

# THE TITANS AND CREATION



## Unit Overview

Remember in the previous unit we talked about how Greek Mythology isn't supposed to be thought of as a religion? We're going to talk about that more in detail in this unit. Throughout this unit, we'll discuss the Titans, creation, and the Olympians.

First, it's important to realize that the Greeks did not believe that the gods created the universe. Actually, they believed that the universe created the gods. They believed that before there were gods, the heaven and earth existed. So, think about heaven and earth as being the first parents. The Titans were the first children of heaven and earth, and the gods were the children of Titans.

Sometimes, the Titans are referred to as "The Elder Gods." This name is pretty self-explanatory; they were the older gods. The Titans ruled the universe for many years before they were overthrown by the Greek gods. They were very large in size and had amazing strength. There were many Titans, but only a few are mentioned in Greek mythology. We will now discuss several of the important Titans.



## The Titans

Now, let's learn a little more background information about the gods and goddesses of the Titans.

**Uranus** was the Sky god. He was the first ruler. His mother was **Gaea**. She created him without help, so Uranus did not have a father. Later, he became the husband of **Gaea** and they parented many children, including 12 of the Titans. His rule over the sky was ended when his son, **Cronus**, took his strength and power away from him. His fate is unknown; he either left Earth or died as a result of this wound.

**Gaea** was the Earth goddess. As we stated, she was the mother of **Uranus**. She and **Uranus** had 12 Titans, in addition to many other children.

**Cronus** became the ruler after he overthrew his father, **Uranus**. His wife was **Rhea**. Their offspring were the first of the **Olympians**, or the gods who lived on Mt. Olympus. When **Rhea** was first having children, **Cronus** insisted on eating them. He thought that if he ate his children, no harm could come to him, knowing what he did to his own father. **Rhea** was sad, however, at the obvious murder of her children by their own father. She decided to trick **Cronus** by having him swallow a rock that she had wrapped in a blanket, instead of their son **Zeus**. When Zeus was older, he revolted against his father and the other Titans. **Cronus** escaped to Italy, where he ruled under the name **Saturn**.

**Rhea** was the wife of **Cronus**. As stated, she saved the life of her son, **Zeus**, by tricking her husband into swallowing a rock, rather than Zeus.

**Oceanus** was the water that surrounded the Earth. Oceanus and **Tethys** produced the rivers and streams of the world. They were also the parents of the water nymphs, which are minor goddesses regarded as a beautiful young women.

**Tethys**, as stated, was the wife of **Oceanus**. She was the mother of the rivers and streams of the world, in addition to the water nymphs.

**Hyperion** was the Titan of Light. He can be considered an early sun god. He is the son of **Gaea** and **Uranus**. He married his sister, **Theia**. Their children were **Helius**, the sun; **Selene**, the moon; and **Eos**, the dawn.

**Mnemosyne** was the Titan of Memory. She was also the mother of the **Muses**, the goddess of art.

**Themis** was the Titan of Justice. She was the mother of the **Fates**, and the goddess of destiny, the **Seasons**.

**Iapetus** was the father of Prometheus, the savior of mankind; **Atlas**, who held the world on his shoulders; and **Epimethus**, who opened Pandora's Box.

**Prometheus** was the smartest of the Titans. His name means "forethought" and he had the ability to tell the future. When **Zeus** fought the Titans, **Prometheus** fought on **Zeus'** side. He and his brother, **Epimethus**, were given the responsibility from Zeus to create man. **Prometheus** is known as the protector of mankind. He is also responsible for giving mankind many important gifts, such as the gift of fire.

After reading the information about these gods and goddesses, you will probably want to do additional research to learn more about them. Feel free to search books or the Internet!



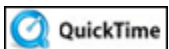
## Mt. Olympus and the Olympians

### Mt. Olympus

As mentioned above, Zeus overthrew his father, Cronus, and became the most powerful god. When Cronus was dethroned, many of the older gods assumed lower places of importance in mythology. The 12 great Olympians were considered the most powerful of the gods. They were called the Olympians because Mt. Olympus was their home. Determining what Mt. Olympus was can often be tricky. Many believe that it was a mountain top – the highest mountain top in all of Greece. Some believe, however, that Mt. Olympus was a mysterious place far above the mountains and the earth. Do not consider Mt. Olympus to be heaven though. It is just the place where the gods dwell.

The entrance to Mt. Olympus was a gate made of clouds. It was kept by the Seasons. Mt. Olympus was always peaceful and pleasant – it never stormed there, the sun was always shining, and it was always peaceful.

Before you read about The Olympians, watch the video segment below. It will introduce you to The Olympians and their home, Mount Olympus.



Mount Olympus and the Gods of Greek Mythology (2:20)

### The 12 Olympians



The Twelve Olympians can be described as a large, sometimes dysfunctional family. The remainder of this unit will concentrate on one Olympian God; Zeus and his wife Hera.

### Zeus



The Olympian family starts with **Zeus**. He is the chief god. The table below explains some details about Zeus.

	<p>The <b>Aegis</b> was a breastplate or shield that was associated Zeus. It was believed to hold supernatural power. The Aegis of Zeus was fringed with serpents.</p>
	<p>One symbol of Zeus is the <b>eagle</b>.</p>
	<p>Another symbol of Zeus is the <b>oak tree</b>.</p>

	
	Dodona Island, the land of oak trees, is the location of the oracle devoted to Zeus.

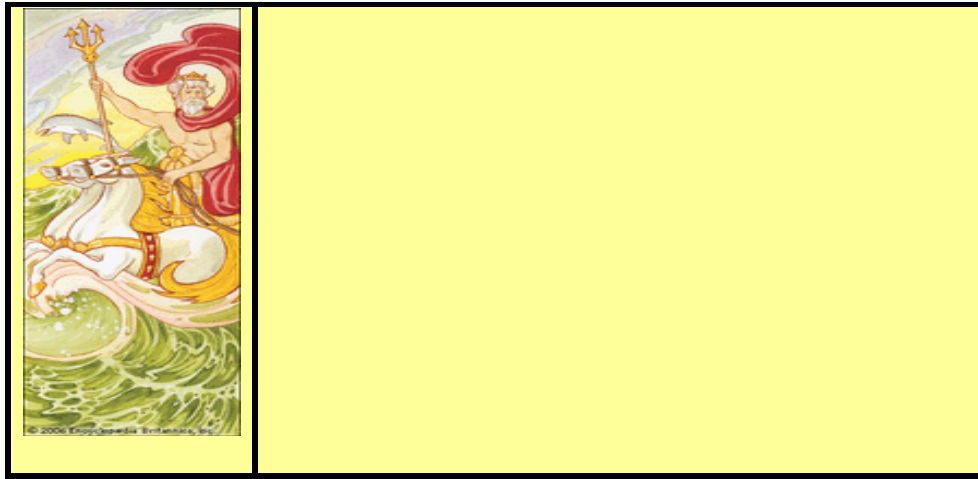
Zeus has two brothers, **Poseidon** and **Hades**.

## Poseidon

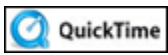


**Poseidon** was Zeus' brother. He was the ruler of the sea. His wife was **Amphitrite**, who was the granddaughter of the Titans, **Oceanus** and **Tethys**. Poseidon had a home under the sea, but he was also found frequently at Mt. Olympus. Poseidon was also responsible for giving horses to man. Storms and calm seas were under his control. It was said when he drove his golden chariot over the waters, the waves would calm and peace would follow behind him. He was always seen carrying a **trident**, which is a three-pronged spear.

The sacred animals of Poseidon were horses and bulls.

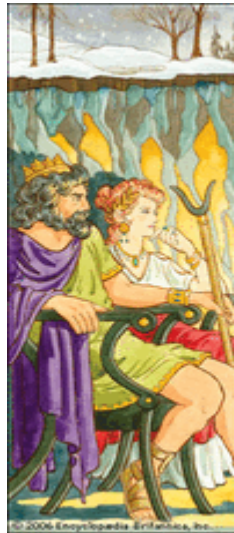


To learn more about Poseidon, watch the video segment below.



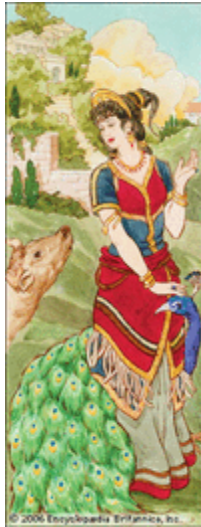
Atlantis: The Wrath of Poseidon (1:43)

## Hades



**Hades** was the third brother among the Olympians. His share was the underworld, and he ruled over the dead. He was considered the god of wealth, and it was believed that he had control of the precious metals hidden in the earth. He had a helmet that would make him invisible. He very rarely left the underworld to visit Earth or Olympus. He did not show pity, but he was fair. His wife's name was **Persephone**, the daughter of Zeus and Demeter. He carried her away from earth and made her the queen of the underworld. He was considered the king of the dead, but he himself was not dead.

## Hera



**Hera is Zeus' wife.**

**Hera** was Zeus' wife and sister. The Titans Ocean and Tethys raised her. She was the protector of marriage and married women. Married women were specifically important to her. Hera spent a lot of her time punishing the women with whom Zeus had affairs. She was able to hold grudges, and her anger toward women who had affairs with Zeus also transferred to the children who were the result of the affairs. Hera was respected in every home. She was the goddess that married women turned to for help.

The chart below give some important facts about Hera.



Hera's favorite city was Argos, the main sanctuary where she was worshipped.



The sacred animals of Hera are the cow, the symbol of cow-eyed, and the peacock, the symbol of pride.

**Zeus** is the supreme god and ruler of all the Olympians. He was the sixth child born to the Titans Cronus and Rhea. Earlier in this unit, it was discussed that Cronus would swallow his children. Rhea successfully tricked Cronus when Zeus was born. Instead of giving him the baby, she gave him a rock that was swaddled in a blanket. Cronus swallowed the rock.

Rhea then sent Zeus to **Gaea**, or Mother Earth. Gaea took Zeus to be raised on the island of Crete in a cave at a place called Dicte. Cronus did not suspect a thing. On Crete,Adrastea and her sister Ide were in charge of Zeus. Adrastea and Ide were ash nymphs. They guarded the cave and did everything they could to prevent Cronus from learning that he had a son. One time, they hung Zeus in a cradle from a tree. This was so Zeus could not be found on earth, in heaven, or in the sea. They even employed young boys with shields and spears to circle the tree and make noise if the baby cried.

As Zeus was growing up, others helped raise him. The early attendants were called **Curetes**. **Amalthea**, a divine goat, also took good care of Zeus. Amalthea means “tender,” and that was exactly how she treated young Zeus. When Amalthea died, Zeus turned her skin into his **Aegis**, or protective shield. This was to honor her for all of her care and hard work.

When Zeus grew older, he tricked his way into becoming the cup-bearer for his father, Cronus. When he was working one day, he, with the help of his mother Rhea and the Titaness Metis, slipped his father a drink which made him release the other children. They emerged unharmed because they were gods.

Zeus knew that if he was going to overthrow his father, he would need help. He freed the Cyclopes from Tartarus, a terrible place in the Underworld where Cronus had imprisoned them. In return for their freedom, the Cyclopes gave Zeus his thunderbolts. The Cyclopes also gave Poseidon, one of Zeus’ brothers, the trident. He used this to shake the earth and sea. They gave another of Zeus’ brothers, Hades, a helmet. When someone wore the helmet, it made that person invisible.

Once they became organized, Zeus and the others attacked Cronus. It was a furious battle. In the end, Hades snuck up behind Cronus wearing his helmet of invisibility. Poseidon rendered him immobile with his trident. Zeus struck him senseless with his thunderbolts. Thus, ended the reign of Cronus and the Titans. Cronus was sent to live on a distant island in the Atlantic Ocean.

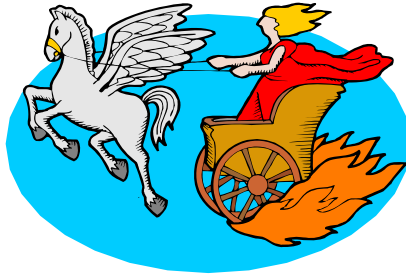
Zeus and his two brothers decided that they would draw lots to determine who was in charge of what aspects of the Universe. When Zeus became the supreme ruler, he was also the Lord of the Sky, the Rain-god, and the Cloud-gatherer. Poseidon became the ruler of the seas. Hades became the ruler of the Underworld.

Zeus’ power was greater than that of all the other gods together. Zeus was not omnipotent or omniscient. He could be opposed and defied. Zeus is often described as falling in love with one woman after another. He is guilty of using all kinds of tricks to hide his affairs from his wife.

Although Hera is considered the protector/goddess of marriage, she is not thought of as a great mother. Her children with Zeus include Ares, Hebe, Eris, and Eileithyia. She became jealous when Athena was born of Zeus



alone. In return, Hera bore Hephaestus alone. **Zeus'** children also included **Apollo, Aphrodite, Hermes, and Artemis.**



There are many stories of Hera and her jealousy toward other women. One of the famous stories involves Hera and a nymph named Echo. Hera suspected that Zeus and Echo were having an affair. When Hera first approached Echo, she noticed her beauty and her habit of talking a lot. Echo's discussions with Hera often served the purpose of distracting Hera from paying close attention to Zeus and his actions. Once Hera discovered this deception, she decided to punish Echo. Hera condemned Echo to never speak an original sentence again. Echo was doomed to only repeat what others had said around her or said to her.

Another woman who experienced Hera's jealousy was Leto. Hera learned that Leto was pregnant and that Zeus was the father. Because of this, Hera banned Leto from giving birth on "terra firma," or land. Leto was not allowed to give birth to her baby on the mainland or on any island at sea. In addition, Hera kidnapped her daughter, Eileithyia, who was the goddess of childbirth. This was to prevent Eileithyia from helping Leto give birth. Leto found Delos, the floating island, and was able to give birth there because it was technically not land.

After reading the information in this unit, it is very obvious that Greek Mythology is very interesting, but intertwined. Also, as we learned that even though the Titans were known as the Elder Gods, the Olympians ruled after the Titans were removed from power.