

# Meet the Greek Gods

High atop Mount Olympus, the gods and goddesses lived in beautiful palaces. Sometimes, the gods and goddesses, or deities, became involved in the lives of people on earth. Most of the time, however, they attended to their duties as Olympians.

The gods and goddesses possessed all of the admirable, and not so admirable, traits of mortals. Therefore, the Olympians could be unselfish or greedy, forgiving or judgmental, generous or cruel.



**Zeus** *god of the heavens and earth, ruler of weather, giver of justice*

Zeus ruled over all with his lightning and thunderbolts. His symbols were the sharp-eyed eagle and the mighty oak tree. Zeus was married to Hera although he had many affairs with goddesses and mortals.

**Hera** *goddess of marriage and married women*

Hera was the jealous wife of Zeus. As a mother, Hera chose the cow as her symbol. As a queen, she used the splendor of the peacock to remind mortals of her power.



**Poseidon** *god of the sea and earthquakes*

Poseidon was Zeus's brother who lived mainly in an underwater kingdom. Poseidon's symbols included a trident (a three-pronged spear), dolphins, and horses.

**Hades** *god of the underworld*

Hades could be identified by his bident (a two-pronged spear), Cerberus (his three-headed guard dog), or the cypress tree. Hades guarded all of the dead and was also in charge of the gems, minerals, and wealth of the underworld.



# Meet the Greek Gods (continued)



**Hestia** *goddess of the hearth and home*

Hestia was known for her pure and simple life. On Mount Olympus she preferred a plain, wooden throne and the color brown. Her symbol was the hearth fire.

**Demeter** *goddess of all growing things*

Demeter adored her only daughter, Persephone, and the two were frequently seen together. When Demeter was sad or lonely, no plants grew and winter came to earth. Demeter's symbols were the sheaf of wheat and the cornucopia.



**Athena** *goddess of wisdom, statecraft, and war*

Athena is said to have emerged from Zeus's head, full grown and wearing her armor. Athena's symbols were the owl and the olive tree. Her aegis, or breastplate, was a gift from Zeus and showed the head of Medusa.

**Aphrodite** *goddess of love and beauty*

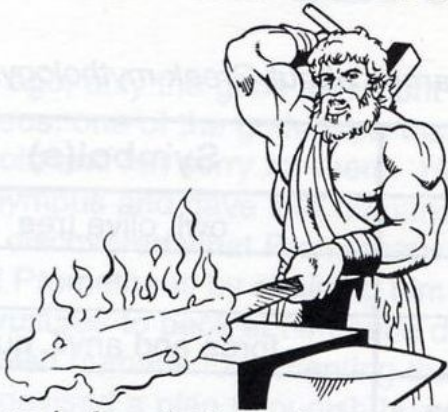
Aphrodite was born on the foam of the sea and rode to shore on a seashell. Her symbols included the dove, sparrow, rose, and myrtle (an evergreen shrub). Although she was married to Hephaestus, the god of blacksmiths, Aphrodite had many affairs.



**Ares** *god of war, hatred, and violence*

Ares was known for his short temper. He was identified by dogs, vultures, or a spear and shield.

# Meet the Greek Gods (continued)



**Hephaestus** *god of blacksmiths, metalworkers, and craftsmen*

Hephaestus was the son of Zeus and Hera. The forge and anvil (metalworking tools) were his symbols. His favorite bird was the quail.

**Apollo** *god of sunlight, truth, poetry, music, and healing*

Apollo was the twin brother of the goddess Artemis. As the protector of single men, Apollo never married. A shrine of truth was dedicated to him at Delphi. Apollo's symbols were the lyre and the laurel wreath.



**Artemis** *goddess of the moon, single women, hunting, and childbirth*

Artemis ruled over hunting and the moon. Her symbols included a crescent moon crown, a stag, or a bow and arrows. She and her brother Apollo were known as the twins of light.



**Hermes** *god of trade, travel, and theft*

Hermes wore a winged cap and winged sandals. He carried a bag of money or a winged staff with two snakes around it. He was the messenger for the gods.



**Dionysus** *god of wine, parties, and drama*

Dionysus is recognized by ivy or bunches of grapes, a wine cup, or a leopard.

