



Mythical characters

Gods and goddesses

Zeus is the king of the gods, ruler of Mount Olympus and god of the sky. His name means 'bright' or 'sky'. His royal animals are the eagle and bull. Zeus's favourite weapon is a lightning bolt made for him by the Cyclops. Zeus can be a greedy and dishonest god. If he desires something, he is unlikely to let anything stop him from gaining it. Because of this, he often lies about his behaviour to Hera, his wife.



Hera is the queen of the gods and wife of Zeus. She is the goddess of women, marriage, childbirth, heirs, kings and empires. She often carries a lotus-tipped staff. Hera never forgets an insult or injury and can be cruel or vengeful.



Poseidon is the god of rivers, seas, floods, droughts and earthquakes. Brother to Zeus, he is the king of the sea and protector of all waters. Poseidon carries a trident: a spear with three points. His sacred animals are the dolphin and the horse.



Athena is the goddess of wisdom, intelligence, skill, peace and warfare. According to legend, she was born out of Zeus's forehead fully formed and fully armoured. She looks over heroes such as Odysseus and Hercules. Athena is often accompanied by a sacred owl. Her symbol is the olive tree.





Gods and goddesses

Aphrodite is the goddess of love and beauty, who can cause gods or mortals to fall in love with whomever she chooses. Aphrodite's sacred animals include doves and sparrows. Her symbols include roses.



Apollo is the god of arts, knowledge, healing, plague, prophecy and archery. He can be cruel and destructive. His symbols include the bow and arrow and he is skilled at archery. His sacred animals include deer, pythons and swans.



Dionysus is the god of wine, parties, drunkenness, madness and chaos, and is often seen in the company of his thiasus: a group of attendants. The group includes his old tutor Silenus, satyrs and maenads. Dionysus wanders the Earth, teaching men how to make wine.



Hades is the god of the underworld and the dead who live there. Because he possesses all of the rich metals under the Earth, he is known as 'the rich one'. Hades has a drinking horn, sceptre and Cerberus – a three-headed dog.





Monsters and other characters

Many of the creatures of Greek mythology combine different animals to create something new

Harpies – Harpies were half-bird half-human creatures. The Harpies were vicious and cruel. They would often snatch away evildoers, carrying them to torture or taking them to the Erinyes (the Furies).



Cyclopes – There are at least two types of Cyclopes in Greek mythology. Both were one-eyed giants. Three Cyclopes – Arges, Brontes and Steropes – were brothers, who forged many things for the gods. They made the lightning bolt of Zeus, the trident of Poseidon and the Helm of Hades. Another group of Cyclopes were a tribe of man-eating giants who herded flocks of sheep on the isle of Sicily.



Cerberus – the ‘hound of Hades’ was a three-headed dog. Cerberus guarded the gates of Hades, devouring any of the dead who attempted to escape and preventing any of the living from entering. The hero Orpheus was able to enter Hades after charming Cerberus with his music.



Minotaur – On the island of Crete is a labyrinth, an impenetrable maze. At the centre of this maze lived the minotaur – a giant man with the head of a bull. Each year the inhabitants of Athens had to offer a sacrifice of seven young men and seven young women. These youngsters were sent into the labyrinth. There they would wander its corridors, lost, until they encountered the minotaur and he devoured them.





Monsters and other characters

Pegasus – Pegasus was a winged horse. He was good-hearted, kind and eager to help. Pegasus could fly through the air and carry heroes on quests.



Nemean lion – The Nemean lion was a seemingly unkillable monster which roamed Neamea. King Eurystheus instructed the hero Hercules to kill the creature without telling him that its skin was impenetrable by normal weapons. Not knowing this, Hercules first tried to kill the lion with arrows. When these failed, he strangled it with his bare hands. It was impossible for Hercules to skin the lion with normal blades so the goddess Athena instructed him to skin it with one of its own claws.



Charon – Charon is a ferryman who transported the souls of the dead across the River Styx to the Underworld. It was a custom to place a coin between the teeth of the dead, so that they could pay the ferryman to take them to Hades. Anybody unable to pay Charon would be stuck. Some tried to swim across; most failed to make it.



Medusa – Once, Medusa had been a beautiful maiden, but after angering the goddess Athena, she was transformed into a hideous creature. Her hair became a nest of venomous snakes and her gaze was so hideous that, if anybody were to look directly at her, they would be transformed into stone.





Settings

The River Styx – The river Styx formed a barrier between the Earth and the Underworld (Hades). It circled Hades nine times. The waters of the river Styx could also bestow miraculous powers. Anybody dipped into its waters could become invulnerable. When the hero Achilles was dipped into the Styx as a baby, his entire body gained invulnerability, with the exception of the heel where his mother had held him.



The Underworld – Hades was a realm invisible to the living. After death, souls would be transported here, where they would forget their former lives and wait for whatever came next. Whilst Mount Olympus was bright, Hades was dark.



Mount Olympus – The highest mountain in Greece was the home of the Greek gods. It was shrouded from the view of mortals by clouds which constantly covered the mountain's peaks. Each of the gods had their own palace at the mountain and would leave or return through a gate of clouds. Zeus's throne was in the Pantheon, the meeting hall of the gods. The tables were made of gold and were in fact automatons (machines), which could move in and out of rooms to wherever they were needed.





Magical Items

Caduceus – This magical staff, entwined by two serpents, had the power to heal.



Cornucopia – The horn of the river god was overflowing with fresh, ripe food.



Adamantine – This rare, hard metal was very strong. Weapons made from this could slay monsters which those made from ordinary metal could not.



The Golden Fleece – Zeus had a winged ram with golden wool. He gave the ram to be sacrificed in place of two children. Its fleece is a symbol of authority.



The Helm of Darkness – This helmet, created by the Cyclopes for Hades, could render the wearer invisible.



The Winged Sandals of Hermes – These winged sandals allowed the wearer to fly.

