
- He was similar to Zeus in that he liked to exert power over women and flaunt his rugged masculinity. At times, however, his efforts were appreciated. Poseidon saved Amymone from a satyr.
- His primary means of transportation was a chariot pulled by horses.
- Poseidon assisted the Greeks in the Trojan war. However, Zeus commanded him to withdraw from the battlefield, and he reluctantly obeyed.
- His grudge against Odysseus is one theme in the *Odyssey*.

- Poseidon was the husband of Amphitrite, a Nereid. Their union produced TRITON, who was half-human, half-fish.
- He and Medusa conceived the FLYING HORSE, PEGASUS – one of many MYTHOLOGICAL CREATURES.
- He was also the biological father of Orion, Polyphemus, Pelias, and many others.
- One of his most notable dalliances involved his sister Demeter. She refused his advances by turning herself into a mare. He then transformed into a stallion and pursued her. Their relations produced a horse, Arion.
- He and Athena competed for possession of the city of Athens. To sway the people in his favor, Poseidon made it spring at the Acropolis. Athena, on the other hand, gave them the olive tree. With it, she won the contest.
- Despite Poseidon's connection to chariots and ships, Athena was the first to make one of each.

Zeus

Greek God of the Sky and King of the Gods

Zeus was the first of the GODS and a very imposing figure. Often referred to as the “Father of Gods and men”, he is a sky god who controls lightning (often using it as a weapon) and thunder. Zeus is king of **Mount Olympus**, the home of Greek gods, where he rules the world and imposes his will onto gods and mortals alike.

Zeus was the last child of the titans Cronus and Rhea, and avoided being swallowed by his father (who had been told one of his children would overthrow him) when Rhea sought help from URANUS and Gaia. Cronus had previously swallowed DEMETER, HESTIA, HERA, HADES and POSEIDON.

Along with Hades and Poseidon, Zeus shared the rule of the world and became king of Olympus as the children of Cronus were filled with admiration for their noble brother and sided with him against their unjust father – even following Zeus into *The Battle of the Titans*.

Zeus mated with many goddesses and mortals (including Aegina, Alcmena, Calliope, Cassiopea, Demeter, Dione, Europa, Io, Leda, Leto, Mnemosyne, Niobe, PERSEPHONE and Semele) but was married to his sister Hera – goddess of marriage and monogamy.

Roles and responsibilities of Zeus

As the king of the gods and sitting atop the golden throne on Olympus, Zeus was revered by all. Mortal kings would boast that they were descendants of Zeus. With this supreme power came a number of roles and responsibilities. Hesiod described Zeus as a god who “*brought peace in place of violence*” and referred to him as the “*lord of justice*”.

Though he is most well known as god of the sky and thunder, Zeus was the supreme cultural embodiment of Greek religious beliefs. He had many epithets (titles) that emphasized different aspects of complete and wide ranging authority.

Appearance and personality of Zeus

According to “*Work and Days*” by Hesiod (line 59), Zeus was a carefree god who loved to laugh out loud. He was regarded as wise, fair, just, merciful, and prudent. He was also unpredictable – nobody was able to guess the decisions he would make.

He was also easily angered which could be very destructive. He has previously hurled lightning bolts and caused violent storms that wreaked havoc on earth.

Zeus fell in love easily and had many affairs with various women, however he would severely punish anybody who attempted to elope/fall in love with his wife Hera – like the giant

Porphyrius who took a lightning bolt from the enraged god for lusting after his wife (albeit with a little help from the love god Eros).

He is often described as a strong, imposing man with a regal body and long, often curly, hair. He usually had a short beard or scruff and carried his trusty thunderbolt at all times.

Facts about Zeus

- Zeus became the ruler of heaven and earth after a revolt against his father, Kronos. In his position as king of the gods, Zeus had to play mediator when other the immortals were mad at each other.
- He is the father of Athena, who is said to have sprung from his head. She was his favorite child, with whom he shared the thunderbolt and aegis.
- Hades and Poseidon were his brothers.
- His wife Hera was also his sister.
- Zeus was not a faithful husband; he was known for having many affairs with mortal women.
- Zeus fathered Hercules, the famous Greek hero, by deception. He disguised himself as Amphitryon, Alcmene's husband, in order to have sexual relations with her.
- Zeus fathered Perseus by impregnating Danaë. When he did so, he appeared to her in the form of a golden shower.
- The name Zeus means "bright" or "sky."
- His weapon of choice was the thunderbolt, made for him by the MYTHICAL CREATURES, the Cyclops.
- Zeus, more recently known for causing thunder and lightning, was once a rain-god. He was always associated with the weather in some form.
- The Zeus described in Homer was not an extension of nature; instead, he had a standard of right and wrong that made him more relatable to mankind.
- Before monarchies were rendered obsolete, Zeus protected the king and his family.
- Hesiod calls Zeus the "the lord of justice." Perhaps because of this, he was reluctant to join a side in the Trojan War. He preferred the Trojans, but he wanted to stay neutral because Hera preferred the Greeks. She was insufferable when he opposed her openly.
- Metis, the goddess of prudence, was Zeus's first love.
- Ares, Hephaestus, Hebe and Eileithyia are the children of Zeus and Hera.
- His union with Leto brought forth the twins Apollo and Artemis.
- When he seduced the Spartan queen Leda, Zeus transformed himself into a beautiful swan, and two sets of twins were born.
- When Zeus had an affair with Mnemosyne, he coupled with her for nine nights. This scenario produced nine daughters, who became known as the Muses.
- Zeus punished men by giving them women.
- Zeus's servants were named Force and Violence.