

THE GREAT GODS: OLYMPIANS AND OTHERS

The Great Gods lived on Mount Olympus, an actual mountain, the highest in Greece, nearly ten thousand feet above the sea. In these stories, Olympus also sometimes seems to be a place much higher in the heavens.

There were twelve chief gods and goddesses and several lesser ones. When Greeks began settling in Italy, the Romans liked the Greek gods well enough to create their own myths about them, although they changed many of the names. Even at the height of the Roman Empire, the Roman gods were considered identical to their Greek counterparts.

Here are the names of the chief gods and goddesses:

GREEK	ROMAN	CHARACTERISTICS
Zeus [ZOOS]	Jupiter [JOO-pit-er] Jove [JOVE]	King of the gods. He is sometimes angry at the behavior of gods and people, but he can also be a gentle and caring ruler. He is particularly fond of beautiful women, regardless of whether they are goddesses or mortals.
Poseidon [poh-SIE-don]	Neptune [NEP-toon]	Zeus's brother. God of the ocean and of earthquakes. He is often distinguished in art by the fisherman's trident he carries - a three-pronged spear.
Hera [HEE-ruh]	Juno [JOO-noh]	Zeus's wife. Queen of the gods, guardian of marriage. She is a great lady and diplomat. Though she is often jealous and nags her husband, she can also be a tender and loving wife.
Athena [uh-THEEN-uh]	Minerva [min-ER-vuh]	Daughter of Zeus (born, it is said, from his brain, when he had a bad headache). She is the goddess of wisdom and war, patriotism and good citizenship. She is the protector and namesake for the city of Athens.
Apollo [uh-PAW-loh]	Apollo	Son of Zeus. God of poetry, music, and medicine, and god of light. He is associated with the sun.
Artemis [AR-tem-is]	Diana [die-AN-uh]	Apollo's twin sister. Goddess of hunting and of wild things. She is associated with the moon. She is sometimes called "Cynthia."
Ares [AIR-eez]	Mars [MARZ]	Son of Zeus. Terrible god of war.
Hephaestus [hee-FES-tuhs]	Vulcan [VUL-kan]	Son of Zeus and Hera, the lame blacksmith god of fire.
Aphrodite [af-roh-DIE-tee]	Venus [VEE-nuhs]	The wife of Hephaestus, she is the goddess of love and beauty. She is said to have been born of the sea foam. Her son, Eros [AIR-ohss] (the Roman Cupid [KUE-pid]), shoots arrows which cause men and women to fall in love. Another son, Aeneas [ee-NEE-uhs], is a mortal man, considered to be the ancestor of the Romans.
Hermes [HER-meez]	Mercury [MER-cure-ee]	Son of Zeus. Messenger of the gods, he is also the god of science and invention.
Hestia [HES-tee-uh]	Vesta [VES-tuh]	Zeus's sister. Goddess of the hearth and home.
Demeter [dee-MEE-ter]	Ceres [SEER-eez]	Zeus's sister. She is the very important goddess of grain and agriculture. She is a kind of bond between heaven and earth.

These are the “Big Twelve,” six gods and six goddesses, the top rank of the Olympians. Their traits and characters are as clear and human as those of mortal men and women.

Along with the twelve Olympians there were other important gods. **Zeus’s** other brother, **Hades** [HAY-deez], more commonly known by his Roman name of **Pluto** [PLOO-toh], was lord of the dead and the underworld (also called “Hades”) where the dead go. As we might expect, he was a dim, shadowy figure. There was also the great earth god **Pan**, god of woods and fields, who was half man (his upper part) and half goat (his lower part). **Pan** often played his “pipes,” a kind of flute made from several tubes of reeds bound together. He was not often seen, but when he played on his pipes the woods were full of rather eerie music, which, especially at twilight, often scared people just to hear it, causing them to *panic*, as we say. The word *panic* comes from the name **Pan**.

Another important earth god was **Dionysus** [die-on-IS-uhs] (the Roman **Bacchus** [BAK-uhs]) god of wine and revelry, dancing and drama. Myths tell of his coming from faraway lands, bringing with him a new ecstatic religion and dancing followers of wild behavior, including the **Maenads** (“raving women”), satyrs (half goat, like **Pan**), and sileni (half horse). His opponents, defenders of more dignified old-time religions, despised his cult and fought it. But in the end, **Dionysus** was recognized as a god - perhaps the most popular of all gods.

There were several groups of minor divinities. Beautiful young women called **nymphs** guarded different parts of nature. Nymphs called **Dryads** lived in the woods, sometimes inside trees. Other nymphs called **Nereids**, daughters of **Poseidon**, lived in the sea.

The nine **Muses**, daughters of **Zeus** and **Mnemosyne** [nee-MOSS-in-ee] (Zeus had several wives), lived on the heights of Mounts Parnassus, Pindos, and Helicon, whose springs and streams were sacred to them, as were the palm tree and the laurel. **Apollo**, god of poetry and music, was naturally their patron and leader. They were goddesses of various arts, mostly literary. **Terpsichore** [terp-SIK-oh-ree] was Muse of choral song and dance, **Euterpe** [yoo-TER-pee] of lyric poetry, **Erato** [AIR-at-oh] of love poetry, **Polyhymnia** [paw-lee-HIM-nee-uh] of sacred poetry (hymns), **Thalia** [tha-LIE-uh] of comic drama, **Calliope** [kuh-LIE-oh-pee] of epic poetry, and **Melpomene** [mel-POM-eh-nee] of tragic drama. **Urania** [yoo-RAY-nee-uh] was Muse of astronomy, and **Clio** [KLIE-oh] was Muse of history.

Three goddesses called the **Fates** controlled the destiny of every mortal person, man or woman. There was **Clotho** [KLO-tho], who spun the bright threads of youth; **Lachesis** [LAK-eh-sis], who wound them on her distaff or spindle, distributing and directing them along the course of each human destiny; and **Atropos** [AT-roh-pos], the eldest, somber symbol of death, who cut the threads with her sharp slender shears. The gods who lived on Mount Olympus had control over the world and nature, but it was the three **Fates** who decided the length of human life. Even the gods could not interfere.



Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

The Great Gods: Olympians and Others

Give both Greek and Latin (Roman) names.

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1. King and father of the gods: _____

2. His wife, queen of gods: _____

3. Goddess of wisdom, war, and civic pride: _____

4. God of poetry, music, medicine, and light; associated with the sun: _____

5. His sister, goddess of hunting; associated with the moon: _____

6. The god who rules the sea; father of the Nereids: _____

7. God of war: _____

8. The blacksmith god of fire: _____

9. Goddess of love and beauty; born of sea foam: _____

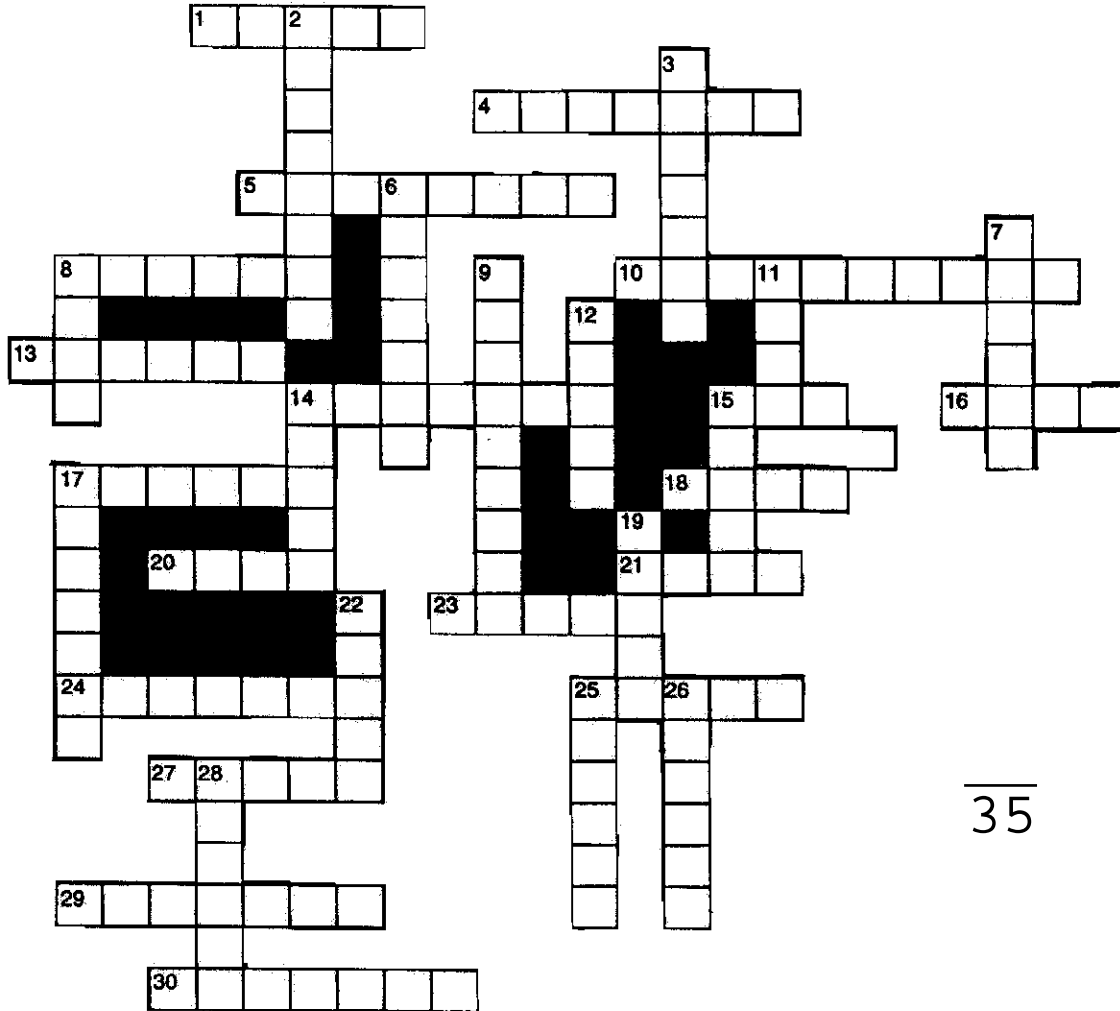
10. Messenger of the gods: _____

11. Goddess of hearth and home: _____

12. Goddess of grain and agriculture: _____

Name _____ Date _____

THE GREAT GODS CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1. Roman archer-god, son of Love Goddess
- 4. Roman messenger of the gods
- 5. Greek name for god of wine and revelry
- 8. God of poetry, music, medicine, light
- 10. Lame Greek blacksmith god
- 13. Greek goddess of hearth and home
- 14. Roman name for goddess of wisdom and war, born from Zeus's brain
- 15. Earth god of woods and fields, half man and half goat
- 16. Roman god of war
- 17. Beautiful young goddesses of nature

- 18. Roman name of Zeus's wife
- 20. Greek king of the gods
- 21. Greek archer-god who causes men and women to fall in love
- 23. Roman love goddess, born of the sea foam
- 24. Greek goddess of grain and agriculture
- 25. Place where the dead go, and Greek name of the lord of the Underworld
- 27. Three goddesses who control mortal destiny
- 29. Greek name of Apollo's twin, goddess of hunting
- 30. Roman god of wine and revelry

DOWN

- 2. Greek name for the god of the ocean
- 3. Roman name for the king of the gods
- 6. Roman name for god who carries a fisherman's trident
- 7. Roman blacksmith god
- 8. Greek god of war
- 9. Greek goddess of love and beauty
- 11. Greek queen of the gods, guardian of marriage
- 12. Roman goddess of the hunt
- 14. Nine goddesses of the arts
- 15. Roman lord of the Underworld

- 17. Daughters of Poseidon
- 19. Roman goddess of the hearth and home
- 22. Roman goddess of grain and agriculture
- 25. Greek messenger of the gods
- 26. Nymphs of the woods
- 28. Greek goddess of wisdom and war; Greek capital is named for her