

GREEK MYTHS RETOLD FOR CHILDREN



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Zeus And His Mighty Company

A long time ago, when the world was much younger than it is now, people told and believed a great many wonderful stories about incredible things which neither you nor I have ever seen. They often talked about a god called Zeus, who was king of the sky and the earth; and they said that he sat most of the time amongst the clouds on the top of a very high mountain where he could look down and see everything that was going on in the earth beneath. He liked to ride on the storm-clouds and hurl burning thunderbolts right and left among the trees and rocks, and he was so very, very mighty that when he nodded, the earth quaked, the mountains trembled and smoked, the sky grew black, and the sun hid his face.



Zeus had two brothers, both of them terrible and great, but not nearly as great as Zeus himself. The name of one of them was Poseidon, and he was the king of the sea. He had a glittering, golden palace far down in the deep sea-caves where the fishes live and the red coral grows, and whenever he was angry the waves would rise mountain high, and the storm-winds would howl fearfully, and the sea would try to break over the land.

The other brother was a sad, pale-faced being, whose kingdom was underneath the earth, where the sun never shone and where there was darkness and weeping and sorrow all the time. His name was Hades, and his country was called the Lower World, or the Land of Shadows. Men said that whenever any one died, Hades would send his messenger to carry him down into his cheerless kingdom; and for that reason they never spoke well of Hades, but were scared of him and thought of him as the enemy of life.

A great number of other gods lived with Zeus amid the clouds on the mountain top - so many that I can name only a few. There was Aphrodite, the queen of love and beauty, who was fairer by far than any woman that you or I have ever seen. There was Athena, the queen of the air, who gave people wisdom and taught them how to do many useful things. There was Hera, the queen of earth and sky, who sat at the right hand of Zeus and gave him all kinds of advice. There was Ares, the great warrior, who delighted in battle. There was Hermes, the swift messenger, who had wings on his cap and shoes, and who flew from place to place like the summer clouds when they are driven before the wind. And besides these, there were many others about whom you will learn soon enough, and about whom are told strange and beautiful stories.

They lived in glittering, golden mansions, high up among the clouds - so high that the eyes of humans could never see them. But they could look down and see what humans were doing, and often they were said to leave their lofty homes and wander unknown across the land or over the sea.

And of all these mighty folk, Zeus was by far the mightiest.



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