

### **Which 3 Gods Do You Think Were The Most Important To The Greeks?**

I think Zeus is one of the most important gods if not the most important, in Greek religion. Zeus was born son of Cronos and Rhea, but Cronos who had learned of a prophecy that said one of his children would overthrow him – had consumed all of his children at birth, except for Zeus who Rhea had saved. She bore him away to a tiny island where he was raised by nymphs and goats. Upon growing up, he returned and faced his father. He poisoned Cronos and all of his brothers and sisters emerged from him, unharmed. Zeus united with them and led a revolt against Cronos and the Titans. The Olympian gods eventually won, and Cronos and the Titans were banished and imprisoned. Zeus then shared out his power with his siblings, he became the god of the sky and weather and was also in charge of ensuring fate had her way. Zeus was soon to become known as the 'supreme ruler', he became King of the gods. He was also the god of strangers and guests and was called 'zeus xenios', as well as being the protector of the state 'zeus polieus'.

In Greek art he is often portrayed as being an older bearded man, sometimes sat upon a throne, and holding either a sceptre thunderbolt, and wearing an Aegis, breastplate or a cloak. And sometimes he is shown with an eagle, as he was believed to be King of Birds.

Zeus controls every aspect of the universe, he helps to fulfill fate and he had scales which he used to determine a man's fate. He was associated with the oak tree at Dodona, which gave portents of the future. Equally Zeus was as famous for his powers as he was for his numerous liaisons with mortal women, most notably – Europa, to whom he appeared as a glorious bull – Leda, a magnificent swan – Danae, a resplendent shower of gold.

The most fantastic statues were built to him, like the 40ft high, gold and ivory statue at Olympia. This reflected the highest of esteem in which the ancient Greeks held Zeus.

Hera, I think was extremely important to the Greeks, as she was Queen of the gods and Zeus's wife. She was daughter of Cronos and Rhea and so full sister to Zeus, and was freed by him. She became the goddess of marriage, women and childbirth, and was known to be very loyal to Zeus – and extremely jealous and increasingly enraged with his affairs. Hera's symbols were a chariot drawn by peacocks, a scepter, a veil and sometimes bottles of perfume. She was thought to have large doleful, beautiful eyes - 'oxen eyes'. She was a mother goddess and often is pictured with a snake as it is a sign of fertility.

She became very vindictive towards the women that Zeus had affairs with and their children. Famously she sent two serpents to kill the infant Heracles, but he strangled them. Zeus is known to have treated her harshly and once, tied anvils to her feet and tangled her over Mount Olympus. And for losing an argument between herself and Zeus, she is believed to have blinded Tiresias. They were arguing over who got more pleasure from sex, men or women – Hera said men, and Zeus said women, they put it to Tiresias (whom they turned in to a woman for a short time) and he sided with Zeus and proclaimed that women receive more pleasure, much to Hera's discontent.

Also Athena/Athene, was one of the most important goddess in ancient Greece. She was undoubtedly one of the most beautiful and nearly won the golden apple in the Judgment of Paris. She was the daughter of Zeus and the goddess of thought, Metis. Before she could be born, Zeus devoured Metis, however Athena survived and grew inside his head. One day Zeus sent for Hephaestus, complaining of a headache. Hephaestus used his axe to split Zeus's head, and out jumped Athena, fully grown and in full armour.

Athena is the Greek goddess of wisdom, and also of war, but just war – unlike Ares who is the god of senseless, bloody and barbaric warfare. Her symbols were an owl (wisdom), olive trees (which were extremely important and vital to ancient Greeks, in the form of olive oil) and also she was the patron goddess of Athens, having beaten off competition from the likes of Poseidon.

She never married, and was also goddess of skills and crafts, she did support many Greek heroes such as Odysseus, Jason, Perseus and Heracles. Athena was portrayed as a warrior, with a helmet, spear, shield and an Aegis – often bearing the emblem of the Gorgon's head on it or on the shield, her cloak sometimes sports snake tassels, and her helmet has a sphinx on it. Occasionally she

is seen holding an owl. Athena's main place of worship was the Parthenon in Athens, there stood a 40ft gold and ivory statue, much like Zeus's statue.