



100 Characters from Classical Mythology: Discover the Fascinating Stories of the Greek and Roman Deities

Malcolm Day

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Dating back roughly 3,000 years, the gods of the ancient Greeks--and later, of the Romans--have figured prominently in legendry, poetry, drama, and the visual arts. But today's readers are often confused when they encounter the myriad names of those deities and try to understand their roles in mythology. This entertaining and mind-expanding book charts 100 of the most prominent characters from Greco-Roman mythology, including the primordial deities, the great gods of Olympus, and the shadowy inhabitants of Hades. Addressing universal themes such as love, jealousy, anger, ambition, deceit, and beauty, the stories told here make fascinating reading while they add significance to countless classical references in our civilization's literature and art. Author Malcolm Day profiles each god with a short, very readable summary of that personage's acts. He sets each deity's story within the larger context of a "family tree" that encompasses all major gods. Full-color illustrations showing memorable scenes from classical mythology include reproductions from famous paintings and photos of statuary. Separate chapters are devoted to:

The Primordial Gods: Gaia, Uranus, Cronus, and others
The Gods of Olympus: Zeus, Poseidon, Athena, Apollo, and others
Descendants of the Titans: Iris, Nike, Helios, Eos, Atlas, and others
Legendary Heroes: Jason, Oedipus, Daedalus, Paris, Helen of Troy, and others
Figures from the Odyssey: Odysseus, Penelope, Circe, and others

This virtual roadmap through the complexities of classical mythology features more than 100 full-color illustrations.

100 Characters from Classical Mythology: Discover the Fascinating Stories of the Greek and Roman Deities Details

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From Reader Review 100 Characters from Classical Mythology: Discover the Fascinating Stories of the Greek and Roman Deities for online ebook

Kimberly Ann says

Crazy Ladies Book Bingo)

So far so bad.....I'm dying here....and so utterly confused, As if I'm gonna remember any of this, and then it's like all these people are related so it's all very incestuous, redundant, and violent (all these Gods & Goddesses killing everyone out of Jealousy,. It is amazing that any of them lived at all)
. I'm so very glad there is no test on this, because you know, I'm not going to remember too much of this information.

Actually, this book got better mid way through. I enjoyed reading about (no sassy remarks here ladies): The Furies, the Gorgons (one of which was Medusa, my Favorite), and the Harpies (you know all my favorite "sisters").

What I found interesting, that most people don't know is Medusa not only had hair of snakes, but she had golden wings, and claws of bronze. However, the book omitted the fact that upon her death, Medusa turned into Pegasus and Perseus (whom killed Medusa....) used Pegasus as a mode of transportation.

Also what I also found strange, is I dabble in astrology, so I'm aware of the Asteroids and their meanings/attributes.....although many of them are named for the Goddesses, not all of the attributes of the Asteroids are the same as those of the Goddesses for which they are named.

So then, as for the book itself: it is well illustrated (lots of color pictures), there are genealogical charts showing how everyone is related, and it is broken down into two main parts; Part I Gods & Goddesses, Part II Heroes. Part I is broken down to include: The Gods of Olympus and The Descendants of the Titans. Part II is broken down to include: Jason & the Argonauts, Theseus & the Minotaur, The Trojan War, and The Odyssey. So in case you miss something in one of the parts, it is sure to be repeated in another. The writing is easy to read and straight to the point with the author actually giving alternate versions of the same story where applicable.

All in all this is a good book, I'm not going to rush out and buy myself a copy, but at least I know I can borrow it from the Library as I desire.

Qin Li says

I used this book as a dictionary for reading Joe Campbell. Quite interesting and potentially useful in picking up girls - by talking about their names in Greek/Roman myths. Lol

David Gwartney says

I had read a couple other books recounting many of the Greek myths and even listened to an iTunes U class on the subject. This book was a perfect way to tie all those other resources together in a way that gave an overview to each story, the characters involved, and the relation of those principle characters to other stories and the Greek gods. Before reading this book, it was difficult to remember different personalities and why their involvement was important in a given myth, but this book really tied all those nuances together. I very much enjoyed reading through 100 Characters from Classical Mythology.

Felipe Alfaro says

This book was wonderful!

I greatly enjoyed the Renaissance artwork and photographs of classical sculpture. The visual accompaniment to the text really brings the stories to life and demonstrates how deeply Greek mythology is ingrained in our cultures and societies.

The family trees attached on each page made it much easier to understand the dynamic relationships between gods, humans and creatures.

I was pleased to see that the author provided examples of mythological influence in our lexicon: Electra complex, fate, mnemonic, lunar, etc.

Some reviewers complained about the repetitive order of the book, but I found that the repetition helped me remember the stories and understand how they tied together.

The only thing I have to complain about is the abundance of punctuation and spelling errors throughout the book. It's hard to believe that they had professional editing done.

Having read John G. Jackson's Christianity Before Christ and now this, I am reinforced in the idea that Greek mythology (and Egyptian/Sumerian mythology prior to that) has had a profound influence on or has been derived from the same origin as some stories of the Bible, as well as the story of Jesus. We can see parallels in the stories of Hercules, Pandora, Dionysus, Prometheus and others. Any honest reader would have to admit it.

Alicia Luchetti says

I like this book and I think it gives a great overview of all the characters, which is what I wanted and expected from this book. But if you want something more detailed this isn't for you.

My one complaint is the organization of the book. There are a lot of characters with names I can't pronounce let alone remember. I understand the classifications, but I think that could have been done with a few pages in an appendix. I would have much preferred a setup as was done for the Trojan war, where it describes the characters story by story. For example, the story of the golden apple has characters in every sector. So it's hard to keep track.

Courtney Herondale says

lots of information and i loved the set up of the different categories. i am a sucker for greek mythology.

Bumblebeebookworm says

Fantastic book when you need to look up something regarding Greek Mythology among other things. I do this every so often when I write stories about it. It's brilliant when it comes to facts, pictures and whom was related to whom.

jmelauren says

Not what I was expecting. I wanted more about the characters and the myths themselves. This was really just a very short overview of some characters. Nothing about the myths, and a lot of the summaries just repeated themselves. Like this character killed his father, now let's read about the father who was killed by his son, now let's read about the mother who watched her son kill his father.

Richard Sansing says

Did you know that Zeus and Prometheus were cousins, or that Prometheus and Atlas were brothers? This entertaining volume provides a quick biography of major mythological figures, along with a family tree of the Greek & Roman gods.

M says

I was super super bored attempting to read from cover to cover. This book would probably be okay for referencing. I think it was a difficult way to learn about deities, I read it to learn, as I never took a mythology class. I think maybe I will try reading the mythological stories instead now, it's GOT to be more interesting than this book.

Kristi says

I loved the set up this of the novel and how all the information is presented. The family tree aspect with the Ancestry. The images were beautiful. The information was presented in more of a reference style but I still really liked it!

This is definitely a great addition to mythology collection!

Toe says

Objective Summary

This compendium lists the major gods and heroes from Greek / Roman mythology with one-page summaries of their exploits. Myths explained nature, emotions, and history. They touched on all aspects of the human condition: life, death, fear, fate, rape, revenge, incest, adultery, anger, and more. Given the ubiquitous concepts explored, their influence on modern culture is perhaps unsurprising. The following is an incomplete list of characters from the book, roughly in chronological order (though the genealogy and taxonomy is tricky), still prevalent in art, life, and language.

Primordial Gods

- Chaos – first primordial god, predated earth and sky
- Gaia – earth goddess
- Uranus – sky god
- Cyclopes – one-eyed monsters
- Furies – three female avengers of wrong
- Fates – three sisters who spun and cut strands of cloth representing human lives
- Nyx – goddess of night
- Eris – goddess of strife and quarrel
- Nemesis – goddess of retribution

Titans – descendants of Gaia and Uranus; replaced by Olympians

- 6 main gods (Oceanus, Crius, Hyperion, Iapetus, Coeus, Cronus)
- 6 main goddesses (Tethys, Theia, Themis, Mnemosyne, Phoebe, Rhea)
- Cronus / Saturn – castrated his father, Uranus the sky, to gain control of the world; Zeus's father

Olympians – descendants of Cronus; replaced Titans

- Zeus / Jupiter – king of the gods; threw lightning bolts; shapeshifter; father of many
- Hera / Juno – queen of heaven; envious wife
- Poseidon / Neptune – god of the sea and water; had trident
- Demeter / Ceres – goddess of vegetation and fruitfulness, hence “cereal”
- Hestia / Vesta – goddess of hearth and home; virgin
- Ares / Mars – god of war; son of Zeus and Hera; father of Romulus (founder of Rome) and Remus
- Athena / Minerva – goddess of war and wisdom; patroness of the arts; daughter born of Zeus's head
- Apollo – god of music, poetry, prophecy, and medicine; protector of flocks and herds; son of Zeus; twin brother of Artemis
- Artemis / Diana – goddess of the hunt, forest, and wild animals; daughter of Zeus; twin sister of Apollo
- Aphrodite / Venus – goddess of love, beauty, fertility; born from the foam surrounding Uranus's castrated genitals
- Hermes / Mercury – messenger god; escort of dead to Hades; god of trade and commerce; son of Zeus
- Hephaestus / Vulcan – god of fire and smiths; son of Zeus and Hera

Other Titan descendants

- Harpies – hungry, predatory birds with women's heads
- Graeae – “gray ones”; three sisters who shared one eye and one tooth
- Nereids – sea nymphs; Thetis, mother of Achilles, was most important

- Hades / Pluto – ruler of the underworld; god of death; not considered an Olympian because he didn't spend time there; Cerberus was three-headed hound of Hades; Hades kidnapped Persephone by opening the world and swallowing her, which upset Demeter, Persephone's mother, and causes winter
- Styx – river goddess; river of the same name encircled Hades; Charon was the ferryman of the river
- Nike – winged goddess of victory
- Gorgons – three ugly sisters with snakes for hair whose gaze turned anyone to stone; Medusa was most famous gorgon and she was killed by Perseus
- Sirens – sea nymphs with bodies of birds and women's heads; their beautiful singing caused boats to crash
- Oceanids – sea nymphs
- Helios – sun god who rode a chariot across the sky every day; his son, Phaethon, failed to control the horses, who got spooked and flew too close to the earth, creating the Sahara desert and black people
- Eos / Aurora – goddess of dawn
- Selene / Luna – moon goddess
- Orion – hunter who was a giant but mortal; accidentally killed by Artemis, who then put his image in a constellation
- Aesculapius – god of healing, prophecy, and divination; his staff with a snake represents rebirth; son of Apollo; father of Panacea
- Orpheus – legendary poet and musician whom all the ladies loved; son of Apollo; during quest to save his wife, Eurydice, by walking with her out of the underworld, he turned around to see her, against Hades's instructions, and she turned into a wraith
- Muses – 9 goddesses of the arts
- Tantalus – god of wealth; stole food of gods and was punished in Tartarus (realm of Hades) by constantly experiencing food and water just out of reach, hence "tantalize"
- Sisyphus – condemned to roll a large boulder uphill for all eternity for betraying Zeus's secrets
- Dionysus / Bacchus – god of wine and ecstasy; cult followers were famous for orgies, but despite the image of hedonistic indulgence, the purpose of the rituals and excessive drinking was to shed social inhibitions, become liberated, and reach a realm of divine abandonment; granted Midas, king of Phrygia, the ability to turn whatever he touched into gold
- Persephone – queen of the underworld; daughter of Demeter whose absence explained winter; her story parallels one involving Aphrodite and Adonis
- Eros / Cupid – youthful, playful god of love; Romans distinguished between Cupid as desire and Amor as love
- Pandora – the Greek Eve; opened a box that unleashed all the world's evils, and only hope remained
- Prometheus – god of fire and craftsmen; punished by Zeus (his liver was eaten by an eagle every day for eternity) for giving men fire
- Triton – merman who calmed storms
- Atlas – led titans during the Titanomachy (10-year war between Titans and Olympians) after Cronus grew weary, and, as punishment, Zeus forced him to bear the sky on his shoulders forever
- Pan – god of pastures; protector of sheep and goats; inspired sudden, inexplicable fright, hence "panic"; associated with irrational element of love and is often depicted with Aphrodite and Cupid; associated with dictum "love conquers all" since pan meant "all"; condemned the nymph Echo to only repeat sounds after she did not return his affections
- Chiron – centaur sage, prophet, teacher, and healer who taught Aesculapius, Achilles, Hercules, and Jason

Heroes

- Jason and the Argonauts – captured a golden fleece to reclaim his father's kingdom
- Castor and Pollux (aka Polydeuces) – twin brothers of Helen of Troy; helped Jason; are the inspiration for the Gemini constellation

- Theseus – king and champion of Athens; slayed the minotaur; broke promise to marry Ariadne for unknown reasons; killed Sinis by bending a pine tree down longer than him; fought with Hercules against Amazons but married their queen, Hippolyta
 - Minos – king of Crete; son of Zeus and Europa; Pasiphae's husband; had architect Daedalus build a labyrinth for the Minotaur; Daedalus killed him by building pipes above his bath that transported boiling oil
 - Pasiphae – Minos's wife; Minotaur's mother; became obsessed with Poseidon's bull and Daedalus built a contraption to help her copulate with the bull
 - Minotaur – literally "Minos's bull," a misnomer; son of a bull created by Poseidon and Pasiphae; lived in labyrinth until killed by Theseus
 - Daedalus – architect and inventor who created the Minotaur's labyrinth; built wings with feathers and wax for his son, Icarus; killed Minos
 - Ariadne – daughter of Minos who helped Theseus navigate the labyrinth by giving him a ball of string to unwind and follow out
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- Perseus – hero who killed Medusa; rode the winged horse, Pegasus; rescued Andromeda from Poseidon's monster; killed other monsters that terrorized mankind
 - Bellerophon – "Bellerus slayer" who accidentally killed nobleman named Bellerus; rode Pegasus and killed the Chimaera, a fire-breathing creature with a lion's head, serpent's tail, and goat's body; defeated Amazons by riding high above them; crippled and blinded after being flung to earth by Zeus for flying too close to Mount Olympus
 - Heracles / Hercules – son of Zeus; performed 12 labors for king Eurystheus; killed by second wife, Deianira, who sprinkled the centaur Nessus's blood on his cloak, which poisoned him
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- Oedipus – "swollen foot" as called by the shepherd who found him as a baby because his feet were pierced with a nail and bound together after his father, Laius, trying to avoid a prophecy, left him to die; solved the Sphinx's riddle (man walks on 4 legs in the morning, 2 in the day, and 3 at night); unknowingly killed his father, Laius, and married his mother, Jocasta, who hung herself; died blind and in exile
 - Sphinx – creature with woman's head, lion's body with wings, and serpent's tale; strangled people who incorrectly answered her riddle; killed herself after Oedipus answered correctly
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- Paris / Alexander – prince of Troy; Priam's son, and Hector's and Troilus's brother; seduced Helen as his reward from Aphrodite for declaring Aphrodite more beautiful than Athena or Hera, which started the Trojan War; killed Achilles with poisoned arrow to the heel
 - Helen – daughter of Zeus; wife of Menelaus; seduced by Paris but returned to Menelaus after the Trojan War
 - Menelaus – king of Sparta; husband of Helen; brother of Agamemnon
 - Agamemnon – king of Mycenae; leader of Greeks in Trojan War; brother of Menelaus
 - Achilles – great warrior; invulnerable except at the heel where his mother, Thetis, held him to dip him into the River Styx; killed Hector and Troilus
 - Ajax – second greatest Greek warrior behind Achilles
 - Priam – king of Troy; father of Hector, Paris, Troilus, and many others
 - Hector – prince of Troy; brother of Paris, Troilus, and many others; greatest Trojan warrior; killed by Achilles, who dragged his body around for 12 days as revenge for Hector's killing Patroclus, Achilles male lover
 - Aeneas – son of Aphrodite; fled Troy at its fall and became national hero of Romans
 - Troilus – son of Apollo but adopted by Priam; loved but cuckolded by Cressida; killed by Achilles
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- Odysseus / Ulysses – king of Ithaca; disputed lineage (Homer said son of Laertes, others said son of Sisyphus); masterminded siege of Troy and the Trojan Horse; blinded the cyclopes Polyphemus, Poseidon's

son who became angry, so it took 10 years for him to return home from Trojan War; had his crew fill their ears with wax and bound himself to the mast to hear the Siren's song and live, only man to do that; stayed on an Eden-like island with the nymph Calypso; returned home to his faithful wife, Penelope, after 20 years and slaughtered all her would-be suitors

Subjective Thoughts

A noticeable amount of typos detracts from an otherwise serviceable overview of an interesting subject, which is disappointing given the book's short length. Pictures of artwork representing the myths add compelling color to what is essentially a coffee table book or collection of short Wikipedia articles. Imagining yourself in a time before scientific explanations of human emotions and natural phenomena reveals the entertaining and explanatory power of mythology. And the overlap of ideas with the Abrahamic religions is curious: chaos in the beginning, earth and sky separating, Pandora = Eve, Eurydice = Lot's wife, heaven and hell, virgin births, immortality. Hmm.

Heather says

I love Greek mythology more and more every day, this is a great resource, informative, easy to read, thoroughly enjoyed it.

Robert says

I was disappointed in a variety of aspect. The orientation by characters did not always work, and towards the end: where he did the Trojan war felt the characters were not the major ones I would want to hear more about in this type of summary.

And sometimes I did not need the conflicting myths - when important to the myth I wanted to hear it - but not when a detail of siring and claim.

BUt still worked as a readable summary.

Alice says

Good overview of Greek Mythology. It's a good book for reference.
