

The Twelve Olympian Gods Δωδεκαθεῖον

- Universal traits:
 - Immortal
 - Ambrosia and nectar for food
 - Ichor instead of blood
 - Can change forms at will; the “true form” of a god is fatal to mortals
 - Can alter the world around them according to their power and their *domains*
 - Can hear all prayers addressed to them and can hear all words spoken in earshot of their altars
- The First Generation (children of Cronos and Rhea) -
 - Zeus / Juppiter
 - Poseidon / Neptune
 - Hades / Pluto
 - Hera / Juno
 - Demeter / Ceres
 - Hestia / Vesta
- The Second Generation (mostly children of Zeus) -
 - Apollo (son of Zeus and Leto)
 - Artemis / Diana (daughter of Zeus and Leto)
 - Ares / Mars (son of Zeus and Hera or Themis)
 - Aphrodite / Venus (“Cronos”)
 - Athena / Minerva (daughter of Zeus and Metis)

- Hephaestus / Vulcan (son of Zeus and Hera)
- Hermes / Mercury (son of Zeus and Maia)

- Occasionally Included -
 - Hades -> Dionysos (son of Zeus and Semele)
 - Hades -> Hercules
 - Demeter <-> Hestia

- ZEUS - King of the Gods, *Lord of Gods and Men* -
 - Animal - Eagle
 - Symbol - Lightning bolt, sometimes an oak leaf
 - Son of Cronos and Rhea; overthrew his father and the Titans to establish the current order of the Cosmos
 - Marries his sister Hera
 - Main Temple - Olympus (Dion)
 - Almost always shown with a beard and a scepter, demonstrating his kingly authority
 - Always neutral; fair and just in his dealings with others
 - Has *countless* children with both gods and mortals
 - Hercules, Perseus, Minos, Myrmidon, Pirithöos
 - Alexander the Great?

- Commonly and easily accepted by foreigners, according to their interpretation of a “king of the gods” - Serapis, Ammon, etc.
 - Towards the turn of the first millennium, many people began to see Zeus as the *only* god, an omnipotent sovereign, and the other gods as aspects of Zeus
- POSEIDON - God of the Seas, *The Earthshaker* -
 - Animal - Horse, sometimes dolphin
 - Symbol - Trident
 - Son of Cronos and Rhea
 - Never married, but has a few children, amongst whom is the cyclops Polyphemos (blinded by Odysseus)
 - Main Temple - Sounion Peninsula, in Attica, Greece
 - Was probably originally a horse-god, as Indo-Europeans didn't have any oceans nearby
 - Is the major foil in the Odyssey
 - Plays a major role in the foundation of Athens along with Athena
 - Built the walls of Troy as a punishment, and favors the Trojans during the war
 - HADES - God of the Dead, *Lord of the Dead, the Unseen One* -
 - Animal - Cerberus
 - Symbol - Key, sometimes a cloak
 - Son of Cronos and Rhea, given the Underworld during the division of the Cosmos; not bitter or resentful, just sort of melancholy and moody

- Perceived as being extremely rich, thanks to the wealth of gold and jewels under the earth; the irony of wealth after death; (*Pluto*)
- Married to Persephone, the daughter of Demeter and Zeus - the Rape of Persephone
- Viewed as fair and equal, but no one was in a rush to meet him; temples of Hades are few and far between, located underground and in darkness
- Impossible to leave his domains, except heroes and Orpheus
- The Fates - Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos
- The Judges - Minos, Aeacos, Rhadamanthos
 - Divisions of Hades (the place) -
 - The Fields of Asphodel - where almost everyone goes; bleak, boring, depressing, grey; without blood, souls waste away, cannot speak, cannot form shapes; the form you have in Asphodel reflects your moment of death; hopeless, eternal, unchanging
 - Elysium - “Paradise” - where the few who have earned the gods’ thanks go - the only part of the Underworld with sunlight (the Azores Islands in the Atlantic); separated from the rest of Hades by the River Acheron (rememberance); doesn’t matter if you’re good in life, it’s up to the gods to reward you; no work, eternal twilight, cool, pleasant, full of wine and relaxation, plenty of heroic active passtimes

- Tartaros - “Punishment” - where the few who have truly angered the gods go - Below Asphodel, seven days from surface; full of fire and lakes of sulphur, separated from the rest of Hades by a river of boiling blood (Phlegethon) - full of ironic punishments, such as Sisypheus, Tantalus, Ixion, Danaides
- HERA - Queen of the Gods, Motherhood and Childbirth, *Ox-Eyed* -
 - Animal - Peacock
 - Symbol - Opium poppy flower
 - Daughter of Cronos and Rhea, wife of Zeus
 - Main Temple - Island of Samos, Aegean Sea
 - Second major temple - Paestum, Italy
 - Frequently seen as a contrary enemy figure, usually in vengeance for Zeus’ infidelity or just plain old being mean
 - Hercules, his whole life
 - Aeneas, for ten years after the Trojan War, simply for being Trojan
 - Echo, for being too talkative
 - Tiresias, for being “right”
 - One of the three goddesses involved in the Judgement of Paris
- DEMETER - Goddess of Nature and Agriculture, *Giver of Life* -
 - Animal - Dragon

- Symbol - Cornucopia, sometimes an ear of wheat
 - Daughter of Cronos and Rhea; never married, but mother of Persephone
 - Main Temple - Eleusis in Attica, Greece - The Eleusinian Mysteries, the most important cult in the ancient world
 - Not many interesting myths, but extremely important in actual worship by almost everyone in the ancient world
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- HESTIA - Goddess of the Home and Family, *Keeper of Home and Hearth* -
 - Animal - Doormouse
 - Symbol - Hearth
 - Never married, no children (*parthenos* - a maiden)
 - No temple in Greece; main Roman temple in the Forum in Rome, where the Vestal Virgins tended the "hearth of the city" - if it ever went out, Rome would be destroyed
 - Often not included in the Dodecatheion and replaced by Dionysos

- APOLLO - God of Music, Medicine, Light, and Prophecy, *Phoebus Apollo*, "*radiant*" -
 - Animal - Python
 - Symbol - Lyre, often a crown of laurel leaves - Daphne
 - Main Temple - Delphi, Greece - the most important oracle in the ancient world by far

- Fraternal twin of Artemis, son of Zeus and Leto (form of: swan!)
 - Never married, has a few children; felt to be the ideal of the *Kouros*, the handsome, athletic youth
 - Main Temple - Delphi, Greece; the home of the Oracle, the prophetess who told the future to those who asked her; answered in riddles
 - Athens vs. Persia
 - Sparta at Thermopylae
 - Croesus vs. Persia
 - Lysander and the Dragon
 - Theodosius
 - By Aethusa, father of Asclepius, god of medicine
 - Tried to woo Cassandra and also the Sibyl; didn't work out well for either of them
 - Later on in Roman times, he was mixed-up frequently with Helios, the god/Titan of the sun, and was worshipped as *Sol Invictus*; never so in myth during the Greek era
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- ARTEMIS - Goddess of the Wild and Woods, *Fleet-Footed*
 - Animal - Stag
 - Symbol - Bow and arrow
 - Never married, eternal virgin - *parthenos* - Actaeon
 - Fraternal twin of Apollo
 - Main Temple - The Artemisium at Ephesos in Asia
 - Minor - one of the seven wonders of the ancient world; Herostratus

- The ultimate hunter; always accompanied by nymphs or silvan hunter-goddesses; takes it badly when men boast that they're better hunters than she is - Adonis
- Fell in love with a mortal, Orion, the only mortal who actually *was* as good a hunter as she; Orion accidentally killed by a giant scorpion during a hunt, placed in the sky
- Agamemnon, Iphigeneia, and the boar - start of the Trojan War's "evil"

- ARES - God of War, *Sacker of Cities, the Bane of Men* -
 - Animal - Dog/Wolf
 - Symbol - Spear and Shield
 - Son of Zeus and either Hera or Themis
 - Main Temple - Thebes, Greece (home of Oedipus and the stories of the Theban Cycle)
 - Never married, but the persistent lover of Aphrodite; father of Deimos (Dread) and Phobos (Terror)
 - By the mortal Rhea Silvia, the father of Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome
 - THE god to whom to sacrifice before battle: Clip! (16:10)
 - Had an important function in the law courts, as capital punishment was frequent - Areopagos in Athens
 - Wounded by Diomedes during the Trojan War; frequently the butt of jokes at his expense
 - Much like Hades, an ambivalent figure; not as many myths as you would think, lest he be summoned

- ATHENA - Goddess of Wisdom, *Grey-Eyed*
 - Animal - Owl
 - Symbol - Olive tree and the *Aegis*, a shield with the head of Medusa on it
 - Daughter of Zeus and Metis
 - Never married - *parthenos*
 - Main Temple - The Parthenon in Athens
 - Also vengeful like Artemis, but with self-control; Arachne, Medusa, Tiresias
 - Has a tendency to keep mortals as “pets” - Odysseus, Erichthonius, Perseus
 - Also a goddess associated with warfare; the wisdom and strategy of warfare, rather than the violence and bloodshed; holds *Nike* (Victory) in her hand
 - Judgment of Paris
 - *Pallas Athena*, **Athena the Protector** - the Palladium, a rock carved with various symbols which made the bearer invincible and the city in which it stood unconquerable
 - *Athena Promachos*, **Athena at the Front-Lines** - A multi-story-tall bronze statue of Athena, poised for battle, in the courtyard of the Acropolis in Athens
 - lasted for millennia (built by Phidias in 465BC, moved to Constantinople in 462AD, burnt by Crusaders in 1203AD sacking the city)
 - Probably comes up in heroic myths more than any other god, even Zeus; heroes cannot succeed without wisdom, so Athena is always in the background

- Perseus, Theseus, Odysseus, Telemachus, Orestes son of Agamemnon
- The Tyrant Peisistratos of Athens - a career for tall girls
- Ares and the Areopagos - The Judgment of Orestes (The Oresteia).
- One of the few gods for whom we have knowledge of a specific holiday: the Plynteria, May 5th; originally the day that the clothes of the cult image of Athena were replaced, turned into a day of spiritual rejuvenation.
- APHRODITE - Goddess of Love, *Lover of Laughter* -
 - Animal - Doves and Swans
 - Symbol - Scallop shell, often a “heart”
 - Parthenogenesis; no parents
 - Main Temple - Paphos on the island of Cyprus
 - Married to Hephaestus; persistent affair with Ares; bigamous married to Anchises, father of Aeneas
 - Mother:
 - Ares -> Phobos and Demos
 - Anchises -> Aeneas, Trojan hero in the war, ancestor of Romulus and Remus
 - Hephaestus -> Eros
 - Dionysos -> Priapos, the Graces
 - Helios -> ?Phaethon?
 - Her cult was less popular than you would think, but involved temple prostitution (i.e., all of her priestesses were also prostitutes)
 - One of the kindest of the gods; often pities mortals
 - Pygmalion

- Adonis
- HERMES - God of travelers, commerce, luck, trickery and jokes, & guide of the dead, *Slayer of Argos* (*Argeiphontes*) -
 - Symbol - Caduceus (staff wrapped in snakes)
 - Animal - Rooster
 - Son of Zeus and Maia, a Nereid water goddess
 - Never married, but father of Tyche (goddess of fortune), Hermaphroditos (with Aphrodite), Pan (god of shepherds and tending animals), and Ceyx (demigod, husband of Alcyone)
 - Usually depicted with a broad-brimmed hat, winged sandals, and a staff, the garb of a traveler
 - Main Temple - Cilene in Arcadia, Greece; the traditional site of his birth; minor temples are located at crossroads and marketplaces
 - Slayer of Argos, origin of the peacock of Hera
 - An “Odysseus” of the gods; very tricky, very witty, very smart; likes to get out of problems by talking rather than fighting
 - Associated with dreams; patron of the *Lotophagoi* in the Odyssey
 - The *Hermai* - “magical” statutes, composed of a square post of stone with a carved head of Hermes on top and a large phallus in the front - good luck symbols, found outside virtually every house in Greece and Rome; Alcibiades, hero of Athens during the Peloponnesian War, was banished for desecrating a *Herma* while

drunk one night; Socrates defended him, and this led to his eventual death

- Tends to play supportive roles in myths, such as Perseus and Medusa, the Judgment of Paris, protector of Priam, etc.

- HEPHAESTOS - God of Fire and Smithcraft, *The Lame God* -

- Symbol - Anvil and hammer
- Animal - Quail
- Son of Zeus and Hera - Thrown off Mt. Olympus and deformed, so he can't overthrow his father
- Main Temple - Syracuse in Sicily, near Mt. Aetna
 - Lives on Olympus, but usually under Mt. Aetna at his smithy, making lightning bolts with the Cyclopes
 - Other major temple at Athens, next to the Parthenon
- Married to Aphrodite; Helios, god of the sun, sees her sleeping with Ares on day as he flies overhead and tells Hephaestos
- Crafted many items in mythology; the Armor of Achilles, the Shield of Athena (the Aegis), the Staff of Agamemnon, the Club of Hercules, the Girdle of Aphrodite, the shoulderbone of Pelops, Lightning, and the Arrows of Eros

- DIONYSOS - God of Wine, Ecstasy, and Theater, *Wild with Frenzy* (Bacchus), *The Liberator* -

- Symbol - Thyrsos (a staff capped with a pinecone and wrapped in grape vines)

- Animal - Leopard
- Son of Zeus and Semele, who was killed by his glory
- Main Temple - Smyrna on the coast of Asia Minor
- Married to Cybele, the *Great Mother*, but has no children by her
- His priests are mostly women called Maenads, who drink themselves into seeing things; orgies and excess, called *Bacchanalia*, forbidden by Rome in 250BC
 - They tend to wander the wilderness and get assaulted by Satyrs
- Portrayed as a young man with a *kratér* of wine, wearing leopard skins and smiling; pictures found on bottom of wine glasses
- A surprisingly violent god (drunken rage) - Midas, Pentheus of Athens (denial of divinity), Lycourgos of Sparta (turned away his Maenads), Ampelos the Centaur
- His worship was *mystery*; you had to be initiated to learn its secrets, which were apparently proto-Gnostic in many ways
 - As a result, the combination of drinking wine and proto-Gnostic elements resulted in many followers of Dionysos being the first pagan converts to Christianity
- All theaters had an altar to Dionysos in the middle of the stage; dramas and comedies were religious festivals dedicated to Dionysos