

EPIC MYTHMEMOLOGY: HESIOD'S THEOGONY

Invocation to the Muses

The poem begins with Hesiod invoking the Muses. They then begin their ritual on Helicon's summit and begin to sing their hymn of the Gods. The Muses teach Hesiod the songs and then tell him the truth of the history of the gods through their songs. They are the nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne after their affair over nine nights. The muses are Cleio, Euterpe, Thaleia, Melpomene, Terpsichore, Erato, Polyhymnia, Ourania, and Calliope. And so, when they sing, they can tell the past, present, and future, and will charm those who listen. Through the Muses chants, they will be telling an honoring story of the Gods and mortals. First, they will honor the gods that created the Earth, and the children of those Gods. Then they speak highly of their father Zeus, because he is the most powerful god. Lastly, they will tell the history of mortals, like humans and Giants. When they're in the land of Olympos, it is their duty as the Muses to entertain and inspire the Gods that reside there.



Quote: This quote describes how the Muses sing and dance for the immortals in Olympos. The Muses are to do this for eternity in the Heavens.

"There are their polished dancing grounds, their fine halls,

And the Graces and Desire have their houses close by, [65]

And all is in bloom. And they move in the dance, intoning

The careful ways of the gods, celebrating the customs

Of all the Immortals in a voice enchanting and sweet.

Then they process to Olympos, a glory of pure

Sound and dance, and the black earth shrieks with delight [70]

As they sing, and the drum of their footfalls rises like love"

The First Gods

The story begins with describing the order of the primordial gods. In the beginning there was only Chaos or the empty universe, and known as the Abyss. Then Gaia, Earth, was created which gave the Gods a foundation. After Gaia came Tartaros, or the underworld, and Eros who was the god of love and desire. Ereberos and Night birthed Aether and Day. Earth's child was Ouranos, or starry heaven. Ouranos was important because he gave them mountains, the barren, and raging seas. Gaia had intercourse with Ouranos and they bore Ocean and other important Gods, like Rheia, Mnemosyne, Crios, and Phiobe.



Quote: The quote represents how the in Hesiod's *Theogony* it states that Chaos, Gaia, and Tartaros were the first three primordial gods in Greek mythology.

"In the beginning there was only Chaos, the Abyss, [116]

But then Gaia, the Earth, came into being,

Her broad bosom the ever-firm foundation of all,

And Tartaros, dim in the underground depths"

The Castration of Ouranos

Gaia and Ouranos together had more children: Brontes, Steropes, and Arges who were all cyclopes. Cottos, Briareos, and Gyges were their children and were known as the Hundred-handers, due to them having 100 hands extending from their shoulders and fifty heads from their necks. Ouranos despised all of his children, so when they were born, he would place them in the underworld of Tartaros in order to keep them from the light. Their last child was Cronos, and he hated his father greatly because of his behavior towards his children. With the children lying inside the Earth, Gaia, their mother, created the mineral flint, which would help in the plan to get revenge on their father. The children were weary about this plan except for Cronos; Cronos agreed to the plan and told his mother how he could not stand Ouranos. Gaia hid Cronos and gave him the flint to use as a weapon. Ouranos greeted Gaia, but while he was distracted Cronos sliced off his father's genitals.



Quote: This quote depicts how Ouranos loathed his children, so he would put all of them into the Earth as they were born to get rid of them.

"And from the start their father feared and loathed them.

[155]

Ouranos used to stuff all of his children

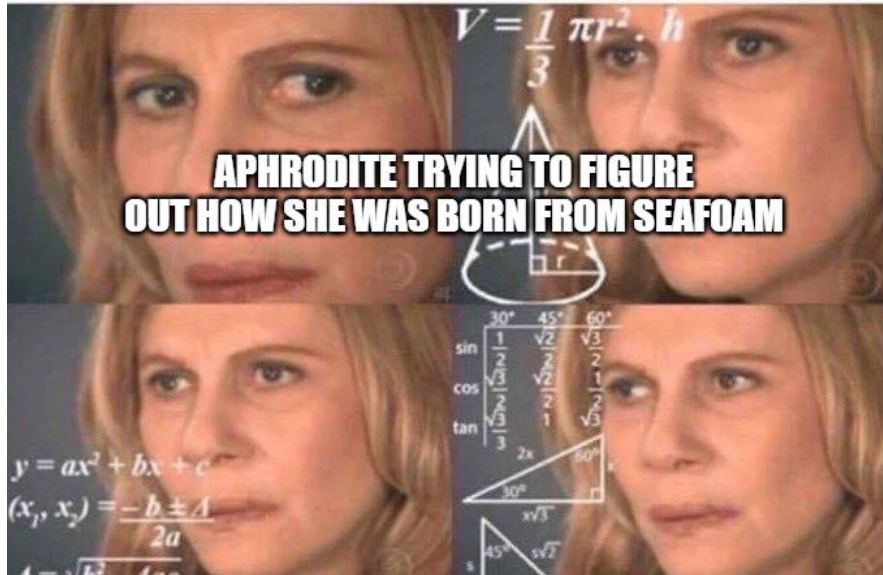
Back into a hollow of Earth soon as they were born,

Keeping them from the light, an awful thing to do,

But Heaven did it, and was very pleased with himself."

The Birth of Aphrodite

When Ourano's genitalia was thrown into the sea, the foam collected on them. This produced a woman named Aphrodite. She came out of the sea and onto the island of Cypros. She was beautiful and nourished since she came from foam. Aphrodite has multiple names, like Cythera, Cypros, and Philommedes. Aphrodite is a sexual goddess and brings desire to the immortal gods. When she is with the gods, she is flirtatious and seen as desirable.



Quote: All of Ouranos children have been conceived through Gaia except for Aphrodite. Aphrodite came from seafoam and Ouranos genitals, so this quote shows how Aphrodite came to be.

"Where they floated a long time.

[190]

A white foam from the god-flesh Collected around them,

and in that foam a maiden developed

And grew. Her first approach to land was near holy Cythera,

And from there she floated on to the island of Cypros.

There she came ashore, an awesome, beautiful divinity."

Other Early Gods

Night gave birth to many offspring like Doom, Fate, Death, Sleep, Dreams, Blame, and Grief. The goddesses Destinies, Fates, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos give humans or mortals good and evil. They make sure a sinner endures a punishment fit for their crime. Deadly night bore Nemesis, Deception, Friendship, Old Age, and Eris. Pontos, the Sea, had child Nereus. Nereus was known as “Old Man” due to his kind and gentle nature. Pontos and Gaia had child Thaumias, Phorcys, Ceto, and Eurybia. Nereus and Doris bore 50 daughters in the sea. Thaumias married Electra and had four children. Ceto bore to Phorcys the Graiai because of their gray complexion from birth. Pegasus flew to the gods, away from Earth, and lives with Zeus. Chrysaor begot Geryones with Callirhoe. Ceto bore a monster in a cave, which was a half-Nymph and half-serpent. This Nymph got pregnant and had a brood of children. Echidna bore Chimaira, and she breathed fire and had three heads of different animals. Chimaira bore Sphinx, and Ceto slept with Phorcys and bore a serpent. Tethys and Ocean had many children scattered throughout the depths of the waters and Earth. Styx slept with Pallas and bore Vying, Victory, Strength, and Force. These children all stay with Zeus. They were able to do this due to Zeus giving a proposal to the Gods which said that those who fight with him against the Titans he would promote them to rights and honors. Because Styx and her children came to Olympos first, Zeus promised they would be with him forever. Phoibe bore Leto, and he was known to be the kindest God in Olympos.



Quote: The Fates or Moirai would seek an appropriate punishment for mortals that committed a sin and would not stop until they paid the price for it.

“Avenging Fates, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos,

Who give mortals at birth good and evil to have,

And prosecute transgressions of mortals and gods. [220]

These goddesses never let up their dread anger

Until the sinner has paid a severe penalty.”

Hecate

Hecate was favored by Zeus, and he gave her many gifts. When men on Earth pray and practice sacrifices, they call upon Hecate. They feel blessed when she hears their prayers because good things will come to him. Hecate is very powerful because she has aspects from all the Gods in her. She is respected because she sits beside kings in judgement and gives soldiers hope during battle. She grants men blessings in times of fear or trouble. She is privileged among most of the gods and is the nurse of the young.

ZEUS WHEN
HECATE DOES ANYTHING:



Hecate

Quote: Hecate was very esteemed among the immortals, and Zeus would give her many gifts because of the honor he had for her.

“And she bore Hecate, whom Zeus son of Cronos

Has esteemed above all and given splendid gifts,

A share of the earth as her own, and of the barren sea. [415]

She has received a province of starry heaven as well,

And is most highly esteemed by the deathless gods.

For even now when any man upon earth

Sacrifices and prays according to ancestral rites,

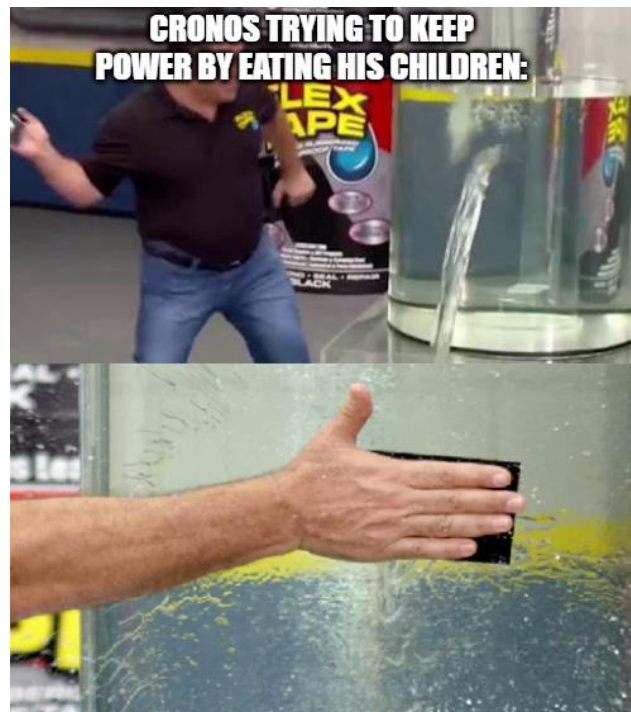
He calls upon Hecate and is greatly blessed [420]

If the goddess propitiously receives his prayers,

And riches come to him, for she has the power.”

The Birth of the Olympians

Cronos and Rheia slept together, and she bore Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon and Zeus. Cronos would eat all his children as they were born. He learned from Earth and starry heaven that his children would overthrow his rule, so he ate them to ensure that he would remain king among the gods. Rheia was grieving over the loss of her children, so she asked her parents to keep the birth of her next child, Zeus, a secret from Cronos. Rheia travelled to Lyctos to give birth to Zeus. After she gave birth, she hid him in a cave. She deceived Cronos by giving him a stone swaddled in cloth and telling him that it was their son. Cronos quickly ate decoy child. Cronos vomited out his children, and Zeus freed his uncles from the underworld. The cyclopes gifted Zeus with thunder and lightning with the intent that he would rule over both mortals and immortals.



Quote: Cronos wanted to keep his power, so he would get rid of his children by eating them, not knowing his plan would not work.

“Well, Cronos wasn’t blind. He kept a sharp watch [470]

And swallowed his children.

Rheia’s grief was unbearable.

When she was about to give birth to Zeus our Father,

She petitioned her parents, Earth and starry Heaven,

To put together some plan so that the birth of her child [475]

Might go unnoticed, and she would make devious Cronos

Pay the Avengers of her father and children.”

Prometheus

Iapetos and Clymene had a child, Atlas, Menoitios, Epimetheus, and Prometheus. Zeus set bonds and an eagle on Prometheus, that would cause him to pain all day and night. Heracles killed the eagle and relieved Prometheus from his misery. Prometheus had to endure this due to him butchering an ox and serving it to Zeus in an attempt to confuse him. Zeus questioned Prometheus's portioning of meat, and Prometheus denied anything wrong. However, Zeus recognized his tricks and saw the white bones of the ox. Because of this, men burn white bones for gods on altars. Zeus was angry that Prometheus tried to outwit him, so he punished him.



Quote: Prometheus, a trickster in Greek mythology, thought he could play games with Zeus, but Zeus is very wise and experienced, so he caught on.

*"This was Prometheus' trick. But Zeus, eternally wise,
Recognized the fraud and began to rumble in his heart
Trouble for mortals, and it would be fulfilled.*

With both his hands he picked up the gleaming fat. [555]

Anger seethed in his lungs and bile rose to his heart

When he saw the ox's white bones artfully tricked out.

And that is why the tribes of men on earth

Burn white bones to the immortals upon smoking altars."

Pandora

Hephaistos created a statue from clay to look like a virgin. Athena gave it clothes, veil, and a wreath of flowers. A tiara was put upon her head and she was then given to the gods and men. From this, she was the first of the race of female women. Women were considered evil amongst mortal men. They are compared to bees and drones, how men work all day while women stay home feeding off the work of others. This was the creation from Zeus, it was a punishment for mortal men. If a man does not marry they will suffer from having no son, but if they do marry they have to endure the wrath of an “evil” woman.



Quote: From the story of Pandora, she was created by Zeus to be a punishment for mortal men. Women bring evil to society and life according to this notion.

*“That’s just how Zeus, the high lord of thunder,
Made women as a curse for mortal men, [605]
Evil conspirators. And he added another evil
To offset the good. Whoever escapes marriage
And women’s harm, comes to deadly old age
Without any son to support him. He has no lack
While he lives, but when he dies, distant relatives [610]
Divide up his estate. Then again, whoever marries
As fated, and gets a good wife, compatible,
Has a life that is balanced between evil and good”*

The Titanomachy

Ouranos became angry at his Hundred-Hander sons due to their arrogant nature and strong, bulky build. He cast them to the underground where they suffered and grieved. His other son, Cronos, lived in the underground too, until he listened to Gaia and went to the light, where he defeated his father. The Titans were born from Cronos and battled with him and the gods for ten years, full of pain and grief. After the war, Zeus gave them food of the Gods, and this improved their spirit. Zeus speaks to them and essentially tells them to get over their grief and defeat the Titans. They reply and tell Zeus they will return to battle and defeat the Titans in his honor. When they returned to battle, the Cottos, Briareos, and Gyges fought together and defeated the Titans, sending them to Tartaros.



Quote: After a long battle between the Titans and the Gods, they defeated the Titans and they were cast to Tartaros.

"From their massive hands, and the stones they shot [720]

Overshadowed the Titans, and they sent them under

The wide-pathed earth and bound them with cruel bonds—

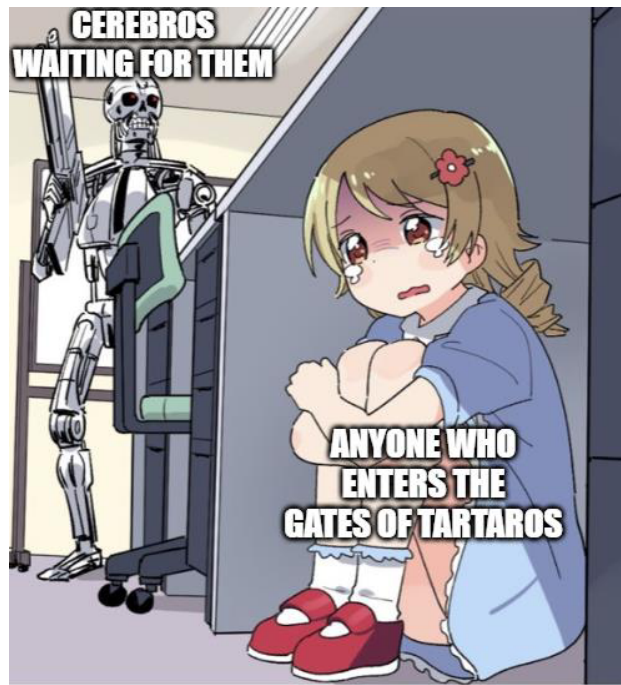
Having beaten them down despite their daring—

As far under earth as the sky is above,

For it is that far from earth down to misty Tartaros." [725]

Tartaros

It would take a bronze anvil nine days and nine nights to reach the Tartaros when falling down from earth. It is surrounded by a bronze wall, and above it is the roots of the Earth and sea. This is where the Titans reside. The Tartaros is a horrible place for men and immortals. Night and Day pass each other as they go in and out. The underworld gods, Hades and Persephone live in the halls, and Cerebros stands guard and will not allow anyone that enters to leave the gates of the gods. Styx resides there too, where she lives away from the gods. When there is strife in Tartaros, Zeus will send Iris to bring them their oath. If a god breaks their oath, they are banned from ambrosia and nectar, then nine years of exile follows, until the tenth year wear they can rejoin the gods in Olympos.



Quote: When someone tries to leave Tartaros, they can't leave because Cerebros stands guard and won't let them leave and eats anyone he catches.

"In front of that stand the echoing halls

Underworld gods, and a frightful, pitiless

Hound stands guard, and he has a mean trick: [775]

When someone comes in, he fawns upon him,

Wagging his tail and dropping his ears,

But he will not allow anyone to leave—

He runs down and eats anyone he catches

Leaving Persephone's and Hades' gates." [780]

Typhoios

Tartaros bore her last child, Typhoios, and he was mighty and powerful. His limbs were reliable and could endure most, he had a hundred heads from his shoulders that sent out fire, a wide range of voices and sounds each head could make, snake-like tongues. Zeus recognized the threat of Typhoios, so one day, the Earth trembled, there were hot winds, and huge fires in the violet sea. Strong waves hit the beaches and the underworld of Tartaros felt these impacts. Zeus came down and burned the heads of Typhoios. From this, a firestorm spread through the mountains and melted Earth. Zeus, still angry, threw Typhoios into Tartaros' abyss. Because of this, came windy monsoons that can be a blessing and curse to those on Earth.



Quote: Typhoios was a very power deity with abilities to overtake Zeus' reign. Zeus ad to destroy him before it was too late.

"And that day would have been beyond hope of help,

And Typhoios would have ruled over Immortals and men,

Had the father of both not been quick to notice. [845]

He thundered hard, and the Earth all around

Rumbled horribly, and wide Heaven above,

The Sea, the Ocean, and underground Tartaros."

Zeus in Power

Zeus came in power because of Gaia's suggestion for him to rule over the gods. Zeus married Metis, the goddess of wisdom and intelligence, but Zeus put her in his stomach before her birth. Gaia and starry heaven told him to do this in order keep his reign of power. He then married Themis who bore Seasons, Eunomia, Dike, and Eirene. He had children with Eurynome, who bore Aglaia, Euphrosyne, and Thalia. He slept with Demeter, and she bore Persephone, and Zeus later gave her up to Hades. He slept with Mnemosyne, and she had the nine Muses. He fathered Apollo and Artemis from Leto and Hebe, Eileithyia, and Ares from Hera. Maia slept with Zeus and she had Hermes, Semele gave birth to Zeus's son Dionysos, a mortal. Alcmena bore Hercules. Hercules married Hebe, Perseis bore Circe and Aietes.



Quote: Zeus in power gave him power to have relations with many goddesses of Olympia. He had many children.

"Next he married gleaming Themis, who bore the Seasons,

Eunomia, Dike, and blooming Eirene,

Who attend to mortal men's works for them,

And the Moirai, whom wise Zeus gave honor supreme:

Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who assign

[910]

To mortal men the good and evil they have.

And Ocean's beautiful daughter Eurynome

Bore to him the three rose-cheeked Graces,

Aglaia, Euphrosyne, and lovely Thalia.

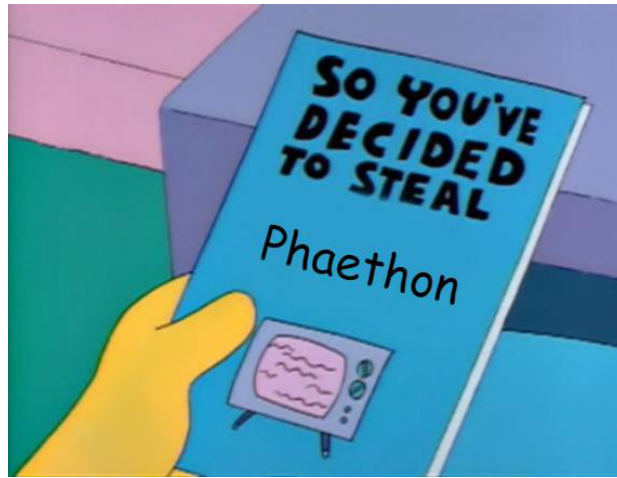
The light from their eyes melts limbs with desire,

[915]

One beautiful glance from under their brows."

Goddesses and Heroes

This is will list the goddesses that slept with mortal men. Demeter bore Pluotos, and he now travels all over land and sea. Aphrodite's daughter. Harmonia, bore Ino and Semele, Agaue and Autonoe. Callirhoe bore a son to Chrysaor, Geryones, who Heracles killed. Dawn slept with Tithonos and had Memnon, or the Ethiopian king. Cephalos bore Phaethon, who Aphrodite stole and made him a guard of her shrine. Jason, son of Aison, and became a king. He married Aietes' daughter and she bore Medeios. Nereus's daughter, Psamathe bore Phocos and Aiacos through golden Aphrodite. Cythereia bore Aineias with Anchises. Circe, daughter of Helios, slept with Odysseus and bore him Agrios and Latinos. Calypso gave birth to Nauithoos and Nausinoos from Odysseus too.



Quote: Aphrodite stole son of Cephalos, Phaethon, away from home and make him a keeper of her holy shrine.

*“And for Cephalos she produced a splendid son,
Powerful Phaethon, a man in the gods’ image. [995]
When he was a boy in the tender bloom of youth,
Still childish in mind, Aphrodite rose smiling
And snatched him away and made him a keeper
Of her holy shrine by night, a spirit divine.”*

Cited Sources

Palaima. Anthology of Classical Myth : Primary Sources in Translation. Indianapolis :Hackett Pub., 2004.