

Essential Readings
for the Study of History

Humanitas

Ancient Greece

BOOK
1



Mythic Origins to Athenian Empire

Rick Trumbo, Volume Editor • Christopher Maiocca, Series Editor
David Diener, Managing Editor



Humanitas: Ancient Greece Book 1, Mythic Origins to Athenian Empire

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	v
Note from the Publisher	vii
Note from the Series Editor	viii
Welcome to <i>Humanitas</i>	xi
Introduction to <i>Ancient Greece Book I: Mythic Origins to Athenian Empire</i>	xiii
Chronology.....	xv

Unit I: Land of the Gods

1. Birth of the Gods	i
<i>The Theogony</i> , Hesiod	7
2. The War in Heaven.....	21
<i>The Theogony</i> , Hesiod	24
3. Gods in the Image of Man	33
<i>The Homeric Hymns</i>	36
4. The Age of Man.....	55
<i>Prometheus Bound</i> , Aeschylus	59
5. Son of Zeus.....	73
<i>Library of Mythology</i> , Pseudo-Apollodorus.....	76
6. The Golden Scales: On the Gods and Fate	89
<i>The Iliad</i> , Homer	92
7. The Fall of Troy	105
<i>The Posthomerica</i> , Quintus Smyrnaeus.....	108
8. Meditations on Virtue.....	125
<i>The Moralia</i> , Plutarch.....	128

Unit II: The Archaic Era

9. The Seven Sages of Greece	141
<i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i> , Diogenes Laertius.....	144
10. Athenian Politics.....	157
<i>Constitution of the Athenians</i>	160
11. Tyrant of Syracuse	171
<i>Bibliotheca Historia</i> , Diodorus Siculus	173
12. The Spartan Way	185
<i>Constitution of the Spartans</i> , Xenophon.....	187
13. The Art of Love	199
<i>The Poems of Sappho</i> , trans. by John Myers O'Hara.....	201
14. Greek Science Begins.....	215
<i>Refutation of All Heresies</i> , Hippolytus of Rome	218
15. The Ancient Atomists	229
<i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i> , Diogenes Laertius.....	231

Unit III: Individual and Community

16. Civil Blood Makes Civil Hands Unclean	243
<i>Eumenides</i> , Aeschylus	246
17. Civic Disobedience	263
<i>Antigone</i> , Sophocles	266
18. Escaping the Curse	281
<i>Iphigenia among the Taurians</i> , Euripides	284

Unit IV: Barbarians vs. Greeks

19. Monarchy among the Barbarians	303
<i>Histories</i> , Herodotus	306
20. The Fight for Greece	321
<i>Histories</i> , Herodotus	324
21. Retreat to the Sea	337
<i>Anabasis</i> , Xenophon	340

Unit V: Athens: Democracy and Empire

22. Athens Becomes an Empire	353
<i>History of the Peloponnesian War</i> , Thucydides	356
23. Imperial Democracy	369
<i>The Constitution of the Athenians</i> , The Old Oligarch	371
24. Party Conflicts	383
<i>Life of Cimon</i> , Plutarch	386

Selected Bibliography	399
Image Credits	403

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the spring of 2020, Chris Perrin of Classical Academic Press contacted me to ask if I would be interested in writing for a volume on early American history. That led to my working under Chris Maiocca, the author of that volume and the series editor for Classical Academic Press's *Humanitas* line. I am indebted to Chris Perrin for the opportunity, and to Chris Maiocca for his patient mentoring in how to write the historical anecdotes that appear in several volumes. I would be remiss not to mention Laurie Gustafson, the wise and kind senior editor for Classical Academic Press, who has guided this entire project, and who invited me to edit the volume on Greece.

I also owe an inexpressible debt of gratitude to my wife, Linda. She proofreads most of what I write for any venue, and her thoughtful advice is invaluable. She has also endured many absences when I attended institutes and seminars on classical topics over many decades. She has been a partner in many conversations and the friend C. S. Lewis described as "a second self" for nearly half a century.

I am grateful to Keith Nix, my headmaster at Veritas School in Richmond, Virginia, for his leadership and encouragement in deepening my familiarity with classical education. My many colleagues at Veritas have engaged me in conversations and occasional debates which have stimulated my thinking about Greek culture, teaching, and many other topics. I do not have room to thank everyone, but I have especially benefitted from conversations and forwarded readings from Michael Dicken, Laurie Howell, and Nate George over many years. Scholarship ought always to be a communal endeavor, and this is true at Veritas.

One of the best ways to learn is through good questions. I have been singularly blessed over four decades by students at two schools who have peppered me with excellent questions. My common response has been, "I don't know, but I'll try to find out." This has led me to explore some odd and interesting details about Greek and Roman history and language. For the past seventeen years, the students at Veritas have compelled me to grow as a teacher and as a classicist, and I gladly recognize my debt to these intellectually curious young learners.

One of the best things to happen in my work on this volume was the privilege of working with my editor, Nate Antiel. We have argued, discussed, and rewritten much together. Nate went the extra mile in patiently adapting to my own Luddite inabilities to use computer programs such as Google Docs, which made his work more difficult but freed me from technological stresses. Some of the chapters and even many of the phrasings have been his suggestions. I could not ask for a better editor, particularly because of his own expertise in teaching Greek literature. The shortcomings of this book are mine, but his input has made it vastly better, for which I thank him.

—Rick Trumbo

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (CONT.)

A long, long time ago, I thought it would be possible to complete the *Humanitas* series mostly on my own. This was folly. Our project—to bring a source-based story of humanity into homes and classrooms around the world—now has dozens of essential contributors, some of whom I have never personally met or worked with directly and thus I cannot formally thank.

If you had told me, even a few years ago, that I would be working with a team of scholars from Oxford, Princeton, Yale, and Duke to tell the story of Western history, I would have thought you were mad. Thus, it goes without saying that I am deeply grateful to Christopher Perrin, CEO of Classical Academic Press, for gathering the most tremendous team of scholars an editor could ever ask for. CAP has invested many precious resources into this series, and I am truly humbled by their faith in the vision of this project.

Few people in the classical renewal have had the staying power of Rick Trumbo, the architect and author of these two Greek volumes. For over forty years, he has been in the classroom, unlocking the riches of the ancient world for students. It is safe to say that he has forgotten more about Greece and Rome than I will ever know. I am extremely thankful that a lifetime of knowledge and wisdom will now be preserved for another generation of students through these volumes. Rick is a gentleman and a scholar—eminently humble and always a joy to work with.

As the series editor of *Humanitas*, it is my job to work alongside the volume architects, providing guidance, editorial feedback, and ensuring that the vision of this series is brought to fruition. Alas, completely inundated with the American volumes, I was unable to give Rick the help he needed to get these books to the printers. The happy result of my incapacitation was Dr. Perrin making the hire of the century by bringing Nate Antiel on as the in-house editor of the *Humanitas* series. When Nate is not receiving invitations from Harvard to speak on surgery and medical ethics in Rome, he is providing unprecedented, selfless, and humble guidance to me in every possible area of this project. Without him, the Greece volumes may have never seen the light of day. With him, the series has reached levels of scholarship and mastery that I could not have pulled off. Nate, I look forward to gleaning from your wisdom and expertise for years to come.

Behind the scenes is a host of contributors too numerous to mention. To them I say, thank you. I am grateful to David Diener. He has brought some much-needed human resources to the *Humanitas* project and has been a voice of calm and reason when I have felt overwhelmed.

Thank you also to Laurie Gustafson and David Gustafson. These volumes do not get to the presses without you.

Finally, I am grateful to my family for their sacrifices as well. Robin, Hannah, Christopher, Phoebe, and Jeremiah. In a very real sense, it is for you that I labor and strive.

—Christopher John Maiocca
All Saints Day, 2023

NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

The classical tradition of education has regularly emphasized the importance of approaching the great ideas of human wisdom *ad fontes*, going “to the fountains or sources” themselves. The reasoning for this is that, though secondary sources certainly have their place, we ought not make what is secondary primary.

Consider, for example, that students are reading about Plato’s dialogue, the *Republic*. While reading about Plato and this influential dialogue can be a pleasure, reading Plato himself is an even greater delight. Plato is one of the greatest minds of Western civilization, and this almost always means he is a better writer than his commentators. Going directly to the fountain of Plato himself should always be preferable when given the choice. Regarding Plato, the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead said:

The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato. I do not mean the systematic scheme of thought which scholars have doubtfully extracted from his writings. I allude to the wealth of general ideas scattered through them.¹

Plato is a great source of wealth and critically important for understanding our philosophical tradition, even today. Why not hear directly from him?

The *Humanitas* series attempts to bring the wealth of primary source writings to high school students so that they may hear from the great authors themselves, thus gaining an understanding of history from those who lived it. Put another way, this series seeks to keep what is primary, primary.

As much as we believe that students should hear directly from original sources and writers, we also know that it is very helpful to provide some orientation to these sources as well as some practical guidance throughout their reading. In this series, we have carefully arranged the sequence of readings but also included brief introductions to each reading as well as many explanatory annotations to provide clarity and context for students. Our goal has been to create just the right blend of the primary (original source readings) and the secondary (introductions, annotations, time lines, questions).

We are convinced that students who study the sources in this series will be led through a rich collection of important ideas and questions that have shaped our past and present. This journey will impart the prudence and wisdom students will need to lead and serve future generations. Our great hope is that students will come to understand humanity well, and therefore serve it well in the years to come.

—Christopher J. Perrin,
Publisher & CEO

1. A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 39.

A NOTE FROM THE SERIES EDITOR

The need for a series like *Humanitas* first occurred to me in the summer of 2014. As the newly appointed Humanities Chair at a small, classical school in San Diego, my dean requested that we transition our history classes from a lecture model to a Socratic or discussion-based format. To accomplish this, three changes needed to take place.

First, the architecture of our classrooms had to be altered. Instead of students lined up in rows before a lectern, they were now seated with their teacher around a long, oval table. Second, we understood that students and teachers would need to enter these classrooms with a different mindset. The former would now be active participants in their education, while the latter would lead conversations instead of simply reciting lectures. Finally, we would have to find a curriculum that could facilitate this type of learning.

Traditional history texts were designed to distill large epochs of time into easily digestible paragraphs, helping students become familiar with the important people, events, and ideas of a particular era. We were after something much different. Rather than reducing history to a series of facts that could be recorded on flashcards, our mission was to help students experience these events through the people who lived them, and to interact with great ideas by directly engaging the geniuses who first articulated them. In short, our aim was to enable students to cultivate wisdom rather than simply memorize facts.

Though we all understood that this meant “going back to the sources,” collecting and organizing primary texts into a three-ring binder proved much more difficult than we could have imagined. For starters, one had to be a scholar in all the different epochs of history to know what documents should be read, or even where to look. And while it is true that there are scores of online sourcebooks, we found that they were often disorganized messes of broken links, terrible translations, and cumbersome redactions.

Furthermore, even when these sources could be secured, we soon discovered there was a big difference between teaching a good class and creating a comprehensive course. In other words, while it is true that we had many wonderful discussions, at the end of the year, I knew my students were not getting a sense of having been exposed to an unfolding, cohesive, and chronological narrative. In that sense, we were still falling short. These were, after all, courses in history.

Then came the great supposal: What if we could create a resource that had all the accoutrements of a traditional text—beautiful art, helpful annotations, clear prose, explanatory essays, and an obvious, historical progression—yet that was completely built around the source documents? That is, what if we could get the

sources to tell the story and send the pedagogue into the background where he belongs? If this could happen, then students will have received, in the truest sense of the word, an education.

In this vein, we humbly offer you the *Humanitas* series. We designed the books so students and teachers can experience unfettered delight in discussing the most profound specimens of firsthand knowledge in the Western historical canon. This is the story of humanity, told in an unfolding narrative, through primary sources. This, in the simplest terms, is *Humanitas*.

—Christopher John Maiocca
Series Editor



Christopher Maiocca received a Master of Arts from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Since graduating, he has taught at three classical schools and currently resides in Boise, Idaho. He is married to Robin, his wife of twenty years, with whom he has four children—Hannah, Christopher, Phoebe, and Jeremiah.

Welcome to *Humanitas*

The emphasis on the importance of firsthand knowledge has been traditionally communicated by the term *ad fontes*, a Latin phrase meaning “to the fountains.” This phrase was used as a banner by both humanist scholars and reformers of the High Medieval and the Early Modern periods to describe their renewed interest in studying the primary documents that contained the ideas most responsible for precipitating the civilizations and cultural milieus in which they found themselves. While this approach to education fell out of vogue in the twentieth century, the *Humanitas* series seeks to return *ad fontes*, to provide high school students and educators with a comprehensive course in the Western story, told through primary sources.

Why is “going back to the sources” so important? As Emerson observed, “We, as we read, must become Greeks, Romans, Turks, priest and king, martyr and executioner; must fasten these images to some reality in our secret experience, or we shall learn nothing rightly.” The hope, then, is that our reading becomes our lives, that our own experience will be enriched because it contains something of the best of ancient Greece and Rome. At the very least, the old authors enable us to live our lives with remarkable freshness, to encounter our days in light of the past. Thoreau, Emerson’s great student, likewise observes, “Men sometimes speak as if the study of the classics would at length make way for more modern and practical studies; but the adventurous student will always study classics, in whatever language they may be written and however ancient they may be. For what are the classics but the noblest recorded thoughts of man? They are the only oracles which are not decayed, and there are

such answers to the most modern inquiry in them as Delphi and Dodona never gave. We might as well omit studying Nature because she is old.” As Emerson and Thoreau knew, the texts in these volumes transcend time: they are ever new. They not only offer adventure in themselves—who has not been excited at the prospect of journeying with Odysseus or encountering Plutarch’s lives?—but they also equip students to lead adventurous lives of their own, to meet joy and sorrow, love and death, the sublime and the mundane having been shaped to desire the true, the good, and the beautiful.

While the early humanists and reformers might not appear to have much in common with the American transcendentalists, both approached the primary sources of the past with awe and expectation. In the middle of the last century, however, C. S. Lewis noticed that a profound change had occurred. Many of his students now preferred to pick up technical books of modern scholarship about the Greeks rather than to read the old authors themselves. He went on to note that, in his experience, students often avoided the old authors out of humility. Plato’s *Republic*, after all, is hard. Yet Plato is accessible and pleasurable in a way that modern scholarship, unfortunately, often is not. Thus, we agree with Lewis when he observed: “The simplest student will be able to understand, if not all, yet a very great deal of what Plato said; but hardly anyone can understand some modern books on Platonism. It has always therefore been one of my main endeavors as a teacher to persuade the young that firsthand knowledge is not only more worth acquiring than secondhand knowledge but is usually much easier and more delightful to acquire.” For Lewis and

nearly every other person living in Europe and America, Greece, and Rome are the fountainheads of our civilization, and it is to these sources we must return, if we hope to become “educated” in the classical sense of the word.

For example, it is in ancient Greece and Rome that you will encounter the beginning of Western poetry in Homer and Hesiod, Ovid and Virgil. They were the founts to which all subsequent European and British letters would return, wrestle with, and imitate. They inspire the tradition and keep it alive. Having read these volumes, when the student comes to Milton, she will not only encounter the greatest epic in English, she will also hear echoes of Hesiod’s *Theogony* and Virgil’s *Aeneid*. She will begin to overhear the great conversation between poets, and to participate in that conversation by how she lives her own life.

Moreover, here is where students will encounter the first writers of history—Thucydides and Herodotus, Livy and Plutarch—who themselves provided the education of the American founders and models of virtue for countless figures throughout history. This, perhaps more than anything else, is the particular value of *Humanitas*. It is by reading and wrestling with the authors themselves, with living texts, that our students can experience not only a quickening of their minds but also of their *thymos*. Classical education, after all, aims to develop virtue in the student. By participating in the great conversation that *Humanitas* presents to students, the reader can enter into that experience, not merely to read *about* the Greeks and Romans, but to read the Greeks and Romans themselves, to count them as friends and attempt to understand them from the inside out.

Humanitas then not only offers students the fountain of Western culture, the delight of reading primary texts, and the broadening of experience properly called “education,” it also encourages them to develop a charitable hermeneutic. This

approach to history *animates* it, that is, etymologically, gives it soul. History becomes a living thing to engage and study rather than a desiccated relic of which we are embarrassed because it lacks modern sensibility.

As you open these volumes of *Humanitas* and encounter the sources of Western civilization for yourself, we believe that you will get to know the Greeks and the Romans—how they thought, lived, worshipped, and fought—better than you could through the conventional textbooks that have occupied our classrooms for more than a century. Here you will march into Gaul with Julius Caesar, sit with Socrates as he drinks the hemlock, and discover what daily life was like on a Roman farm. In short, we believe that this is as close as we can take students into the classical world without traveling back in time and seeing it for themselves.

—Christopher Maiocca and Nate Antiel

Introduction to Ancient Greece, Book 1: *Mythic Origins to Athenian Empire*

These volumes are the first in a series of books introducing students to the history of Western civilization by means of primary source readings. Book 1 begins with the remote mythical past of Greece and takes students through the rise of classical Greek civilization with the magnificent accomplishments of the Greeks of the fifth century BC. Book 2 then examines the internal political conflicts that divided and demoralized the Greeks at the end of that century. Following the wars among the city-states of Greece, the volume leads students to the rise of the Macedonians under Alexander the Great, which united much of the known world in a synthesis of Greek and local cultures known as the Hellenistic age. The *Ancient Greece* books conclude with the exploration of Hellenistic civilization, ending just prior to the Roman conquest of the East.

UNIT I: *Land of the Gods*

The earliest intact Greek literature consists of epic poems that narrate the creation of the world, the establishment of the Olympian gods, and the adventures of various gods and heroes in the distant past. The mythic outlook shaped the Greek understanding of the cosmos and the world they inhabited with its incredible beauty and wonder, as well as dark elements of danger. Gods fought each other, and heroes proved their worth by overpowering monsters, dark forces that dwelt on the edges of society. Finally, history and myth were synthesized in the legendary epics about the expedition against Troy. The Age of Heroes highlighted human achievement by outstanding individuals. The final chapter in this unit takes students to a more “modern” and rational analysis of human behavior by the famous biographer Plutarch, which contrasts with the traditional mythical view of humanity.

UNIT II: *The Archaic Era*

After the Age of Heroes, Greece suffered three centuries of turmoil and struggle known as the Greek Dark Ages. In the ninth century BC, however, civilization emerged once again in Greece. The Archaic era saw the development of communal solidarity in the city-state, elevating the welfare of the group over the heroic individualism celebrated in the epics. Political forms such as tyranny and democracy developed in the struggles between nobles and commoners. Wise men, known as “sages,” offered practical guidance to the reviving city-states. Sparta developed her unique military state just as Athens was evolving toward democracy, setting the stage for the later conflicts between the two great powers of Greece. Lyric poetry, exemplified by the female poet Sappho, appeared alongside the longer epics. The first philosophers in history began to speculate about the nature of reality, and their speculations gave rise to natural philosophy, what we would come to call “science,” as well. Amidst this time of growth, a tension developed between the mythical outlook of the poets and the more naturalistic interpretation of the world offered by philosophers.

UNIT III: *Individual and Community*

By the end of the Archaic era, Greek drama developed as a new type of poetry. The three greatest dramatists—Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—drew upon the old myths of the heroic past but used them creatively to address issues raised by the community-centered city-state. Aeschylus probed the tension between the older duty of private revenge for harm to one's family and the new dominance of the city's laws and public justice through the story of Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, the high king who led the Greeks at Troy. Sophocles portrayed the timeless struggle between individual conscience or religious duty and the dictates of civil government in his *Antigone*. Euripides daringly portrayed a conflict between loyalty to one's family and duty to the gods. In each case, the dramatic poets highlighted the tragic nature of choosing among these foundational loyalties, and in doing so taught their fellow Greeks about the tensions which inevitably arise in the replacement of heroic individualism by loyalty to the larger community.

UNIT IV: *Barbarians vs. Greeks*

The Classical period in Greece began with a defining conflict between the fractious Greek city-states and the enormously large and wealthy Persian Empire to their east. Persian absolute monarchy, exemplified by the hubristic emperor Xerxes, contrasted with the Greek ideals of freedom under law. A Greek revolt in Ionia, a province of Persia, launched a lengthy war which engaged the mainland Greeks and the Persians from 499 BC to 449 BC, when a peace treaty finally ended the conflict. The Greeks achieved their greatest unity against the foreign foe, fighting side-by-side for their freedom against much greater odds at key battles in Greece. Surprisingly, the outnumbered Greeks defeated the invaders. The unity and confidence inspired by the common victory over Persia would contribute to the great flourishing of art, literature, and philosophy during the fifth century BC. At the beginning of the next century, even after a devastating war between the Greeks, a force of ten thousand Greek mercenaries fought their way across fifteen hundred miles of western Asia to safety, again demonstrating the superiority of Greek weapons and discipline to the great hosts of the Persian Empire—a feat that would later inspire Macedonian plans to conquer Persia.

UNIT V: *Athens: Democracy and Empire*

In the wake of the victory of the Greeks over Persian invasions, Athens became the leader of a Greek alliance to carry the war into Persian territory to liberate the Ionian Greeks. Unable to resist the temptations of power, however, Athens grew increasingly domineering and arrogant toward her Greek allies, transforming the alliance into her own empire, enforced by her powerful navy. At the same time, Athens became the world's first great democracy, extending power to common citizens through the votes of her Assembly. Not all Athenians, however, admired the new democratic regime; an anonymous author, known simply as "the Old Oligarch," afforded a critical evaluation of the Athenian government and society. Another chapter explores the partisan conflicts within the Athenian democracy in the rivalries between conservatives like Cimon and his more radical opponents. At its height, the Athenian democracy would be the setting for some of the greatest achievements of ancient Greece: the Parthenon, the golden age of Greek drama, and the rise of philosophers such as Socrates and Plato.

CHRONOLOGY

c. 2500 BC	The first proto-Greek tribes begin to migrate into Greece from the northeast.	1194–1185 BC	The Trojan War is fought; Troy falls to Mycenaean attackers after ten years of fighting.
c. 2000 BC	Palace-centered cities appear on Crete marking the rise of the Minoan civilization.	c. 1150 BC	The Mycenaean civilization collapses; three centuries of Dark Ages follow with no evidence of writing. Cities are abandoned. New Greek tribes from the north migrate into Greece.
c. 1800 BC	The Minoans unite under the city of Knossos and their empire spreads among Aegean Islands and at various outposts in Greece such as Mycenae, Athens, and Corinth. The Minoans introduce their writing system, Linear A, to Greece.	1100 BC	The Late Bronze Age collapse cripples Egypt. The Hittite Empire disappears. Much of western Asia falls under pressure from invaders known as the Sea Peoples.
c. 1650 BC	The island of Thera explodes in a volcanic eruption; resulting tsunamis hit the north coast of Crete, disrupting the Minoan fleet.	1000 BC	Israel and Phoenicia enjoy a period of wealth and political power following the collapse of the great empires of the Near East.
c. 1600–1450 BC	The first Greek civilization appears at Mycenae and other cities; the Greeks begin writing with Minoan characters, known as Linear B.	c. 800 BC	Writing reappears in Greece with the adoption of a modified form of the Phoenician alphabet.
1458 BC	Thutmose III expands Egypt into the most powerful empire of the era. Egypt controls Libya, Ethiopia, Palestine, and much of Syria.	776 BC	The first Olympic Games are celebrated in honor of Zeus.
1450 BC	Earthquakes devastate the palace at Knossos in Crete, severely weakening the Minoans.	735–715 BC	Sparta defeats Messenia in the First Messenian War, beginning the conquest of Messenia.
1400 BC	Greeks invade and overtake Crete. A Mycenaean empire spreads across islands of the Aegean Sea.	753 BC	Rome is founded in central Italy.
		c. 750–700 BC	Homer is performing his epics about Troy, the <i>Iliad</i> and the <i>Odyssey</i> , for audiences.

750–700 BC	Hesiod composes his creation epic, the <i>Theogony</i> , and his epic about farming, the <i>Works and Days</i> .	on the island of Samos in the Aegean Sea.
750–500 BC	Greek colonists settle in Italy, Macedonia, North Africa, southern France, and the coast of the Black Sea.	560 BC Pisistratus becomes Athens's first and greatest tyrant. He keeps power by appealing for support from the lower classes against rival nobles.
687 BC	The term of office for archons, heads of state, in Athens is reduced from ten years to one year, opening access to this position to more citizens.	546 BC The Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great conquers Greek cities on the coast of Ionia in western Turkey.
650 BC	Sparta crushes a Messenian revolt and enslaves the population, who become helots working Spartan farms so that Spartan citizens can become full-time soldiers.	539 BC The Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great conquers Babylon, making Persia the unrivaled master of the entire ancient Near East from the Aegean Sea to India.
621 BC	During Draco's archonship, Athens receives her first written law code. Citizenship is expanded to anyone who can furnish a suit of bronze armor.	539 BC Etruscans and Carthaginians form an alliance to halt further Greek colonization west of Sicily.
612 BC	Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, falls to Babylonian and Mede attackers. The Assyrian Empire comes to an end.	525 BC Aeschylus, the first of the great trio of Greek tragic poets, is born.
594–592 BC	Solon is given emergency power in Athens to prevent a civil war between rich and poor. He abolishes debt slavery, cancels all debts, and redistributes landholdings.	522 BC Darius I succeeds to the throne of Persia and expands Persian power into Europe by conquering Thrace.
c. 624 BC	Thales, the first philosopher in recorded history, is born in Miletus near the coast of Turkey.	510 BC Pisistratus's son Hippias is expelled from Athens by a democratic revolt, ending the period of tyranny in Athens.
570 BC	Pythagoras, the great musician, philosopher, and mystic, is born	510 BC Under the leadership of Cleisthenes, Athens adopts democratic reforms and becomes the world's first recorded democracy.
		509 BC The Romans drive out Tarquinius Superbus, their last king, and become a republic.

499–492 BC Greek cities in Ionia, on the western coast of modern Turkey, unsuccessfully revolt against Persian rule. Athens sends help to these cities, arousing Persian hatred for Athens.

496 BC Sophocles, the second of Athens's great tragic poets, is born. He adds a third speaker to scenes, allowing for more complicated dialogue. He also invents the decoration of the *skene*, the structure at the back of the stage for scenery, for his plays. His life would span almost the entire fifth century.

490 BC Emperor Darius I of Persia sends a fleet with 20,000 soldiers to attack Athens in revenge for her intervention in the Ionian Revolt. Ten thousand Athenians defeat this invasion at the battle of Marathon.

486 BC Xerxes becomes emperor of Persia upon the death of his father Darius I. He begins to plan revenge for the defeat at Marathon.

c. 484 BC Euripides, the third great tragic poet of Athens, is born. His often cynical plays are regarded by many critics as the most “modern” of ancient dramas.

483 BC The Athenians discover a rich vein of silver at Laurium in southern Attica. Themistocles persuades them to use this money to build 200 ships, which marks the beginning of Athenian naval power.

480 BC Emperor Xerxes invades Greece with a massive army of roughly 400,000 men.

480 BC In August, a tiny Greek force led by 300 Spartans stops the Persian advance at Thermopylae for six days. The Spartans act as a rear guard and are all killed after inflicting great losses upon the Persians.

480 BC In late September or early October, the allied Greek navy inflicts a crippling defeat upon the Persian navy at the battle of Salamis. With control of the sea, the Greeks are able to force Xerxes to withdraw from Greece.

479 BC An allied Greek army destroys the Persian rear guard at the battle of Plataea, the last battle of the Persian Wars fought in Greece.

478 BC The victorious Greeks form a defensive alliance against Persia, the Delian League, led by Athens. This will eventually become an Athenian empire.

469 BC Socrates, one of the greatest philosophers of antiquity, is born in Athens.

461 BC After aristocratic leader Cimon is exiled, Pericles becomes the leader of Athens and advances further democratic measures in the city.

460 BC Democritus, founder of the first atomic theory, is born.

460 BC Hippocrates, the “father of medicine,” is born.

454 BC	Pericles moves the treasury of the Delian League from Delos to Athens, symbolically showing that Athens is now the master of this empire.	415–413 BC	Athens, persuaded by the rascal Alcibiades, launches an invasion of Sicily. The disastrous expedition loses half of Athens's army and fleet, decisively weakening Athens for the remainder of the war with Sparta.
c. 450 BC	Aristophanes, Athens's greatest comic poet, is born.	412 BC	Diogenes of Sinope, a leading figure in Cynic philosophy, is born.
449 BC	After several Greek cities in western Asia are liberated from Persian rule, the Persians end their wars with Greece by signing the Peace of Callias with Athens.	404 BC	With the surrender of Athens, the Spartans install the Thirty Tyrants as an aristocratic regime in Athens.
447–432 BC	The Parthenon is built on the Athenian Acropolis, a measure by Pericles to glorify his city.	399 BC	In a democratic reaction to the hated aristocrats, Socrates is put on trial and executed because he criticized Athenian democracy.
431–404 BC	The devastating Second Peloponnesian War pits Athens and her allies against Sparta and her allies. Almost all of the Greek world is drawn into this conflict.	384 BC	Aristotle, student of Plato and the second great philosopher of antiquity, is born in Stagira north of Greece.
c. 430 BC	Herodotus publishes his <i>Histories</i> , an account of the war between the Greeks and the Persians.	387 BC	Plato founds his Academy in Athens, the first “university” in Europe.
430–426 BC	A plague ravages Athens, killing Pericles and approximately one fourth of the population of Athens. This plague further demoralized the Athenians.	371 BC	Thebes, led by general Epaminondas, decisively defeats Sparta at the battle of Leuctra, ending Spartan domination of Greece.
c. 428 BC	Plato, arguably the greatest philosopher in history, is born.	362 BC	Sparta and Athens join to fight Thebes at the battle of Mantinea. The battle is a draw, but Epaminondas is killed, and Thebes declines without his brilliant leadership.
427 BC	Gorgias, a Sophist from Leontini in Italy, moves to Athens and begins to teach public speaking there. Sophism would become increasingly influential in Athens during the terrible years of the Peloponnesian War.	359 BC	Philip II becomes king of Macedonia and begins to plan his conquest of Greece.

356 BC	Alexander the Great is born to Philip of Macedon and his wife Olympias.	306 BC	Greek philosopher Epicurus establishes a community/school on the outskirts of Athens to advance the Epicurean philosophy.
351 BC	Demosthenes delivers what comes to be known as his “First Philippic” speech, warning the Athenian Assembly against Philip’s intention to dominate Greece.	264–201 BC	Rome defeats Carthage in the First and Second Punic Wars. Rome effectively becomes the dominant power in the western Mediterranean.
347 BC	Plato dies, leaving leadership of the Academy to his nephew, a mathematician.	168 BC	Rome defeats Macedonia at the battle of Pydna, reducing Macedonia to a subject ally. This begins Roman advances into the eastern Mediterranean world.
342 BC	Aristotle becomes the tutor of Alexander the Great.	c. 150 BC	Greek historian Polybius writes his <i>Histories</i> , explaining how Rome’s republican government resembles the mixed constitution of Sparta, featuring checks and balances to limit power.
338 BC	Philip of Macedon defeats an allied Greek army at the battle of Chaeronea. This completes his conquest of Greece.	146 BC	Rome conquers Greece, making the Greeks subjects of her empire for the rest of antiquity.
334 BC	Alexander the Great launches a Macedonian and Greek invasion of Persia.	133 BC	Rome inherits the kingdom of Pergamum in the region of ancient Troy, giving the Romans a foothold in Asia Minor.
331 BC	Alexander conquers Egypt, and then goes on to defeat the Persians under Darius III at the battle of Gaugamela in Mesopotamia. Alexander is recognized as emperor of Asia after this victory.	c. AD 46	Greek historian, biographer, and essayist Plutarch is born.
323 BC	In June, Alexander dies in Babylon just before his thirty-third birthday. His death touches off a series of wars between rivals who wish to succeed him.	AD 55	Epictetus, one of the leading figures in Stoic philosophy, is born in Asia Minor.
310 BC	Roxana, the widow of Alexander, and their young son, Alexander IV, are killed. Alexander’s empire becomes permanently divided into three successor kingdoms.		

I

Birth of the Gods

Hesiod and Homer . . . these are they who made a theogony for the Hellenes and gave the titles to the gods and distributed to them honors and arts, and set forth their forms.

—Herodotus

INTRODUCTION

In many ways, the history of the West begins with the Greeks. We can trace much of our cultural, scientific, educational, and political heritage back to this magnificent people. We hold, as the Declaration of Independence proclaims, certain truths to be self-evident, but many of the ideas and assumptions that seem so natural to us today were once uncommon. They had to be conceived of, advocated, and even fought for. History can seem inevitable, but we do well to remember that it is precarious. Neither the Greeks nor their way of life was ever guaranteed success. Indeed, part of the wonder of the story of the Greeks is wrapped up in how this relatively small, individualistic group of cities managed not only to navigate the perils of history but also to exert a lasting influence on the shape and direction of civilization for millennia to come. Our journey will trace the development of the Greeks across time and space, attempting to discern not only what made the Greeks different from other ancient peoples but also how they came to exert such lasting influence on Western civilization.

Sometime around 2500 BC, in the midst of the Bronze Age of Greek history, the first Greeks began forming *poleis* or city-states—distinct political units composed of cities and their surrounding

territories—on the various islands in the Aegean Sea. City-states were then established on the Greek mainland and the peninsula, known as the Peloponnesus, which extends southwest into the Aegean. Although this small, seemingly insignificant people group was unified only by a shared language and some cultural practices, the Greeks emerged from the Aegean to explore, colonize, establish trade, and eventually conquer much of the known world over the next two thousand years. They built cities, such as Miletus and Ephesus, across the Aegean in Asia Minor. They also ventured north and established colonies in the hostile coastal regions of the Black Sea. So prevalent were the Greeks in parts of southern Italy and Sicily that the region came to be known as *Magna Graecia*, “greater Greece.” Further west in the Mediterranean, they established Massalia, modern-day Marseille, on the coast of France and Mainake, modern Malaga, in Spain. Alexander the Great would extend the influence and culture of Greece even further during the Hellenistic period, three hundred years before Christ, bringing the Greek language and culture to north Africa and east toward Asia.

Greek culture proved more influential than the sheer geographical reach of Greece, however. It is

in the Archaic and Classical eras of Greece that we see the birth of democracy and many of the elements of a mature civilization. In addition to their distinct approach to politics, the many achievements of the Greek mind and imagination include epic poetry, tragedy and comedy, history, science, pure mathematics in the form of geometry without numbers, and of course philosophy—the pursuit the Greeks affectionately termed *philosophia*, the love of wisdom. Under the constant threat of war and invasion by large empires, art, aesthetics, politics, philosophy, and education flowered in ancient Greece. Importantly, these Greek ideas, values, and practices would go on to shape and influence the Romans, early Christian and medieval thinkers, Renaissance humanists, the American founders, and many others throughout history. Before this could happen, however, the Greeks needed to become Greek. So, to begin our study of this fascinating people, we turn to the shadowy beginnings where Greek myth and historical fact intermingle.

The story of the Greeks begins, appropriately, with stories. Centuries before the Greeks began writing history, their poets sang about the beginnings of all things, about how the world came to be the way it is. Aside from a few, scattered archaeological remains, these myths are practically all we have from the dawn of Greek culture. And like the ruins that have been uncovered, the myths stand as evidence of something wonderful, a vestige of a grand and complex civilization that strove to find and establish order in the midst of chaos and flux, to identify the rhythms and patterns in nature, to make sense of pain and suffering. While the word “myth” is often used today to suggest that something is untrue or fanciful, in its original context, the Greek word *mythos* simply means “story.” The myths, then, far from being something the Greeks thought of in terms of truth or falsehood, are quite simply the stories they told themselves about the cosmos and their place in it.

Because these myths developed over long eras and in diverse places, they are not always consistent with each other. Some of the differences are minor, such as who fathered whom, but others are more substantial. The just and all-powerful Zeus of

Homer is, for example, in many ways distinct from the seemingly arbitrary and tyrannical Zeus of Euripides. Despite these differences, however, the myths are consistently insightful. They are one place where we see the Greeks repeatedly probe what it means to be human. Though they neither approach the question systematically nor exhaust it, they do suggest that part of the answer is found in telling stories. Remarkably, the myths reveal that humans do not merely shape stories or myths: we are also shaped by them. The stories we tell help make us who we are. To be Greek, then, was first to know and love the Greek myths. These beautiful, imaginative tales express the danger and wonder and the strangeness of the world the first Greeks inhabited. It is in the myths that we catch the first glimpses of Greek life and thought.

The first Greek-speaking tribes to appear on what would become the Greek mainland trickled south out of the Balkan Mountains to settle in northeastern Greece near Mount Olympus, the home of the gods. With a temperate climate, the resources of the nearby sea, and mountains and valleys rich in timber, the land south of Olympus was inviting to these immigrants. As they began to settle, the early Greeks discovered that the land was enchanted, animated by nymphs and gods. They saw that the world was charged with grandeur, that the forces of nature were tremendous. The stories they told about their surroundings enabled the Greeks to know their world imaginatively. Instead of mere wood and leaf, cellulose and chlorophyll, those reductive elements our more materialistic outlook has emphasized in modern life, the Greeks saw something more, something that might be written about but never fully captured or defined. They looked with fear and trembling upon the god within the tree, full of wonder at the growth of spring and the changing colors of fall. Many of the early myths arouse awe and admiration at the beauty of such a world.

There was, however, a darker side to the world of the early Greeks. The dense forests concealed many wild animals that could prey upon humans, and dangerous natives were scattered across the mountainous ridges and wooded valleys. Some

early stories recall conflicts between the Greeks and these native inhabitants, while others relate tales of shadowy, monstrous beasts feared by mankind. We find, then, that the myths of the early Greeks are populated with dangers and evils alongside captivating beauty and joy. In such a world, things are very rarely what they seem: though an idyllic pasture or quiet spring might appear to be a *locus amoenus*, a safe and pleasant place, a jealous or enraged god might lurk just beneath the surface. In the blink of an eye an otherwise tranquil moment could transform into one of divine punishment or lust. The gods and primordial forces of nature were to be feared more than trusted.

Many of these very old Greek creation myths were preserved by Hesiod in the eighth century BC in his epic poem the *Theogony*. Though they were finally written down at the beginning of the Archaic period, the myths probably originated in the Bronze Age and were memorized and passed down orally by travelling poets known as bards. A simple farmer and poet from the Greek mainland, Hesiod came to be recognized as a great composer of epics, second only to Homer, and along with Homer, he helped shape the cultural identity of ancient Greece. His *Theogony* begins with the first supernatural beings who emerge from Chaos and reflect the threatening and uncertain forces of nature the early Greeks encountered. Along with these preternatural beings came monsters that embodied the powers of darkness, peril, and death. The danger increased with the birth of powerful, impersonal spirits such as Famine and Toil, which made human life all the more uncertain and thus ever more precious. And yet, we will also find that beauty and wonder characterize these tales. Graceful gods and

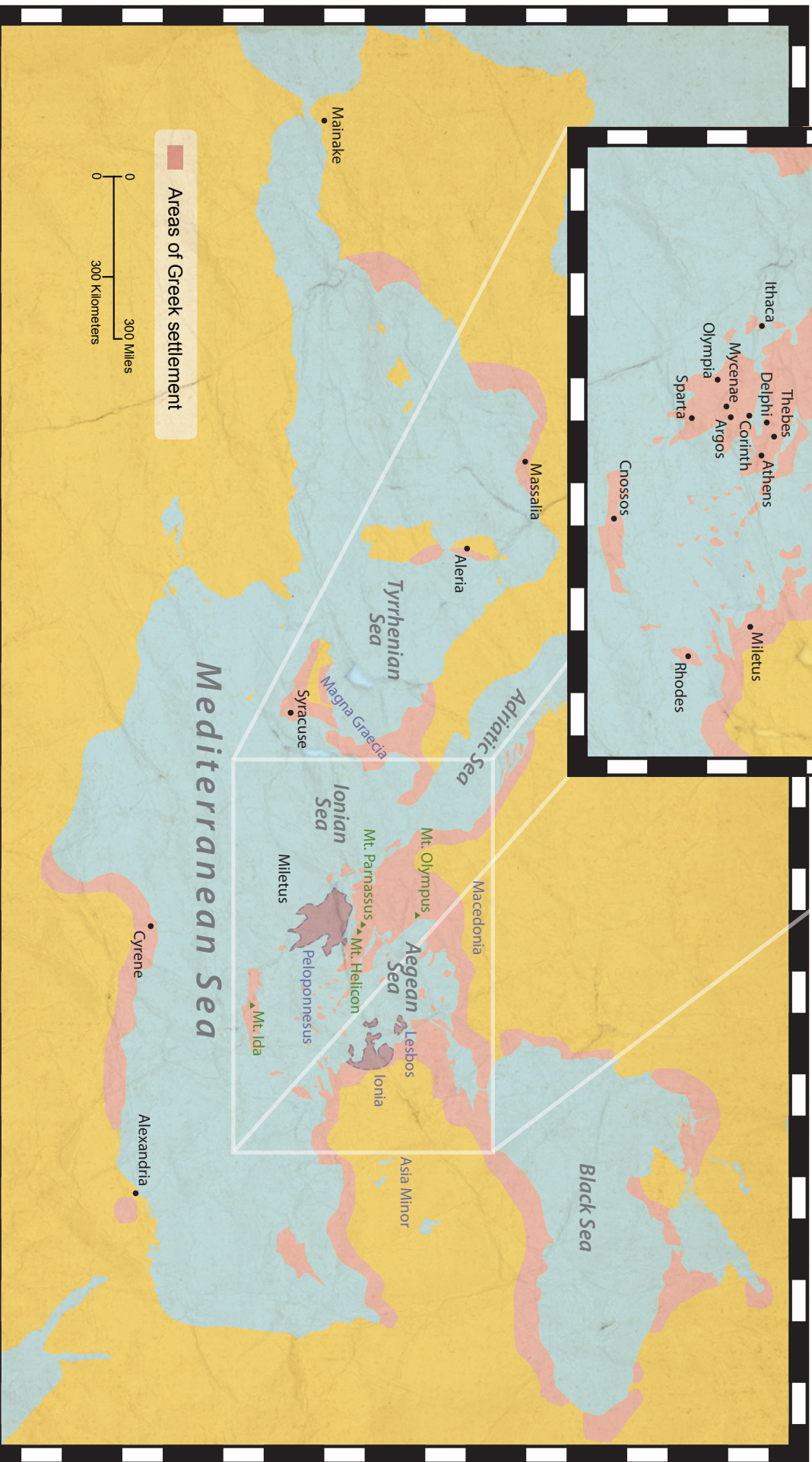
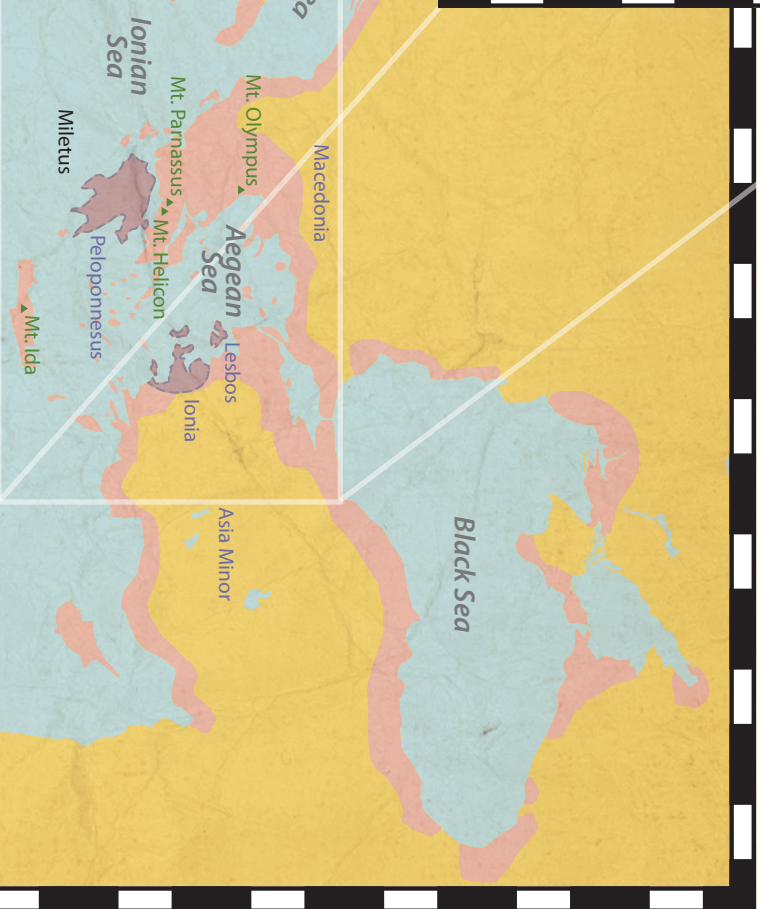
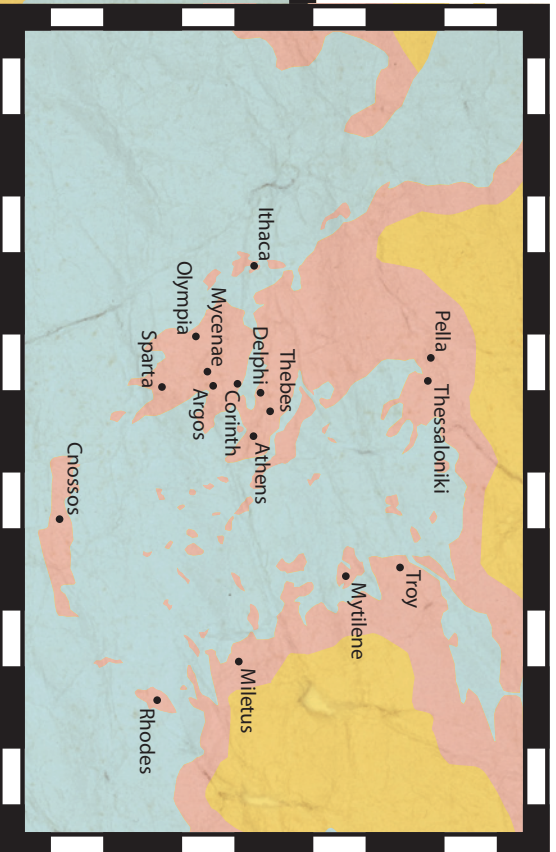
nymphs, who could be persuaded at times to aid humans in their struggle to live well, enchant the countryside. Even the monsters provided occasions for heroes to display courage, perseverance, and phenomenal power. The early myths highlight the nobility and moral significance of life in a world which comprised more than mere matter, a world infused with the divine and the monstrous. Our first selection will explore the beginnings of this magnificent world and the many supernatural beings who inhabited it.



A POET'S VISAGE

Is this the face of Hesiod? No contemporary portrait exists, but many scholars think this careworn, emotional head is an attempt by later Greeks to represent the shepherd poet, surviving here in a Roman copy.

THE GREATER GREEK WORLD



Areas of Greek settlement

0 300 Miles
0 300 Kilometers

Major Eras in Ancient Greece

BRONZE AGE: C. 3000–1150 BC

c. 3000 BC — The early Minoan civilization appears on the island of Crete and begins building cities. They will later introduce writing and cities to the mainland Greeks.

c. 2500 to 1600 BC — Ancestors of the Greeks begin to emigrate from the Balkan Mountains to northeast Greece near Mount Olympus.

c. 2000 BC — Wandering Greek tribes appear in Greece. Within a century, the first distinctly Greek civilization appears in central Greece, building palaces at Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos, and other sites soon after.

c. 1800 BC — Linear A, the first linear writing system in Europe, appears on Crete and later

spreads to Greece. Scholars have been unable to decipher Linear A.

c. 1600–1150 BC — This era is also known as the Mycenaean era and marks the Age of Heroes.

c. 1450 BC — Early stories about the gods of Olympus are sung by poets.

c. 1450 BC — Linear B, the earliest Greek writing, develops out of Linear A in Greece.

c. 1200 BC — Around the end of the Age of Heroes, the Greeks fight the famous war against their rival Troy across the Aegean Sea.

DARK AGE: c. 1150–800 BC

c. 1150 BC — A second wave of Greeks occupy most of the Greek mainland, and the earlier Greeks emigrate to various Aegean islands

and the coastal region of Asia Minor near Troy. All writing disappears in Greece for more than three centuries.

ARCHAIC AGE: C. 800–500 BC

c. 800 BC — Writing reappears in Greece with the adoption of a modified Phoenician alphabet.

c. 750 BC — Homer and Hesiod sing traditional poems, some of them handed down from the Mycenaeans. Hesiod composes the *Theogony*, the Greek creation story, and *Works and Days*, a didactic poem about agriculture. Homer's epics about Troy, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, depict the Bronze Age heroes.

c. 750–500 BC — Greeks begin to colonize the coast of the Black Sea, Thrace and Macedonia, North Africa, and Italy.

c. 600–500 BC — Greek city-states move away from monarchies and develop tyranny and democracy as forms of government.

c. 600 BC — Greek philosophy and natural philosophy, or the inquiry into nature, begins in the Ionian region.

CLASSICAL AGE: 500 BC–338 BC

499–449 BC — Ionian Revolt and the Persian Wars between Greece and Persia occur.

477–404 BC — Athens creates an empire with the Delian League.

460–429 BC — The Golden Age of Athens—art, literature, and philosophy flourish under the leadership of Pericles.

431–404 BC — The Peloponnesian War devastates most of Greece as Athens and Sparta, and their allies, fight for supremacy.

404–371 BC — Sparta dominates Greece after defeating Athens.

371–338 BC — Athens, Sparta, and Thebes continue their wars, weakening Greece.

HELLENISTIC AGE: 338–146 BC

338 BC — Philip II of Macedon finally conquers Greece at the Battle of Chaeronea.

334 BC — Alexander the Great launches his daring invasion of the Persian Empire.

323 BC — Alexander dies, touching off a series of wars across the Greek world as various rivals seek to inherit his empire.

215–148 BC — The Roman Republic fights the Macedonian Wars with Macedonia and its Greek allies, eventually conquering Macedonia and making it a Roman province.

146 BC — Rome conquers Greece, making it part of her empire.

ROMAN REPUBLIC AND EMPIRE: 146 BC–AD 476

146 BC–AD 476 — Greece is part of the Roman Empire and greatly influences Roman civilization.

c. 144 BC — After Polybius is taken as a hostage to Rome in 168 BC, he begins to compose his history of the world.

48 BC — Julius Caesar defeats Pompey at Pharsalus in Greece.

31 BC — Octavian defeats Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra at Actium, off the coast of

Greece. He becomes Rome's first emperor, officially establishing the Roman Empire.

AD 66 — Emperor Nero tours Greece, offering singing concerts and competing in the Olympics, where the Greeks allow him to win first place in each event he enters.

AD 410 — Alaric the Goth sacks Rome.

AD 476 — Germanic king Odoacer deposes Romulus Augustus, the last Roman emperor, thus ending the Roman Empire.



APOLLO AND THE MUSES

Apollo plays his lyre surrounded by attentive Muses, who are individually marked out by their attributes. The Muse of astronomy, Urania, for example, can be seen on the far left, distinguished by her celestial globe and the pair of compasses she holds in her lap; Melpomene, the Muse of tragic poetry, is marked out by the glum tragic mask clutched in her hand. The German Nazarene artist Heinrich Maria von Hess paints with a classical simplicity of design and a love of rich colors which owes much to his love of painters of the high Renaissance such as Raphael, whose works he studied in Rome.

The Theogony

Hesiod
c. 8th century BC

THE INVOCATION

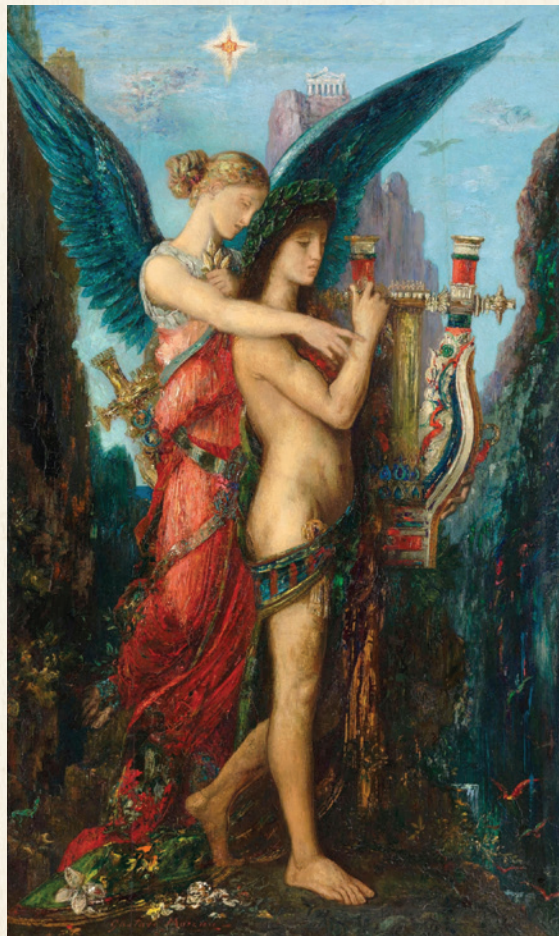
One day the **Muses** taught me, Hesiod, glorious song while I was tending my lambs under holy **Mount Helicon**. The Muses approached me and said, “Shepherd of the wilderness, we know how to speak many false things as though they were true, but we also know how to utter true things when we wish.” So said the honey-voiced daughters of great Zeus, and they plucked and gave me a rod, a shoot of sturdy olive, a marvelous thing, and breathed into me a divine voice to celebrate things that shall be and things that have been. They bade me sing of the race of the blessed gods that are eternal and instructed me always to sing of them whenever I begin and end my song. Then I replied, “**Sing**, daughters of Zeus! Give me lovely song to honor the holy race of the immortal gods, the children of **Gaia** and starry **Uranus** and gloomy Night and those that salty **Pontus** reared. Tell how, at the first, the gods and earth **came to be**—and rivers, and the boundless sea with its raging swell, and the gleaming stars, and the wide heaven above, and the gods who came after them, givers of good things, and how they divided their wealth, and how they shared their honors, and also how at the first they took possession of Olympus. Declare these things to me from the beginning.”

CHAOS, EARTH, AND SKY

At the first, **Chaos** came to be, but next came wide-bosomed Gaia, the stable foundation of all the immortal gods on Olympus, and dim **Tartarus** deep inside the earth, and **Eros**, fairest of the deathless gods, who weakens the limbs and overwhelms the minds and plans of both gods and men. Darkness and

HESIOD AND THE MUSE

One of the nine Muses gives poetic inspiration to a youthful Hesiod. The poet's head is crowned with laurel, a symbol of literary greatness, and the French painter Moreau has made the Muse resemble an angel by giving her wings. Hesiod himself describes the occasion when the Muses appeared to him on Mount Helicon while he was pasturing sheep and commissioned him to be a poet.



Muses

The nine goddesses who inspired human creativity; they were the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne or Memory.

Mount Helicon

a mountain near Thebes sacred to the Muses and known for inspiring poets

Sing

This part of the poem is an invocation, a conventional prayer that asks the Muses to help the poet tell his story well. Writers of epics such as Virgil, Dante, and Milton crafted increasingly complex invocations for their poems.

Gaia

the goddess Earth, who bore many of the Titans

Uranus

The Sky or Heavens, he fathered many of the Titans.

Pontus

the sea

came to be

The title of the poem, Theogony, literally means “the coming-to-be of the gods.”

Chaos

the formless matter from which the cosmos was made

Tartarus

A dark place of torment for evil doers, Tartarus became a sort of hell in the Greek mythic cosmos.

Eros

Love and desire. The Greek root can be seen in our word “erotic.”

realm

Although Mount Olympus became the localized home of the major Greek gods, the gods were thought more broadly to live in the sky—the sun, moon, and stars were commonly worshipped as deities. The planets reflect Romanized names for the gods: for example, Venus is Aphrodite; Jupiter is Zeus. Generally, mortals lived upon earth, and the dead lived in the Underworld, while the heavens were the home of divinities.

sterile sea

Unlike the freshwater springs that give life to plants and men, the salty sea that surrounds Greece did not father any further gods or beings.

begot

The children of Gaia and Uranus are the Titans, the first generation of personal deities as opposed to primeval forces. Most of them ruled parts of nature until they were overthrown in the war with the Olympian gods. Oceanus governed the expansive ocean, which surrounded and contained Gaia, and Hyperion ruled the sun.

Cyclopes

These one-eyed monsters were skilled smiths who forged weapons for Zeus during the Olympians' war with the Titans; lesser Cyclopes such as Polyphemus, a son of Poseidon, would later appear on earth.

THE GARDEN OF THE HESPERIDES

The Hesperides are, according to Hesiod, the daughters of Night. They guarded golden apples on an island in the far west that came to be associated with paradise. One of Heracles's Labors will be to collect the golden apples.

Night emerged from Chaos; Sky and Day were the children of Night and Darkness. And Gaia first gave birth to starry Uranus, equal to herself, to cover her on every side, and to be the **realm** of the blessed gods. Then Gaia gave birth to long hills, graceful dwellings of the Nymphs. From herself Gaia also brought forth Pontus, the **sterile sea** with his raging swell. But afterwards Gaia lay with Uranus and **begot** deep-swirling Oceanus, Coeus and Crius and Hyperion and Iapetus, Theia and Rhea, Themis and Mnemosyne, and gold-crowned Phoebe and lovely Tethys. Finally, Gaia gave birth to Kronos the Wily, the youngest and most terrible of her Titan children, who hated his strong father Uranus.

After the Titans, Gaia continued to bear children. She gave birth to the proud **Cyclopes**, Brontes, Steropes, and stubborn-hearted Arges, who gave Zeus the thunder and made the thunderbolt. They were like the gods but had only one eye in the middle of their foreheads. Next, Gaia and Uranus had three more sons, Cottus and Briareos and Gyes, monstrous in size and appearance. From their shoulders sprouted a hundred strong arms, and each had fifty heads upon his shoulders, and they were irresistibly strong. Of all the children that Gaia and Uranus begot, these were the most terrible, and their own father hated them from the first.

THE FIGHT BETWEEN KRONOS AND URANUS

From fear and hatred, Uranus imprisoned these three monstrous sons deep in the earth as soon as each was born, and he would not permit them to come up into the light. And he rejoiced in his evil doing. But vast Gaia groaned, being crowded with such prisoners, and she took gray flint and shaped a great sickle and plotted with her Titan children. She encouraged them in her wrath, saying, "My children, born of a wicked father, if you will obey me, we might punish the outrageous deeds of your father." But fear seized them all, and none of them uttered a word. Finally, great Kronos took courage and answered: "Mother, I will undertake to perform this deed, for I reverence not our father of evil name, for he first thought of doing shameful things." And Gaia rejoiced greatly, hid him in ambush and gave him the jagged sickle, instructing him what to do. And when Uranus came that night longing for love, he lay with Gaia and spread himself upon her.



HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS



◆ Unhappy Immigrant

Hesiod's father emigrated from the city of Cyme in Aeolis, a coastal Greek region of Asia Minor near ancient Lydia, after failing as a merchant. He moved his family to a small village, Ascra, at the foot of Mount Helicon in Boeotia, well to the north of Athens on the mainland of Greece. The family apparently did not prosper there either. The poet himself indicated that he did not like his new home. In his poem *Works and Days*, Hesiod characterizes his Greek village as “bad in winter, sultry in the summer, and good at no time.”

◆ Age of Bards

Hesiod was roughly contemporary with the great epic poet Homer. In their lifetimes, writing had recently been reinvented in Greece after three centuries of illiteracy were ushered in by the destruction of the Mycenaean Greek civilization. Both men were bards, oral poets who memorized heroic poems and sang them to entertain audiences. Scholars believe that Hesiod's *Theogony* and Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed by drawing from multiple oral poems that had been handed down over centuries. The bards not only memorized their source poems but also creatively interpreted them, adding their own emphases to the material they inherited. These oral poems were, according to tradition, recorded about a century after the bards lived, in Homer's case by a group of poets who called themselves the “sons of Homer.”



◆ Shepherd and Poet



In the *Theogony*, Hesiod says that the Muses, who lived on Mount Helicon and inspired the various arts, visited him while he was tending sheep and commanded him to tell the story of the gods and their origins. His occupation may be another indication of the family's financial status, since shepherds occupied a lower class in society. Regardless, Hesiod seems to have begun a tradition that connected shepherds with poetry. This tradition would continue through the Renaissance and into the Early Modern period where poets such as Edmund Spenser and Sir Philip Sidney would write pastoral poetry and poems about shepherds.

While he watched over sheep, the young Hesiod memorized epic stories and language, which he later sang for audiences at feasts. The poet later dedicated a prize he won in a competition to the Muses out of gratitude for their inspiration.

castrated

Though the gods could not die, Kronos rendered Uranus powerless by making him unable to father any more children.

Furies

Robed in black with bloody mouths, these goddesses of vengeance haunted and tormented mortals who committed crimes against blood relatives.

power

The Greeks regarded love with a certain amount of distrust, for although it can be wonderful, it can also deceive, making fools of people.

golden apples

Gaia later gave the trees that produced these magical apples as a wedding gift to Hera when she married Zeus.

Fates

Sisters who collectively controlled the events and duration of each person's life. Imagined as weavers, Clotho, whose name means "spinner," spun the thread of life; Lachesis the "allotter" would determine the amount given to each man; and Atropos the "inflexible" would cut the thread at the end of life. For the Greeks, man was subject to the divine and could not alter his fate.

Nemesis

Both a goddess and a personification, Nemesis was born as an avenger to punish hubris, which was a great sin for the Greeks.

trouble men

The evils that came to plague mankind preexisted him; they were born on the earth from the descendants of Night well before humans were created. For the Greeks, evil was part of the natural order.

Then the son took the great sickle with jagged teeth and leapt from his ambush, swiftly **castrated** his father and cast the remains into the sea. Then blood dropped and fell upon Gaia, who received it, conceived, and gave birth to the strong **Furies**, the great giants with gleaming armor who hold long spears in their hands, and the Nymphs all over the boundless lands. And the parts of Uranus, which Kronos threw into the sea, began to froth until a white foam encircled the immortal flesh. Within it grew a maiden. Gods and men call her Aphrodite, goddess born of sea foam. She is also called Cytherea, because she reached that isle, and Cyprus-born, since that is where she came ashore. She went into the assembly of the gods attended by Eros the beautiful. From the beginning her **power** among men and undying gods is felt in the coy whisperings of maidens, in the smiles and deceits of sweet delight and love and graciousness.

THE FAMILY OF NIGHT

Meanwhile Night bore hateful Doom and Death. And she also bore Sleep and the tribe of Dreams. Then the goddess, murky Night, though she lay with none, brought forth Blame and painful Woe, and the Hesperides who guard the rich, **golden apples** and the trees that bear them beyond glorious Ocean. Afterwards she bore the Destinies and the ruthless avenging **Fates**—Clotho and Lachesis and Atropos, who give both evil and good to men at their birth. They pursue the transgressions of men and of gods, and these goddesses never cease from their dread anger until they punish the wrongdoer with an awful penalty. And deadly Night bore **Nemesis** to afflict mortal men, and after her, Deceit and Friendship and hateful Age and hard-hearted Strife. And hated Strife gave birth to painful Toil and Forgetfulness, Famine, and Sorrow. Strife bore yet more children: Battles, Murders, Manslaughters, Quarrels, Lying Words, Disputes, Lawlessness and Ruin, who all **trouble men**, and Oath who most disturbs men when anyone knowingly swears falsely.



MEDUSA

Of the three Gorgons, daughters of Ceto, Medusa is the most unfortunate and most famous. Despite her power to turn to stone anybody who looked directly at her, she was decapitated by Perseus. Caravaggio, a painter of great dramatic skill, represents her severed head, though her face, and the snakes she has for hair, seem still to be filled with horrific life.

MONSTROUS ENEMIES OF HEROES

Then **Ceto** bore to **Phorcys** the beautiful **Graiae**, deathless gods these sisters gray from birth. Ceto also gave birth to the Gorgons who dwell beyond glorious **Ocean** in the frontier land towards the West, where the Hesperides dwell. The Gorgons are Sthenno and Euryale, and **Medusa** who suffered the woeful fate of death, but the other two Gorgons were immortal. The **Dark-haired One** lay with Medusa in a soft meadow amid the spring flowers. And when Perseus cut off her head, the horse Pegasus was born, who is so called because he was born near the **springs** of Ocean. Now Pegasus flew away from the earth and lives with the deathless gods in the house of Zeus, where he brings to wise Zeus the thunder and lightning.

There were many monsters born who became **trials** for the hero **Heracles**. From Medusa's blood sprang Chrysaor, who married Callirrhoe, the daughter of glorious Ocean. These begot three-headed Geryon, whom mighty Heracles slew in Erythea near his oxen on the day Heracles drove the cattle to holy Tiryns. And in a hollow cave Callirrhoe begot another monster, irresistible, resembling neither mortal men nor the undying gods, fierce Echidna who is half beautiful nymph with bright eyes and fair cheeks and half huge snake, great and awful with speckled skin, eating raw flesh beneath the secret parts of the holy earth. And there she has a cave deep down under a hollow rock far from the gods and mortal men. Men say that Typhon the terrible, outrageous and lawless, married Echidna, the maiden monster with lovely eyes. So she conceived and brought forth fierce offspring. First she gave birth to Orthus, the hound of Geryon. And then again she bore a second monster not to be overcome, Cerberus who eats raw flesh, the brazen-voiced hound of Hades, **fifty-headed**, relentless and strong.



(reverse)

TERRACOTTA AMPHORA

Heracles, dressed in the skin of the Nemean lion and armed with his characteristic club, faces Geryon, a monster with three bodies, on this Archaic Athenian amphora.

Ceto and Phorcys

The gods of the dangerous, deep sea. Most of their children had some association with the sea, and several were deadly monsters.

Graiae

The three Graiae or "Gray Ones" shared one eye. Whichever of the sisters held the eye could see the future.

Ocean

In Hesiod's poems, the earth is a sort of disk that is encircled by Ocean, an enormous river that marked the borders of the world.

Medusa

Medusa had snakes for hair, and anyone who looked upon her was transformed into stone.

Dark-haired One

A term for Hades, god of the dead. The early Greeks often used euphemisms—mild, indirect terms—to avoid speaking the names of dangerous beings. They believed that uttering the name of Hades could make him appear.

springs

Pegasus's name derives from the Greek word for spring, *pegae*.

trials

The Twelve Labors of Heracles were undertaken to atone for accidentally murdering his wife and children. Many required him to defeat monsters throughout the Greek world. See *History of Ancient Greece* Book I (HAGI), chapter 5 for the Labors of Heracles.

Heracles

While he is most often known by his Latinized name "Hercules," Heracles is the Greek spelling.

fifty-headed

Although Hesiod makes him fifty-headed, Cerberus usually appears with three heads. He guarded the pathway into Hades, the Underworld.

Iolaus

the nephew of Heracles who accompanied him on some of his Labors

Bellerophon

The son of the mortal Eurynome and the god Poseidon. With the help of Athena and Poseidon, he captured and tamed the winged horse Pegasus. He killed the Chimera, a monster comprised of lion, goat, and serpent parts, while mounted on Pegasus.

Sphinx

A monster that was part woman, eagle, lion, and serpent. She famously asked a riddle of travelers and ate them if they could not answer correctly.

Nemean lion

The first of Heracles's Labors was to kill the monster. Its hide was impenetrable by mortal weapons, and its claws could cut through armor. Heracles trapped the beast in its cave and strangled it with his bare hands.

give light

Helios is the sun, and Selene is the moon.

winds

Zephyrus was the gentle west wind who announced the coming of spring; Boreas was the stormy north wind of winter; Notus was the south wind, hot and dry, who stirred up storms in late summer and destroyed crops. Homer names a fourth, Eurus, the east wind.

Styx

The river that runs through the Underworld. The most binding promise a god could make would be sworn by the River Styx, for if the god broke his word, he suffered terrible consequences.

And Echidna bore a third child, the evil-minded Hydra of Lerna, whom the goddess, white-armed Hera nourished, because of her anger at the mighty Heracles. And Heracles, the son of Zeus, together with warlike **Iolaus**, destroyed her with the merciless sword through the help of Athena. Hydra was the mother of Chimaera who breathed raging fire, a creature fearful, great, swift-footed, and strong. She had three heads, one of a grim-eyed lion, another of a goat, and another of a snake, a fierce dragon, and breathed forth a fearful blast of blazing fire. Pegasus and noble **Bellerophon** killed her. Echidna also brought forth the deadly **Sphinx** which destroyed the men of Thebes, and the **Nemean lion**, which Hera, the good wife of Zeus, brought up and made to haunt the hills of Nemea, a plague to men. The strength of stout Heracles overcame this savage beast as well.

DESCENDANTS OF THE TITANS



The Titan children of Gaia and Uranus gave birth to yet more beings. Theia lay with Hyperion and bore great Helios and clear Selene and Dawn, who each **give light** to men and gods. And Dawn bore to Astraeus the strong-hearted **winds**, brightening Zephyrus, and Boreas, headlong in his course, and Notus. And **Styx** the daughter of Ocean bore Emulation and Victory in her house. She also gave birth to Strength and Force, powerful children who dwell in the house of Zeus the loud-thunderer. The

OEDIPUS AND THE SPHINX

Moreau portrays the Sphinx as a large feline who has jumped upon Oedipus's body. This is the moment before the hero destroys the monster by solving her riddle, but her career as a destroyer of the people of Thebes is evident in the body parts at the painting's base.

Olympian Lightener had summoned all the deathless gods to great Olympus. He promised those who came that whichever of the gods would join with him against the Titans would keep the authority which he held before the **war**. So Styx came first to Olympus with her children on the advice of her dear father Ocean. And Zeus honored her, and gave her very great gifts, for he appointed her to be the great oath of the gods, and her children to live with him always.

KRONOS SWALLOWS HIS CHILDREN

Now after Kronos had defeated Uranus and replaced him as king of the universe, he married Rhea, who bore splendid **children**, Hestia, Demeter, and golden-shoed Hera and pitiless Hades, who dwells under the earth, and the loud-crashing **Earth-Shaker**, and wise Zeus, father of gods and men, by whose thunder the wide earth is shaken. Mighty **Kronos swallowed** his children one by one as they were born, fearing that one would rise up to defeat him and take his place as king over the deathless gods. For he had learned from Gaia and starry Uranus, his parents, that despite his great strength he was destined to be overcome by his own son. Therefore he watched and swallowed his children as they were born. And unceasing grief seized Rhea. But when she was about to bear Zeus, the father of gods and men, she begged her own dear parents, Gaia and Uranus, to devise some plan with her to conceal the birth of her child. They also plotted to bring revenge upon crafty Kronos for what he had done to his own father and for devouring his children. So her parents sent Rhea to the rich land of Crete when she was ready to bear great Zeus, the **youngest** of her children. Gaia received him from Rhea in wide Crete and reared the baby.

Gaia carried him swiftly through the black night and took him in her arms and hid him in a remote cave beneath the secret places of the holy earth on thick-wooded **Mount Ida**; but to Kronos the ruling son of Uranus, she gave a great stone wrapped in swaddling



Olympian Lightener
Zeus, god of lightning

war

Zeus led an uprising of younger gods against his father Kronos (see HAG1, chapter 2) and his Titan brothers.

children

The Olympian gods: Hestia was the goddess of the hearth, and Demeter the goddess of grain. Hera, the goddess of marriage and childbirth, would marry her brother Zeus and become queen of the Olympian gods. The three brothers, Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus, ruled the three realms of the Underworld, the sea, and the sky, respectively.

Earth-Shaker

one of the titles of Poseidon, god of the sea and of earthquakes

Kronos swallowed

In Greek, *chronos* is one word for time. Later Greeks interpreted Kronos's swallowing his children as symbolic of the way time devours all things.

youngest

Just as Kronos, the youngest child of Uranus, overthrew his father, so Zeus, the last born from Rhea and Kronos's union, would replace Kronos.

Mount Ida

The tallest mountain on the island of Crete, it was sacred to both Rhea and Zeus.

SATURN

In this shocking image Rubens shows Kronos eating one of his children, an act that would lead to his overthrow by his youngest child, Zeus. Although the myth as usually told has Kronos swallowing his offspring whole, the painter has adopted a bloodier representation, no doubt to emphasise the horror and unnatural quality of the episode.

Mount Parnassus

A mountain sacred to Dionysus and the Muses. It was the scene of many events: Deucalion's ark rested there after the flood; Orpheus met Apollo there; and it was the earthly abode of Pegasus. It became a symbol of ancient Greek culture in later writings.

Atlas

He sided with the Titans against Zeus during the war between the gods. As punishment, Zeus forced him to hold the sky over the earth. Heracles encountered Atlas during his Labors when tasked with gathering golden apples from the Hesperides.

Menoetius

Along with his brother Atlas, Menoetius warred against Zeus.

Prometheus

His name means "forethought." He was always thinking ahead and planning tricks. Prometheus sided with the Olympians in the war between the gods. In Hesiod's Works and Days, he appears as a patron of mankind, defying Zeus to bring man fire. Zeus punished this rebellion (see HAGI, chapter 4) but eventually allowed Heracles to free Prometheus, ending his punishment (see HAGI, chapter 5).

Epimetheus

Like Prometheus, he fought alongside the Olympians. In stark contrast to his brother Prometheus, his name means "afterthought." He did not realize the significance of his actions until it was too late. Epimetheus brought troubles to mankind because he accepted Pandora, the first woman, from Zeus, who unleashed evil and suffering upon mankind.

clothes. Then he took it in his hands and crammed it into his belly—foolish wretch! He did not know that in place of the stone his son was left behind unharmed, that this son was soon to overcome him by force and drive him from his throne, not Kronos but Zeus to reign over the deathless gods. After that, the strength and glorious limbs of the young god increased quickly, and as the years rolled by, great Kronos was tricked by Gaia into vomiting up his children. He first spewed out the stone, which he had swallowed last. Then he was overpowered by the arts and might of his son Zeus. And Zeus placed the stone in the broad earth at the foot of **Mount Parnassus** to be a sign and a marvel to mortal men. And he set free from their terrible bonds Kronos's hundred armed brothers, sons of Uranus, whom Kronos in his foolishness had bound deep in the earth. And grateful to Zeus for his kindness, they gave the mighty Olympian thunder and the glowing thunderbolt and lightning, for before that, huge Gaia had hidden these.

PROMETHEUS AND EPIMETHEUS

Now Iapetus the Titan had married Clymene, daughter of Ocean, and she bore him a stout-hearted son, **Atlas**. She also bore glorious **Menoetius** and clever **Prometheus**, full of sly tricks, and scatter-brained **Epimetheus**, who first brought trouble upon men who eat bread, for Epimetheus first accepted woman from Zeus, the maiden whom Zeus had formed. Menoetius envied Zeus, but the far-seeing god struck him down with a thunderbolt and sent him to Tartarus for his presumption and pride. And Zeus compelled Atlas to uphold the wide heaven above the earth with unwearying head and arms, standing at the borders of the West near the clear-voiced Hesperides. And the cunning Prometheus he bound with cruel chains, drove a shaft through his middle, and set on him a long-winged eagle to eat his immortal liver. By night, the liver grew as much as the eagle had devoured that day. Heracles, the valiant son of beautiful Alcmene, killed that bird and rescued Prometheus, Titan son of Iapetus, from his cruel affliction. This Zeus allowed in order to add to the glory of Heracles, the hero he loved. Though he had been angry, he gave up the wrath Prometheus had stirred up when he strove to match himself in wit against almighty Zeus.

PROMETHEUS ANGERS ZEUS

Here is the cause of Zeus's grudge against Prometheus. When the gods and mortal men gathered at Mecone, Prometheus prepared to cut up a great ox and set portions before them, trying to fool Zeus. In front of everyone else he set rich flesh and inner parts thick with fat, hiding this beneath the stomach of an ox. In front of Zeus he put only white bones, but he dressed them up with cunning art, covering them with shining fat to make them seem appealing. Then the father of men and of gods said to him: "Son of Iapetus, how unfairly you have divided the portions!" But wily Prometheus answered him, smiling softly and not forgetting his cunning trick, "Zeus, most glorious and greatest of the eternal gods, take whichever of these portions your heart desires."

With both hands Zeus picked up the white fat, and he was angry when he saw the white ox-bones craftily set out. Ever since the tribes of men upon earth



have burned white bones to the deathless gods upon fragrant altars and kept for themselves the better parts. But Zeus who drives the clouds was furious and said to him: “Son of Iapetus, clever above all! So, you have not forgotten your cunning arts!” As punishment, Zeus would not give the power of fire to the race of mortal men. But Prometheus outwitted Zeus and stole fire in a hollow fennel stalk and gave it to mankind.

ZEUS’S REVENGE

After Prometheus had given man fire, Zeus who thunders on high was stung in his spirit. Immediately he devised an evil thing for men as the **price** of fire. Zeus called on the **Limping God**, skilled in various arts, to form from earth a shy maiden. And the goddess Athena dressed her in silvery garments, and down from her head she spread with her hands an embroidered veil, a wonder to see. And she, Pallas Athena, put about her head lovely garlands, flowers of new-grown herbs. Also she put upon her head a crown of gold which the skillful Limping God himself made as a favor to Zeus to further adorn her. But when he had made this beautiful evil, he brought her out, delighting in the finery which adorned the bright-eyed daughter of a mighty father, and led her to the place where the other gods and men were. And wonder took hold of the deathless gods and mortal men when they saw her. Such a beautiful and deceptive creature was not to be withstood by men. From her comes the race of women and the female kind, the deadly race and tribe of women who live amongst mortal men to cause them great trouble, who do not share in hateful poverty, but only in wealth.

And as in thatched hives bees feed the drones whose nature is to do mischief—for by day the bees are busy laying the white combs while the drones

THE NURTURE OF JUPITER

Hesiod tells us that Rhea secreted the young Zeus on Mount Ida. Later poets elaborated the tale, adding that Zeus was nurtured on honey and goat’s milk. In Poussin’s pastoral rendition, the baby god gets the milk straight from the goat.

price

Though Prometheus defied Zeus, mankind suffered the consequences of his actions.

Limping God

A name for Hephaestus, the smith of the gods. He was crippled when Zeus threw him off Olympus during an argument when Hephaestus rose to defend Hera, his mother.

HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

◆ Not Built in a Day

According to tradition, the city of Rome was founded in 753 BC by Romulus, a descendant of the Trojan prince Aeneas who had escaped the city of Troy when it fell to the Greeks. The date reported by tradition falls close to the lifetime of both Homer and Hesiod. Although modern archaeologists do not believe that Rome was originally a city with walls as tradition claims, the earliest evidence of civilization on the location that would become Rome dates from the middle of the ninth century BC, roughly a hundred years before the traditional date of its founding. There were little villages on three of Rome's seven hills at that time, populated by local tribes known as Latins and Sabines. Rome probably became a walled city during the period when the Etruscan king Lucius Tarquinius Priscus ruled the region.



◆ Take My Poem . . . Please

In ancient times, it was not uncommon for poems to be wrongly attributed to other authors in an attempt to gain credence or acceptance. This happened several times in Hesiod's case. Later commentators may have seen similarities of style or content, or lesser poets may have wished to gain audiences by ascribing their work to a recognized authority. These spurious compositions included a poem entitled *The Precepts of Chiron*, a manual on how to divine or interpret the migration and activity of birds, and the lengthy *Catalogues of Women*. The poem on women appears to continue the *Theogony*, telling the stories of many famous mortal women who became lovers of various gods and gave birth to great heroes of the legendary past. Another composition of dubious origin is a poem entitled *The Shield of Heracles*. While we do not know the true authors of these poems, scholars now believe that they were not written by Hesiod.



◆ Five Ages of Man

In his *Works and Days*, Hesiod preserved an ancient tradition that divided human history into five eras. Unlike modern views of historical progress, ancient thinkers believed that the first period was a Golden Age ruled by Kronos in which people did not work, food was abundant, and humans were virtuous and pious. Next was the Silver Age, a time when people had to work but lived for a very long time. Zeus destroyed this race of humans because they refused to honor the gods. In the Bronze Age, people were fierce, strong, and warlike. These people were destroyed by the Great Flood of Deucalion and Pyrrha. Next came the Age of Heroes, the period of Mycenaean legends such as Heracles, Achilles, Theseus, and Jason. Hesiod called his own time the Iron Age because life was frequently short and full of sorrows, people were selfish, and evil flourished on the earth.



stay home in their covered cells, reaping the toil of others into their bellies—even so Zeus who thunders on high made women to be an evil to mortal men, with a nature to do evil. And he gave them a second evil to be the price for the fire they had received—whoever avoids marriage and the sorrows that women cause, will reach deadly old age with no one to tend him in his ailing years. Though he at least has no lack of livelihood while he lives, yet, when he is dead, his kinsfolk will divide his possessions amongst them. And as for the man who chooses marriage and takes a good wife well suited to his mind, evil continually contends with good. For whoever happens to have mischievous children will live always with unceasing grief in his spirit and heart within him. This is a sorrow that cannot be healed. So it is not possible to deceive or go beyond the will of Zeus, for not even man's friend Prometheus escaped his heavy anger, but strong bands confined him, although he knew many a trick.

CHILDREN OF ZEUS

Now the Olympian gods in their turn begot children. Zeus, king of the gods, wed Metis, and she was the wisest among gods and mortal men. But when she was about to give birth to bright-eyed Athena, Zeus craftily deceived her with cunning words and put her in his own belly, as Gaia and Uranus advised. For they counselled him, so that no other god should take the place of Zeus. For wise and cunning children were destined to be born of Metis.

First she was to bear the maiden, **bright-eyed Tritogeneia**, equal to her father in strength and in wise understanding. But afterwards she was to bear a son of overbearing spirit, destined to become king of gods and men. But Zeus swallowed Metis after she conceived Pallas Athena. Then the father of men and gods gave birth to Athena himself; she burst out of Zeus's own head on the banks of the river Triton.

Next, he took bright Themis, who bore the Hours, Good Order, Justice, and blooming Peace, who mind the works of mortal men. Themis also bore the **Fates**, to whom wise Zeus gave the greatest honor, Clotho, and Lachesis, and Atropos who give to mortal men their portions of evil and good. And Eurynome, the daughter of Ocean, beautiful in form, bore to Zeus the three lovely Graces, Aglaea, and Euphrosyne, and lovely Thaleia, whose eyes inspire love that unnerves the limbs.

Zeus also lay with all-nourishing Demeter, and she bore white-armed **Persephone** whom Hades carried off from her mother since Zeus allowed his brother to kidnap the maiden. And again, he loved Mnemosyne with the beautiful hair. From her the nine gold-crowned Muses were born who delight in feasts and the pleasures of song. And Zeus loved Leto, who bore him Apollo and Artemis, who delight in arrows, children who are more lovely than any other children of the gods.



PANDORA

Rossetti's Victorian vision of Pandora depicts the moment at which she opens her box of ills, which Hesiod records in his other surviving poem, *Works and Days*. Only one thing is left inside her box, as the Latin inscription explains: *ultima manet spes, hope remains last*.

bright-eyed Tritogeneia

An epithet, or name, of Athena because she was born near the river Triton. Her bright eyes reflected her beauty, wisdom, and capacity for quick thought.

Fates

Earlier, Hesiod claimed the Fates were daughters of Night; here they are daughters of Zeus by Themis.

Persephone

See the hymn to Demeter in HAGI, chapter 3. Persephone becomes an example of death and rebirth, and she was later worshipped in a mystery religion that promised immortality to humans.

Ares
god of war

Eileithyia
goddess of childbirth
and midwives

Dionysus
god of wine and revelry, and
patron of the theater

Finally, he made Hera his blooming wife. She brought forth Hebe and **Ares** and **Eileithyia**. And Hera brought forth famous Hephaestus, who is skilled in crafts more than all the sons of Heaven, without union with Zeus—for she was very angry with Zeus and quarreled with him. And Maia, the daughter of Atlas, bore to Zeus glorious Hermes, the herald of the deathless gods. Semele, daughter of Cadmus, bore Zeus a splendid son, joyous **Dionysus**. This mortal woman bore Zeus an immortal son, and now they both are gods. Later, mortal Alcmene loved Zeus, and became the mother of Heracles.

BACCHUS

Caravaggio presents Dionysus, known as Bacchus by the Romans, as a youthful god of wine, tempting the viewer to join him for a drink. The sensory pleasures on offer are evoked by the abundance of vine leaves and grape bunches clustered in the god's hair and by the overflowing bowl of fruit, but the transitory nature of such pleasures is also suggested, since one of the apples has started to decay.



HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

◆ Embarrassing End

Hesiod lost two lawsuits to his brother Perses, both concerning property their father left to them. After his second defeat in court, Hesiod left his home and moved to Naupactus, a city west of Delphi on the north side of the Gulf of Corinth. He was later murdered by the sons of his host at Naupactus as retribution for having seduced a young woman in nearby Oenion. Tradition states that the maiden gave birth to Hesiod's son, Stesichorus, who became a highly regarded lyric poet in his day. Unlike the sprawling epics his father wrote, Stesichorus helped develop the new lyric form of poetry, which would mature in the late sixth century BC. Because he often took up epic plots and themes in lyric verse, he also helped prepare the way for the development of Greek tragedy.



◆ The Olympics Begin



The first recorded Olympics were held during the same century of Hesiod's life. The first Olympiad, occurring in 776 BC, became a benchmark for dating other events in Greek history. This date is confirmed because the Greeks kept lists of all the Olympic victors from this time on, allowing historians to relate particular Olympics to other historical events. These athletic competitions, revived in modern times with the 1896 Olympics, were originally celebrated to honor Zeus and the other gods. Scholars believe that Olympic contests were probably held many years before, but there are no records from the period before writing reappeared in Greece. Hesiod's age was a time of cultural development and the rise of a new civilization after centuries of decline on mainland Greece.

AFTERWORD

Through Hesiod's creation stories, we are introduced to key aspects of the early Greeks' world. These poems evoke the wonder that became characteristic of Greek life. This sense of awe at the natural world would later contribute to the development of Greek science as men tried to further comprehend the world and their place in it. Eventually, this wonder would also give rise to philosophy, which drew upon and wrestled with myth, vying for cultural supremacy in Greece.

But the cosmos was also dangerous. The uncanny, threatening world of the *Theogony* is populated with supernatural beings and the monsters

of legend. Humans appeared in the midst of chaos and strife and did not always enjoy beneficial relationships with the divine. We can see the struggle between man and the gods highlighted in the accounts of Prometheus and Pandora. Though elsewhere Zeus will favor and even protect many mortals, Hesiod depicts him as hating pride in mankind, as jealous and protective of his superiority to mortals. While the Titan Prometheus acts from a desire to outwit Zeus, he emerged in the Greek mind as a benefactor of mankind. Prometheus's story reveals that the gods can be fickle and suddenly turn on those who are proud or ungrateful, who encourage

men to rise above their station. Thus, Zeus punishes Prometheus by binding him to a cliff to have his liver eaten each day by an eagle. Similarly, he introduces the first woman, Pandora, to ensnare and ruin mankind. Pandora is lovely to behold as the gods give her beauty, skill, and rich adornments. But she brings with her a jar containing all sorts of evils such as Disease, Old Age, Poverty, and Despair. Curiosity ultimately leads her to open the forbidden vessel, unleashing all these troubles upon humanity. Hesiod depicts women as having the

power to shape the world alongside their ability to introduce conflict and pain among men. The most famous woman of Greek myth, Helen of Troy, will likewise reshape the Greek world.

As we have seen, Kronos established himself as ruler of the cosmos by overpowering his father Uranus, the primordial king of the world. The competition intensifies in chapter 2 with the continuation of Hesiod's *Theogony*, where Zeus and the Olympians challenge the older divinities in a winner-takes-all struggle.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & WRITING

1. The Muses bid Hesiod sing before proceeding to teach him how to do so, telling him what to sing about. Having been commanded to sing, he in turn calls upon the Muses and begs them to sing, saying, "Give me lovely song to honor the holy race of the immortal gods." Why is this work called a song, instead of, perhaps, a prayer, a history, or a genealogy? Whose song is it? Does it belong to Hesiod or the Muses?
2. The Muses introduce themselves saying, "We know how to speak many false things as though they were true, but we also know how to utter true things when we wish." What does it mean for the Muses to utter truth? In what ways can poetry be true? In what ways can poetry be false? Is this a true song?
3. Gaia and Uranus bring forth mighty and powerful children, the Cyclopes and the Titans, including Cottus, Briareos, and Gyes, who are said to be "irresistibly strong." When Gaia proposes to punish the "outrageous deeds" of their "wicked father," however, "fear seized them all, and none of them uttered a word." Why were they afraid to speak and act?
4. Is it possible to justify Kronos's actions toward his father? What does he ultimately decide to do? How does he undertake his actions? What are his motivations for so doing?
5. Why does Gaia plot against Uranus, and then plot against Kronos for plotting against Uranus?
6. Is Zeus justified in his actions toward his father? Why doesn't Gaia foment a plot against him?
7. Though the listing can seem tedious, Hesiod spends a great deal of time on the genealogies of these immortals. What insight does this afford us? What does this reveal of the nature of these gods and the importance of their origins to the Greeks?
8. Is there a point at which creation or the "coming-to-be" can be said to be complete? Throughout the poem, Hesiod connects many passages with "and." What does this suggest about the nature of creation for the Greeks?
9. Prometheus, whose name means "forethought," steals fire from the gods and bestows the divine spark upon man. What difference does it make in the lives of men? Does it matter that man receives fire as something stolen instead of freely given? What are the implications and consequences? Why is Zeus angered?

2

The War in Heaven

The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound
Groan'd for the old allegiance once more,
And listen'd in sharp pain for Saturn's voice.

—John Keats

INTRODUCTION

Hesiod gave us the framework for the patterns of the universe in the prehistoric power struggles between the different generations of the gods, which featured cycles of conflict and rivalry. Though these cyclical patterns began with the gods, they ultimately played out on all levels of the cosmos, for they were part of the natural order itself. Just as death followed birth, and spring came after winter, so too cities rose and fell, enjoying periods of peace and prosperity after war and strife. For the Greeks, the natural order, even time itself, was cyclical. Thus, as the Greek gods resembled the character of humans for good and for ill, the deeds of men often paralleled or reenacted the patterns established by the gods. For example, the ten-year-long Trojan War among mortals mirrored the ten-year war between the Titans and the Olympians.

In Hesiod's myths, the basic elements of earth, sky, and sea—Gaia, Uranus, and Pontus—emerged from the raw material or “stuff” of nature to establish a basic order in the cosmos. Uranus rose to a place of power, but Kronos the upstart son soon overthrew his father to become ruler of the universe. A tyrant may have been overthrown, but the son who displaced him was equally oppressive. Following the pattern established by his father, Kronos

ruled by power and fear. He and his fellow Titans did nothing to restrain the powers of darkness and destruction that roamed the earth. Fearing that he too would be overthrown, Kronos attempted to break the pattern of generational rivalry by devouring his own beautiful children, who would become the Olympian gods, as soon as they were born. Later writers would understand this as an allegory for how time, *chronos* in Greek, eventually consumes all things.

Hatred, jealousy, and conflict characterized the various relationships among the divinities long before the creation of mankind. So too, Death, Disease, War, and Famine predated humanity. They roamed the cosmos as part of the natural order, inherent to the structure of the world. It is in the midst of describing the origins of such fearsome monsters and beings harmful to mankind that Hesiod pauses and briefly turns from the unfolding cosmic conflict between father and son to record mankind's creation and his fall from a state of bliss. The Titan Prometheus had defied Zeus and elevated humans out of their animal state through the gift of fire. Ultimately, fire offered mankind culture—a means of resisting the turbulent chaos that characterized their world. Fire enabled humans to

achieve civilization: it gave them warmth and protection, the means to cook, and the ability to shape metal, whether tools for farming or weapons for defense. Fire also gave off light, which represented knowledge and creativity. Rather than allowing men to enjoy these blessings, however, the gods cleverly used Woman to unleash many of the evils that beset mortals; just as Kronos feared his children, the gods were threatened by humankind's capacity for greatness. Resorting to trickery, the gods made Woman irresistibly lovely in order to ensure their own continuing superiority and to humble the pride of mortals. While Zeus himself was sometimes unkind toward humanity, he was far more benevolent than his voracious and tyrannical father.

After this brief account, mankind recedes into the background for the remainder of Hesiod's *Theogony*. The story returns to the war between the Olympian gods and Kronos and his Titan siblings. Though the war introduced new characters, it repeated the pattern of conflict between elder and

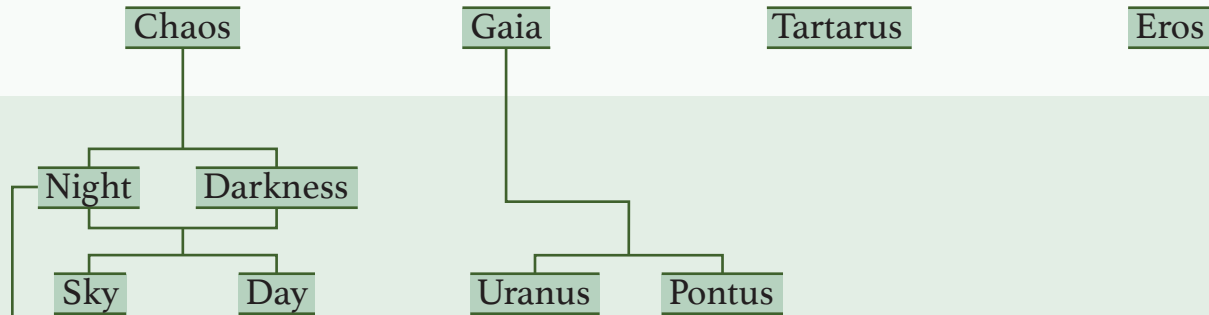
younger deities which Kronos set in motion when he rebelled against Uranus. Against Kronos and the Titans, figures of chaos, Zeus and his allies became champions of order. *Cosmos*, the Greek word for "universe" also meant "beauty," and thus reflected the beautiful and orderly world the early Greeks saw when they gazed upon the night sky. The capacity for culture which Prometheus had given humans enabled them, like the gods, to draw order out of chaos, to shape and structure the wooded mountains and productive valleys of their new land. While Kronos had brought "chill doom" to the world, the Olympians appeared as "givers of good."

The conflict between the Titans and Olympians was so evenly balanced that the war dragged on for ten years, and the savage intensity of the fighting threatened to revert the world to utter Chaos. It became evident that the very fate of the cosmos was at stake, and something had to give. Victory by the Olympians meant a world that was safer for mankind with some expectation of justice, and explained why they deserved honor and worship.

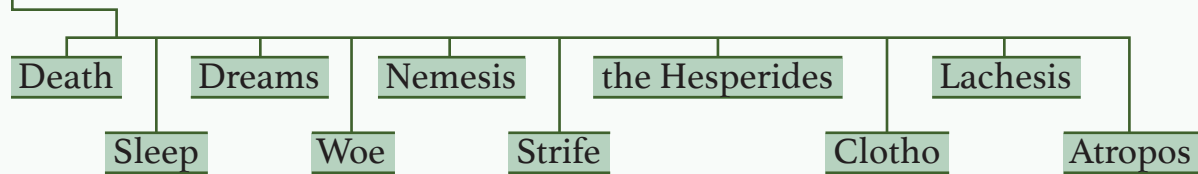


The First Gods

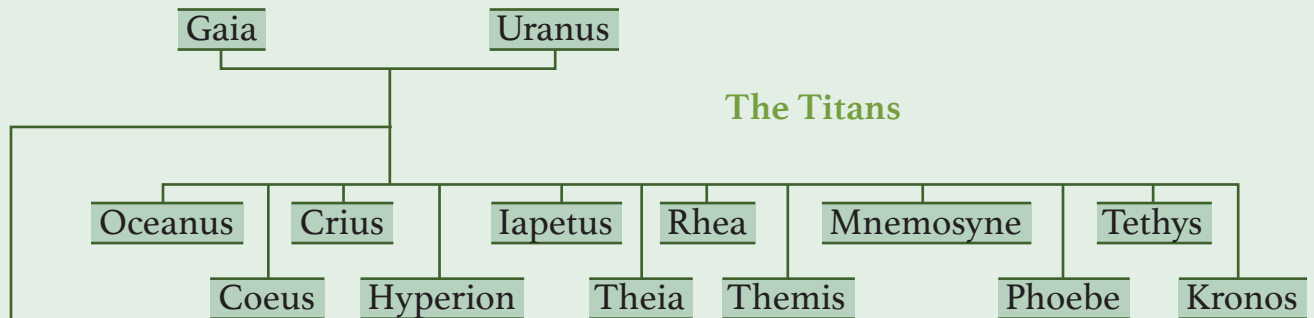
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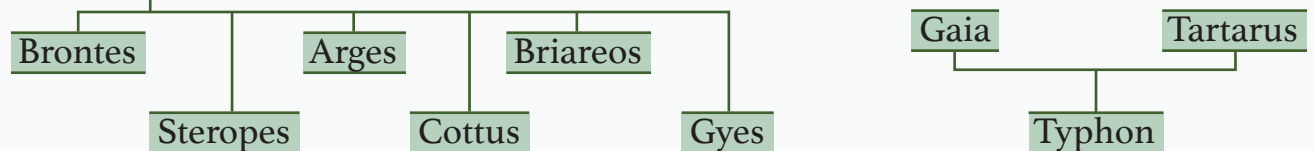
Children of Night



The Titans



Cyclopes and Monsters



The Theogony

Hesiod
c. 8th century BC

NEW ALLIES OF ZEUS

Othrys

Located about 70 miles south of Mount Olympus, Mount Othrys was the stronghold of Kronos and the Titans. It was thus the birthplace of Zeus and the younger gods.

evenly balanced

In the epics of Homer and Hesiod, the fates of warring armies and heroes are weighed against each other on scales or balances. See HAG1, chapter 6, where Zeus weighs Achilles against Hector on his golden scales.

nectar and ambrosia

These were the special drink and food reserved for the gods, which helped them maintain their immortality.

help you

Even though they belonged to the earlier generation of gods, the hundred-armed giants sided with Zeus and the Olympians because of Zeus's kindness in rescuing them.

PROCESSION OF TWELVE GODS AND GODDESSES

This Greek relief sculpture shows the canonical twelve Olympian gods, who fought and vanquished the Titans. At the far right is Apollo, god of music, with his lyre; third from the right is Zeus carrying his thunderbolt; and fourth from the right is warlike Athena, wearing a helmet and carrying an owl, symbol of wisdom.

Uranus had long ago become afraid of his sons Briareos and Cottus and Gyes. Because he was jealous of their overwhelming power and beauty and great size, he bound them in cruel bonds and made them live in bitter anguish deep within the earth. Here they remained in great suffering for a long time. But Zeus and the children of Kronos brought them up again to the light at the advice of Gaia, who revealed to the gods that victory and glory would be won with the aid of these strong helpers. Now the Titans and the Olympian gods, children of Kronos and Rhea, had long been fighting each other with heart-grieving toil. The lordly Titans advanced from high **Othrys**, but the gods, givers of good, came from Olympus. So each generation, with bitter wrath, fought continually against the other for ten full years, and the raging conflict had no close nor end for either side, and the issue of the war hung **evenly balanced**.

In the tenth year of the war, Zeus freed the three gigantic captives, giving them all necessary provisions and offering them **nectar and ambrosia**, which the gods themselves eat. With this food, their proud spirits revived within them. Then the Lord of Olympus said to them: "Hear me, sons of Gaia and Uranus. We, the children of Kronos, have waged bitter war for many years against our elders. Now show your great might and unconquerable strength and face the Titans in deadly strife. Remember our kindness, how we have rescued you from long ages of suffering in the grim darkness below." And blameless Cottus answered him: "Divine one, we know well the truth of your words. We know indeed that you became our deliverer from chill doom. You released us from our merciless bonds and brought us out of the murky gloom so that we might enjoy freedom, O lord, son of Kronos. And so now, with fixed purpose and deliberate counsel, we will **help you** in your dreadful strife. We will fight against the Titans in harsh battle."

In this way he replied, and the gods, givers of good things, cheered when they heard him. Their spirits longed for war even more than before, and they all, both gods and goddesses, went forth to battle that day against the Titans. All the children of Kronos fought in ranks alongside those three dreadful and



mighty ones whom Zeus brought up to the light from beneath the earth. The three giants who had been freed stood against the Titans in fierce battle, holding huge rocks in their strong hands. And on the other side the Titans eagerly arranged their ranks, and both sides at the same time displayed their strength and their ferocity. The boundless sea rang with the roar of battle, and the earth crashed with their tread. Wide heaven shook and groaned, and high Olympus reeled from its foundation under the charge of the undying gods. A heavy quaking reached even dim Tartarus below the Earth from the clang of their hard weapons and the heavy tread of their feet in the fearful clash. So, then, they launched their grievous spears upon one another, and the cry of both armies as they shouted reached to **starry heaven**. Each side roared their battle cries.

As the armies met, Zeus exerted his power to the utmost. Now his heart was filled with fury and he put forth all his strength. Out of the sky and from Olympus he rushed into battle, to the front lines, hurling and flashing his lightning. Thunderbolts flew thick and fast from his mighty hand. Together, his **lightning and thunder** swirled in awesome, devastating fire. The life-giving earth burst into flames, and the vast forests crackled loud with burning on all sides. The land itself seethed with heat, as did Ocean's streams and the sterile sea. The hot vapor lapped around the earthborn Titans and flame unspeakable rose to the bright upper air. The flashing glare of the thunderbolts and lightning blinded their eyes despite their great strength. Chaos lifted his head to see with his eyes and to hear the sound with his ears, for it seemed even as if earth and wide heaven above became one. Such a mighty crash would have occurred if earth were being hurled to ruin, and heaven from on high were casting her down. The awesome struggle of Titans and gods meeting together in battle created such a world-ending crash. At the same time the winds brought rumbling earthquakes and dust storms, thunder and lightning and the lurid thunderbolt, the weapons of great Zeus, and carried the clash and the war cry between the two hosts. A horrible uproar of terrible strife ascended: mighty deeds of war were performed, and the battle raged.

These mighty powers fought one another and kept up their cruel war. And in the midst of the heaviest fighting, Cottus and Briareos and Gyes, relentless for war, fought grimly. Three hundred massive boulders, one after another, they launched from their strong hands and overpowered the Titans for all their great spirit. At last, then, the forces of Zeus triumphed, and they **hurled** the ancient

starry heaven

The war had cosmic ramifications, threatening to unsettle the entire natural order from the heavens above to Tartarus below. The conflict was so fierce it shook the foundations of the universe.

lightning and thunder

Zeus was given these weapons by the Cyclopes, the children of Uranus and Gaia whom Kronos hated. In his hands they were especially catastrophic.

hurled

As immortal gods, the Titans could not be killed or truly destroyed. They were, therefore, imprisoned in the deep pit of the Underworld.



THE OLYMPIAN GODS

The Italian Renaissance painter Raphael presents the twelve Olympian gods gathered on the clouds in this wall painting. Family disputes are common in the stories about these gods. Raphael here depicts a typical moment of family drama: Eros, the son of Aphrodite, has fallen in love with a mortal, Psyche, and asks for the blessing of Zeus upon this troubled relationship.



ATLAS

The Titan Atlas was famously punished by being forced to bear the heavens, which the baroque painter Guercino brilliantly represents, showcasing the strength of the Titan's body alongside the strain and anguish we see in his face. The Greeks envisaged the heavens as a celestial sphere, upon which we see two constellations: Scorpio and Libra.

aegis

A symbol of Zeus's strength, the aegis was a shield that engendered terror in all who saw it; later the head of Medusa was placed upon it to increase fear in onlookers.

brother of Death

The ancient Greeks often paired Sleep and Death as they closely resemble each other, separating people from contact with the waking world.

deities deep beneath the broad earth and bound them in unbreakable chains when they had broken their strength and their spirits. Far beneath the surface of the earth in dark Tartarus they imprisoned the Titans.

THE PRISON TARTARUS

A bronze anvil cast down from heaven would fall nine nights and days to reach the earth upon the tenth. And again, a bronze anvil would fall from earth the span of nine nights and days before reaching Tartarus upon the tenth. So great is the depth of the prison where the Titans remain. Round it runs a fence of bronze, and Night spreads all around it like a triple necklace, while above it grow the roots of the earth and the sterile sea. There the Titan gods are held fast under misty gloom, in a dank place at the ends of the huge earth. And they may not go out, for Poseidon fixed gates of bronze upon it, and a wall runs all round it on every side.

There Gyes and Cottus and great-souled Briareos lived, trusty wardens for Zeus who holds the **aegis**. And there, all in their order, are the utmost boundaries of gloomy earth and misty Tartarus and the unfruitful sea and starry heaven, borders loathsome and dank, which even the gods abhor. It is a great gulf, and if once a man were within the gates of Tartarus, he would not reach the floor until a whole year had reached its end, but cruel blast upon blast would carry him this way and that. And this marvel is fearful even to the deathless gods.

At this boundary of all things stands the awful home of murky Night wrapped in dark clouds. In front of it stands Atlas, immovable, upholding the wide sky upon his head and tireless hands. Here Night and Day pass by and greet one another as they cross the great threshold of bronze: while one is about to go down into the house, the other comes out at the door. And the house never holds them both within, but one is always outside the house passing over the earth while the other stays at home and waits until the time for her journeying comes. Day holds all-seeing light for those who live on earth, but evil Night holds Sleep in her arms, the **brother of Death**, wrapped in a vaporous cloud. And there the children of dark Night have their dwellings, Sleep and Death, awful gods. The glowing Sun never looks upon them with his beams, neither as he goes up into the sky, nor as he comes down from there. And Sleep roams peacefully over the earth and the sea's broad back and is gracious to men, but his brother Death has a heart of iron, and his spirit within him is pitiless and unyielding as bronze. Hateful even to the deathless gods, whomever of men he has once seized he holds fast.

THE REALM OF HADES

Before the pit of Tartarus stands the joyless halls of the god of the lower-world, strong Hades, and of awful Persephone his queen. A fearful hound guards the house in front, merciless, and he has a cruel trick. He fawns all those who go in with his tail and both his ears, but he does not allow them to go back out again. He keeps watch and devours whomever he catches going out of the gates

HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

◆ Mixed Feelings

Plato seems to have been ambivalent about Hesiod's poetry. His theory of the universe's primordial "stuff," which was formed into the cosmos by the *demiurge* or divine craftsman, seems to draw upon Hesiod's Chaos. And in the *Apology*, he has Socrates say that it would be a delight to converse with the epic poet in the afterlife. The Noble Lie in the *Republic*, which claims that men have either gold, silver, bronze, or iron mixed into their souls, is clearly a reference to the four eras of man, which Hesiod's *Works and Days* characterizes with the same metals. Yet, in book two of his *Republic*, Plato's Socrates calls for censoring the poets, specifically Hesiod and Homer, because they portray gods and heroes as doing evil things and thus give men bad moral exemplars. By the time we get to book ten, Socrates exiles Homer and Hesiod from his imagined republic because they stir up those emotions which ought to be controlled. Plato obviously knew and quoted Hesiod in his writing, but he objected to the popular mythology that portrayed the gods as having many of the moral failings from which people suffer.



◆ Enuma Elish

Although this Babylonian creation epic was written about a thousand years before Hesiod's *Theogony*, scholars believe that it was an influential source for Greek stories. In both epics, a younger god defeats gods from the older generations. The goddess Tiamat in the *Enuma Elish* is a watery dragon; she functions similarly to Uranus and Kronos in Hesiod's epic. When Marduk, the patron god of Babylon, defeats her, he becomes king of the universe over the older Sumerian gods whom Tiamat had defeated. Both myths also emphasize the triumph of order over chaos. Unlike the *Theogony*, in which younger gods aspire to take power from their elders, the conflict in the *Enuma Elish* is started by the older generation of gods. It begins because the older gods resent the noisy restlessness of the younger deities.



◆ Pastoral Poetry

Hesiod's *Works and Days* is considered to be the forerunner and inspiration for pastoral poetry, which celebrates the simple life of peasants in the countryside. Theocritus, a Hellenistic poet of the third century, drew upon Hesiod's depiction of farming life with its seasonal rhythms to develop pastoral poems as a distinct genre. Such poems typically feature shepherds who woo nymphs or shepherdesses, expressing their longing to enjoy the beauties of nature with their beloved ones. The point of view is characteristically that of common farm workers, in contrast to the aristocratic outlook of epics. Later poets developed this form further. Pastorals became especially fashionable during the Renaissance era as well as during the age of Romanticism in Europe.

HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

♦ Iron Age

Although a few iron objects appeared earlier, iron and steel implements only became widespread during the 8th century BC. The earliest known cast-iron tools come from China. Cast iron was stronger than simple iron, and it was formed by mixing iron ore with carbon and other materials. The ability to make steel, formed from iron and other alloys, quickly followed. Steel was made harder by a process known as quenching, when the hot metal was plunged into cold water. Homer's *Odyssey* refers to this technology when the poet compares Odysseus hardening the point of the wooden beam which he and his men used to destroy the Cyclops's eye to a metalsmith tempering metal, quenching an axe with cold water. The development of cast iron and steel forging probably occurred in Greece during Hesiod's lifetime.



♦ Fame

The Roman poet Virgil was significantly influenced by Hesiod; one of his most famous phrases in the *Georgics* is a Latin translation of a phrase from Hesiod's *Works and Days*, and his *Eclogues* are pastoral poems in the tradition of Hesiod and Theocritus. Critics also note that Virgil's depiction of *Fama* (Rumor in Latin) in book four of the *Aeneid* as a monstrous bird which flies over the countryside is derived from Hesiod's portrayal of *Pheme* (Rumor in Greek) in *Works and Days*. Poets often alluded to and even borrowed from well-known earlier works in compositions, so it was natural for Virgil to elaborate upon phrases and images from the great Greek epic poet. Thus he demonstrates his debt to Hesiod even while deviating from and advancing beyond his predecessor.

♦ Isaiah

About the same time as Hesiod was composing his songs in ancient Greece, the Hebrew prophet Isaiah was active and writing the prophecies which made up the longest prophetic book of the Old Testament. Isaiah lived in the southern kingdom of Judah, and during his lifetime, Judah experienced significant prosperity, which weakened their commitment to their God, but they also witnessed the rise of Assyria, a fierce empire which conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC and went on to besiege Jerusalem unsuccessfully. Isaiah's writings called Judah to return to reliance upon their God and to turn from idolatry. There are also several Messianic prophecies in Isaiah which speak of a suffering servant who will restore peace and order. The authors of the New Testament interpreted these passages in light of Jesus's life and death. Isaiah's prophecies combined warnings against sin with comfort and encouragement for those who remained faithful to the covenant with God.



of strong Hades and awful Persephone. And there dwells the goddess dreaded even by the deathless gods, terrible Styx, eldest daughter of ancient Oceanus. She lives apart from the gods in her glorious house vaulted over with great rocks and propped up to the sky all round with silver pillars. Rarely does the daughter of Wonder, swift-footed Iris, come to her with a message over the sea's wide back. But when strife and quarrel arise among the deathless gods, and when any of those who live in the palace of Olympus lies, then



Zeus sends Iris to bring in a golden jug the great oath of the gods from far away, the famous cold water which trickles down from a high rock. Far under the wide earth a branch of Ocean flows through the dark night out of the holy stream, and a tenth part of his water is allotted to Styx. With nine silver-swirling streams he winds about the earth and the sea's wide expanse, and then falls into the Ocean. But the tenth flows out from a rock, a sore trouble to the gods. For if any of the deathless gods who dwell on snowy Olympus pours a libation of her water and tells a lie, he must lie breathless for an entire year. He never tastes ambrosia and nectar but must lay spiritless and voiceless on a bed while a heavy trance possesses him. But when he has spent a long year in his sickness, another and harder penalty follows the first. For nine years he is cut off from the eternal gods, unable to join their councils or their feasts. But in the **tenth year** he comes again to join the assemblies of the deathless gods who dwell on Olympus. Such an oath, then, did the gods appoint the eternal and primeval water of Styx to be, and it spouts through a rugged crag.

All these realms in their order are the sources and ends of the dark earth and misty Tartarus and the sterile sea and starry sky, hateful even to the gods above. And there are shining gates and an immovable threshold of bronze with unending roots which has grown down by itself. And beyond that threshold, away from all the gods, live the Titans, even beyond gloomy Chaos. But the glorious allies of loud-crashing Zeus have their dwelling upon Ocean's foundations, even Cottus and Gyes. The deep-roaring Earth-Shaker Poseidon, however, made Briareos his son-in-law because he is handsome, giving him **Cymopolea** his daughter in marriage.

WAR WITH TYPHON

So it seemed that peace would prevail after Zeus had driven the Titans into Tartarus, but huge Gaia bore her youngest child **Typhon**, aided by the power of golden Aphrodite. The father was gloomy Tartarus himself. Typhon was a

CHARON CARRIES SOULS ACROSS THE RIVER STYX

The River Styx, by which the gods took their oaths, was thought to separate the land of the living from Hades, the land of the dead. The souls of the dead were desperate to cross over the river, but they needed to be taken by the ferryman Charon. Litovchenko was a student at the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts when he created this prize-winning image, and he represents Charon as stern and unyielding to the cries of the dead. The scene is witnessed by the poets Virgil and Dante, in a reference to the latter poet's fourteenth-century Divine Comedy.

tenth year

Like the war of the Titans and gods and the Trojan War, the span of ten years suggests the completion of a dreadful event. Even gods must pay penance for breaking their word.

Cymopolea

goddess of stormy sea waves

Typhon

The last of the Titans, Typhon was one of the most powerful, and he nearly single-handedly overthrew the Olympian gods. As the child of Earth and Tartarus, he was both monstrous—a sort of chaos-dragon—and almost invincible.



ALABASTRON WITH TYPHON

The painter of this small pot, who lived in Corinth in the seventh century BC, has taken great delight in depicting Typhon's monstrous strength. The lower part of his body is a snake, an animal associated with the earth, since like the Titans Typhon was the offspring of Gaia.

Zeus cast

Zeus's right to rule the universe is confirmed by his single-handed victory over this last, terrible monster.

breezes

Notus was the south wind, who brought the summer rains to Greece; Boreas was the north wind, who brought winter storms; Zephyr was the gentle western wind, who usually brought mild weather and good sailing.

realms

As ruler of the cosmos, Zeus had the authority to appoint gods and powers to their appropriate place, thus completing the organization of the world as men know it.

monster, powerful beyond belief, who never grew tired. From his shoulders grew a hundred heads of snakes, a fearful dragon, with dark, flickering tongues, and from under the brows of his eyes in his marvelous heads flashed fire, and flames burned from his heads as he glared. And there were voices in all his dreadful heads which uttered every kind of unspeakable sound. At one time they seemed to speak, but then they made the noise of a bull bellowing in proud, ungovernable fury. They made the sound of a lion, relentless of heart, and barked like dogs, amazing to hear. Again, Typhon would hiss so that the high mountains re-echoed. Truly, a terrible disaster would have happened on that day, and Typhon would have become lord over all things, if the father of men and gods had not been quick to perceive it. But Zeus thundered hard and mightily: the whole earth resounded, echoing terribly throughout the wide heaven above, over the sea and Ocean's streams, and into the lowest parts of the earth. The earth groaned and great Olympus reeled beneath the divine feet of the king of gods as he advanced to war. And as they fought, heat overwhelmed the dark-blue sea. The thunder and lightning of the god clashed with the fire from the monster. The winds scorched, and the firebolts blazed. The sky and whole earth seethed, and from the sea fierce waves raged along the beaches round about at the rush of the two gods—and there a ceaseless shaking began. Hades trembled where he rules below over the dead, and even the Titans under Tartarus who live with Kronos shook, because of the loud clamor and the fearful strife. So when Zeus had aroused his might and seized his arms, thunder and lightning and lurid thunderbolt, he leaped from Olympus and struck Typhon, and scorched all the frightful heads of the monster.

So, when Zeus had conquered him and lashed him with lightning, Typhon was hurled down, a maimed wreck, so that the huge earth groaned at his impact. And flame shot forth from the dazed monster in the dim rugged forests of the mountain when he was struck. A great part of huge earth was scorched by the terrible vapor, and the land melted as tin melts when heated by men's art in the smith's crucibles; or as iron, hardest of all things, is softened by glowing fire in shady forests and melts in the divine earth through the strength of Hephaestus. Even so, did the ground melt in the glow of the devouring fire. And in the bitterness of his anger **Zeus cast** the hulk of Typhon into wide Tartarus.

Now from Typhon come boisterous winds which blow damply, except Notus and Boreas and clear Zephyr. These are **breezes** sent by the gods, and a great blessing to men; but the other winds born from Typhon blow fitfully upon the seas. Some rush upon the misty sea and work great havoc among men with their evil, raging blasts. Varying with the season they blow, scattering ships and destroying sailors. And men who meet these upon the sea have no help against their mischief. Others again over the boundless, flowering earth spoil the fair fields of men who dwell below, filling them with dust and cruel uproar. But when the blessed gods had finished their combat and settled by force their struggle for dominion with the Titans, they begged far-seeing Olympian Zeus to reign and rule over them at the prompting of wise Gaia. So he divided their **realms** amongst them.

HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS



◆ Milton

Hesiod's impressive legacy also extends to John Milton, the greatest epic poet in the English language, and perhaps of the entire Early Modern period. Milton employed the pastoral tradition to write a pair of poems called *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, Italian for “the happy man” and “the melancholy man,” respectively. Perhaps his greatest lyric poem was *Lycidas*, an elegy for a college friend, Edward King, who drowned at sea. In *Lycidas*, Milton assumes the voice of a shepherd lamenting his

dead friend Lycidas. Critics have also detected the influence of the *Theogony* in Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*. In this work, Milton's picture of the universe owes much to Hesiod. When Satan departs Hell to visit earth, he must pass a great void presided over by “Chaos and ancient Night”—two primordial beings in Hesiod's poem. Later, the battle between Satan and his followers and the hosts of unfallen angels draws upon Hesiod's depiction of the war of the Olympian gods and the Titans.

◆ Messenian War

While Assyria was conquering the kingdom of Israel, Sparta fought a long, grueling war against the neighboring kingdom of Messenia from 743 to 722 BC. The Spartans were superior in combat, so the Messenians avoided battles on open ground and instead based their defense upon fortified outposts. As a result, Spartan armies would raid Messenian territory throughout the war but fought few full-scale battles. Finally, the Spartans besieged the main Messenian fortress on Mount Ithome. When the garrison surrendered, Messenian defenses collapsed and Sparta conquered most of the surrounding country. The survivors were reduced to slavery, becoming the helot class in Spartan society for almost four hundred years. Conquering Messenia made Sparta the dominant power in central Greece, but it also forced the Spartans to maintain a full-time professional army to keep their slaves under control. Farm labor was performed by the conquered Messenians, known as helots, while the Spartan men trained for war.



AFTERWORD

So influential was the *Theogony* that subsequent generations repeatedly returned to its account of beginnings, alluding to it and occasionally transforming it in visual art and drama. It was so prevalent that we find references to it throughout Greek works of history, science, and philosophy. Indeed, so influential were the myths that in the Classical era some four hundred years later, Plato would name Hesiod and Homer the “educators of Greece.” Recognizing the power of myth to shape the loves and imaginations of a people, however, Plato

warned in his *Republic* that we must judiciously censor the stories we tell children. What if a child read Hesiod's stories and was inspired to rebel against his father? Socrates claimed to love the poets but said he would exile Homer and Hesiod from his imagined city due to their amazing power to influence the people. Thus, the creation of all things and the rise and triumph of the Olympian gods became the prehistoric background and setting for ancient Greek culture.

As the gods emerged victorious, the Titans and many of the worst monsters, such as Cerberus and Echidna, were confined to the Underworld, no longer free to roam the earth above. While Zeus's victory was achieved by sheer force and domination, he broke the pattern of tyranny and established a measure of peace, order, and justice. Out of the ferocious conflicts extending over two generations of divinities, order finally triumphed over Chaos, and the Olympian gods ruled the universe under Zeus, who became known as the "father of gods and men." The triumph of the younger gods created the world the early Greeks knew and inhabited and shaped, a world of breathtaking beauty and order

constantly shadowed by ongoing threats. Thus the myths enabled the Greeks to know their place in the world. Through the authoritative tales of the inspired poet, they were able to comprehend both the beauty and the darkness of their experience.

But what were these ruling Olympian gods like? A collection of poems from the ninth and eighth centuries BC narrated the adventures and characters of the Greek deities. The *Homeric Hymns* contain moments of beauty, sorrow, and humor as they depict the powerful and charming but very human-like and unpredictable gods, offering us a glimpse into how the gods were seen and addressed by the mortals who worshipped them.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & WRITING

1. Why is Zeus so slow to seek help from Briareos, Cottus, and Gyes? Why does he wait ten years? Why aren't they upset that they were made to wait so long?
2. Why do Briareos, Cottus, and Gyes agree to fight for Zeus, to do what they previously refused? Are they merely angry about having been imprisoned?
3. If we conceive of the gods not only as persons, but as personifications, what is the significance of their going to war? What are they fighting over, and for what do they fight? Does Zeus, for example, simply want more power, or is he after something else?
4. Why is night called "evil"? Are the gods inherently good or bad, or are they just what they are? Are lions good or evil? What about when they attack humans?
5. Who or what determines right and wrong, good and bad? What does it mean that the gods suffer punishment for perjuring themselves? What does it mean that they can punish one another?
6. Why is Aphrodite, the goddess of love, involved in the birth of Typhon, the last and greatest of the Titans?
7. In the beginning, the universe emerges from Chaos. Immortals, Titans, gods, and monsters continually rise up, clash, conquer, or die. What does this reveal of the nature of the cosmos? Is there a natural or resting state? Is the world ever done or is it constantly in a state of becoming?
8. Zeus continues to order creation, appointing realms and domains, assigning punishments and rewards, instituting sacrifices and rites. He also occasionally allows what he has done to be undone, as with Prometheus. If creation is ever an ongoing process, then by what art is it directed? By what artist?