

Greek Mythology - Outline #1

Definitions/History/Beliefs

- I. Definition of myth – an ancient anonymous story usually involving gods and/or mortal heroes and explains some aspect of nature.
 - A. Elements of a myth –
 1. Supernatural forces exist – myths involve a god or supernatural power; a deity
 2. Interprets or explain natural events such as an earthquake
 3. Details human qualities or flaws such as the weakness of too much pride
 4. Other common elements used include a metamorphosis, monsters, invisibility, trials and tests, trickery, and gods' interference.
- II. History of Greek Myths –
 - A. Greek Civilization – 1200 B.C.E. – Greece and Asia Minor
 1. Oral versions – as early as 800 B.C.E. (the tradition of the storyteller and the importance of divine inspiration by the Muses)
 2. Written versions – around 700 B.C.E.
 - B. Main Sources – Homer and Hesiod
 1. Homer - A Greek poet Homer born sometime between the 12th and 8th centuries BC. He is famous for the epic poems *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.
 2. Hesiod – Another Greek poet who flourished during 700 BC. He is famous for *Theogony* and *Work and Days*.
 - C. Beliefs – Cultural understanding – [See Map](#)
 1. Earth – was flat and circular with Greece in the middle and the highest point to be Mt. Olympus
 2. Mt. Olympus – the home of the Olympian gods in the realm above Mt. Olympus – [See Map](#)
 3. Underworld – underneath the earth and the realm of the dead

4. Oceanus – a river encircling the earth (keep in mind that Greece is mostly coastal and sailors who ventured too far would fall off the earth)
5. River Styx divided the land of the living from the land of the dead. One could only enter the underworld with payment, (a coin placed under the tongue) and given to the ferryman, Charon. Without payment a soul would be lost in the river of the dead for 100 years.
6. Gods and goddesses were immortal and therefore unable to die, but they could feel pain and be placed in prison-like locations. Since gods were immortal, they did not need to follow the same laws, morals, and ethics given to mankind. To marry one's sibling or parent would seem unethical for men but not for gods.
7. Some gods/goddesses could see into the future (prophetic) but not many (Gaia, Prometheus), and therefore they were said to be powerful and intelligent.
8. Oracles were used to help man communicate with gods/goddesses. These were older, wise known as priests. Where the priests were housed became known as an oracle or a temple.