

The Greek Gods

A long time ago, most Greeks worshipped a family of many gods. The ancient Greeks believed that these gods lived high on Mount Olympus. The gods were very important in ancient Greek culture. They influenced architecture, art, celebrations, and even the Olympic Games! One of the main purposes of the original Games was to make the gods happy.

There are thirteen main Olympic gods. The leader, and the father of many of the gods, was Zeus. Zeus is often pictured with lightning bolts, which he threw when he got angry! He was the god of battle. Zeus had two brothers, Poseidon and Hades. Zeus was the god of the sky, Poseidon was the god of the sea, and Hades was the god of the underworld.

Hera was the wife of Zeus and the goddess of marriage.

Demeter was the goddess of agriculture. She was the sister of Zeus and the mother of Persephone. Persephone was taken by Hades to be his queen. Hades was the god of the underworld. Demeter was angry for her daughter's disappearance, so she made the crops stop growing. Later, Hades let Persephone join her mother for part of the year. When Persephone is with her, Demeter lets the crops grow (spring and summer), but when Persephone is gone, no crops grow (fall and winter).

Ares, the god of war, was the son of Zeus and Hera. Another son, Hephaestus, was the god of fire and craftsmanship.

Apollo and Artemis were the twin children of Zeus and Leto. Apollo was the god of medicine and music. Artemis was the goddess of the hunt.

Aphrodite was the goddess of love and beauty.

Athena was the goddess of wisdom, justice, crafts, and also of war. She was the patron goddess of Athens. Her symbol was the owl, and she is often pictured in armor.

Dionysus was the god of wine.

Hermes was the messenger god, the god of travel. Hermes was usually pictured carrying a staff with two snakes wrapped around it.