

greek tales



Apollo

Apollo is the son of Zeus and Leto. His twin sister is Artemis. He is the god of music, playing a golden lyre. The Archer, far shooting with a silver bow. The god of healing who taught man medicine. The god of light. The god of truth, who can not speak a lie. One of Apollo's more important daily tasks is to harness his chariot with four horses and drive the Sun across the sky. He is famous for his oracle at Delphi. People traveled to it from all over the Greek world to divine the future. His tree was the laurel. The crow his bird. The dolphin his animal.



Athena

Athena is the Greek virgin goddess of reason, intelligent activity, arts and literature. Athena is the daughter of Zeus. She sprang full grown in armor from his forehead, thus has no mother. She is fierce and brave in battle but, only wars to defend the state and home from outside enemies. She is the goddess of the city, handicrafts, and agriculture. She invented the bridle, which permitted man to tame horses, the trumpet, the flute, the pot, the rake, the plow, the yoke, the ship, and the chariot. She is the embodiment of wisdom, reason, and purity. She was Zeus's favorite child and was allowed to use his weapons including his thunderbolt. Her favorite city is Athens. Her tree is the olive. The owl is her bird. She is a virgin goddess.

The Cyclopes



It was at the beginning of time that Gaia (Mother Earth) and her husband Uranus (the Heavens) began producing children of semi-human form. The first of their offspring to come into existence were the Hecatoncheires or Hundred-handed Ones. These three brothers known as Briareus, Gyges and Cottus were not only gigantic in size but each bore fifty heads and one hundred arms. They were soon followed by another curious looking set of siblings named Arges, Brontes and Steropes, best known to the world the three original Cyclopes. Each of the brothers had but one solitary eye positioned in the center of his forehead.

All were great in stature and possessed immense power and strength. Though they were born with explosive tempers, the Cyclopes were known to be master smiths as well as expert builders.

The brothers are credited for constructing the massive enclosures at Tiryns and Midea, as well as the stone fortress that surrounds the mighty city of Mycenae. Stories of the Cyclopes range from Thrace to Crete to Lycia. According to the Roman poet Virgil, their thunderbolt forge could be found in Vulcan's blacksmith shop, among the caves of Mount Aetna.

The Cyclopes played a role in the fall of both their father Uranus and his son Cronus. It seems that after Uranus fathered the Titans with Gaia, he no longer looked favorably upon his first born children. He viewed the Cyclopes and the Hecatoncheires as nothing more than rebellious monsters, and to rid himself of embarrassment had the brothers imprisoned in the dark depths of Tartarus.

Angry over the treatment of her children, Gaia appealed to her son Cronus, the youngest of the seven Titans. She petitioned him to sneak up upon his sleeping father and attack him with a flint sickle. She added that upon the death of Uranus, Cronus would be able to assume the position of king.

Naturally, the thought of having dominion over heaven and earth appealed to the young Titan and he readily agreed to his mother's proposition. Cronus waited, and when he was sure Uranus had fallen into a deep sleep slowly approached and castrated him, throwing both his father's genitals and the flint sickle into the sea.

As Uranus lay dying, some of his fresh blood dripped down and flowed into Mother Earth. She at once gave birth to the three Furies; Alecto, Tisiphone and Megaera. These terrifying sisters were given the task of avenging crimes of perjury and parricide. Immediately, the Cyclopes and

the their Hundred-handed brothers were released from their prison cells and Cronus accepted his role as king of the universe. Much to Gaia's dismay, her son's first act as sovereign was to return her beloved children to their prison cells in Tartarus, then taking for himself his sister Rhea as his bride. Though it was not long before Rhea became pregnant, she would not be allowed to experience the joys of motherhood. For it had been prophesied to her new husband that just as he had defeated his own father he would also fall at the hands of his own children. Cronus insisted that after giving birth Rhea take the newborn baby and place it before him. He would then swallow the child whole, thus protecting both himself and his title as king. One by one Rhea watched as her husband devoured her children, until finally she could take no more.

After giving birth to her youngest son Zeus, the distraught mother hid the child safely away on the island of Crete. She then disguised a stone by wrapping it in a baby's blanket and handed the bundle to Cronus to swallow.

Zeus quickly grew to manhood, and with the help of the Titaness Metis, was able to trick his father into drinking a magic potion. The elixir caused Cronus to become very sick and in a few moments he began to vomit. As the Titan wretched, out popped Rhea's missing children;

Poseidon, Hades, Hera, Hestia and Demeter. The group joined together with Zeus,



Before adding them to the ranks of the Olympians, Zeus first made sure to build up their strength by filling them with the divine food of the gods. To show their gratitude, the Cyclopes presented Zeus with the mighty thunderbolt. The god immediately adopted the weapon as his own, making it forever a symbol of his personal power. The giants also awarded Hades with a helmet of invisibility and Poseidon with a trident. Armed with their new gifts, the three Olympian brothers held a meeting and together formulated a plan. Hades placed the helmet of darkness upon his head and entered unseen into the presence of Cronus.

As Poseidon caused a distraction by threatening his father's life with his trident the lord of the dead carried off the Titan's weapons. With Cronus' attention finally diverted, Zeus took aim and struck him down with a thunderbolt. The Hecatoncheires began to throw rocks at the remaining Titans and to add extra fear the god Pan let out one of his famous shouts, causing the defeated army to run for their lives.

The Olympians followed close behind and it was not long before the Titans were finally captured and placed in Tartarus. It is there they remain to this day under the watchful guard of the Hecatoncheires. For his role as commander and leader,

Atlas suffered a much different punishment. He was made to stand and bear the weight of the heavens upon his shoulders for all eternity. There are other variations as to the fate of

Cronus. One tells us that he escaped to Italy and was given the privilege of ruling over the Golden Age. Another claims that after leaving Olympus, the Titan went on to become king of the Island of the Blessed.

This was a place located in the realm of Hades where men who were once favored by the gods traveled to after their death. Because of the help given to Zeus by Rhea and Metis, the two Titanesses remained free and received no punishment. The Cyclopes went on to forge Zeus' weapons until they were killed by Apollo in retaliation for Zeus causing the death of his son Asclepius. It is said that their ghosts can still be found lurking about the volcanic caves of Mount Aetna.



hence bringing about the great war between the Olympians and the Titans.

Mother Earth promised Zeus victory, but only if he would first agree to release her monstrous children from their bondage and accept them on his side as allies. Desperately wanting to defeat Atlas and his army of Titans, Zeus crept into Tartarus and killed the old guard Campe. He removed the cell keys from her belt and released both the Cyclopes and the Hecatoncheires from their chambers.