

The Gods of the Trojan War

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Introduction

In Greek mythology, the Trojan War was waged against the city of Troy by the *Achaean*s (Greeks) after *Paris of Troy* took *Helen* from her husband *Menelaus*, king of *Sparta*.

The war is one of the most important events in Greek mythology, narrated through many works of Greek literature, most notably Homer's *Iliad*. The core of the *Iliad* (Books II – XXIII)

describes a period of four days and two nights in the tenth year of the decade-long siege of Troy; the *Odyssey* describes the journey home of Odysseus, one of the war's heroes.

Other parts of the war are described in a cycle of epic poems, which have survived through fragments. Episodes from the war provided material for Greek tragedy and other works of Greek literature, and for Roman poets including Virgil and Ovid.¹



¹ 'Trojan War', *Wikipedia*, n.d., https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trojan_War

Origins of the legend of the Trojan War

The ancient Greeks believed that Troy was located near the Dardanelles and that the Trojan War was a historical event of the 13th or 12th century BC, but by the mid-19th century AD, both the war and the city were widely seen as non-historical. In 1868, however, the German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann met Frank Calvert, who convinced Schliemann that Troy was at what is now Hisarlik in Turkey. On the basis of excavations conducted by Schliemann and others, this claim is now accepted by most scholars.

Whether there is any historical reality behind the Trojan War remains an open question. Many scholars believe that there is a historical core to the tale, though this may simply mean that the Homeric stories are a fusion of various tales of sieges and expeditions by Mycenaean Greeks during the Bronze Age. Those who believe that the stories of the Trojan War are derived from a specific historical conflict usually date it to the 12th or 11th century BC, often preferring the dates given by Eratosthenes, 1194–1184 BC, which roughly correspond to archaeological evidence of a catastrophic burning of Troy VII, and the Late Bronze Age collapse.

The Classical legends of the Trojan War developed continuously throughout Greek and Latin literature. In Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the earliest literary evidence available, the chief stories have already taken shape, and individual themes were elaborated later, especially in Greek drama. The story of the Trojan origin, through Aeneas, of Rome helped to inspire Roman interest; Book II of Virgil's *Aeneid* contains the best-known account of the sack of Troy.

The war

The Trojan War fought between the Greeks and Troy originated in the following manner. King Priam of Troy was wealthy and powerful; by his wife Hecuba and by concubines he had 50 sons and 12 daughters. But his son Paris was invited to judge which of the goddesses Aphrodite, Hera, and Athena was entitled to receive the golden apple marked by the goddess Eris (Discord) "for the most beautiful." Aphrodite promised Paris the most beautiful woman in the world: he therefore awarded her the apple and went to Greece, where he won the love of, and eloped with, Helen, wife of Menelaus, the king of Sparta.



Menelaus captures Helen in Troy, Ajax the Lesser drags Cassandra from Palladium before eyes of Priam, fresco from the Casa del Menandro, Pompeii

To recover Helen, the Greeks launched a great expedition under the command of Menelaus's brother, Agamemnon, king of Argos or Mycenae. The Trojans refused to return Helen. Small towns in or near the Troad were sacked by the Greeks, but Troy, assisted by allies from Asia Minor and Thrace, withstood a Greek siege for 10 years.



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The gods also took sides, notably Hera, Athena, and Poseidon for the Greeks, and Aphrodite (who had a son, Aeneas, by the Trojan Anchises, grandson of Assaracus), Apollo, and Ares for the Trojans. The Iliad, which is set in the 10th year of the war, tells of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles, who was the finest Greek warrior, and the consequent deaths in battle of (among others) Achilles' friend Patroclus and Priam's eldest son, Hector.

After Hector's death the Trojans were joined by two exotic allies, Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons, and Memnon, king of the Ethiopians and son of the dawn-goddess Eos. Achilles killed both of these, but Paris then managed to kill Achilles with an arrow. Before they could take Troy, the Greeks had to steal from the citadel the wooden image of Pallas Athena (the Palladium) and fetch the arrows of Heracles and the sick archer Philoctetes from Lemnos and Achilles' son Neoptolemus (Pyrrhus) from Skyros; Odysseus and Diomedes achieved all these. Finally, with Athena's help, Epeius built a huge wooden horse. Several Greek warriors hid inside it; the rest of the Greek army sailed away to Tenedos, a nearby island, pretending to abandon the siege. Despite the warnings of Priam's daughter Cassandra, the Trojans were persuaded by Sinon, a Greek who feigned desertion, to take the horse inside the walls of Troy as an offering to Athena; the priest Laocoön, who tried to have the horse destroyed, was killed by sea-serpents. At night the Greek fleet returned, and the Greeks from the horse opened the gates of Troy. In the total sack that followed, Priam and his remaining sons were slaughtered; the Trojan women passed into slavery in various cities of Greece. The adventurous homeward voyages of the Greek leaders were told in two epics, the Returns (Nostoi; lost) and Homer's Odyssey.



The earliest known depiction of the Trojan Horse. The Mykonos vase c. 670 BC.

The few Trojan survivors included Aeneas, whose descendants continued to rule the Trojans; later tradition took Aeneas's Trojans to Italy as the ancestors of the Romans.

Summary and Analysis: Greek Mythology The Trojan War — The Preliminaries, The Course of the War, The Fall of Troy, and The Returns²

King Priam ruled in the wealthy, fortified city of Troy. He was not only prosperous, but he had fifty or more children, and it seemed as if good fortune would bless him and his children for a long time to come. However, his wife, Hecuba, had a nightmare in which she gave birth to a deadly firebrand. The seers interpreted this to mean that her unborn child would destroy Troy and its inhabitants. When the infant was born it

² 'Summary and Analysis: Greek Mythology The Trojan War — The Preliminaries, The Course of the War, The Fall of Troy, and The Returns', *Cliff Notes*, n.d., <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/m/mythology/summary-and-analysis-greek-mythology/the-trojan-war-8212-the-preliminaries-the-course-of-the-war-the-fall-of-troy-and-the-returns>

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was exposed on Mount Ida, but a she-bear nursed it and it survived, growing up as a shepherd called Alexander, or Paris. Paris took the nymph Oenone as a lover.

At the wedding of Peleus and Thetis the gods were enjoying themselves when Eris, or Strife, threw a golden apple into their midst with the words, "For the fairest," attached. Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite all claimed the apple and asked Zeus to judge between them, but he wisely refused, directing the three goddesses to a shepherd on Mount Ida who could decide the loveliest.

The goddesses approached Paris and each offered Paris a bribe for selecting her. Hera promised to make him a king who would rule Asia and have great wealth. Athena offered to give him wisdom and an invincible valor in warfare. But Aphrodite won the apple by promising Paris the most beautiful woman in the world — the spectacular Helen. His choice was imprudent to say the least, since he made

implacable enemies of Hera and Athena, both of whom vowed to destroy him and Troy.

On learning that he would possess Helen, Paris first went to Troy and established himself as a true prince, the legitimate son of Priam and Hecuba. He now had no further use for Oenone and abandoned her. Then he sailed for Sparta, where he seduced Helen during her husband's absence and took her back to Troy with him.

Meanwhile Paris' sister Cassandra was faced with trouble. Apollo gave her the gift of prophecy while trying to make love to her, but she had taken a vow of chastity and resisted him. In anger Apollo turned his gift into a curse by making it so that no one would believe her. When Paris returned with Helen and stood before Priam to get his father's acceptance Cassandra came into the room, visualized all that would occur because of Paris and his lust, gave shrieks of despair, and railed at her immoral brother. Thinking Cassandra mad, Priam had his daughter locked in a palace cell.



When Menelaus returned to Sparta and found his wife Helen gone, he summoned the Greek leaders to go with him to conquer Troy and recover Helen. These leaders were pledged to aid Menelaus, for as they had courted Helen too they had taken an oath to avenge any dishonor that fell upon her future husband because of her. Thus Paris precipitated the Trojan War, which would fulfill the prophetic dream his mother had of giving birth to a firebrand that would destroy Troy.

An oracle had said that the first to leap ashore on Trojan territory would be the first to die. Protesilaus took this burden on himself and was greatly honored for it after being slain in a skirmish with Hector, the Trojan prince. A mighty warrior, Hector was the mainstay of Troy in the ten years of fighting that followed.

Yet Hector bore the knowledge that both he and his city were doomed. If his brother Troilus had lived to be twenty Troy might have been spared, but Achilles slew the boy in his teens. Troy had one other defender of note, Aeneas, an ally from a neighboring land. The Greek army, however, was full of heroes. In addition to Agamemnon, Menelaus, Nestor, Odysseus, and Achilles, there were Diomedes and the two Ajaxes.

The gods took part in the war as well, affecting the outcome of various battles. Apollo, Artemis, Ares, and Aphrodite sided with the Trojans, while Hera, Athena, Poseidon, Hermes, and Hephaestus aided the Greeks. Zeus might interfere on occasion, but he maintained neutrality for the most part, being fully aware of what would happen.

After nine years of fighting the Greeks had managed to lay waste many kingdoms allied to Troy in Asia Minor, but they had not made much headway against Troy itself. There was friction in the Greek camp. Odysseus still bore a grudge against Palamedes, the man who had ruthlessly shown his madness to be a hoax. When Palamedes denounced Odysseus for an unsuccessful foraging expedition, Odysseus framed Palamedes, making him appear a traitor. Palamedes was stoned to death as a result.

But then a more disastrous quarrel broke out, this time between Agamemnon and Achilles. Agamemnon had taken the daughter of a priest of Apollo as a trophy of war, and when her father came to ransom her Agamemnon sent him off without her. The priest called upon Apollo to avenge him, so Apollo sent a plague to the Greeks that killed many. Achilles called a council and demanded that Agamemnon give back the girl, Chryseis. Agamemnon angrily agreed, but he insisted on taking Achilles' own prize, the maid Briseis, in her place. It would have come to murder had not Athena intervened. Achilles then gave up Briseis, but in his wounded pride he decided to withdraw from the war. Since the Greek victories up to that point had been due to Achilles' prowess, this was a calamity for the Greeks. Achilles told his mother Thetis to petition Zeus for Trojan victories, which she did.

Quick to see that Achilles and his band of Myrmidons had retired from the fighting, the Trojans made a spirited attack. Agamemnon then granted a truce in which it was agreed that Paris and Menelaus should fight in single combat for Helen. But the duel was inconclusive, for Aphrodite, seeing that Paris was losing, wrapped him in a magic cloud and took him back to Troy.

Menelaus searched for Paris in the Trojan ranks, and Agamemnon demanded that the Trojans surrender Helen. The Trojans were willing,

which might have ended the war. But Hera wanted Troy devastated, so she dispatched Athena to break the truce. Athena then persuaded the Trojan archer Pandarus to fire an arrow at Menelaus. The shot grazed Menelaus, and the fighting resumed in an angry turmoil.

Forced to retreat, Hector was advised to return to Troy and bid his mother Hecuba to offer her most beautiful robe with a plea for mercy to the hostile Athena. Yet this gesture failed to placate the goddess. After a poignant conversation with his wife Andromache and dandling his infant son Astyanax, Hector went back to the field and issued a challenge to duel to Achilles, who declined. Ajax took up the challenge, and in the fight Ajax slightly bested Hector. The two warriors parted after exchanging gifts.



Achilles and Ajax engaged in a game, c. 540–530 BC, Vatican Museums

Honoring his promise to Thetis, who had asked him to aid the Trojans, Zeus ordered the other gods from the battlefield. As a consequence the Greeks lost badly.

The next day the Greeks were forced back to the beach, and Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes were wounded. Hera resolved to turn the tide of battle. Using Aphrodite's magic girdle, she seduced Zeus into making love to her and forgetting about the war. While Zeus was



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engaged Poseidon entered the fray and made the Trojans retreat. Ajax hurled a boulder at Hector and felled him, whereupon the Trojans ran madly for the city. Zeus recovered from his infatuation, saw the rout, threatened to beat Hera, and ordered Poseidon from the field.

Apollo came to Hector's aid, breathing vigor into him. Once again the Trojans gained the upper hand. With Hector in the forefront the Trojans smashed down the protective barricades the Greeks had built to protect their ships. Greatly alarmed, Achilles' companion Patroclus tried to persuade his friend to fight, but still Achilles declined. Patroclus then borrowed Achilles' armor and entered the battle. Thinking that Achilles was now fighting, the Trojans panicked as Patroclus slaughtered them right and left. He made his way to the walls of Troy, but Apollo dazed him as he tried to scale them. Hector found Patroclus then and slew him, stripping him of his splendid armor.

When Achilles received news of Patroclus' death he threw himself on the ground in a frenzy of grief and had to be restrained. His mother, Thetis, brought him new armor fashioned by Hephaestus, but she warned him that if he killed Hector he himself would perish soon after. Nevertheless, Achilles was determined to slay Hector and a host of Trojans besides. The next morning he made a formal reconciliation with Agamemnon and began fighting immediately.

The clash of arms that day was terrible. While Hector and Aeneas killed many Greeks they could not stop Achilles in his furor of bloodletting. In fact, both Aeneas and Hector had to be rescued with divine help. Achilles filled the Scamander River so full of bodies in his dreadful onslaught that the waters overflowed and nearly drowned him. The gods, too, engaged in battle among themselves, as Athena felled Ares, Hera boxed Artemis' ears, and Poseidon provoked Apollo.

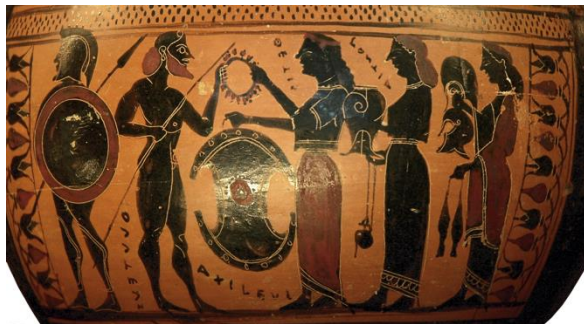
Eventually Achilles encountered Hector outside the walls of Troy. Hector ran from his opponent in a lapse of courage, circling the city three times. But Athena duped him into making a stand, and Achilles' lance caught him in the throat. Although Hector had pleaded with Achilles to let his parents ransom his body as he died, Achilles denied him jeeringly. Then Achilles took Hector's corpse, tied it behind his chariot, and dragged it back to the Greek camp as Hector's wife watched from the walls of Troy.

Since Patroclus' ghost demanded burial, Achilles prepared a glorious funeral. He cut the throats of twelve Trojan nobles as a sacrifice on Patroclus' pyre, and funeral contests in athletics followed. For eleven days Achilles dragged Hector's body around the pyre, yet Apollo preserved the corpse from corruption. Then Zeus directed Thetis to bid Achilles accept the ransom offered by King Priam for Hector's body. Zeus also sent Hermes to Priam, and Hermes guided the old king with his ransom through the Greek lines to Achilles' camp. Achilles treated Priam with courtesy, for Priam reminded him of his own aged father, Peleus. Achilles took Hector's weight in gold and gave Priam the body, which Priam took back to Troy. During the next eleven days there was a truce as the Trojans mourned for the dead Hector, whom they cremated and buried.

Achilles managed to kill the Amazon Queen, Penthesileia, in the battles that followed. And when the Trojans brought in Ethiopian reinforcements under Prince Memnon, things went hard with the Greeks, for many were slain. But when Memnon killed Achilles' friend Antilochus, Achilles retaliated by killing Memnon in a duel. However, Achilles' life was drawing to a close, as he well knew. One day in battle Paris shot at Achilles, and the arrow, guided by Apollo, struck him in the right heel, the only place where he was vulnerable. The Greeks had a difficult time retrieving his corpse from the field. Only the efforts of Ajax and

Odysseus saved Achilles' body from the Trojans. The hero was given a magnificent funeral.

There arose a dispute as to whether Ajax or Odysseus should receive Achilles' resplendent armor. The Greek commanders voted on it and awarded the armor to Odysseus. Dishonored and furious, Ajax resolved to kill a number of Greek leaders, including Odysseus. But Athena visited him with madness, and that night Ajax butchered a number of cattle under the delusion that they were the men who had slighted him. When Athena removed his frenzy Ajax saw his irremediable folly and committed suicide out of shame.



Thetis gives her son Achilles weapons forged by Hephaestus (detail of Attic black-figure, 575–550 BC, Louvre, Paris)

With their two most valiant warriors dead the Greeks became anxious about ever taking Troy. Force of arms had been unsuccessful, so they turned to oracles increasingly.

The death of Paris and possession of Heracles' weapons did not change the stalemate, so Calchas told the Greeks that only Helenus, the Trojan seer and prince, knew how Troy's downfall might be brought about. Odysseus captured Helenus on Mount Ida. Helenus bore a personal grudge against Troy, having fought for Helen after Paris died and having lost her, and he was willing to betray the city. First, the Greeks had to bring Pelops' bones back to Asia from Greece. Agamemnon accomplished this.

Second, they had to bring Achilles' son Neoptolemus into the war, and a group of Greeks went to Scyros to get him. Third, the Greeks had to steal the Palladium, a sacred image of Athena, from the goddess's temple in Troy. Diomedes and Odysseus undertook the dangerous mission. Once in Troy Odysseus was recognized by Helen, who saw through his disguise but did not give him away. The two heroes seized the sacred image of Athena and escaped unharmed.

If Odysseus claimed credit for the notion of the huge wooden horse, Athena had given the idea to another. Nevertheless, Odysseus helped the plan succeed. A great horse of wood was constructed under Greek supervision, one with a hollow belly to hold several soldiers. One night this horse was brought to the Trojan plain and warriors climbed in under Odysseus' direction. The rest of the Greeks burned their camps and sailed off to wait behind the nearby island of Tenedos.

The next morning the Trojans found the Greeks gone and the huge, mysterious horse sitting before Troy. They also discovered a Greek named Sinon, whom they took captive. Odysseus had primed Sinon with plausible stories about the Greek departure, the wooden horse, and his own presence there. Sinon told Priam and the others that Athena had deserted the Greeks because of the theft of the Palladium. Without her help they were lost and had best depart. The Trojans needed no further proof: they drew the gigantic horse inside their city gates to honor Athena.

That night the soldiers crept from the horse, killed the sentries, and opened the gates to let the Greek army in. The Greeks set fires throughout the city, began massacring the inhabitants, and looted. The Trojan resistance was ineffectual. King Priam was killed by Neoptolemus. And by morning all but a few Trojans were dead. Of Trojan males only



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Aeneas, with his father and son, had escaped the slaughter. Hector's young son Astyanax was thrown from the walls of the city. The women who were left went into concubinage as spoils of war. And the princess Polyxena, whom Achilles had loved, was sacrificed brutally upon the tomb of the dead hero. Troy was devastated. Hera and Athena had their revenge upon Paris and his city.

Having accomplished their aim in sacking Troy, the Greeks now had to face the problem of getting back to their various kingdoms. This was a problem, for the gods had scores to settle with many Greeks. Soon after the Greeks set sail a fierce storm arose that blew much of the Greek fleet far off course.

Of those who went by ship Agamemnon was one of the few that escaped the storm and reached home easily. But immediately upon his return Agamemnon's wife, Clytemnestra, and her lover, Aegisthus, slew him and his followers, including Cassandra, at the banquet table. Clytemnestra had never forgiven her husband for sacrificing Iphigenia.

Menelaus had resolved to kill Helen when he found her in Troy, but on seeing her naked he lost his determination and took her again as his wife. After offending Athena, Menelaus and Helen were caught in the storm, lost most of their ships, and were blown to Crete and Egypt. Unable to return to Sparta because of adverse winds, Menelaus began trading. Eight years later he wrested the secret of getting home from the prophetic sea god Proteus, master of changes. And having propitiated Athena, Menelaus was able to sail to Sparta with Helen, returning a rich man. When the two of them died they went to the Isles of the Blessed, being favored relations of Zeus.

The lesser Ajax, who had raped Cassandra in the temple of Athena while plundering Troy, was shipwrecked on his way home. Scrambling onto

the rocks, he rejoiced at having escaped the vengeance of the gods. But Poseidon split the rock to which he clung and drowned him. Athena then exacted an annual tribute of two maidens from Ajax's fellow Locrians to be sent to Troy.

Bitterly resentful of the Greeks, Nauplius caused many of their ships to smash on the Euboean coast by lighting a deceptive beacon. Philoctetes, who still nursed a grudge against the Greeks for their shabby treatment of him, did not return to Greece but sailed to Italy, where he founded two cities.

Of all the Greeks only the wise Nestor sailed swiftly home and enjoyed the fruits of old age in peace, surrounded by stalwart sons. His virtues of prudence and piety had enabled him to live to see three generations of heroes.

Roles of the Gods

- **Aphrodite** favored the Trojans, defended Paris.
- **Apollo** favored the Trojans, plagued the Greek camp.
- **Ares** favored the Trojans, emboldened Trojan warriors on the battlefield.
- **Artemis** favored the Trojans, emboldened Trojan warriors on the battlefield.
- **Scamander**, the river god who was insulted by Achilles, and tried to kill the hero for throwing dead bodies in his river.
- **Athena** favored the Greeks, provided aid on the battlefield.
- **Hephaestus** favored the Greeks., and mostly forged various weapons and armor for Greek heroes, Achilles in particular.
- **Hera** favored the Greeks, provided aid on the battlefield.
- **Hermes** favored the Greeks, provided aid on the battlefield.

- **Poseidon** favored the Greeks, provided aid on the battlefield.
- **Zeus** uncommitted until informed by the Fates that Troy would fall. When he learned this, he forbade the gods from taking part in delaying that fate.
- **Demeter**, uncommitted.
- **Hades**, uncommitted.
- **Persephone**, uncommitted.

The Gods described



Aphrodite favored the Trojans, defended Paris.

Aphrodite is an ancient Greek goddess associated with love, lust, beauty, pleasure, passion, and procreation. She was syncretized with the Roman goddess Venus. Aphrodite's major symbols include myrtles, roses, doves, sparrows, and swans.

In Homer's Iliad she is the daughter of Zeus and Dione. Aphrodite had many other epithets, each emphasizing a different aspect of the same goddess, or used by a different local cult. Thus she was also known as Cytherea (Lady of Cythera) and Cypris (Lady of Cyprus), because both locations claimed to be the place of her birth.

Aphrodite was married to Hephaestus, god of fire, blacksmiths and metalworking. Aphrodite was frequently unfaithful to him and had many lovers; in the Odyssey, she is caught in the act of adultery with Ares, the god of war. Aphrodite was also the surrogate mother and lover of the mortal shepherd Adonis, who was killed by a wild boar. Along with Athena and Hera, Aphrodite was one of the three goddesses whose feud resulted in the beginning of the Trojan War and she plays a major role throughout the Iliad. Aphrodite has been featured in Western art as a symbol of female beauty and has appeared in numerous works of Western literature.



Apollo favored the Trojans, plagued the Greek camp.

Apollo was recognized as a god of archery, music and dance, truth and prophecy, healing and diseases, the Sun and light, poetry, and more. One of the most important and complex of the Greek gods, he is the son of Zeus and Leto, and the twin brother of Artemis, goddess of the hunt. Seen as the most beautiful god and the ideal of the kouros (ephebe, or a beardless, athletic youth), Apollo is considered to be the most Greek of all the gods.

As the patron deity of Delphi, Apollo is an oracular god—the prophetic deity of the Delphic Oracle. Apollo is the god who affords help and wards off evil; various epithets call him the "averted of evil". Medicine and healing are associated with Apollo, whether through the god himself or mediated through his son Asclepius. Apollo delivered people from epidemics, yet he is also a god who could bring ill-health and deadly plague with his arrows.

The invention of archery itself is credited to Apollo and his sister Artemis. Apollo is usually described as carrying a silver or golden bow and a quiver of silver or golden arrows. Apollo's capacity to make youths grow is one of the best attested facets of his panhellenic cult persona.

Apollo is an important pastoral deity, and was the patron of herdsmen and shepherds. Protection of herds, flocks and crops from diseases, pests and predators were his primary duties. On the other hand, Apollo also encouraged founding new towns and establishment of civil constitution. He is associated with dominion over colonists. He was the giver of laws, and his oracles were consulted before setting laws in a city.

As the god of music, Apollo presides over all music, songs, dance and poetry. He is the inventor of string-music. The lyre is a common attribute of Apollo.



Ares favored the Trojans, emboldened Trojan warriors on the battlefield.

Ares is the Greek god of war and courage. He is one of the Twelve Olympians, and the son of Zeus and Hera. The Greeks were ambivalent towards him. He embodies the physical valor necessary for success in war but can also personify sheer brutality and bloodlust, in contrast to his sister, the armored Athena, whose martial functions include military strategy and generalship. An association with Ares endows places, objects, and other deities with a savage, dangerous, or militarized quality.

In the Trojan War, Aphrodite, protector of Troy, persuades Ares to take the Trojan's side. The Trojans lose, while Ares' sister Athena helps the Greeks to victory. Most famously, when the craftsman-god Hephaestus discovers his wife Aphrodite is having an affair with Ares, he traps the lovers in a net and exposes them to the ridicule of the other gods.

Ares' nearest counterpart in Roman religion is Mars, who was given a more important and dignified place in ancient Roman religion as ancestral protector of the Roman people and state. During the Hellenization of Latin literature, the myths of Ares were reinterpreted by Roman writers under the name of Mars, and in later Western art and literature, the mythology of the two figures became virtually indistinguishable.



Artemis favored the Trojans, emboldened Trojan warriors on the battlefield.

Artemis is the goddess of the hunt, the wilderness, wild animals, nature, vegetation, childbirth, care of children, and chastity. She would often roam the forests of Greece, attended by her large entourage, mostly made up of nymphs, some mortals, and hunters. The goddess Diana is her Roman equivalent.

In Greek tradition, Artemis is the daughter of the sky god and king of gods Zeus and Leto, and the twin sister of Apollo. In most accounts, the twins are the products of an extramarital liaison. For this, Zeus' wife Hera forbade Leto from giving birth anywhere on land. Only the island of Delos gave refuge to Leto, allowing her to give birth to her children. Usually, Artemis is the twin to be born first, who then proceeds to assist Leto in the birth of the second child, Apollo. Like her brother, she was a kourotrophic (child-nurturing) deity, that is the patron and protector of young children, especially young girls, and women, and was believed to both bring disease upon women and children and relieve them of it. Artemis was worshipped as one of the primary goddesses of childbirth and midwifery along with Eileithyia and Hera. Much like Athena and Hestia, Artemis preferred to remain a maiden goddess and was sworn never to marry, and was thus one of the three Greek virgin goddesses, over whom the goddess of love and lust, Aphrodite, had no power whatsoever.

In myth and literature, Artemis is presented as a hunting goddess of the woods, surrounded by her followers, who is not to be crossed.

In the Epic tradition, Artemis halted the winds blowing the Greek ships during the Trojan War, stranding the Greek fleet in Aulis, after King Agamemnon, the leader of the expedition, shot and killed her sacred deer. Artemis demanded the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Agamemnon's young daughter, as compensation for her slain deer. In most versions, when Iphigenia is led to the altar to be offered as a sacrifice, Artemis pities her and takes her away, leaving another deer in her place. In the war that followed, Artemis along with her twin brother and mother supported the Trojans against the Greeks, and challenged Hera into battle.

Artemis was one of the most widely venerated of the Ancient Greek deities, her worship spread

throughout ancient Greece, with her multiple temples, altars, shrines, and local veneration found everywhere in the ancient world. Her great temple at Ephesus was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, before it was burnt to the ground. Artemis' symbols included a bow and arrow, a quiver, and hunting knives, and the deer and the cypress were sacred to her.



Scamander, the river god, got involved through direct response or for personal gain, rather than allegiance or belief in one of the two sides. Insulted by Achilles, he tried to kill the hero for throwing so many dead bodies in his river.

Scamander fought on the side of the Trojans during the Trojan War (Iliad XX, 73/74; XXI), after the Greek hero Achilles insulted him. Scamander was also said to have attempted to kill Achilles three times, and the hero was only saved due to the intervention of Hera, Athena and Hephaestus. In this context, he is the personification of the Scamander River that flowed from Mount Ida across the plain beneath

the city of Troy, joining the Hellespont north of the city. The Achaeans, according to Homer, had set up their camp near its mouth, and their battles with the Trojans were fought on the plain of Scamander.

According to Homer, he was called Xanthos by gods and Scamander by men, which might indicate that the former name refers to the god and the latter one to the river itself.



Athena favored the Greeks, provided aid on the battlefield,

Athena is an ancient Greek goddess associated with wisdom, warfare, and handicraft. Athena was regarded as the patron and protectress of various cities across Greece, particularly the city of Athens, from which she most likely received

her name. The Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens is dedicated to her. Her major symbols include owls, olive trees, snakes, and the Gorgoneion. In art, she is generally depicted wearing a helmet and holding a spear.

In Greek mythology, Athena was believed to have been born from the forehead of her father Zeus. Athena was the patron goddess of heroic endeavor; she was believed to have aided the heroes Perseus, Heracles, Bellerophon, and Jason. Along with Aphrodite and Hera, Athena was one of the three goddesses whose feud resulted in the beginning of the Trojan War.

She plays an active role in the Iliad, in which she assists the Achaeans and, in the Odyssey, she is the divine counselor to Odysseus.



Demeter, uncommitted.

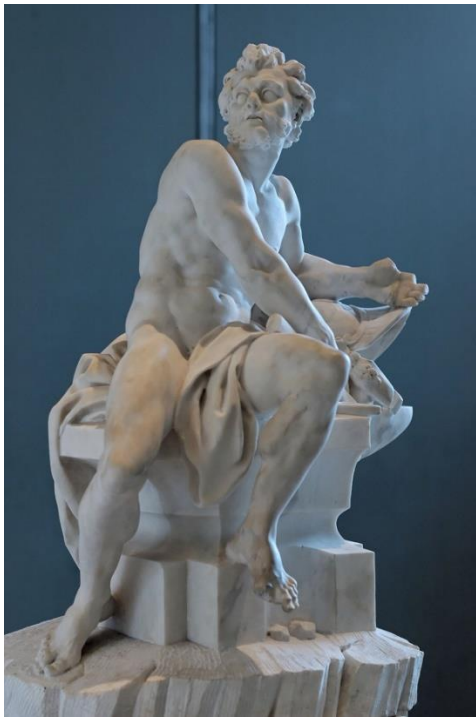
Demeter is the Olympian goddess of the harvest and agriculture, presiding over crops, grains, food, and the fertility of the earth. Although she is mostly known as a grain goddess, she also appeared as a goddess of health, birth, and marriage, and had connections to the Underworld.

In Greek tradition, Demeter is the second child of the Titans Rhea and Cronus, and sister to Hestia, Hera, Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus. Like her other siblings but Zeus, she was swallowed by her father as an infant and rescued by Zeus.

Through her brother Zeus, she became the mother of Persephone, a fertility goddess.

One of the most notable Homeric Hymns, the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, tells the story of Persephone's abduction by Hades and Demeter's search for her. When Hades, the King of the Underworld, wished to make Persephone his wife, he abducted her from a field while she was picking flowers, with Zeus' leave. Demeter searched everywhere to find her missing daughter to no avail until she was informed that Hades had taken her to the Underworld. In response, Demeter neglected her duties as goddess of agriculture, plunging the earth into a deadly famine where nothing would grow, causing mortals to die. Zeus ordered Hades to return Persephone to her mother to avert the disaster. However, because Persephone had eaten food from the Underworld, she could not stay with Demeter forever but had to divide the year between her mother and her husband, explaining the seasonal cycle, as Demeter does not let plants grow while Persephone is gone.

Though Demeter is often described simply as the goddess of the harvest, she presided also over the sacred law, and the cycle of life and death. She and her daughter Persephone were the central figures of the Eleusinian Mysteries, a religious tradition that predated the Olympian pantheon and which may have its roots in the Mycenaean period c. 1400–1200 BC.



Hephaestus favored the Greeks, provided aid on the battlefield. He mostly forged various weapons and armor for Greek heroes, Achilles in particular.

Hephaestus is the Greek god of blacksmiths, metalworking, carpenters, craftsmen, artisans, sculptors, metallurgy, fire (compare, however, with Hestia), and volcanoes. Hephaestus's Roman counterpart is Vulcan. In Greek mythology, Hephaestus was either the son of Zeus and Hera or he was Hera's parthenogenous child. He was cast off Mount Olympus by his mother Hera because of his lameness, the result of a congenital impairment; or in another account, by Zeus for protecting Hera from his advances.

As a smithing god, Hephaestus made all the weapons of the gods in Olympus. He served as the blacksmith of the gods, and was worshipped in the manufacturing and industrial centers of Greece, particularly Athens. The cult of Hephaestus was based in Lemnos. Hephaestus's

symbols are a smith's hammer, anvil, and a pair of tongs.



Hades: uncommitted.

Hades is the god of the dead and the king of the underworld, with which his name became synonymous. Hades was the eldest son of Cronus and Rhea, although this also made him the last son to be regurgitated by his father. He and his brothers, Zeus and Poseidon, defeated their father's generation of gods, the Titans, and claimed rulership over the cosmos. Hades received the underworld, Zeus the sky, and Poseidon the sea, with the solid earth, long the province of Gaia, available to all three concurrently. In artistic depictions, Hades is typically portrayed holding a bident and wearing his helm with Cerberus, the three-headed guard dog of the underworld, standing to his side.



Hera favored the Greeks, provided aid on the battlefield.

In ancient Greek religion, Hera is the goddess of marriage, women and family, and the protector of women during childbirth. In Greek mythology, she is queen of the twelve Olympians and Mount Olympus, sister and wife of Zeus, and daughter of the Titans Cronus and Rhea. One of her defining characteristics in myth is her jealous and vengeful nature in dealing with any who offend her, especially Zeus' numerous adulterous lovers and illegitimate offspring.

Her iconography usually presents her as a dignified, matronly figure, upright or enthroned, crowned with a polos or diadem, sometimes veiled as a married woman. She is the patron goddess of lawful marriage. She presides over weddings, blesses and legalizes marital unions, and protects women from harm during childbirth. Her sacred animals include the cow, cuckoo and the peacock. She is sometimes

shown holding a pomegranate, as an emblem of immortality. Her Roman counterpart is Juno.



Persephone, uncommitted.

Persephone, also called Kore or Cora, is the daughter of Zeus and Demeter. She became the queen of the underworld after her abduction by and marriage to her uncle Hades, the king of the underworld.

The myth of her abduction, her sojourn in the underworld, and her temporary return to the surface represents her functions as the embodiment of spring and the personification of vegetation, especially grain crops, which disappear into the earth when sown, sprout from the earth in spring, and are harvested when fully grown. In Classical Greek art, Persephone is invariably portrayed robed, often carrying a sheaf of grain. She may appear as a mystical divinity with a scepter and a little box, but she was mostly represented in the process of being carried off by Hades.

Persephone as a vegetation goddess and her mother Demeter were the central figures of the Eleusinian Mysteries, which promised the initiated a happy afterlife. The origins of her cult are uncertain, but it was based on ancient agrarian cults of agricultural communities. In Athens, the mysteries celebrated in the month of Anthesterion were dedicated to her.



Poseidon favored the Greeks, provided aid on the battlefield.

Poseidon was one of the Twelve Olympians in ancient Greek religion and myth, god of the sea, storms, earthquakes and horses. In pre-Olympian Bronze Age Greece, he was venerated as a chief deity at Pylos and Thebes. He also had the cult title "earth shaker". He is often regarded as the tamer or father of horses, and with a strike of his trident, he created springs which are related to the word horse. His Roman equivalent is Neptune.

Poseidon was the protector of seafarers, and of many Hellenic cities and colonies. Homer and Hesiod suggest that Poseidon became lord of the

sea when, following the overthrow of his father Cronus, the world was divided by lot among Cronus' three sons; Zeus was given the sky, Hades the underworld, and Poseidon the sea, with the Earth and Mount Olympus belonging to all three. In Homer's Iliad, Poseidon supports the Greeks against the Trojans during the Trojan War and in the Odyssey, during the sea-voyage from Troy back home to Ithaca,



Zeus remained uncommitted until informed by the Fates that Troy would fall. When he learned this, he forbade the gods from taking part in delaying that fate.

Zeus is the sky and thunder god in ancient Greek religion, who rules as king of the gods on Mount Olympus. His name is cognate with the first element of his Roman equivalent Jupiter. In most traditions, he is married to Hera, by whom he is usually said to have fathered Ares, Eileithyia, Hebe, and Hephaestus.



The Gods of the Trojan War



At the oracle of Dodona, his consort was said to be Dione, by whom the Iliad states that he fathered Aphrodite. Zeus' first wife was Metis, by whom he had Athena. Zeus was also infamous for his erotic escapades. These resulted in many divine and heroic offspring, including Apollo, Artemis, Hermes, Persephone,

Dionysus, Perseus, Heracles, Helen of Troy, Minos, and the Muses.

He was respected as an all-father who was chief of the gods, and assigned roles to the others. Even the gods who are not his natural children address him as Father, and all the gods rise in his presence.

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