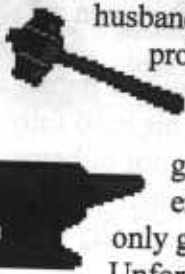


## Hephaestus: God of Fire

Believe it or not, the goddess of love had a husband—Hephaestus. Now, you probably think that this god must have been the most beautiful and passionate god around if he was lucky enough to capture the one and only goddess of love.

Unfortunately, no, he wasn't. In fact, he was thrown out of heaven at his birth because of his ugliness and deformities.



Hephaestus was the god of fire, smithing, craftsmanship, and metalworking. He built the great homes of the gods and goddesses, made armor for those he favored, and could pretty much build anything that was asked of him. He was most often depicted as being lame and not so handsome. Instead of being associated with animals, Hephaestus is associated with volcanoes, which were thought to be his workshop.

## Ares: God of War

The least favorite of all the Olympians was Ares, god of war. He lived for battle and bloodshed, deriving great pleasure from destruction. But still, he was one of the "Greats" and therefore, held high rank. Ares is depicted as always wearing a helmet and armor, and carrying a spear, sword, and shield. Though he was the war god, he was not always victorious. In fact, he was defeated in battle several times throughout the myths. He is associated with the dog and the vulture.

Ares was tall and handsome, but vain and as cruel as his brother Hephaestus was kind. When Ares heard the clashing of arms, he grinned with glee, put on his gleaming helmet, and leapt into his war chariot. Once in a while, Ares



himself was wounded, and although he was immortal, he could not bear to suffer pain. He screamed so loudly that he could be heard for miles. He then would run home to Olympus, where Zeus in disgust called him the worst of his children and told him to stop his howling.

Aphrodite admired him for his splendid looks, but none of the other gods were fond of him, least of all his half sister Athena. She loathed his vain strutting and senseless bloodshed. With Aphrodite, Ares fathers Eros (Cupid).

## Aphrodite: Goddess of Love

Aphrodite, beautiful goddess of love and beauty, was the only Olympian with neither a mother nor father. Nobody knew from where she had come. The West Wind had first seen her in the pearly light of dawn as she rose out of the sea on a cushion of foam. She floated lightly over the gently waves and was so lovely to behold that the wind almost lost his breath.

Zeus was afraid that the gods would fight over the hand of Aphrodite, and to prevent it, he quickly chose a husband for her. He gave her to Hephaestus, the steadiest of the gods, and he, who could hardly believe his good luck, used all his skills to make the most lavish jewels for her. He made her a girdle of finely wrought gold and wove magic into the filigree work. That was not very

wise of him, for when she wore her magic girdle no one could resist her. She was all too irresistible already.



Some myths view her as a flaky and ridiculous character, while other describe her as a generous and benevolent goddess, due just as much reverence as the other Olympians.

Regardless of her character, Aphrodite is always viewed as passionate. That was her duty after all—to make love. Needless to say, Aphrodite is depicted as being a great beauty, with a sweet and seductive smile. She is associated with the dove, and her plants are the rose and myrtle.