

## Hera: Queen of the Gods



Hera, the beautiful queen of Mount Olympus, was a very jealous wife. Even Zeus, who was afraid of nothing, feared her fits of temper. She hated all his other mistresses, and when Zeus first asked her to be his wife, she refused. Slyly Zeus created a thunderstorm, changed himself into a little cuckoo, and, pretending to be in distress, he flew into Hera's arms for protection. She pitied the wet little bird and hugged it close to keep it warm, but all of a sudden she found herself holding mighty Zeus in her arms instead of the bird.

Thus, Zeus won Hera and all nature burst into bloom for their wedding. Mother earth gave the bride a little apple tree that bore golden apples

## Demeter: Goddess of the Harvest

Demeter, whose name means "Mother Earth," is an earth goddess, though not to be confused with Gaea, the actual Earth. Demeter holds the power of fertility and agriculture. Whereas her sister Hestia never left Mount Olympus, Demeter rarely stayed there. She preferred to spend her time on earth, close to the soil. Her bird is the crane and her emblems are the poppy, narcissus, and an ear of corn.

Demeter was Zeus's sister and goddess of marriage, but she is best known as the goddess of the harvest, who introduced agriculture of the Greeks. To offend her was to bring blight and drought to the crops

## Hestia: Goddess of the Hearth

Zeus's third sister was kind Hestia, goddess of hearth and home. Her only job on Mount Olympus was keeping the fire lit in the palace hearth. A quiet goddess, she had no throne of her own as she gave hers to Dionysus since he did not have one.

It is said that Apollo and Poseidon quarreled over who would have her for his bride, and overhearing their argument, became angry. She swore by Zeus's head that she would remain an unmarried woman for all time.

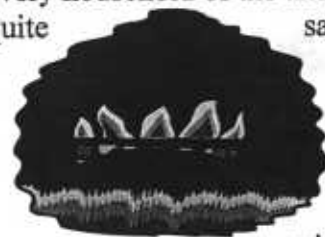
of immortality. Zeus loved Hera dearly, but he was also very fond of rocky Greece. He often snuck down to earth in disguise to marry mortal girls. The more wives he had, the more children he would have, and all the better for Greece. All his children would inherit some of his greatness and become great heroes and rulers, but Hera in her jealous rages tormented his other wives and children, and even Zeus was powerless to stop her. She knew how tricky Zeus could be and kept very close watch over him.

She is often depicted as a queen often is: stately, and wielding a scepter. Her bird is the peacock—a bird whose feathers have many eyes in which to keep watch over Zeus.

and famine to themselves, the people believed; so they held frequent festivals in her honor. It was she who made the earth's fruits and grains grow and flourish. If not for Demeter, the earth would have been dry and barren, and people would have starved.

The mother of Persephone, Demeter was devastated when Hades kidnapped her daughter. Sinking into a great despair, Demeter allowed the plants to wither and die, bringing forth cold and dying plants. This was to continue until a compromise was made and Hades for fear of a dying earth, allowed Persephone to spend three months with her mother each year, thus explaining the seasons.

She is thought to have been worshipped in every household of the ancients and was held as quite



sacred. Though no description is given of her, she is closely associated with the countenance of purity and is not associated with any animal.