

# GREEK MYTHOLOGY



# WHAT ARE MYTHS?

- ▶ Traditional stories of gods, kings, and heroes
- ▶ Show the relations between gods and people
- ▶ Mythology was a form of early science to Greeks because it helped explain the unexplainable.



Myths seek to explain all those unexplainable or unknowable aspects of life.

Where do we go after we die?

How was the world created?

Why can we see our reflection in water?

Why are there four separate seasons?

Why do we fall in love?

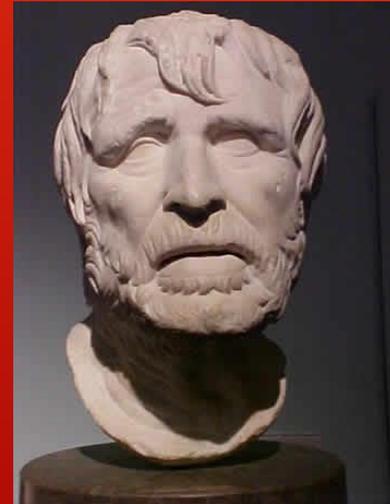
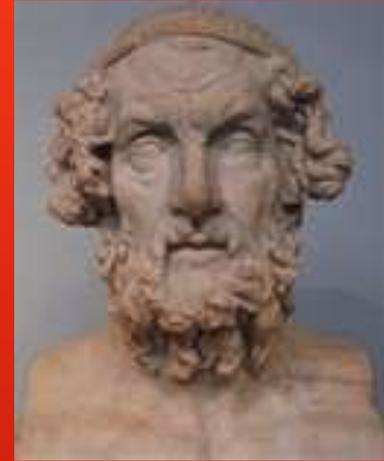
How is lightning created?

Why do our voices sometime echo?

How was fire created, and why do we have it?

# BACKGROUND OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY

- ▶ Fully developed by about 700 B.C.
- ▶ Homer and Hesiod are generally considered the earliest Greek poets whose work has survived



# ANCIENT GREEK BELIEFS AND CHARACTERISTICS

- ▶ Death is inevitable and final, so the goal was to become a legend through great deeds.
- ▶ The Greeks were tough, restless, ambitious, hard-living, and imaginative.
- ▶ Honor was extremely important, and the Greeks were very vengeful if wronged.
- ▶ The gods mirrored human feelings and physical form.
- ▶ Their flaws were pride, cruelty, stubbornness, impulsiveness, lust for power, and a desire to be like the gods.

# THE CREATION MYTH

- ▶ First there was Chaos (vast and unorganized space from which all other things originated).
- ▶ Chaos gave birth to Gaea, the Earth, and Night, which gave birth to Day.
- ▶ Gaea and Uranus (the sky) gave birth to Cronus and the other Titans, the Cyclopes, one-eyed giants, and the Hecatonchieres with 50 heads and 100 arms apiece.



# THE FOUNDATION OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY

- ▣ In general, *Greek gods* were divided into three categories:
  - Heaven
  - Earth
  - Sea
- ▣ The Titans ruled before the *Gods of Olympus*.
- ▣ The Titans were the children of Uranus (Heaven) and Gaea (Earth) and the parents of the *Gods of Olympus*.
- ▣ The Titans were overthrown by *Olympians*.



# CRONUS

- ▶ Cronus mutilated his father and overthrew him.
- ▶ Cronus and Rhea married and produced the Olympians: Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, and Poseidon.
- ▶ Cronus swallowed them to keep from being overthrown. When Zeus was born, Rhea gave her husband a rock to swallow. Zeus overthrew his father Cronus and forced him to disgorge the other Olympians.



**The Titan Cronus (or Saturn) about to eat one of his children, from a 1599 engraving. ©1999 by Dan Norder**

# How did Humans get Fire?



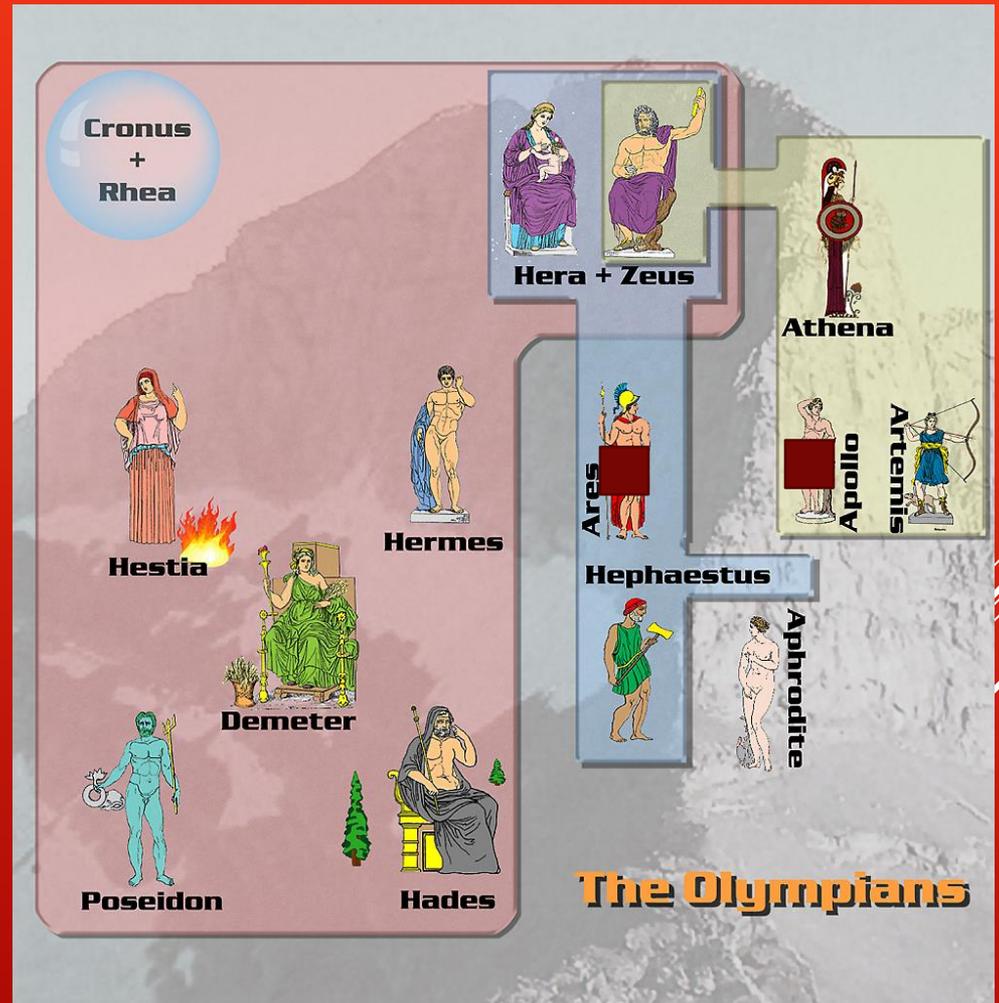
Prometheus was the wisest Titan of all.

Prometheus is credited with bringing enlightenment to humans. Prometheus stole fire from the gods and gave it to humankind, bringing the power of warmth and light to the dark and miserable earth.

Prometheus acted against the express wishes of the Olympian Gods, who wanted to keep the power of fire - enlightenment - for their exclusive use. For this Zeus punished Prometheus by having him chained to a rock with an eagle tearing at his liver.

# THE OLYMPIANS

- A group of 12 gods who ruled after the overthrow of the Titans
- All the Olympians related in some way
- Named after their dwelling place, Mount Olympus
- The Olympian Gods: Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, Hestia, Hera, Ares, Athena, Apollo, Aphrodite, Hermes, Artemis, and Hephaestus



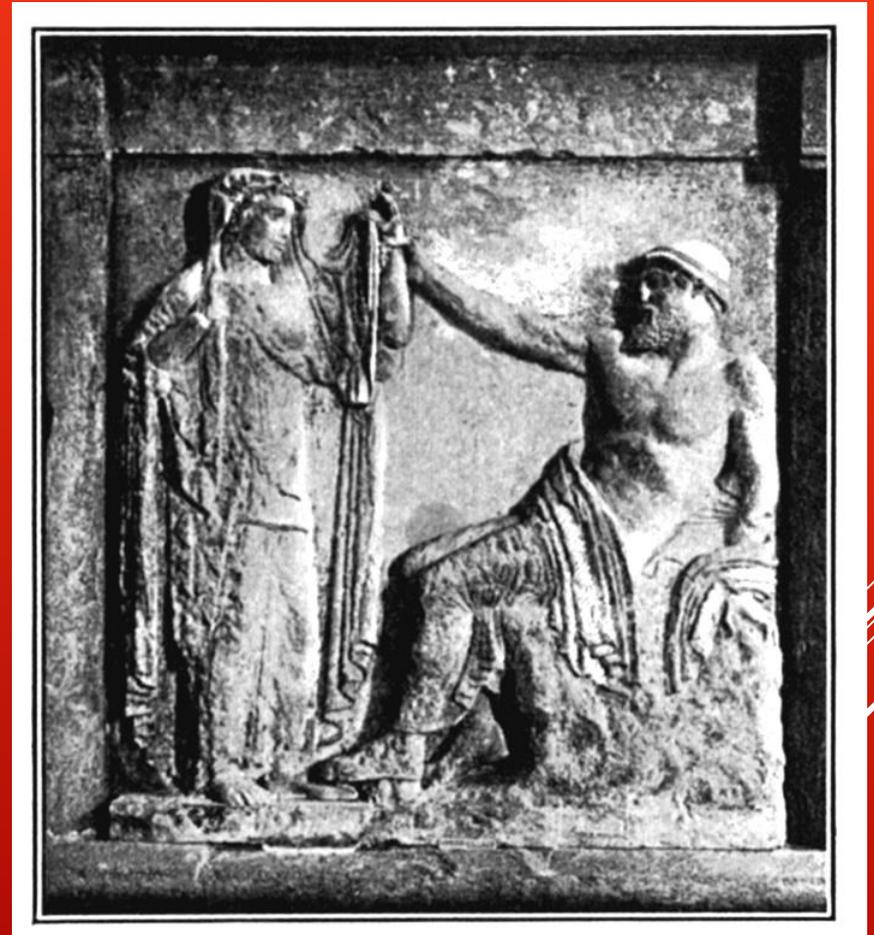
# ZEUS

- ▶ Roman name: Jupiter
- ▶ Realm: King of gods, god of thunder and lightning
- ▶ Symbols: eagle, oak tree, lightning bolt
- ▶ Married to Hera; had many affairs and many children, some of whom were gods and goddesses because as the Greeks conquered territories, they took on the new goddesses and "married" them to Zeus
- ▶ The spiritual father of gods and men

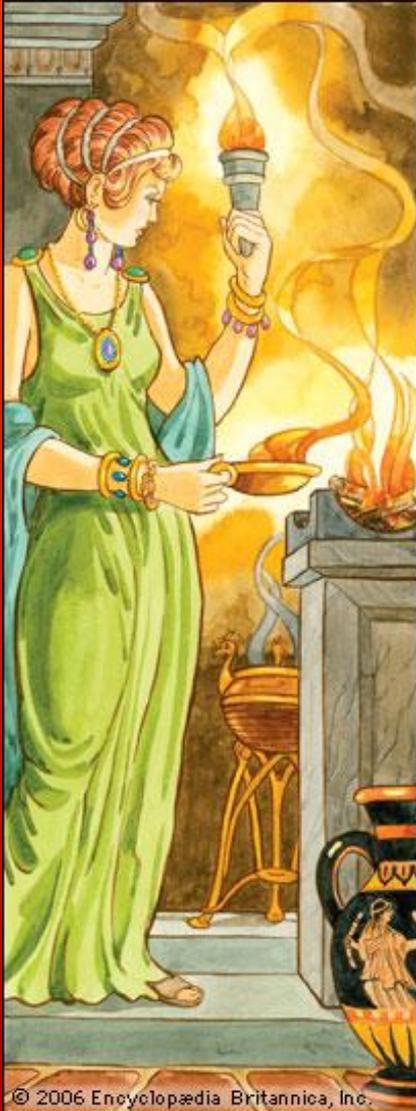


# HERA

- ▶ Roman name: Juno
- ▶ Realm: Goddess of marriage
- ▶ Symbols: peacock, cow
- ▶ Married to Zeus
- ▶ Jealous of Zeus's affairs
- ▶ Because of this, asked a 100-eyed giant to watch him. When Hermes put the giant to sleep, she turned him into a peacock, an animal with eyes on its tail feathers.



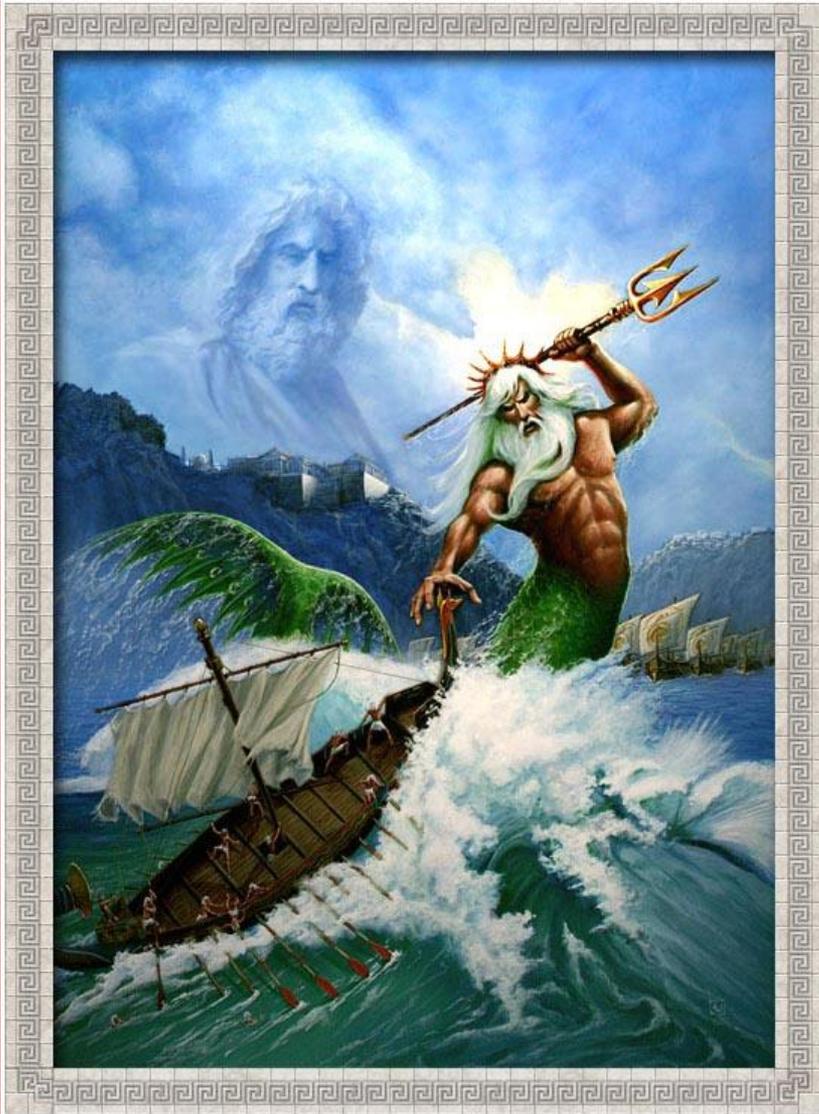
# HESTIA



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- ▣ Roman name: Vesta
- ▣ Realm: Goddess of hearth and home; protector of the sacred fire
- ▣ Symbol: torch, a distaff (hand-held loom)
- ▣ Zeus's sister

# POSEIDON



- ▶ Roman name: Neptune
- ▶ Realm: God of the sea and earthquakes
- ▶ Symbol: trident
- ▶ Zeus's brother
- ▶ Controlled earthquakes, hurricanes, rough seas, tidal waves
- ▶ Gave the horse to mankind

# HADES

- ▶ Roman name: Pluto
- ▶ Also called Dis, the rich one (because he owned all the minerals in the earth)
- ▶ Realm: God of the Underworld
- ▶ Symbol: Cerberus, cypress, bident (see his staff)
- ▶ Rarely visited Earth
- ▶ Not friendly, but not evil either



# UNDERWORLD FEATURES

- ▶ Charon, who rowed people across the river Styx
- ▶ Cerberus, the 3-headed dog who guarded the underworld



# ARES



- ▶ Roman name: Mars
- ▶ Realm: God of war
- ▶ Symbols: dogs of war; vulture, weapons
- ▶ Son of Zeus and Hera
- ▶ No myths written about Ares

# ARTEMIS

- ▶ Roman name: Diana
- ▶ Realm: goddess of the moon, the hunt, and (sometimes) witchcraft
- ▶ Symbols: crescent moon, bow and arrow, short hunting robes
- ▶ Apollo's twin sister
- ▶ Avoided men
  - ▶ She turned Acteon, a hunter, into a stag (deer) and set his own dogs on him because he watched her bathe.



# APHRODITE



- ▣ Roman name: Venus
- ▣ Realm: Goddess of love, beauty, sexuality
- ▣ Symbols: shell, mirror, dove, swan
- ▣ Married to Hephaestus
- ▣ Son was Eros (Cupid)

# HEPHAESTUS

- ▶ Roman name: Vulcan
- ▶ Realm: God of the forge; made Zeus's lightning bolts and the armor for war
- ▶ Symbols; the forge
- ▶ Son of Zeus and Hera
- ▶ Zeus threw him out of heaven for siding with his mother (Hera)
- ▶ Husband of Aphrodite, who was constantly unfaithful to him



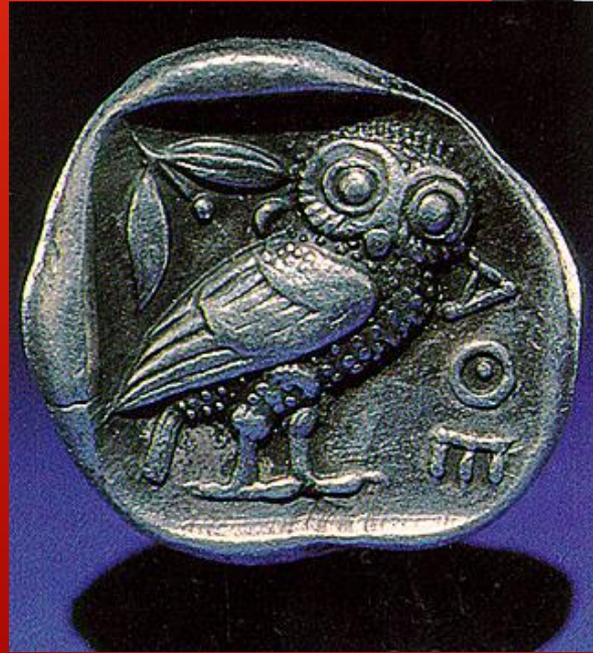
# DEMETER



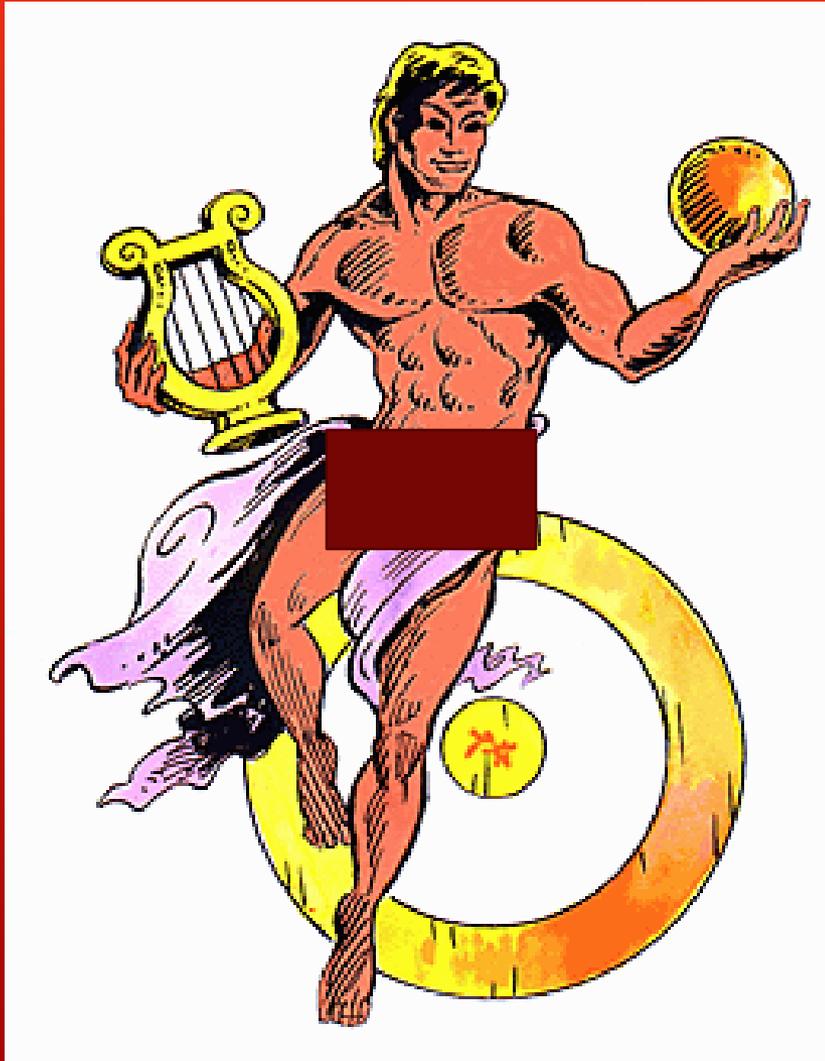
- ▣ Roman name: Ceres
- ▣ Realm: Goddess of agriculture
- ▣ Symbols: sheaves of wheat
- ▣ Zeus's sister, mother of Persephone
  
- ▣ Persephone was kidnapped by Hades. Demeter created eternal winter on earth until Zeus agreed to bring her back. She had eaten 6 pomegranate seeds and so had to remain in the underworld for 6 months of the year.

# ATHENA

- ▣ Roman name: Minerva
- ▣ Also called Pallas Athena
- ▣ Realm: Goddess of defensive warfare, wisdom, handicrafts
- ▣ Symbols: armor, owl, olive tree
- ▣ Emerged from Zeus's head fully grown
- ▣ City of Athens named for her after she gave them the olive tree
- ▣ Also created the spider



# APOLLO



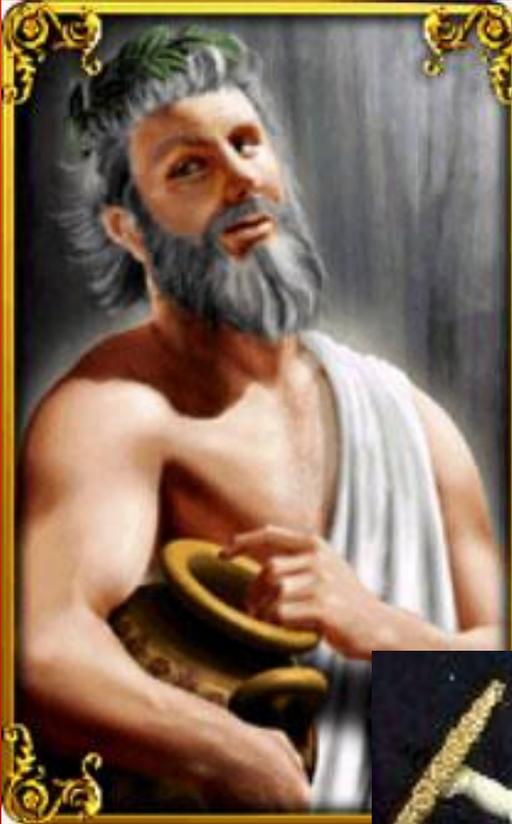
- ▶ Roman name: Apollo
- ▶ Realm: God of light (the sun), music, shepherds
- ▶ Symbols: bow and arrow, the sun chariot, the lyre (small harp)
- ▶ Some myths say he drove the sun chariot, others give this job to Helios
  - ▶ His son Phaeton tried to drive it and burned part of the earth
- ▶ Always shown in pictures as being young, beardless, and handsome

# HERMES

- ▣ Roman name: Mercury
- ▣ Realm: Messenger of gods; god of commerce (trade), thieves, science (sometimes medicine)
- ▣ Symbols: winged helmet or sandals, caduceus (medical staff with 2 snakes)
- ▣ Created the lyre, which he gave to Apollo when Apollo caught him stealing his cows



# DIONYSUS



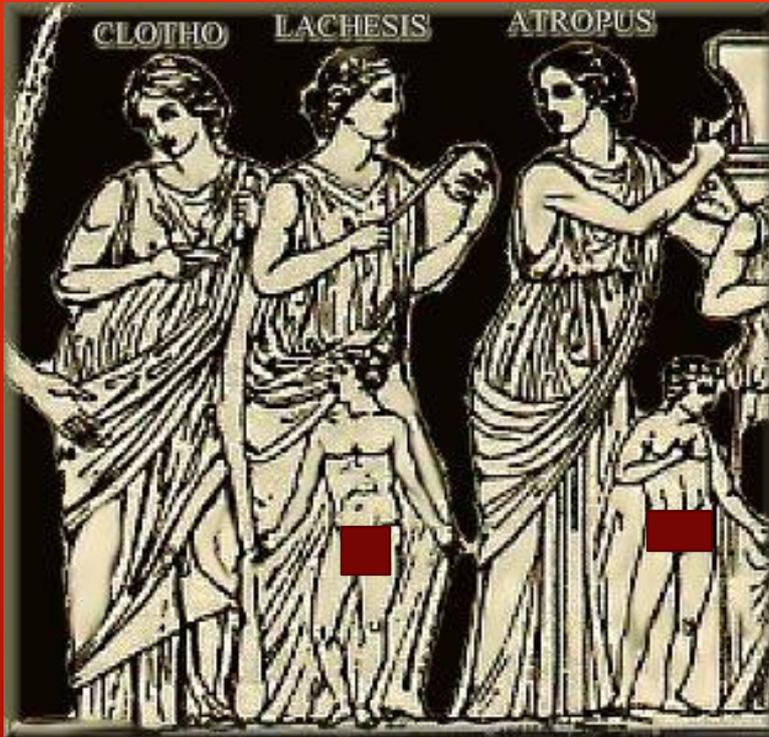
- ▣ Roman name: Bacchus
- ▣ Realm: God of wine, revelry, drama,
- ▣ Symbol: grapes
- ▣ Brought pleasure and insanity (from wine)
- ▣ Followed by the Maenads, crazed women who tore people apart, the satyrs, centaurs, and nymphs
- ▣ First plays were presented during the festivals of Dionysus
- ▣ Popular "party animal"
- ▣ Not typically considered an "Olympian" god

# THE MUSES

- ▶ Nine goddesses in charge of different sciences and arts including music, poetry, history, astronomy, dance, etc.
- ▶ Daughters of Zeus
- ▶ They were meant to inspire



# THE FATES



- ▶ Daughters of Zeus
- ▶ Three blind sisters who determined people's lifespan
  - ▶ One spun the thread of life (Clotho)
  - ▶ One measured the thread (Atropos)
  - ▶ One cut the thread with scissors of death (Lachesis)

# Mythology in Nature and Science

Many of our planets (and many moons)  
are named after Roman gods

Mercury- Messenger god

Mars- God of war

Venus- Goddess of love

Jupiter- King of the gods

Saturn- God of agriculture

Neptune- God of the seas

Uranus- ancient Greek deity of the Heavens

Pluto- God of the Underworld





## Cupid

Son of the goddess of Love. This winged god can be seen to this day, especially during Valentine's day. One shot from his bow is supposed to make the victim fall in love.



## Nike

The Greek goddess of victory



## Cyclops

Named after a mythological being with only one eye.



