

Classical Mythology

(or Percy Jackson's Family History)

Week 2

Day 1: The Lesser Gods, Part 1: Helios and his sisters

Day 2: The Lesser Gods, Part 2: Hecate and Styx

Day 3: The Lesser Gods, Part 3: Pan

Day 4: The Lesser Gods, Part 4: Asclepius

Day 5: Weeks 1 and 2 Review

Day 1

Now that you are familiar with the major players on Mount Olympus, it's time for you to meet some of the minor players, other gods with lesser powers, most of whom pre-dated the Olympians.

The story of today's deities picks up where we left off back on Week 1, Day 2. Recall the following from that lesson:

The twelve Titan offspring of Sky and Earth were as follows:

Daughters:

- **Theia** (a goddess of light)
- **Rhea** (an earth goddess and eventually the mother of the Olympian Gods)
- **Themis** (another earth goddess like her mother and sister, Rhea)
- **Mnemosyne** (Memory)
- **Phoebe** (a moon goddess)
- **Tethys** (the most ancient goddess of the sea)

Sons:

- **Oceanus** (the first born of the Titans; the god of the River Oceanus, a freshwater river that circled the whole Earth and was the source of all of Earth's fresh water; the river itself)
- **Coeus** (Query)
- **Crius** (Ram)

- **Hyperion** (a god of light)
- **Iapetus** (Spear Wound)
- **Cronus** (the youngest of the Titans; Time)

Also from the Week 1, Day 2 lesson:

More than anything, Sky desired power, and so afraid was he of losing that power that he tried to get rid of the Titans as he had the Giants and Cyclopes. Whenever a Titan was born, Sky would immediately thrust the child back into the darkness of Earth's womb. By the twelfth time this happened, Mother Earth had had enough, and her maternal instincts kicked in. Along with her children, Earth devised a plan to punish Sky, but none of the children volunteered to execute the plan except Cronus. So Cronus waited until the time that he could act, and when he did, he castrated Sky with an iron sickle. Sky then vowed to someday avenge the act and warned Cronus that his own children would someday rise against him, too.

So now the Titans were free with Cronus as their king, and they freed their siblings, the Giants and the Cyclopes, as well. The freedom of the six latter siblings was short lived, however, as Cronus soon sent them back to Tartarus when he feared they would rise up against him.

Now freed, the Titan siblings began to pair up. For example, Theia and Hyperion (both light deities) married and produced a son, **Helius** (Sun), and two daughters, **Selene** (Moon) and **Eos** (Dawn) . . .

(end of review section)

Aetiology Alert!

As the sun god, Helios was said to have driven a sun chariot pulled by four horses across the sky each day, beginning in the east and ending in the west. Then at night, he rode the river Oceanus around the perimeter of the earth back to the east so that his journey across the sky could begin anew the next morning. His sister, Eos (Dawn), accompanied him on his journeys.

The story goes that during the ten-year war between the Titans and the Olympians that ended in Zeus' taking reign, Helios had remained neutral. As a reward, Zeus granted Helios an island, Rhodes*, that Helios wanted.

On his journey across the sky each day, Helios saw everything that happened on earth, and he was sometimes quick to tell others what he saw and learned. Because the ancient Greeks believed no one could hide from the all-seeing sun god, they often swore oaths by him.

***A Modern-Day Connection**

Rhodes is a real place, and the people of the island later erected a statue (circa 280 BC) of Helios overlooking the arbor. The statue, which stood 98 feet high and came to be known as the “Colossus of Rhodes,” became one the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and survived only until it was destroyed by an earthquake in 226 BC.

The Statue of Liberty was modeled after the Colossus of Rhodes, and the latter is even referred to in the poem by Emma Lazarus which is engraved on a bronze plaque and mounted inside the lower level of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. Fittingly, Lazarus’ poem is titled “The New Colossus.”

On December 23, 2015, *The Telegraph* reported that Greece plans to rebuild the statue as a symbol “of the country’s determination to emerge from the [current] economic crisis.” The new statue will reportedly be five times larger than the original, standing 443 feet tall.

For the full article about the new statue, please visit this link:

<https://www.jebiga.com/colossus-of-rhodes-project-rebuilding-world-wonders/>

Please note: The video on the page is not necessary and is not recommended without a parent previewing, as it contains images of the original Colossus that may not be appropriate for all students.

A Tale of Two Sisters

Besides Helios, Hyperion and Theia had two daughters, Eos (Dawn) and Selene (Moon).

As mentioned above, Dawn was thought to accompany her brother Sun across the sky, but first she would daily rise from her throne in her palace in the east to announce the coming of her brother.

Like her brother, Moon drove a chariot drawn by horses across the sky, but of course, she did it at night while Sun was making his way back to the east via the river Oceanus.

Roman Equivalents

Helios: Sol

Eos: Aurora

Selene: Luna

Based on this information, how do the following words relate? Reminder: add them to your dictionary.

solar, solarium, solarize, insolation, solstice

aura, auroral; the periodic table symbol for gold, Au

lunar, lunacy, lunatic

What other words can you think of that are associated with the Roman names of these deities?

Helius is also spelled "Helios." What words can you think of that have been derived from this Greek deity's name?

Most of us are probably not familiar with the words derived from "Selene" (I wasn't anyway). Use a dictionary to define the following words:

aposelene

geoselenic

paraselene

periselene

selenocentric/selenocentric

selenodesy

selenodont

selenofault

selenograph

selenographer

selenographic/selenographist/selenography/selenographical

selenoid

selenolatry

selenologist/selenology/selenological

selenomancy

selenomania

selenomorphology

selenophobia

selenotrope/selenotropic

selenotropism

selenozone

Day 2

Hecate (HECK-uh-tay)

The goddess Hecate was first mentioned in Hesiod's *Theogony* (lines 411-452). According to Hesiod, Hecate was a powerful but benevolent goddess who had fought with Zeus against her own in the war with the Titans and was thus rewarded by him after the war with retention of a portion of each major realm: the earth, the sky, and the sea.

Interestingly, Hesiod was the only writer to look favorably upon Hecate. In later writings, Hecate was a force of darkness, but the change was never explained. Because the later writings are more recent than Hesiod's, the goddess is thought today to be a "dark" goddess—of the night, of witchcraft, and of ghosts, but that wasn't always so.

Hecate is often depicted as three joined bodies looking in different directions, perhaps because she was also goddess of the crossroads. With three heads, she could see in all directions (or even, symbolically, the past, present, and future). Those who prayed to her sought guidance in choosing the right direction or path. Because she was thought to lead others on journeys, she carried a torch to light the way.

Her Roman equivalent is *Trivia*, which means "three ways" or "three roads" (*tri* = three; *via* = way or road). Be sure to add this to your dictionary!

Please see the following link for one artist's depiction of Hecate:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Hecate#/media/File:Hecate_Chiamonti_Inv1922.jpg

Styx

Do you recall from Week 1, Day 2 that two Titans, Oceanus and Tethys, mated and produced all the rivers on Earth? One of their river offspring was Styx.

Like Hecate, Styx was a dark deity as she was the goddess of the river Styx which was thought to be the main river in the Underworld.

Also, like Hecate, she fought with Zeus against her own in the war with the Titans. Zeus rewarded her by promising to keep watch over her four children*—**Zelus** (Zeal), **Nike** (Victory), **Cratus** (Strength), and **Bia** (Force)—all of whom also fought on the side of the Olympians during the war.** In addition, Zeus honored her by making her name the one upon which were sworn the greatest oaths.

Roman equivalent: Styx

*Their father was a Titan named **Pallas**, who was a god of warcraft. In the war between the Titans and the Olympians, he was killed by Athena.

**Nike, who had wings, was appointed Zeus' charioteer, and all four were appointed as sentinels standing beside the throne of the god.

Known Roman equivalents of Styx's children: Nike = Victoria; Cratus = Potestas; Bia = Vis

Something to Think About: How do the following words relate to classical mythology?
Reminder: add them to your dictionary.

stygian

zeal/zealous

autocracy

democracy

What do you make of the athletic company Nike? In what ways does it draw inspiration from the Greek goddess?

Day 3

In 1844, a poet named Elizabeth Barrett Browning declared in “The Dead Pan” that “Pan, Pan is dead.”

Pan was one of only two classical deities who died; the other was Asclepius, whom you will learn more about tomorrow.

Perhaps more than any other classical deity, Pan had, at least from a Christian perspective, a reputation for evil. As half-man and half-goat (a satyr or, in Roman mythology, a faun), he was the flute-playing god of the wild and thus of man’s wildest, basest desires of the flesh. In fact, artistic depictions of Satan were (and are) often similar to the look of Pan, particularly with horns on his head.

Browning’s reference in her poem to Pan’s death originated with a writer named Plutarch (circa AD 46-127) who told in his story that the news of Pan’s death was announced from the skies to a sailor on his way to Italy. The sailor was then instructed to spread the news. Later, another writer, Eusebius (AD 263-339), added to the story that Emperor Tiberius (a real person who reigned during the life of Jesus), upon hearing the news, asked to see the sailor in person so he could hear his account firsthand; Eusebius concluded that Jesus Christ had rid the world of Pan. And even later, writer G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) wrote the following in “The End of the World” from *The Everlasting Man*: “It is said truly in a sense that Pan died because Christ was born.”

In other words, Jesus put an end to the need for polytheism since he was and is the one true God.

Historically, it was probably then that Pan became “demonized” in art and that he and Satan were seen as basically interchangeable.

As the god of the wild, Pan represented everything in nature (in fact, his name means “everything”). At its root, paganism (or more specifically, neopaganism) is the worship of nature, a.k.a. pantheism (get it?). The New Age Movement also has pantheistic beliefs.

And what is Pan’s influence in the 21st century? He is the chief deity of a religion that still worships him and many other of the classical deities.

Roman equivalent: Faunus

Activities:

Define “pantheism.”

Research how the word “panic” relates to this classical god. Add it to your dictionary.

The cover of the April 8, 1966, edition of *Time* magazine asked, “Is God Dead?” in response to the growth of atheism in America at that time as well as the growth of “Death of God” theology. Which do you think is a bigger threat to Christianity today: atheism or pantheism?

Some people believe the character Peter Pan is based on the Greek god Pan. Besides the name, how/why do you think they have come to this conclusion?

Day 4

Probably, you have heard of most of the deities we have studied so far, but one you may not be familiar with is **Asclepius**, the Greek god of medicine and healing.

Besides Pan, Asclepius was the only deity who died, which is ironic given what he reigned over. (He was technically a demi-god, or half-god, since his mother was mortal, but he was so revered that the ancient Greeks elevated him to the status of a god.)

Asclepius was a son of Apollo. His mother was a mortal (human) named Coronis, who died while she was pregnant with Asclepius; the child was rescued from her womb (his name meant “to cut open”).

It is said that in return for some kindness rendered by Asclepius, a snake taught him secret knowledge. (Ancient Greeks believed snakes were sacred beings of wisdom, healing, and resurrection.) To commemorate this event, Asclepius bore a rod wreathed with a snake, which became associated with healing and which remains a symbol of medicine today.

Regarding his death, the story goes that Asclepius became so proficient as a healer that he was able to bring others back from the dead. Zeus did not like this because it caused a growth in the human population and/or because it defied the natural order of things, so he (Zeus) killed Asclepius with a thunderbolt.

The Romans believed that after Asclepius' death, Zeus placed his body among the stars as the constellation Ophiuchus, i.e., Serpent Holder.

Some sources also state that Asclepius was later resurrected by Zeus to prevent feuds with Apollo and that Asclepius was instructed by Zeus to never revive the dead without his approval again.

Among his children, Asclepius had five daughters: **Hygieia**, the goddess of health, cleanliness, and sanitation; **Iaso**, the goddess of recuperation; **Aceso**, the goddess of the healing process; **Aglaea**, the goddess of the glow of good health; and **Panacea**, the goddess of universal remedy.

How do the following words relate to today's lesson? Add them to your dictionary.

hygiene/hygienic

panacea

Research the following and determine how they relate to today's lesson:

Aesculapian snake

the botanical genus *Asclepias* (milkweed)

Day 5

We have covered a wealth of material in the first two weeks! In this lesson, we will see how much you remember. I recommend completing as much of this review as you can without looking back at the material so you can see what/how much information has stuck with you.

1. Who was the leader of the Olympian gods?
2. What two Olympian gods were twin brother and sister?
3. Who were the Titans?
4. Who was the Olympian goddess of love and beauty?
5. What Olympian god lived in the Underworld rather than on Mount Olympus?
6. Which Olympian god's symbol was the trident?
7. Who was Zeus' wife?
8. What was unusual about Athena's birth?
9. Who was Hephaestus' wife?
10. Which Olympian goddess gave up her throne for Dionysus?
11. Hecate was the goddess of what?
12. What was given to Cronus to eat instead of his son, Zeus?
13. Who was Uranus?
14. Who was Cronus' wife?
15. Which Olympian god was blacksmith to the other Olympian gods?
16. Who was the goddess of agriculture?
17. Who was the Olympian god of war?
18. Who was the Olympian goddess of hunting?
19. Who was the messenger of the Olympian gods?
20. Who wrote the *Theogony*?

21. Who was the author of *Works and Days*?
22. Who were the Titans' parents?
23. What was the first Age of Man?

SAMPLE