

Ancient Greek and Roman Gods

A Reading A-Z Level W Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,313

Connections

Writing

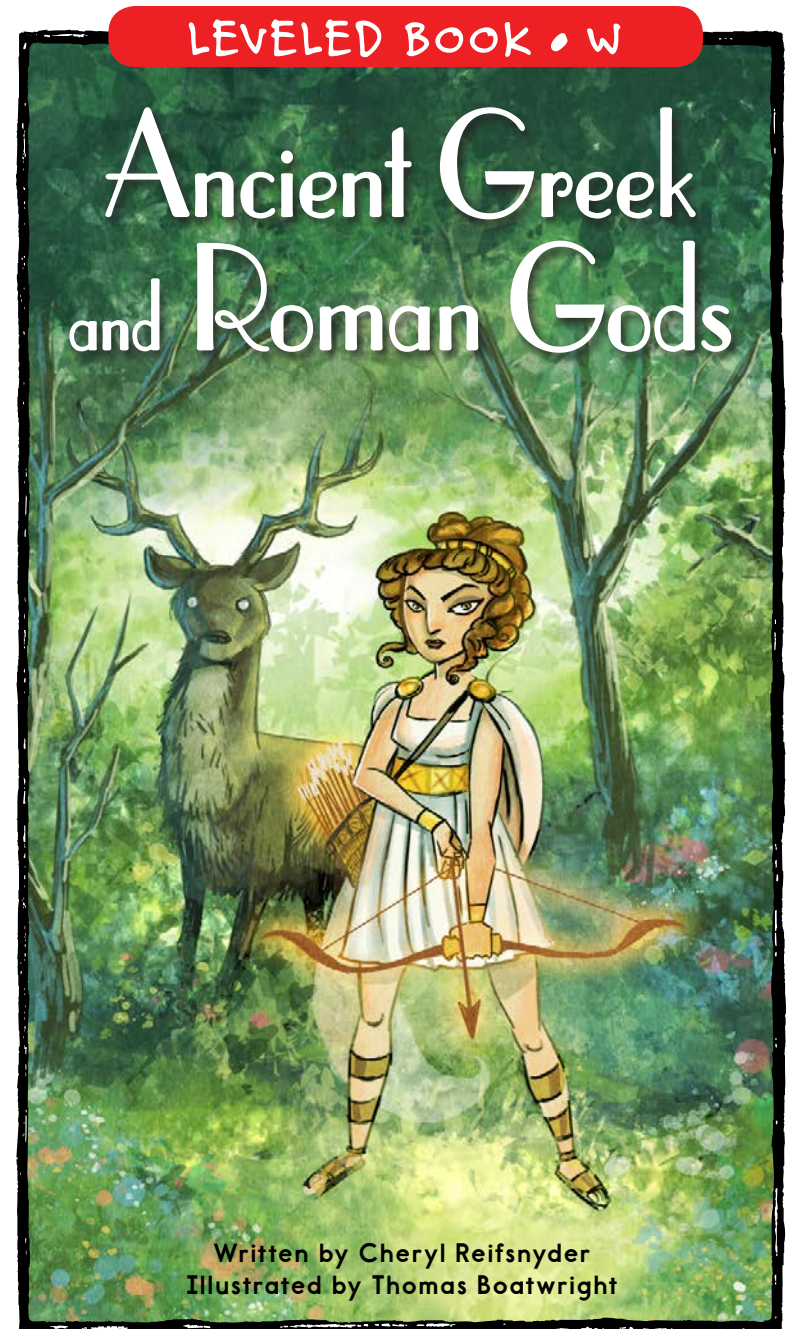
Create a new Greek god. Give the god a name and symbol and describe what special powers the god possesses. Include a picture of the new Greek god to accompany your description.

Social Studies

Create a diagram to show how the gods are related to one another. Include their names, domains, and symbols.

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Ancient Greek and Roman Gods



Written by Cheryl Reifsnyder
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Focus Question

What did the ancient Greeks believe about their gods?

Words to Know

chariot	realm
disguised	scepter
immortal	temples
mischievous	Titans
mythology	trident
nymphs	underworld

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Correlation

LEVEL W

Fountas & Pinnell	S
Reading Recovery	40
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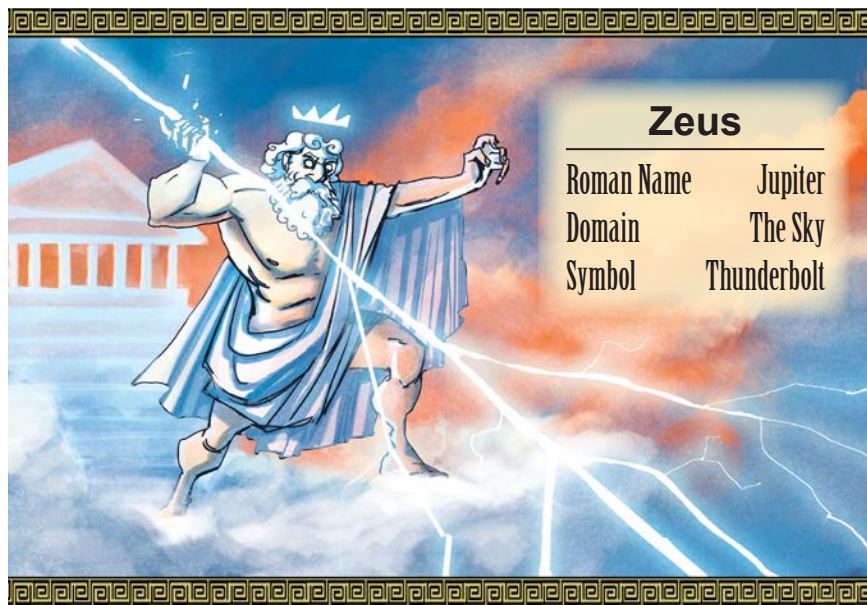


Introduction

The ancient Greeks told stories about great adventures, wars, and romance. They built **temples** to their gods and crafted great works of art.

The ancient Greeks believed that their gods were much like humans, except larger, stronger, more beautiful, and most important—**immortal**! They were called Olympians because they lived on Mount Olympus. A gate of clouds circled its peak, allowing only the gods to pass.

Like mere mortals, the Olympians enjoyed games, music, art, and fancy jewelry; they fell in love, married, and had children. They even argued and fought with one another. Sometimes the gods **disguised** themselves as people or other animals when visiting Earth because in their true forms they glowed with such a bright golden light that humans couldn't stand the sight. The gods helped heroes, honored people who honored them, and punished those who didn't.



Zeus, God of Sky and Weather

Zeus (ZOOS) was king of the Olympians, god of sky and weather, and the wisest and mightiest of the gods. All the other gods had to obey him.

Zeus had not always ruled the heavens. He led his brothers, Poseidon (poh-SY-dun) and Hades (HAY-deez), to overthrow their father, Kronos, and the other **Titans**. After the Titans' defeat, Zeus and his brothers divided up the world's rule. Zeus won the contest to become god of the sky. Thunder and lightning became his weapons.

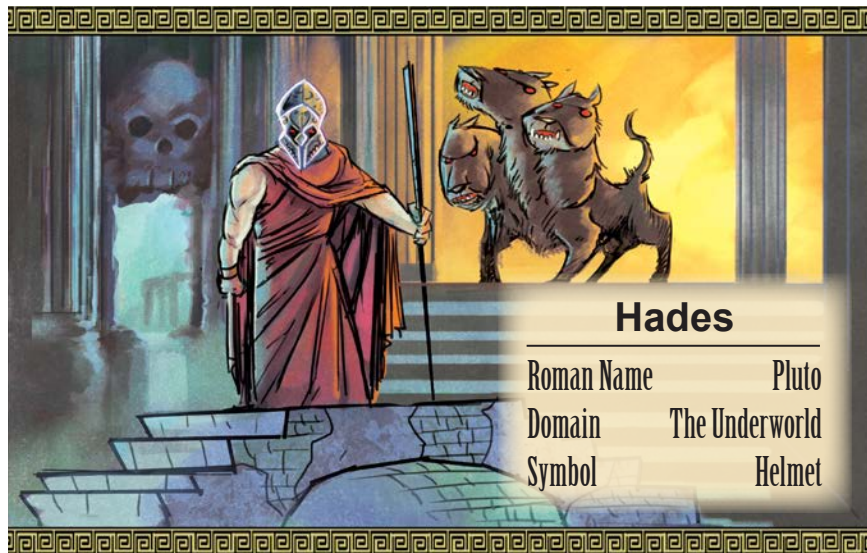
The Greeks believed that Zeus protected the kings and rulers of Earth. He watched over everyone to uphold law and protect those who were wronged.



Poseidon, God of the Oceans

Poseidon was the ruler of Earth's oceans. His kingdom suited him because his mood changed as quickly as the sea. When he was angry, Poseidon summoned storms and earthquakes with his magic **trident**; with the same trident, he could calm the waves.

Poseidon roamed his kingdom in a golden **chariot** pulled by horses in the shape of waves. One story says Poseidon created the first horse while trying to impress the goddess of the harvest, Demeter. She asked him to make her a new animal, one more beautiful than any other. When he made a horse, she was delighted. Poseidon was delighted, too—so much so that he forgot Demeter in his hurry to make more horses!

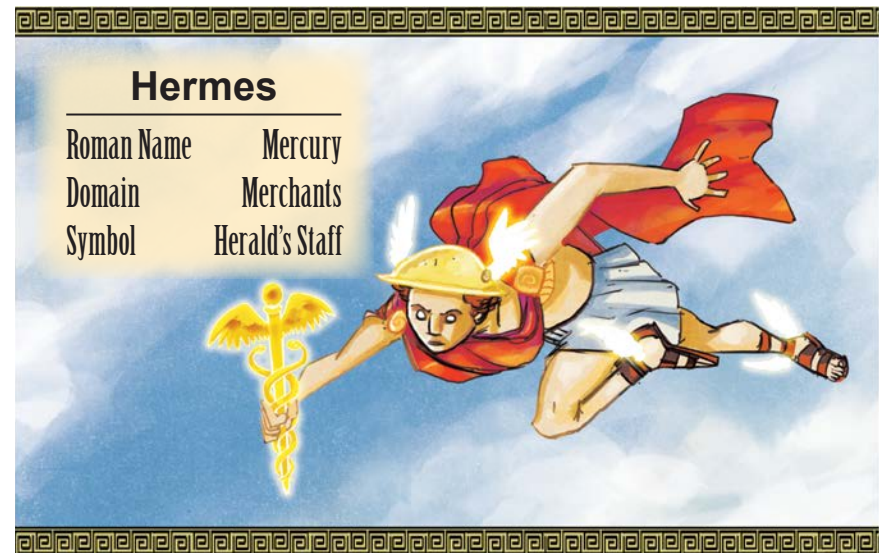


Hades, God of the Underworld

Hades won the **realm** known as the **underworld**. There he ruled as the god of death. He made sure the dead were properly buried. The earth's hidden wealth belonged to him as well: gold, silver, and other treasures buried underground.

Most Greek gods lived in palaces, but Hades seldom left the dark underworld. He asked Zeus to let him marry the lovely Persephone. When Zeus agreed, Hades carried her to his palace.

Persephone's mother threatened Zeus until he ordered Hades to return the girl to daylight. Hades obeyed—but only after offering Persephone food from his underworld kingdom. She ate several pomegranate seeds, which required her to return to Hades' realm for a few months each year.

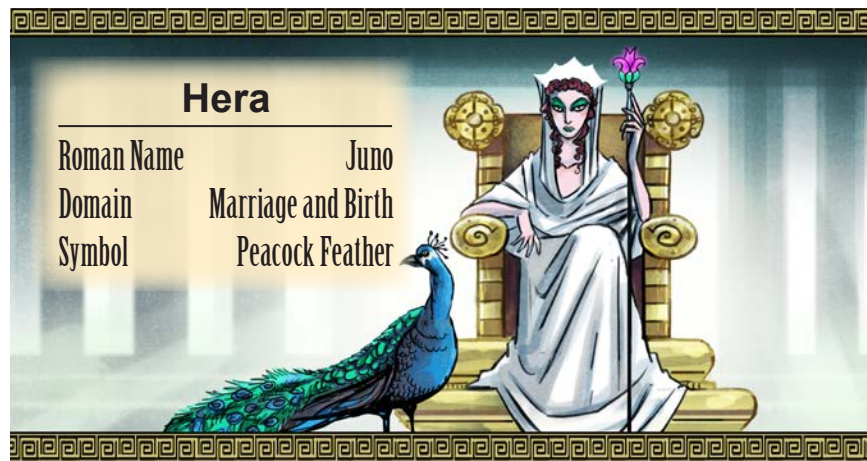


Hermes, God of Merchants

Hermes (HUR-meez), god of merchants, was a son of Zeus and the only god besides Hades allowed into the underworld. When someone died, Hermes guided that person to Hades' realm.

Any similarity to Hades ended there. Hades seldom spoke or smiled, but Hermes loved to talk and play tricks on people. While still a baby, he tiptoed from his mother's side to steal his brother's cows. He covered the cows' feet with bark to hide their tracks and tied brooms to their tails to sweep the ground behind them.

Hermes' quick wit and clever tongue so pleased his father that he made Hermes his messenger. Zeus gave Hermes winged sandals and a winged golden cap to speed him on his way.



Hera, Queen of the Gods

Hera (HAIR-uh), the goddess of marriage and childbirth, was Zeus' wife and queen of the gods. She was one of the few allowed to argue with Zeus! Hera wore a royal crown, carried a **scepter** tipped with a lotus blossom, and drove a chariot pulled by peacocks.

Greek women asked her blessing at weddings. Hera was also the goddess of childbirth, thought to protect a mother when giving birth.

How the Romans Got Their Gods:

The Romans in the seventh century BC admired the Greeks so much that they modeled their society on that of Greece. They even had the same gods but expanded their personalities. Some became more warlike, while others became less powerful. The Roman versions of the names of these gods are the ones given to the planets in our Solar System.



Artemis, Goddess of Hunting

Artemis (AR-teh-mis) was the goddess of hunting, the wilderness, and wild animals. While still a child, she begged her father, Zeus, to let her stay unmarried forever. She would spend her days hunting in the mountains and forests, with **nymphs** to tend her hounds.

Artemis was also a goddess of childbirth because she helped her mother give birth to her twin brother. Artemis' role as a childbirth goddess differed from Hera's: Hera protected the mother, and Artemis guarded the newborn baby.

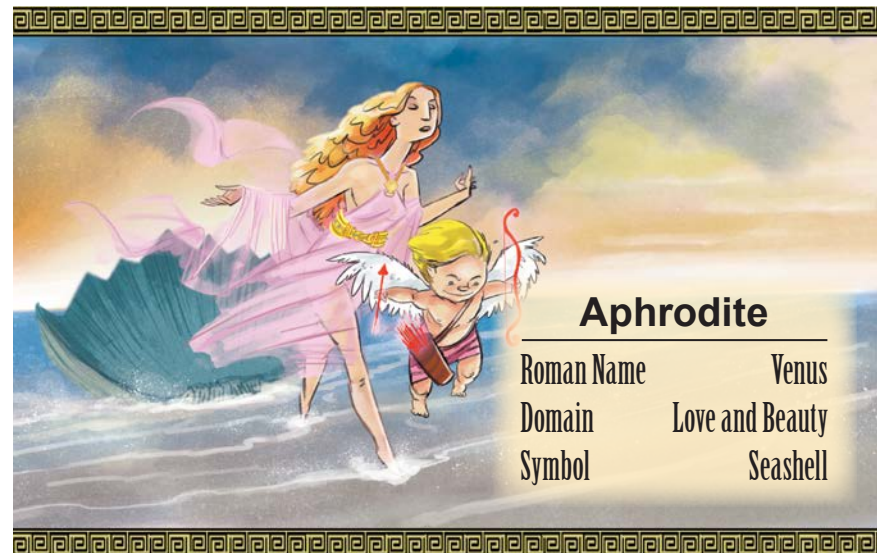


Hephaestus, God of Fire and Blacksmiths

Hephaestus (heh-FES-tus) was the god of fire, volcanoes, and blacksmiths. He was born with crippled legs, and when his mother, Hera, saw him, she was so upset that she threw him from Olympus.

Hephaestus fell to the ocean far below, where sea goddesses found him and gave him shelter. He lived with them for nine years, working as a blacksmith until he became the Olympians' most skilled craftsman. Both gods and heroes delighted in his finely crafted weapons, armor, and jewelry.

One day, Hephaestus made a marvelous throne of gold and sent it to Olympus. When Hera sat on the throne, hidden springs wedged her in place! Hephaestus had made a trap to punish her for throwing him away.



Aphrodite, Goddess of Love and Beauty

Golden-haired Aphrodite (af-roh-DY-tee) was the goddess of love and beauty. She had the power to give beauty and charm to those who pleased her and make anyone fall in love. The **mischievous** child-god Eros—called Cupid by the Romans—was her son.

When Hera was caught by Hephaestus' trap, Zeus offered Aphrodite's hand in marriage to whoever freed his wife. Unable to resist Aphrodite's loveliness, Hephaestus came to Mount Olympus to free his mother and marry Aphrodite.

When they married, Hephaestus made Aphrodite a metal belt woven with precious gems and magic. Its power made Aphrodite completely irresistible to both gods and men.



Ares, God of War

Ares (AIR-eez), the god of war, was a son of Zeus and Hera. He was a fierce, strong warrior who wielded a gigantic spear. Ares loved the destruction and smells of war. Sometimes other gods and goddesses chose one side to support in battle, but not Ares. He didn't care who was right or wrong; sometimes he even switched sides mid-battle! Ares loved fighting for its own sake.

Ares did not get along well with many of the other Olympians, most of whom hated his attitude and violence. He was often found with his sister Eris, the goddess of discord, who had the power to stir up war. He was also in love with Aphrodite, who loved the handsome god of war more than she loved her husband, Hephaestus.



Athena, Goddess of Wisdom

Of all Zeus' children, the goddess of wisdom had the strangest birth. Athena sprang from Zeus' head, fully grown and dressed in golden armor! Athena became Zeus' favorite child, the only one allowed to use all his weapons—even his thunderbolts and lightning.

The Greeks believed that Athena was responsible for many types of wisdom. They gave her credit for inventing almost every type of art and craft done by women, such as spinning, weaving, pottery, and cooking. For farmers, she invented the plow and the horse's bridle. She was also considered a goddess of war and was thought to give leaders good advice.

It's All Greek to Me!

Greek Name	Name in Greek	Roman Name	Name in Latin
Zeus	Ζεύς	Jupiter/Jove	Iuppiter/Iovis
Hera	Ἥρα	Juno	Iuno
Poseidon	Ποσειδών	Neptune	Neptunus
Athena	Ἀθηνῆ	Minerva	Minerva
Hades	Αἰδης	Pluto	Pluton
Ares	Ἄρης	Mars	Mars
Hephaestus	Ἥφαιστος	Vulcan	Vulcanus
Aphrodite	Ἀφροδίτη	Venus	Venus
Hermes	Ἑρμης	Mercury	Mercurius
Artemis	Ἄρτεμις	Diana	Diana

Conclusion

The Greek gods held a central role in ancient Greek society, inspiring countless sculptures, temples, and other works of art—but their influence didn't end in ancient Greece. Not far away in Italy, the Romans modeled much of their society on the Greeks'.

Even modern people look to ancient Greece for ideas from their temples and statues. The first Olympic Games, in 776 BC, were running contests held to honor the gods. They gave rise to today's Olympic Games. In fact, ancient Greece is sometimes called the birthplace of Western society. The ideas illustrated in Greek **mythology** helped shape the way people think and interact today.

Glossary

chariot (<i>n.</i>)	a horse-drawn carriage with two wheels that was used in ancient times, usually for racing and fighting battles (p. 6)
disguised (<i>v.</i>)	changed to appear to be something different so as not to be recognized (p. 4)
immortal (<i>adj.</i>)	not subject to death; living forever (p. 4)
mischievous (<i>adj.</i>)	liking to cause trouble in a playful way (p. 12)
mythology (<i>n.</i>)	the myths, or ancient stories about heroes or supernatural beings, of a culture or group (p. 15)
nymphs (<i>n.</i>)	in stories, spirits in the shape of young women who live in mountains, forests, meadows, or water (p. 10)
realm (<i>n.</i>)	an area over which a person, such as a monarch, rules or has power (p. 7)
scepter (<i>n.</i>)	a decorated rod held by a ruler as a symbol of power (p. 9)
temples (<i>n.</i>)	buildings that are places of worship (p. 4)
Titans (<i>n.</i>)	in Greek myths, large and powerful beings who ruled before the gods (p. 5)
trident (<i>n.</i>)	a weapon that looks like a spear with three points (p. 6)
underworld (<i>n.</i>)	the place where some of the dead go in Greek myths, ruled by the god Hades (p. 7)