



Zeus

Zeus was the god of the sky and ruler of the Olympian gods. Zeus overthrew his Father Cronus. He then drew lots with his brothers Poseidon and Hades. Zeus won the draw and became the supreme ruler of the gods. He is lord of the sky, the rain god. His weapon is a thunderbolt which he hurls at those who displease him. He is married to Hera but, is famous for his many affairs. He is also known to punish those that lie or break oaths. He was the rain god, and the cloud gatherer, who wielded the terrible thunderbolt. His breastplate was the aegis, his bird the eagle, his tree the oak. He is represented as the god of justice and mercy, the protector of the weak, and the punisher of the wicked.



Poseidon

God of the sea, protector of all waters. Poseidon is the brother of Zeus. After the overthrow of their Father Cronus he drew lots with Zeus and Hades, another brother, for shares of the world. His prize was to become lord of the sea. He was widely worshiped by seamen. He married Amphitrite, a granddaughter of the Titan Oceanus. At one point he desired Demeter. To put him off Demeter asked him to make the most beautiful animal that the world had ever seen. So to impress her Poseidon created the first horse. In some accounts his first attempts were unsuccessful and created a variety of other animals in his quest. By the time the horse was created his passion for Demeter had cooled.

His weapon is a trident, which can shake the earth, and shatter any object. He is second only to Zeus in power amongst the gods. He has a difficult quarrelsome personality. He was greedy. He had a series of disputes with other gods when he tried to take over their cities.

greek tales

AMONG all those mortals who grew so wise that they learned the secrets of the gods, none was more cunning than Daedalus.

He once built, for King Minos of Crete, a wonderful Labyrinth of winding ways so cunningly tangled up and twisted around that, once inside, you could never find your way out again without a magic clue. But the king's favour veered with the wind, and one day he had his master architect imprisoned in a tower. Daedalus managed to escape from his cell; but it seemed impossible to leave the island, since every ship that came or went was well guarded by order of the king.

At length, watching the sea gulls in the air, — the only creatures that were sure of liberty, — he thought of a plan for himself and his young son Icarus, who was captive with him.

Little by little, he gathered a store of feathers great and small. He fastened these together with thread, moulded them in with wax, and so fashioned two great wings like those of a bird. When they were done, Daedalus fitted them to his own shoulders, and after one or two efforts, he found that by waving his arms he could winnow the air and cleave it, as a swimmer dcs the sea. He held himself aloft, wavered this way and that with the wind, and at last, like a great fledgling, he learned to fly.

Without delay, he fell to work on a pair of wings for the boy Icarus, and taught him carefully how to use them, bidding him beware of rash adventures among the stars.



Icarus and Daedalus

“Remember,” said the father, *“never to fly very low or very high, for the fogs about the earth would weigh you down, but the blaze of the sun will surely melt your feathers apart if you go too near.”*

For Icarus, these cautions went in at one ear and out by the other. Who could remember to be careful when he was to fly for the first time? Are birds careful? Not they! And not an idea remained in the boy's head but the one joy of escape.

The day came, and the fair wind that was to set them free. The father bird put on his wings, and, while the light urged them to be gone, he waited to see that all was well with Icarus, for the two could not fly hand in hand. Up they rose, the boy after his father. The hateful ground of Crete sank beneath them; and the country folk, who caught a glimpse of them when they were high above the tree-tops, took it for a vision of the gods, — Apollo, perhaps, with Cupid after him.

At first there was a terror in the joy. The wide vacancy of the air dazed them, — a glance downward made their brains reel. But when a great wind filled their wings, and Icarus felt himself sustained, like a halcyon-bird in the hollow of a wave, like a child uplifted by his mother, he

forgot everything in the world but joy. He forgot Crete and the other islands that he had passed over: he saw but vaguely that winged thing in the distance before him that was his father Daedalus. He longed for one draught of flight to quench the thirst of his captivity: he stretched out his arms to the sky and made towards the highest heavens.

Alas for him! Warmer and warmer grew the air. Those arms, that had seemed to uphold him, relaxed. His wings wavered, drooped. He fluttered his young hands vainly, — he was falling, — and in that terror he remembered. The heat of the sun had melted the wax from his wings; the feathers were falling, one by one, like snowflakes; and there was none to help.

He fell like a leaf tossed down the wind, down, down, with one cry that overtook Daedalus far away. When he returned, and sought high and low for the poor boy, he saw nothing but the bird-like feathers afloat on the water, and he knew that Icarus was drowned.

The nearest island he named Icaria, in memory of the child; but he, in heavy grief, went to the temple of Apollo in Sicily, and there hung up his wings as an offering. Never again did he attempt to fly.

