



Ancient Goddesses and Gods
Women in Antiquity | Meeting #3

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Upcoming Dates

- Tuesday, February 17
• No class meeting
- Monday, March 9
• Images Essay Due
- Sunday, February 15
• Responses for Week 3 Due

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Five things today

- The Aegean world
- The Greeks and their gods
- Pre-Olympian gods
- Strong goddesses and philandering gods
- Medusa and Pandora

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Quiz #1: Ancient Goddesses and Gods

1. According to Pomeroy, Athena, the Greek goddess of war and wisdom, is "the most complex of the goddesses" because:

- a. She has a complicated love life
- b. She works all day and parties all night
- c. She possesses both masculine and feminine qualities
- d. She has seven uteruses

2. A double standard seen in stories about the gods' and goddesses' relationships is:

- a. Goddesses are expected to sleep only with other gods, but gods can sleep with whomever
- b. Goddesses can sleep with women but gods can never sleep with men
- c. Gods can give fruit baskets and other gifts to their lovers, but goddesses can't
- d. Cursing your lover can only be done on Sundays

3. The "virginal" Olympian goddesses (that is, goddesses who are unmarried and not bound to a male god) include all of the following [Click Here](#):

- a. Athena
- b. Artemis
- c. Hestia
- d. Hera

4. Mother goddesses in various cultures make a connection between female fertility and:

- a. architecture
- b. agriculture
- c. archeology
- d. astrology

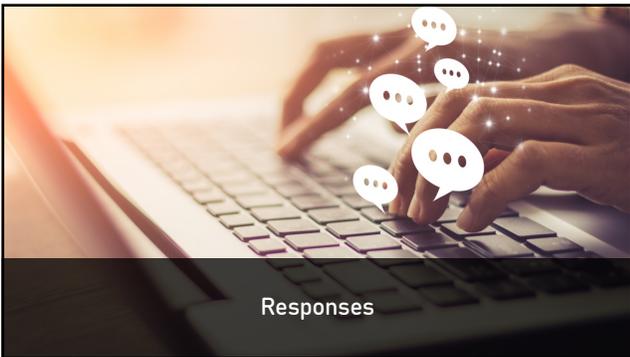
5. The pre-Olympian god Cronus is known for all of the following [Click Here](#):

- a. Castrating his father with a sickle
- b. Swallowing his own children
- c. Being defeated by Zeus with the help of his wife Rhea
- d. Drinking weekly in pomegranate juice

Extra Credit

EC. In the readings (Pomeroy or Hesiod), which goddess's story stood out to you? Why?

5



Responses

6

Questions about whatever



7

The Aegean world



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Minoans

- Indigenous Aegean city-state culture
- No writing, only images
- Sacred places located in the depths of nature, not in great temples in the cities
- Some imagery seems to emphasize female deities and priestesses

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Mycenaean Greeks

- Massive migration of pastoral Indo-Europeans from the north into the Aegean
- Envid and emulated the Minoan city-state industrial culture
- Brought with them Indo-European ideas of the gods
 - Ruling sky god
 - Wide pantheon of gods and goddesses

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The Trojan War

- Fight to the death for Aegean economic power
- Some argue that the war is entirely mythological
- Archaeological evidence of Troy being violently destroyed ca. 1200 BCE

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Greek "Dark Age"

- Writing lost for centuries
- Stories told orally
- Society rebuilt to reject Bronze Age greed

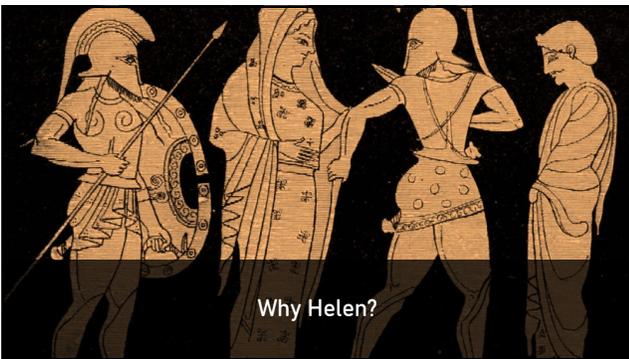
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Homer

- Key works: *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
- Written version of a story told orally for 500 years
- Epic poetry
- Focus on flawed Greeks and noble Trojans

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Hesiod

- Key works: *Theogony*, *Works and Days*
- Perspective of a small landholder
- Writes about the roles of mortals and gods in society and nature

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Hesiod's Theogony

- Hesiod's treatment of the Titans
- Zeus's first children are the Muses
- Hekate's unique place among the gods
- The price of Prometheus's betrayal
 - The creation of "an evil thing for men": the beauty of women
 - Men must marry to avoid solitary, demeaning final years

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What does the story of Kronos and Rhea tell us?

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Pre-Olympian Gods

- Titan-era figures show basic Greek gender archetypes
- Ouranos and Kronos
 - Rivalry between fathers and sons - males in fierce rivalry with each other
 - Male archetype = reactive, destructive, animalistic
- Gaia and Rhea
 - Move in opposite direction, counteract hostility, actively create a future
 - Female archetype = wise, constructive, rational

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Olympian gods and goddesses

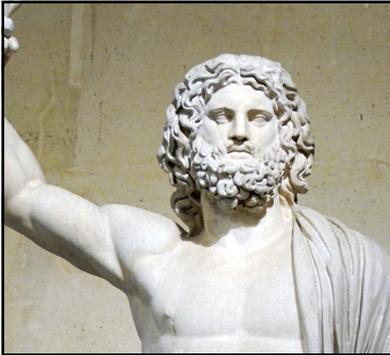
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The Greeks and their gods

- No priestly class
- Their understanding of the gods comes from literature
- Gods react to mortals' betrayals of the community
- Rarely punish the wrongdoer only, often visiting suffering on family and descendants

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Zeus

- King/father of the gods
- Wife is goddess of marriage
- Known for having sex with mortals and gods
- Why is Zeus portrayed this way?

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Great mothers vs. goddesses

- Birth of all nature vs. functional roles

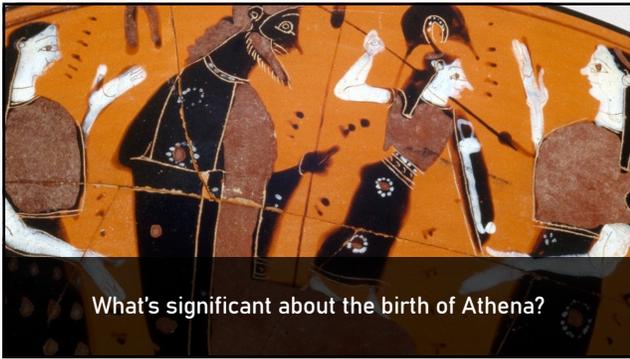
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Athena

- Daughter of Zeus
- Goddess of wisdom, warfare, and handcraft
- "The most complex of the goddesses"

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Aspects and Epithets

- Gods and goddesses serve different roles
 - Sometimes regional or the result of merging different myths
- Athena
 - Athena Parthenos ("the pure")
 - Athena Nike ("the victorious")
 - Athena Polias ("of the city")
 - Pallas Athena ("heroine")

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Artemis

- Goddess of the hunt, animals, virginity, young women, and archery
- Strength and independence

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Hestia

- Goddess of the domestic and civic hearth; the home; and sacred and sacrificial fire
- Not the subject of stories

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Aphrodite

- Goddess of love, lust, beauty, and sexuality
- Reflects both carnal sexuality and emotional union

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What does the birth of Aphrodite suggest about her?

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Hera

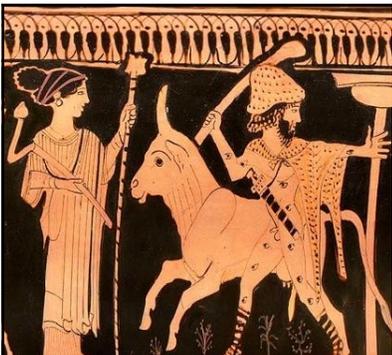
- Goddess of marriage and matrons
- Myths about anger and vengeance toward Zeus's conquests and offspring

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Why do the Greek gods sleep around?

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Gods with mortals

- Male gods often shown seducing or raping mortals
 - Sometimes the god takes the form of an animal
 - Consequences for female victims, but not the god
 - Fallout different for male vs. female victims
- Female gods expected to consort with peers only

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Demeter

- Goddess of the harvest, agriculture
- Key myth involves her daughter, Persephone (Korē)

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Secondary Source Reading

Lucia Nixon
"The Cults of Demeter and Korē"

- Collective religion – public festivals in agora
- Cults and rituals – Some just for women
 - Literal and figurative sanctuaries
 - Several about Demeter and Korē/Persephone
- Nice contrast to father/son hostility among gods
 - Parallel land fertility, human fertility
 - Agricultural revolution makes possible creation of the future (grow a community)
- Demeter represents ultimate capacity of humans not just to survive but to grow



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Hekate

- Goddess of magic, the moon, the night, and crossroads
- On the boundary between the human and divine worlds

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Mortals, demigods, and monsters

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Pandora

- "First woman"
- Zeus was angry over Prometheus's theft of fire
- Pandora given as bride to Prometheus's brother
 - Made to be beautiful and alluring
 - Bears a gift of jar containing evils
- In some versions there are two jars

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Secondary Source Reading

Froma Zeitlin
 "Signifying Difference:
 The Myth of Pandora"

- Pandora and Hekate
 - Pandora - represents rupture between gods and mortals
 - Hekate represents intermediation between divine and mortal
- Pandora seen as an image of the gods and something new and different
 - Evolution from the divine to the mortal (!)
 - Power of reason and ability to grow



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What does Medusa represent to the Greeks?

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Medusa

- One of the Gorgons
- Anyone who looked upon her was turned to stone
- Men's fear of women
 - Vulnerable to beauty
 - Extreme beauty = extreme vulnerability

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Secondary Source Reading

Philip E. Slater
"The Greek Family in History and Myth"

- Relationship between parent and child and how this resonates in mythology and epic poetry
- Medusa represents all that men fear in women
 - Causes irragging inability to act or think
 - The ultimate Greek monster
- Reflection of this idea in ordinary life
 - Fear carries over in boy's relationship with mother
 - Mother does not necessarily have positive relation with child
 - Symbolized in legend and mythology in Agamemnon's family
- Solution of rejecting mother and devotion to father has a certain appeal in the Greek mind
 - Not a lot of positive father/son models in literature



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