

"To Zeus's brother Hades," another said, "we give this magic helmet of darkness."

"And to their brother Poseidon," said the third, "we give this sharp-pronged trident."



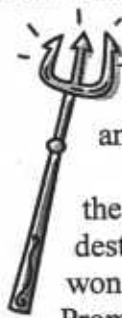
Zeus and Hades, and Poseidon thanked the Cyclopes and discussed how best to use their gifts.

Then Hades put on his helmet of darkness, which made him invisible. He crept up behind Cronus and stole his weapons. Poseidon struck the ground with his trident, which caused the earth to shake. Cronus in his terror became powerless. Then Zeus threw his thunderbolts, and Cronus and Atlas and the rest of the Titans retreated.

Meanwhile, the three hundred-handed monsters hurled three hundred rocks at the Titans, all at once, over and over.

The earth was almost torn apart by the dreadful battle, but before it could be destroyed, Zeus and his brothers and sisters won. They punished all the titans except for Prometheus, Epimetheus, and Rhea, who had helped them. And they chained Cronus and the others in the dark pit Tartarus under the earth.

Now, which of the three brothers, Zeus, Poseidon, or Hades, should be the ruler of the universe? They had had enough of fighting, and they wanted to settle this problem without an



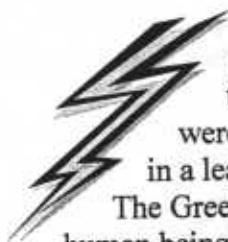
argument. They decided to draw lots. Hades won the underworld, and Poseidon won the sea. And, Zeus became lord of the heavens and ruler of all the gods on Mount Olympus.



The gods themselves could not die, for divine ichor flowed in their veins instead of blood. Most of the time, they lived happily together, feasting on sweet-smelling ambrosia and nectar, but when their wills clashed, there were violent quarrels. Then, Zeus would reach for a thunderbolt and the Olympians would tremble and fall to order, for Zeus alone was the stronger than all the other gods together.

The Gods of Mount Olympus

Zeus: King of the Gods



For the Greeks, Zeus was the supreme god. We can assume the human qualities Zeus displayed were ones the Greeks saw as necessary in a leader. Zeus was also a father figure. The Greeks believed that he determined how human beings should behave and punished wrongdoers. They feared his wrath and the thunderbolts he could hurl from the sky.

But Zeus had human failings, too. Here is evidence that the Greeks endowed their gods with both the good and bad traits they themselves possessed.

The chief god on Mount Olympus was Zeus, lord of the sky, god of thunder and lightning, king of gods. He was conceited and awesome but seldom frightening. The gods' thrones on Mount Olympus were made of gold and silver and marble and ivory, ornamented with precious stones, but Zeus's throne was the largest and most magnificent. His weapon is a thunderbolt which he hurls at those who displease him. He is married to Hera, but he was often unfaithful to his wife and had love affairs with mortal maidens. He is also known to punish those that lie or break oaths.