

College Guild
PO Box 696, Brunswick, Maine 04011

Mythology

Unit 1 of 6

*"Because of College Guild I am able to believe that
no human being -- free or otherwise -- is
unlovable and unreachable."
~ Donald ~*

* There are several questions that ask you to draw/sketch something...please TRY these! It does not matter if you think you are a terrible artist, even stick figures are fine with us. *



The Immortal Gods

Myths can best be described as traditional stories, folk tales, or legends that were passed down from one generation to the next. Writing did not exist thousands of years ago, when the world was new. The ancient Greeks did not have scientific

knowledge about the "why" of things that occurred in nature. For example, they did not know why the seasons changed, where the sun disappeared to at the end of the day, or what made it look as if the moon had a face (the "man in the moon"). Their curiosity led them to create stirring and sometimes outrageous stories to explain the "why" of natural events; we call these stories "myths."

1. List five or more natural phenomena that you think would have puzzled the early Greeks.

These people believed that there were superhuman beings -- gods and goddesses -- who controlled everything that happened on earth. They were invisible and immortal. No mortal dared to ignore the "Voices of Heaven." Of course, this meant that the ancients were not in complete control of their own lives. This belief system is essential to the understanding of all myths.

The role of myths is to teach and to learn. We may even discover that we are not in control of our own lives as much as we think. Some people call it "destiny".

2. Are people ever completely in control of their lives and futures? Why or why not?

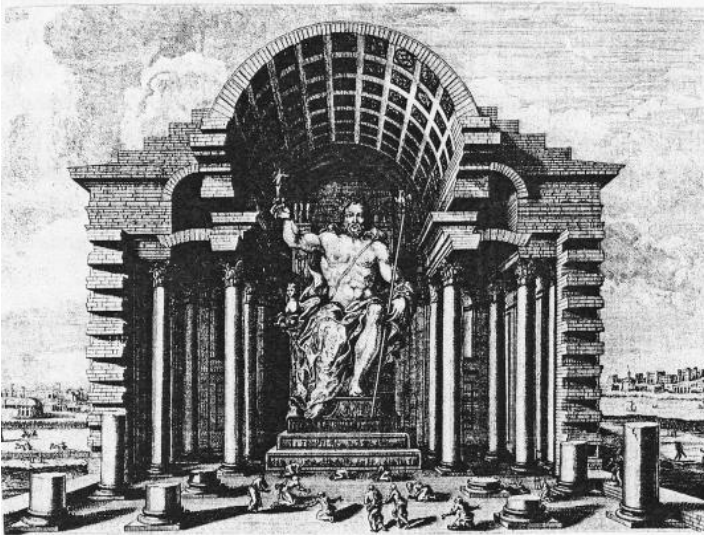


The Greek gods lived in palaces on the towering peak of Mt. Olympus in Greece. Dense clouds obscured any view from the earth -- all the more mysterious! They lived, loved, hated, quarreled -- exhibiting the very same range of emotions that we do. They could be kind and helpful, but also mean, spiteful, and cruel. They often intervened in the lives of mortals and had their favorites. There were many gods, but the most important ones were the Olympian gods. The Roman names for them will be included in parentheses.

3. What personality traits would your "perfect" God/Goddess have?

One of the Seven Wonders of the World is the temple of Zeus, King of the Gods, visited annually by millions of people. It is located in Olympia, Greece, the site of the first Olympic games. Below is an artist's concept of the temple, which once contained a forty-foot gold and ivory statue of Zeus (Jupiter) in whose honor the Ancient Olympic games were held. It is said that at the time of the games, wars stopped, and athletes came from Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, and Sicily to celebrate the Olympics and to worship Zeus. Crumbling remains are all that exist today. Each god had symbols with which s/he was always associated. (Those of Zeus were the eagle, scepter (staff), lightning bolts, oak leaves, and his aegis (a protective cloak) -- all representing his majesty, the king.)

4. What would you choose as a symbol for yourself and why?



5. Do we have an equivalent to Zeus in current times? Explain.

In the Beginning

What was the origin of man? There are many creation theories and belief systems around the world related to this question.

6. Explain three theories of creation.

The Olympian theory is one that the ancient Greeks held. In the beginning, Gaea (Mother Earth) and Uranus (Sky) had many children. The first set was three giant monsters, called the hundred-handed Hecatoncheires, each with fifty heads. They possessed unbelievable strength. The second set was "thunder," "lightning," and "flash," three giant cyclopes with one distinguishing feature -- each had one eye in the middle of the forehead with a dark eyebrow underneath. All six giants could toss boulders around like stones and make mountains crumble. Uranus hated these children, so he disposed of them by throwing them into Tartarus, the Greek version of an underground hell where escape was almost impossible.

7. Think of a symbol that would be appropriate for Gaea. How about Uranus?

The most famous set of children was thirteen Titans. One of them, Cronos (Saturn), hated his father's tyrannical rule to such an extent that he disposed of him with a sickle. As Uranus lay dying, he said to his son, "You murder me now and steal my throne -- but one of your own sons will dethrone you, for crime begets crime."

Hoping to prevent this from happening, Cronos swallowed each of his children as they were born. His scheming wife Rhea determined that he would not eat her last child, Zeus. She wrapped a rock in a "baby" blanket and gave it to Cronos. He promptly swallowed it and Rhea secretly sent the infant Zeus to a faraway place where he was raised until manhood. Upon Zeus' return to his homeland, he waged a long, bitter war to claim the kingship of the universe for himself.

8. Write a letter from the Cronos to his dead father, Uranus, twenty years after his death. Consider -- Does Cronos now understand what Uranus was saying? Does Cronos still think he did the right thing?

9. Come up with a different scheme Rhea could have used to deceive Cronos and save Zeus.



In order to defeat Cronos, Zeus gave him a horrible drink that forced Cronos to "cough up" the children he had previously swallowed. The Hecatoncheires and cyclopes were released from Hell to join their brother Zeus in his ten-year battle against Cronos and his supporters. This was the War of the Titans, which Zeus and his siblings ultimately won. Thus, Zeus became King of the Gods, the rule of the seas went to Poseidon (Neptune), and the rule of the underworld went to Hades (Pluto).

10. Write a news article about the War of the Titans. Try to capture the audiences' attention!

Many of the words we use today are borrowed from Greek mythology. Almost anything you see or hear has in some way been affected by mythology. The word "titan" for example, describes a person or thing of enormous strength, size, or achievement.

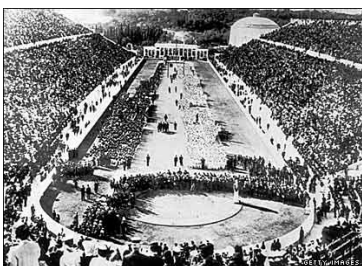
11. In the sentences below, explain why the use of the word "titan" is appropriate:

- a) "In a storybook ending of a fairytale season, the Tennessee Titans battled the St. Louis Rams to a thrilling victory.
- b) "On the night of April 14, 1914 the luxury liner Titanic smashed into an iceberg and sank."
- c) "The meeting marked a pivotal point in the confrontation between two titans in the American Group of International Investors."

12. Come up with your own sentence using the word "titan."

Astronomers gave the name Titan to the largest satellite of Saturn (the Roman name for Cronos), the 6th largest planet.

13. How do you think we came up with the names for our other planets? Give a specific example of one. (This can be made up!)



The word "Saturn" gives us the adjective "saturnine," which describes one who is gloomy and usually not very talkative.

Olympus gives its name to: the Olympic Games; Olympia, the capitol of the state of Washington; the adjective "Olympian," which defines a person or thing as majestic in manner; as well as to the noun "Olympiad," which is a period of four years between the games.

14. What sports, if any, do you think the ancient Greeks played in the Olympic Games that we play in ours?

Polyphemus

The story of Polyphemus, the cannibal Cyclops (a one-eyed giant), is found in Homer's Greek classic, *The Odyssey*. The story centers around the many adventures of the Greek hero Odysseus and the crews of several sailing ships who are returning home to Greece from the Trojan War. In search of a safe harbor for the night, Odysseus and several members of his crew disembark to scout out the island, when suddenly a giant creature appears, herding his sheep and goats into a huge cave. This was Polyphemus. He quickly grabs two of the sailors and swallows them.

Once inside the cave, Polyphemus rolls a boulder in front of the entrance so that Odysseus and his crew cannot escape. He tells Odysseus that, since he is a guest, Polyphemus wants to give him a "gift" -- that he would be the last one to be eaten!

15. What would you tell your crew to help them remain calm and focused in this situation?

While the crew, terrified as to who would be the next victim devoured, sits around the fire, Polyphemus asks Odysseus for his name. "Noman (No one, Nobody) is my name," he replies. The crew quickly sharpens a stick, heats it with fire and Odysseus blinds the giant's one eye. While Polyphemus screams with pain, other members of the Cyclops family come rushing to the cave. They inquire what is the matter, but leave when the giant answers, "Noman is here!"

The next morning, the crew ties themselves to the bellies of the sheep. Polyphemus, awake and sober, pats each sheep on the head in order to count them as they leave the cave. All the crew escape and run with great speed to their ships. As an angry Cyclops throws boulders at the crew and prays to Poseidon (Neptune), god of the seas, for a terrible storm to arise and stir up the winds and the sea in hopes it will shipwreck the crew. Other gods, who favor the Greeks in the Trojan War, spare their lives.



16. Sketch a scene from this myth.

17. "Odyssey" is commonly used in the English language meaning a quest, an adventurous journey, or an eventful process. Explain its use in the following sentences:

- a) Honda: *The All-New Odyssey*. A Great Idea Made Better.
- b) Colorado Fishing: a Southwest Odyssey.
- c) Two "Odyssey of the Mind" students are on their way to the World Finals Competition.

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes

Appendix Greek Mythology: Unit 1 of 6

Citations

https://tomtomrant.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/cyclops_poster.jpg

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