

WHO WERE THE GODS?

Ancient Greek religion tried to explain how the world began - as the Muses also do at the beginning of the film 'Hercules'. Mother Earth formed the world and also created the gods and goddesses. However, monsters and giants like the Titans were also created and the world was in chaos until Zeus fought the Titans and won, becoming King of the gods.

The Greek myths usually featured gods and goddesses - each responsible for some part of everyday life. People relied on these stories of the gods rather than upon actual historical evidence when they wanted to learn about the past. People prayed to whichever one was most relevant to them - e.g. protecting the harvest, keeping people safe in wartime etc. Worshippers believed that the gods would look after them if they offered them food from their harvests and animal sacrifices.

The gods were immortal (this meant that they lived forever) and had supernatural powers such as strength. They lived on top of Mount Olympus - the highest mountain in northern Greece in between Thessaly and Macedonia).

THE GALLERY OF THE GODS: WHO'S WHO?

- **ZEUS** - King of the gods and Lord of the weather. Married to Hera. Domineering and powerful but seen as more humourous in the film. Carries thunderbolts and an eagle as his symbols.
- **HERA** - Queen of the gods. Goddess of marriage and women. Seen as Hercules' mother in the film but in Greek mythology his mother was a human being.
- **ATHENE** - Goddess of wisdom and war. Always wore armour and has the owl as her symbol. (Athens is named after her.)
- **HADES** - Ruler of the Underworld - the Kingdom of the dead. Gloomy and frightening. Had a helmet which made him invisible.
- **POSIEDON** - Lord of the seas from an underwater palace. Controlled storms, sea monsters and earthquakes.
- **APOLLO** - God of light, truth, music, poetry, science and healing. Told the future and carried a bow and arrows.
- **HEPHAESTOS** - The blacksmith who made supernaturally powerful weapons. Often seen with a hammer, tongs and an axe.
- **APHRODITE** - Goddess of love and beauty. Had a magic golden belt which made her irresistible.
- **DEMETER** - Goddess of plants and harvest - responsible for growth and fertility of crops.
- **EROS** - Son of Aphrodite - made people fall in love by shooting them with his golden bow.
- **HERMES** - Messenger of the gods. God of travellers and thieves. Had a winged helmet and sandals.
- **THE MUSES** - These were the goddesses of the arts.

You may find in your research that some of the names of the gods are different. This is because both the Greek and Roman names of each god can be used. Hercules is the Roman name of the god whilst his Greek name is Heracles.



TASK:

You are shown what the Disney animators think some of the gods and goddesses look like in the film. You can also see interpretations of them on pieces of pottery made thousands of years ago. What do YOU think they would have looked like? Using the descriptions given above, try and draw your interpretations of the gods.