

The Olympian Divinities

Key: A. (functions and area of responsibility)
B. (attributes, i.e. in art, literature etc.)

Zeus (Roman Jupiter or Jove)

A. (1) Sky and weather, especially the rain, thunder, lightning. (2) Sovereignty of the world, king and father of gods and men. (3) protection of political and social institutions: state, family, contracts, oaths, relations of host and guest

B. Thunderbolt, staff or scepter, aegis, eagle, lion, garland of wild olive or oak leaves, beard and flowing locks, throne, often accompanied by Nike (Victory)

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Hera (Roman Juno)

A. (1) Queen of the world as Zeus's sister/wife. (2) Marriage. (3) Motherhood, especially the protection of women in childbirth

B. Crown, polos (high headdress), scepter, wedding veil, peacock, cuckoo

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Hephaestus (Roman Vulcan or Mulciber)

A. (1) Blacksmith and men's handicrafts (2) Fire

B. Smith's garb, hammer, anvil, bellows, forge, fire

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Ares (Roman Mars)

A. War

B. Armor and weapons

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Poseidon (Roman Neptune)

A. all waters, both salt and fresh; earthquakes

B. trident, dolphin, horse, bull, Triton (merman), beak of a ship

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Athena (Roman Minerva), Zeus' daughter without a mother

A. (1) War. (2) Protection of the state. (3) Handicrafts, both women's and men's: weaving, spinning, embroidery, chariot-making, shipbuilding etc. (4) Wisdom in general

B. Helmet, shield, spear, aegis (usually with head of Medusa depicted on it), lamp, distaff, owl, snake. Often accompanied by Nike (Victory). Often called "glaukopsis" = "gray-eyed"; or "Parthenos" = "virgin"

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Aphrodite (Roman Venus)

A. (1) Love. (2) Fertility. (3) Beauty

B. Mirror, apple, dove, attractive clothes, cosmetics

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Artemis (Roman Diana), twin sister of Apollo

A. (1) Wild life, as mistress of wild things. (2) Hunting. (3) Virginity. (4) Protection of women in childbirth. (5) Archery. Also has some connection with the moon.

B. Bow and quiver of arrows, short sleeveless hunting dress, buskins, narrow ribbon in hair, torch; deer, wild goat, boar, bear, quail

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Apollo (same name for Romans), also called Phoebus or Pythian Apollo

A. Prophecy. (2) Medicine. (3) Music, poetry, dance. (4) Archery. (5) Youth and manly beauty. (6) Flocks and herds. (7) Sun (a later responsibility, which Apollo takes over from Helios)

B. Tripod, omphalos, lyre, bow and quiver of arrows, crown of laurel leaves, peplos, hawk, raven or crow, fawn. Epithet: "Far-shooting"

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Hermes (Roman Mercury)

A. (1) Commerce (2) Theft. (3) Heraldry, i.e. messenger of the gods. (4) Flocks and herds. (5) Youth and manly beauty (6) Music. (7) Conducting of souls to the lower world (hence the epithet "Psychopompos" = 'guide of souls')

B. (1) hat (usually broad-rimmed), herald's staff ("caduceus"), winged sandals, short cloak, tortoise-shell lyre, ram, shepherd's staff

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Dionysus, sometimes called Bakchos (Roman Bacchus or Liber)

A. (1) vegetable life, especially the grapevine and ivy. (2) Wine and wine-making. (3) Fertility. (4) Poetry, song, drama.

B. Grapevine, ivy vine, crown of ivy, cluster of grapes, thyrsos (vine-wrapped staff), kantharos (drinking cup), clothes of fawnskin or leopard skin, leopard drawn chariot, leopard, deer, Satyrs, Pans, Bacchantes (also known as Maenads).

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Demeter (Roman Ceres)

A. (1) Agriculture, especially grain. (2) Fertility in general

B. Sheaf of grain, polos (headdress), scepter, torch, sacrificial bowl