

Follow-up Activities

- As your students continue to explore mythology, they will soon discover the connection and interdependence between myths. Have students set up a chart listing the gods, goddesses, heroes, mortals, and each one's special skills, domain, and deeds. Include the mother and father of each god and their Roman and Greek names. These entries will keep the characters straight and serve as a reporting device and research tool.
- Zeus, Hades and Poseidon are brothers born from the mighty Titans. Discuss with your students how each god is similar. How is each god different? Assign students to research their relationship and personal characteristics. Create a Venn diagram demonstrating the similarities and differences among the three brothers.
- Many famous sayings and quotes come from Greek mythology. Discuss with students the meaning of these proverbial expressions. Have them use www.livethemyth.com/quotes.html to locate some of these expressions. Students can practice using this figurative language in daily writing.
- Symbols from Greek mythology are found in modern times. They are used today on flags, seals of countries, and on business and brand logos. Have students look through a variety of sources to identify mythological symbols. Students can create a chart with the symbol, the god associated with the symbol, and the source. Encourage students to create their own advertisements using Greek symbols.
- The ancient Greeks are famous for building temples and altars to honor their favorite gods. Have students research the temples which remain standing in the Mediterranean region, like the Acropolis in Athens and Agrigento in Sicily. Using these as reference, each student can design a temple to honor a particular god or goddess.
- Students can use myths as a basis for writing opinion essays: Should the gods be allowed to interfere with mortals? Should Mt. Olympus remain off-limits to mortals? It is up to your students to resolve a controversial issue by developing persuasive argumentative essays.
- The role of death and the afterlife was honored by the ancient Greeks. Students can begin discussing and researching Hades' kingdom, the lands and waters of the underworld, Tartarus, and the rites of Greek death and burial.
- The tallest mountain in Greece was believed to be the home of the gods and goddesses at Mt. Olympus. Have students read about its construction, palace life and the major gods through "The Myth Man's Homework Help Center" at www.mythman.com.
- Discuss the stereotypes found at Mt. Olympus. Have students cast contemporary personalities for each Olympian. Which characters are the hardest and easiest to cast? Why?

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our Web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

- www.pantheon.org**
Encyclopedia Mythica supplies definitions, images, and pronunciation guides for gods and heroes.
- library.thinkquest.org/26264/**
ThinkQuest presents "Elysium," a site about Greek mythology that has sections and resources for newcomers, students and educators.
- www.mythweb.com/gods/index.html**
A portrait of the gods upon Mt. Olympus leads students into exploring mythology.

Suggested Print Resources

- Bulfinch, Thomas. *Bulfinch's Mythology*. Random House, New York, NY; 1998.
- D'Aulaire, Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire. *Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire's Book of Greek Myths*. Doubleday, Garden City, NY; 1962.
- Hantman, Clea. *Heaven Sent: Goddesses #1*. Avon Books, New York, NY; 2002. Three of Zeus' daughters handle life at a contemporary American high school.
- Houle, Michelle M. *Gods and Goddesses in Greek Mythology*. Enslow Publishers, Berkeley Heights, NJ; 2001.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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THE GODS OF OLYMPUS

Grades 4–8

Thousands of years ago, the ancient Greeks created a galaxy of myths to explain the mysteries and complexities of the world around them — the seasons, stars and planets, human society, war and peace, feast and famine, good luck and bad — even the creation of the world itself. They believed gods and goddesses, each with special powers, controlled and protected all humans. Many colorful stories about heroes, gods and monsters were memorized and sung by traveling poets long before they were ever written down. As they were passed down from generation to generation, aspects of the stories sometimes changed. These myths provide insight into the history, legends and religion of an ancient civilization, but also highlight fundamental similarities between modern people and those who lived long ago.

This guide provides a summary of classical retellings of Greek and Roman mythology, vocabulary, discussion questions, activities, and print and Internet resources for students and teachers to explore.

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Program Summary

The Gods of Olympus tells the story of the creation of the world as it begins with chaos, a state of nothingness, in which the earth, sky, water, and air gradually pull apart and become distinct regions. Mother Earth, known as Gaia, marries the sky god, Uranus. They have many unusual children. Uranus is disgusted with the sight of his monstrous offspring, and imprisons several of them in Tartarus.

Gaia enlists the help of her youngest son, a Titan named Cronus, to battle his father. Cronus is able to overtake the throne and becomes ruler of the world. He marries Rhea, a fellow Titan, and she gives birth to the Olympian gods and goddesses. Fearful of losing his throne as his father had, Cronus swallows his children one by one. Rhea saves their youngest child, Zeus. Zeus grows up and later returns to rescue his siblings. Zeus and his siblings fight Cronus and the Titans for their right to rule the earth and are victorious.

The gods pick Mt. Olympus for their palace and divide the world among the three brothers: Zeus rules the sky, Poseidon rules the sea, and Hades rules the underworld. Their sisters, Hera, Demeter, and Hestia, each with their individual special powers, choose other areas of the world to influence and govern. Zeus has many children who take their royal places upon Mt. Olympus, including Hephaestus, the ugly and crippled god of the forge; Ares, the god of war; Zeus' favorite daughter, Athena, goddess of wisdom; Aphrodite, the goddess of love; Apollo, god of archery, truth, and music; Artemis, goddess of the hunt; and Hermes, the messenger god. Zeus' children have their own characteristics, domains and responsibilities. As strange and powerful as they are, they behave a lot like humans, falling in love, making mistakes and fighting each other.

People honored and feared the gods and looked to them for protection. In order to worship the gods, people of Greece built temples and held festivals and athletic competitions, like the Olympics, staged to honor Zeus. By the 1st century C.E., the Romans borrowed the life stories of many Greek gods whom they renamed.

Vocabulary

chaos — A state of nothingness from which, according to the ancient Greeks, the world emerged as earth, water, air and sky.

Mount Olympus — A mythological mountain in Greece that was believed to be the home of the gods and goddesses.

mortal — A human being.

Tartarus — The lowest region of the underworld; in Greek mythology this deep pit became the prison for defeated gods.

Cast of Characters

Includes phonetic spelling in parentheses.

Titans and Others

Cronus (KROH-nus) — Youngest Titan and son of Gaia and Uranus; with the help of his mother, he overthrows his father's throne and becomes ruler of the world; known as Saturn in Roman mythology.

Cyclops (SY-klahps) — Children of Gaia and Uranus; semi-human, giant monsters having a single eye in the center of each of their foreheads.

Gaia (GI-uh) — Mother Earth and wife of Uranus; she is born from chaos, a great void of emptiness in the universe; she gives birth to many early beings like the giant Titans, the one-eyed Cyclops, and the monsters with 50 heads and 100 hands called Hecatonchires.

Leto (LEE-toh) — Daughter of the Titans and mother of Artemis and Apollo.

Python (PI-thahn) — Son of Gaia; he is a monstrous serpent who guards the Temple of Delphi until killed by Apollo.

Rhea (REE-uh) — A Titan married to Cronus; she is mother to the Olympian gods and goddesses; known as Ops in Roman mythology.

Uranus (UR-uh-nuus) — God of the sky and husband to Gaia; he is overthrown by his son, Cronus.

Olympian Gods

Zeus (ZOOS) — God of the sky and ruler of Olympus; he shares the earth with his brothers Poseidon and Hades and is considered protector of all humans; he has had many children with goddesses and humans; also known as Jupiter in Roman mythology.

Hera (HAYR-ah) — Wife and sister of Zeus and the most powerful goddess on Olympus; her name means "lady" and she is recognized as the protector of marriage; while beautiful, she is very jealous and frequently petty, cruel, and vindictive to anyone who spends time with her husband; known as Juno in Roman mythology.

Poseidon (puh-SY-dun) — God of the sea; brother to Zeus and Hades; sometimes violent, he causes great storms and earthquakes with his trident; known as Neptune in Roman mythology.

Hades (HAY-deez) — The god of the underworld and brother to Zeus; he rarely leaves his realm to visit earth or Olympus; he rules the dead and is feared by mortals; known as Pluto in Roman mythology.

Demeter (de-MEET-ter) — Goddess of the harvest and vegetation; she spends her time on the earth making flowers and crops grow; known as Ceres in Roman mythology.

Hestia (HES-tee-uh) — Goddess of the home and hearth; known as Vesta in Roman mythology.

Aphrodite (a-froh-DI-tee) — Goddess of love and beauty; she is born from the foam of the sea; known as Venus in Roman mythology.

Apollo (uh-POL-loh) — God of archery, truth, music, light, and medicine and twin brother to Artemis.

Ares (AYR-eez) — God of war; known as Mars in Roman mythology.

Artemis (AR-te-mis) — Goddess of animals, hunters, childbirth and the moon; she is Apollo's twin; known as Diana in Roman mythology.

Athena (a-THEE-na) — Goddess of wisdom, justice, battle, and crafts; she is the favorite daughter of Zeus; known as Minerva in Roman mythology.

Hephaestus (he-FES-tus) — God of the forge; he is an ugly, crippled blacksmith who creates beautiful ornaments, weapons, furniture and jewelry for the Olympian gods and goddesses; his inventions include Zeus' lightning bolts, Poseidon's trident and Hades' helmet; known as Vulcan in Roman mythology.

Hermes (HER-meez) — Messenger of the gods; he is also the guide of dead souls to Hades and the patron of travelers, merchants, shepherds, thieves, and all others who live by their wits; known as Mercury in Roman mythology.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Brainstorm a list of Greek myths that students are familiar with and write the list on the board. Ask students if the stories they know about the Greek gods are similar to any films or books they have read.
- Discuss theories and stories of the creation of the universe and planets. How did ancient people explain creation?
- A ruler or king has many responsibilities in order to maintain peace and harmony in a kingdom. If you were ruler of the world, what would your responsibilities be? What kind of assistance or help would you need?

Focus and Discussion Questions

1. Explain the creation of the universe according to Greek mythology.
2. Describe the children of Uranus and Cronus. Discuss each father's behavior towards his children.
3. Explain how both Gaia and Rhea were able to save their children.
4. How are Zeus and his siblings able to become rulers of the world?
5. Discuss the spectacular birth of Zeus' children.
6. How is Athena different from the other goddesses?
7. Why is Hermes considered to be a master thief? Why does Zeus welcome him to Mt. Olympus?
8. Who is your favorite Mt. Olympian god or goddess? Why?

(Continued)