The Gods of Olympus
Olympian Gods

- Zeus
- Poseidon
- Apollo
- Ares
- Hermes
- Hephaestus
- Hera
- Hestia
- Demeter
- Athena
- Aphrodite
- Artemis
Mount Olympus
Zeus
Zeus

• Indo-European Sky Father?
  – *dewos*: PIE
  – Zeus, Dios: Greek
  – Daiva: Old Persian
  – Deva: Sanksrit
  – Tues: Germanic
  – Diespiter: Old Latin
    • (Dies Pater: God the Father)
  – Jupiter
Son of Cronus (Cronides)

- Rhea Tricked Cronus
  Zeus raised on Crete
- Returns to defeat Cronus
- Zeus the Victor becomes king of the gods.
Moira

- By Lot:
- Zeus – Heaven
- Poseidon – Sea
- Hades – Underworld
- “Moira is not a person, not a god or a power, but a fact: the word means portion, and proclaims that the world is apportioned, that boundaries are drawn in space and time.” (Burkert, 1985: 129).
Sky God

• Zeus is the sky shining down upon the earth from the peak of Olympus.
• Commands the clouds and the rain
• Bringer of storms
• "Zeus, most glorious, supreme, who dwells in heaven, and rides upon the storm-cloud..." (Iliad ii. 412)
All Powerful

• Master of Heaven
• Resides on Olympus
• Wields Thunderbolt, Lightning bolt
• Aegis = Shield
• When Zeus shakes his aegis storms appear
• If he bows his head after speaking, his decision is final.
God of Kings, Law and Justice

• As King of Heaven and Earth:
• Zeus ratifies all monarchical power
• Oversees the exercise of power as a function of Justice
  – Dike, Themis and Metis
• Presides over the Assembly and Council
• Protects the Oath
• Avenger of the wronged and punisher of wrongdoers
Hospitality and Friendship

• Xenia
  – A bond of friendship between foreigners
  – Covers hospitality to strangers
• Philia
  – Bonds of friendship between countrymen.
• Both governed by a very strict set of behavioral norms.
• Troy destroyed because of Paris.
All Knowing

- Only Zeus knows the future
- Prophesies given from Zeus
  - Through Apollo at Delphi
  - “Make the best, therefore, of whatever ills he may choose to send each one of you” (*Iliad* xv.106 - 8)

- Dreams
  - “dreams, too are of Zeus” (*Iliad* i.63)
Zeus of Crete

- Zeus Dictaios/ Cretagenes
- Hidden, by Rhea, in a cave of Mt. Dicte.
- Raised by the Curetes and nymphs
- Fed milk and honey
Arcadian Zeus

- **Zeus Lukaios:**
  - Born in Arcadia on Mt. Lycaeon (Cretea)
  - Altar of Zeus near the peak (very ancient)
  - Arcadians claim the Crete legend is an error

- **A sky-god associated with the Oak tree and eagles**

- **Lycosura:**
  - The first town that ever existed (Paus. 8.38)
Zeus of Dodona

- Temple of Zeus at Dodona in Epirus
- Seat of a prophetic oracle
- Claim that Zeus was reared there
- Identified by Oak tree or oak leaves
The Black Doves

- Temple of Zeus at Thebes (Egypt)
- Phoenicians abduct two priestesses
- The Dodona Myth:
  - Two black doves came from Egypt
  - One flew to Dodona and landed on an oak tree
  - One flew to Ammon in Africa
  - Each spoke to the people and told them to build a sanctuary of Zeus
- Hdts. ii.55
Olympian Zeus

- National/ Hellenic Zeus
- Temple at Olympia
  - Statue of Zeus mid 5th c. BC.
- Olympic Games
- Battle of Zeus and Cronos
Temple of Zeus at Olympia
Zeus at Athens
Poseidon
Poseidon

- Son of Cronus, brother of Zeus
- God of the Sea
  - Wields a Trident
  - Calls forth storms and earthquakes
- The “Earthshaker”
- Source of spring water
- Temple under the sea off Euboea
- Married to Amphitrite
Poseidon

- Creator of the Horse, God of Charioteers
- Ancestral god of Aeolians and Boeotians
- Patron god of Pylos
- Father of Theseus
- Sanctuary at Corinth
- Temple on Cape Sunium
Temple at Sunium
Temple of Poseidon at Sunium
Poseidon or Oceanus?
Hades
Hades

- Brother of Zeus
- God of the Underworld
- Not included as a resident of Olympus
- Rarely depicted in ancient art
- Death = “going to the house of Hades”
  - “it is only Hades who is utterly ruthless and unyielding- and hence he is of all gods the one most hateful to mankind” (*Iliad* ix.158).
Apollo
Apollo

• The ‘most Greek of the gods’
• Son of Zeus and Leto
• Brother of Artemis
• God of youth
  – Depicted with long hair
• Young god:
  – No evidence on Apollo in Mycenaean culture
Apollo

• God of sickness and healing
  – Rituals of song and dance
  – God of purification
  – Asclepius is son of Apollo

• God of music
  – Master of the Muses
  – Plays the lyre

• Archer god
  – But not a hunter god
Apollo Lykeios

- Came to Greeks through Lycia
- Possible Hittite or Syrian origins
- Epithet associates Apollo with the wolf
  - Or with light...
- Phoebus Apollo:
  - Association with the fox?
Delian Apollo

- Sanctuary on Delos
- Leto gave birth to Apollo on Delos
- Themis gave Apollo nectar and ambrosia
  - He suddenly matures and demands a lyre and a bow.
Pythian Apollo

• Pytho
  – Dragon, son of Earth, lord of Delphi

• Apollo
  – Slays the dragon with his arrows
  – All sudden death is from his arrows

• From Delphi, Apollo gives prophesies through the Pythia (priestess)

• Founder of cities
Loxias

- “to men I will utter in oracles the unerring counsels of Zeus” (Homeric Hymn to Apollo)
- ‘Loxias’ refers to ambiguous speech.
Apollo Helios

• Helios, the sun
• Usually distinct from Apollo
• Possibly the original Apollo (Hyberborean)
• Possibly of Egyptian origin (Horus)
• Phoebus Apollo = Apollo of the light
Apollo Helios
Ares
Ares

• Son of Zeus and Hera
• God of War
  – But only the violence and combat
• Residence in Thrace
  – Sanctuary outside Sparta
  – Temple outside Athens
• In love with Aphrodite
• Rarely depicted in art
Ares

- ...don’t come to me and whine, you fickle god, I hate you more than any god of Olympus because all you love is conflict, war, and fighting. You remind me of your mother...” (Zeus to Ares in *Iliad* v.889-90).

- “Ares, most keen, is from Mycenae...” (Eurip. *Heraclidae* 290).

- Agamemnon calls his men “Servants of Ares” (*Iliad* ii.110)
Hermes
Hermes

- Son of Zeus and Maia
- God of thieves and liars
  - As a baby he stole the cattle of Apollo
  - Apollo accepted the lyre as compensation
- Herald of the gods
  - God of speech and eloquence.
- God of roads, travelers and merchants
- Conducts the souls of the dead to Hades
Herm

- Ancient symbol of ownership and boundaries
- Ancient way marker
- Phallic association
  - Ithiphallic images of Pelasgian origin
  - A mystery cult?
Herm
Hephaestus

- Son of Hera (and Zeus)
- God of fire
- Born with a malformed leg
  - Hera threw him from Olympus
  - Rescued and reared by Thetis and Eurynome
- God of metallurgy and all crafts