

## GREEK CREATION

In the beginning, the universe was without form. It was just a vast hole, an abyss. This nothingness was called **Chaos** [KAY-ahs]. Out of **Chaos** were created **Erebus** [AIR-uh-bus] (Darkness) and **Nox** (Night). These two produced a gigantic egg, out of which was hatched a tremendous energy called **Eros** [AIR-ohss] (Love). Love created a goddess, **Gaea** [JEE-uh] (Earth), and a god, **Uranus** [YUR-an-uhs] (Heaven). Heaven and Earth were the first parents. Their children were a race of giants called Titans (or Elder Gods).

**Uranus**, first ruler of all things, proved to be very cruel and unjust. Finally his wife, **Gaea**, the Earth-Mother, helped one of their Titan children, **Cronus** [KRO-nuhs] to overthrow him. **Cronus** became king and married a Titaness named **Rhea** [REE-uh]. The rule of **Cronus** was called the Golden Age because all things on earth, including men (who had been fashioned by a Titan named **Prometheus** [pro-MEE-thee-uhs]), were living in harmony with the gods and with each other. The whole earth at this time was a paradise.

But this Golden Age ended when one of the sons of **Cronus**, **Zeus** [ZOOS], overthrew his father with the help of **Prometheus**. **Zeus** made himself King of the Universe. He gave the sea to his brother **Poseidon** [poh-SIE-don] and the underworld to his brother **Hades** [HAY-deez]. After that the race of men declined morally from the Golden Age to the Silver Age. The Silver Age had some good things, too, but men had less respect for the gods and were absorbed by material pleasures. They continued to decline into the next Age, the Brazen (Bronze) Age. The Brazen period of constant violence and warfare did produce the heroes of the Trojan War. As time went on however, this degenerated more into an Iron Age of poverty and misery, cold weather, crop shortages, and dwindling food supplies.

One version of the story of creation claims that the world became so wicked that **Zeus** saw he must sweep it clean of people and make a fresh start. He caused a great rain to fall (one of his titles was "Cloud-Compeller") and a great flood to cover the earth. When it passed, only a good man, Deucalion [doo-KAL-lee-on], and his good wife, Pyrrha [PEER-uh], were left. They and their children repopulated the earth.

The authors of the Greek myths accepted a system of rewards and punishments. They believed that sin or wrong-doing - pride or greed or disobedience to the gods - were always punished. Sometimes the fault was in being too curious, as when the nymph **Pandora** [pan-DOOR-uh] disobeyed her husband and opened a mysterious box, setting free all the evils in the world. Most religions try to explain the origins of evil, and the ancient Greeks explained it with this myth.

But sometimes, it would seem, people were punished unjustly. The good Titan, **Prometheus**, known as the "savior" of mankind because he stole fire from heaven for the good of men against the command of Zeus, was punished by being bound to a rock.

For the most part, the gods lived their own lives apart from men, free of sickness and pain. And, of course, they never died. Only through a god's attachment to mortal persons could he know true suffering, as the drama of **Prometheus** shows.

Most of the time the gods lived happy lives, engaged in what we would call "trivial pursuits" - fun, feasting, and merrymaking. They even had their own special food, called *ambrosia*, and drink, called *nectar*.

The Greek gods had human traits and were fully capable of meanness, cruelty, and jealousy. Quarreling and feuding among the gods was fairly common. Most of them fell far short of perfection. But we must remember that the Greeks, unlike the Egyptians and the people of India, made their gods in their own image, in the image of nature, men, and women. Gods and natural objects were like people. A rushing stream was a lively young woman, a nymph, hurrying along to join her love, the sea. It is the humanity of the Greek myths that have given us some of the most beautiful stories the world has ever known.

## HOW EVIL CAME INTO THE WORLD

Although **Zeus** [ZOOS] had punished **Prometheus** [pro-MEE-thee-uhs] for giving fire to Man, he couldn't take the fire away from Man. The law of Olympus was that no god could take away any gift that another immortal had given. **Zeus** could only bestow another gift that might balance the account with **Prometheus**. So he called his son and chief craftsman, **Hephaestus** [hee-FES-tuhs], the blacksmith, and told him to make a new creature, like nothing known before - a creature made up of all good things, but also with their opposites.

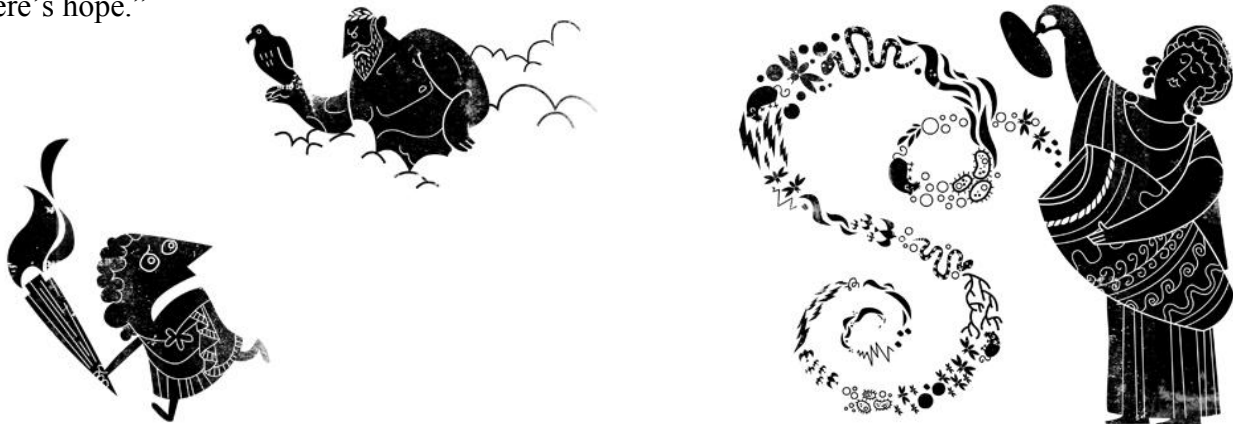
So **Hephaestus**, who must have been the most industrious of all the gods, took a lump of clay and mixed into it a little bit of everything, from gold to gravel, from honey to gall, sweet things and bitter things and contradictory things: love and hate, kindness and cruelty, faithfulness and inconstancy, beauty and treachery, a little bit of heaven and a great deal of earth. He created a lovely creature - the first woman. (How men got along without women before that, only the gods knew!) The goddess **Athena** [uh-THEEN-uh] dressed her in beautiful clothes and taught her household crafts like spinning and sewing. **Aphrodite** [af-roh-DIE-tee], the Love Goddess, gave her beauty, of course, and the gift of sweet talk, but she also put all kinds of cunning tricks into her mind. All the gods gave her something, so they called her "**Pandora**" [pan-DOOR-uh], which means "All-Gifted."

**Zeus** directed that **Hermes** [HER-meez], the Messenger, take **Pandora** to **Epimetheus** [ep-ee-MEE-thee-uhs], brother of **Prometheus**, to be his wife. This was to show **Epimetheus** that the gods bore him no grudge or ill will because of his brother's rebellion.

**Epimetheus** - "Afterthought" - who never could foretell the consequences of his actions and often got into trouble without far-sighted **Prometheus** to guide him, naturally received the beautiful **Pandora** with great joy. He forgot his brother's warning about accepting gifts from **Zeus**. He was still guarding the sealed box that **Prometheus** had left with him, charging him never to open it. He was so charmed, however, with his new mate, **Pandora** that he almost forgot the box until one day she asked what it was. **Epimetheus**, remembering his brother's warning, put her off. And so, for awhile, everything was fine.

But one day when **Epimetheus** was out gathering a bouquet for his beautiful bride, the too-curious **Pandora** broke the seal and lifted the lid of the box. Out flew big horseflies and wasps, beetles and bats, terrible creatures, stinging and poisonous - all the bad things that **Prometheus**, with careful foresight, had gathered together - sins and plagues and misery - and guarded so that the Golden Age and happiness of men might go on. And now they had all flown out into the world because of an undisciplined woman! **Pandora** was not a bad girl - just a little too curious about things better left alone.

However, one good thing remained in the box after the bad things had flown out and away. Hope, a beautiful, angelic little figure, had remained at the bottom of the box of evil things. Hope reassured **Pandora** and **Epimetheus** that she would never leave them. As we say, "While there's life, there's hope."



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

# Creation

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1. In the beginning, the nothingness was called \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The universe was without form, a big bottomless hole or \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Erebus and Nox produced a big \_\_\_\_\_ . Out of it came a gigantic force called \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. From this tremendous energy were created Gaea and Uranus, also known as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. From these two came the Elder Gods, giants called \_\_\_\_\_.
6. One of the sons of Gaea and Uranus, \_\_\_\_\_ , overthrew his father and became king. His reign was called the \_\_\_\_\_ .
7. This age ended when \_\_\_\_\_ overthrew his father, Cronus. It was followed by the \_\_\_\_\_ , the \_\_\_\_\_ , and the \_\_\_\_\_ Ages.
8. When the world became too wicked, Zeus wiped out most of the people with a great \_\_\_\_\_ .
9. The only people left were the good man \_\_\_\_\_ and his good wife \_\_\_\_\_ .
10. The gods were like men, but unlike men they never \_\_\_\_\_.
11. The special food of the gods was called \_\_\_\_\_ , and their drink was called \_\_\_\_\_ .
12. The Greeks made their gods in their own \_\_\_\_\_ .

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

## ***How Evil Came Into the World***

1. What was the law of Olympus, with regard to gifts of the gods?

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2. In making the first woman, Hephaestus used opposite things, such as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

3. The goddess Athena gave Pandora lovely \_\_\_\_\_ and taught her household skills like \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

4. The goddess Aphrodite gave her the gift of \_\_\_\_\_, but put all kinds of \_\_\_\_\_ in her mind.

5. Because all the gods gave her something, she was called Pandora, which means \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Epimetheus was so happy with Pandora that he forgot about the \_\_\_\_\_ his brother had left in his charge.

7. Epimetheus, whose name means \_\_\_\_\_, could never fortell the consequences of his actions.

8. Pandora was not a bad girl; she just had too much \_\_\_\_\_.

9. What happened when Pandora opened the box? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. The one good thing that was left, a promise for the future, was \_\_\_\_\_.