

Name _____ Date _____

Greek Mythology

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. For the ancient Greeks, mythology explained things in nature that they didn't have a scientific explanation for. The ancient Greeks were polytheistic, believing in many deities, some major and some minor. They saw the gods as part of their everyday lives. They would sacrifice animals and other precious things to the gods before sports events, traveling and war to show their thanks and to ask about the future. For example, sailors would make sacrifices to Poseidon, the god of the sea, before a journey. A sick person might ask Apollo, who ruled medicine, to help them get well.

Notes

2. Like people of many cultures, ancient Greeks had a myth to explain the creation of the world. According to the myth, in the beginning, there was only darkness, or Chaos. Gaea, the Earth, grew out of Chaos and gave birth to Uranus, the sky. Gaea became the mother of all living things. Gaea and Uranus gave birth to monsters and giants like the Titans and Cyclopes. Uranus hated these ugly children and threw them into the underworld. Gaea was angered by this and convinced Cronus, the most powerful Titan, to overthrow his father. Cronus did overthrow Uranus, but he worried that his own children would someday overthrow him. To prevent this, Cronus swallowed each of his children when they were born. When the youngest, Zeus, was born, Cronus's wife tricked him by hiding the baby. She gave him a rock wrapped in a blanket instead. Zeus did end up overthrowing Cronus. He also saved his five older brothers and sisters from inside Cronus's stomach. Zeus and his siblings formed the first generation of the Olympian gods.

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3. Zeus and his siblings were known as the Olympian gods because they lived on Mount Olympus. Olympus was a real mountain in northern Greece, but it came to be known more for its mythology than its physical location. Zeus and his brothers, Poseidon and Hades, divided control of the world. Zeus won the sky, becoming the king of the gods. Poseidon won the sea and carried a trident. Hades won the underworld and lived among the dead. Zeus married their sister Hera, who became the queen of the gods. Their sister Demeter was the goddess of crops and the harvest. Their other sister, Hestia, ruled the home and hearth.

Notes

4. The second generation of Olympian gods was made up of Zeus's children. Athena, the goddess of wisdom and war, was born fully formed from Zeus's head after a bad headache. She was the best-loved goddess on Mount Olympus, and the city of Athens was named after her. Athena's symbols include the owl, helmet and spear, to represent her wise yet competitive spirit.

Notes

Apollo was the god of the sun, and he also represented health, medicine and music. He was the most handsome of the gods and had many lovers. His twin sister, Artemis, was the goddess of hunting and the moon. She was known to protect women and children.

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Ares, the god of war, was young, handsome and strong. He loved to fight and wear battle gear. However, he was a coward under his boisterous exterior. Ares was in love with Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, but she was already married to Hephaestus. Hephaestus, the god of metalworking, worked as a blacksmith on Mount Olympus. He forged tools and jewelry for the gods and goddesses. He was considered the ugliest of the gods and was rejected by his mother, Hera. Hermes was the messenger god and also the god of mischief, science and invention. His symbols are a winged helmet and sandals to illustrate his speed. Dionysus was the god of revelry and showed people how to have a good time.

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6. Allusions, or references, to Greek mythology can be found nearly everywhere. Entrepreneurs, inventors and advertisers use these references to help explain what their products are about. The Olympic Games are named for Mount Olympus. The famous Apollo Theater in New York City alludes to Apollo, the god of music. Hermes's winged feet can be seen in the logo for The Athlete's Foot, a sneaker store.

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