The Olympians are a group of 12 gods who ruled after the overthrow of the Titans. All the Olympians are related in some way. They are named after their dwelling place, Mount Olympus. Note that the Roman names for the Olympian Gods are in brackets.

Zeus
Zeus (Jupiter) overthrew his Father Cronus to become the supreme ruler of the gods. He was lord of the sky, the rain god and the cloud gatherer. His weapon/symbol was a thunderbolt which he hurls at those who displease him. He was married to Hera but, was famous for his many affairs. An eagle attended him as a minister and as a symbol of his will and for page and cup-bearer he had Ganymede, a boy so beautiful that Zeus had him stolen from Mount Ida to make him immortal in heaven. He was also known to punish those that lie or break oaths. His tree was the oak and his oracle was at Dodona, the land of the oak trees.

Poseidon
Poseidon (Neptune) was the brother of Zeus. Poseidon was a son of Cronus and Rhea. Like his brothers and sisters except for Zeus, Poseidon was swallowed by his father.

He was the lord of the sea. He was widely worshiped by seamen. He married Amphitrite, a granddaughter of the Titan Oceanus. His weapon was a trident/symbol, which could shake the earth, and shatter any object. He was second only to Zeus in power amongst the gods. Under the ocean, he had a marvelous golden palace, its grottos adorned with corals and the sea-flowers, and lit with a phosphorescent glow. He rose forth in a chariot drawn by dolphins, sea-horses other marine creatures.

Hades
Hades (Pluto) was the brother of Zeus. He was made lord of the underworld, ruling over the dead. He was a greedy god who was greatly concerned with increasing his subjects. Those whose calling increase the number of dead were seen favorably by him. The Erinyes were welcomed guests.

He was also the god of wealth, due to the precious metals mined from the earth. He had a helmet that made him invisible, and was a symbol of his power to leave the underworld unseen. He rarely left the underworld. He was unpitying and terrible, but not capricious. His wife was Persephone whom Hades abducted. He was the King of the dead but, death itself is another god, Thanatos.

Hades obtained his eventual consort, Persephone, through trickery, a story that connected the ancient Eleusinian Mysteries with the Olympian pantheon. Hades ruled the dead, assisted by demons over whom he had complete authority. He strictly forbade his subjects to leave his domain and would become quite enraged when anyone tried to
leave, or if someone tried to steal his prey from him. Very few have gone to the underworld and returned.

**Hestia**
Hestia (Vesta) was Zeus' sister. She was a virgin goddess. She was the Goddess of the Hearth, the symbol of the house, around which a new born child was carried before it was received into the family. In the Greek and Roman households, the hearth fire was not allowed to go out, unless it was ritually extinguished and ritually renewed, accompanied by impressive rituals of completion, purification and renewal. Each city also had a public hearth sacred to Hestia. Hestia symbolizes the alliance between the colonies and their mother-cities.

**Hera**
Hera (Juno) was Zeus' wife and sister. She was raised by the Titans Oceanus and Tethys. She was the protector of marriage and takes special care of married women.

Most stories concerning Hera have to do with her jealous revenge for Zeus' infidelities. Her sacred animals were the cow and the peacock. Her favorite city was Argos.

**Ares**
Ares (Mars) was the son of Zeus and Hera. He was disliked by both parents. He was the god of war. He is considered murderous and bloodstained but, also a coward. When caught in an act of adultery with Aphrodite, her husband Hephaestus was able publicly ridicule him. His bird was the vulture. His animal was the dog. Armor was also a another symbol.

**Athena**
Athena (Minerva) was the daughter of Zeus. She sprang full grown in armor from his forehead, thus has no mother. She was fierce and brave in battle but, only fights to protect the state and home from outside enemies. She was the goddess of the city, handicrafts, and agriculture. She invented the bridle, which permitted man to tame horses, the trumpet, the flute, the pot, the rake, the plow, the yoke, the ship, and the chariot. She was the embodiment of wisdom, reason, and purity. She was Zeus's favorite child and was allowed to use his weapons including his thunderbolt. Her favorite city was Athens. Her tree was the olive. The owl was her bird. She was a virgin goddess.

**Apollo**
Apollo was the son of Zeus and Leto. His twin sister was Artemis. He was the god of music, playing a golden lyre. He was the god of the archer, far shooting with a silver bow. The god of healing who taught man medicine. The god of light. The god of truth, who can not speak a lie. Apollo was considered to have dominion over disease, beauty, light, healing, colonists, medicine, archery, poetry, prophecy, dance, reason, intellectualism, and shamans, and was the patron defender of herds and flocks.

One of Apollo's more important daily tasks was to harness his chariot with four horses and drive the Sun across the sky. (Some times confused or used interchangeable with Helios)
He was famous for his oracle at Delphi. People traveled to it from all over the Greek world to divine the future.

His tree was the laurel. The crow was his bird. The dolphin was his animal.

**Aphrodite**
Aphrodite (Venus) was the goddess of love, desire and beauty. In addition to her natural gifts, she had a magical girdle that compelled anyone she wished to desire her. There were two accounts of her birth.

One says she was the daughter of Zeus and Dione.

The other went back to the time when Cronus castrated Uranus and tossed his severed genitals into the sea. Aphrodite then arose from the sea foam on a giant scallop and walked to shore in Cyprus.

Aphrodite, in many of the myths involving her, is characterized as vain, ill-tempered and easily offended.

She was the wife of Hephaestus. The myrtle was her tree. The dove, the swan, and the sparrow were her birds.

**Hermes**
Hermes (Mercury) was the son of Zeus and Maia. He was Zeus' messenger. He was the fastest of the gods. He wore winged sandals, a winged hat, and carried a magic wand. He was the god of boundaries and of the travelers who cross them, of shepherds and cowherds, of orators, literature and poets, of athletics, of weights and measures and invention and commerce in general, of liars, and of the cunning of thieves. He was the guide for the dead to go to the underworld. He invented the lyre, the pipes, the musical scale, astronomy, weights and measures, boxing, gymnastics, and the care of olive trees.

**Artemis**
Artemis (Diana) was the daughter of Zeus and Leto. Her twin brother was Apollo. She was the lady of the wild things. She was the huntsman of the gods. She was the protector of the young. Like Apollo, she hunted with silver arrows. She became associated with the moon. She was a virgin goddess, and the goddess of chastity. She also presided over childbirth, which may seem odd for a virgin, but goes back to causing Leto no pain when she was born. The cypress was her tree. All wild animals were scared to her, especially the deer.

**Hephaestus**
Hephaestus (Vulcan or Mulciber) was the son of Zeus and Hera. Sometimes, it was said that Hera alone produced him and that he had no father. He was the only god to be physically ugly. He was also lame. He was the god of fire and the forge. He was the smith and armorer of the gods. He used a volcano as his forge. He was the patron god of
both smiths and weavers. He was kind and peace loving. His wife was Aphrodite. Sometimes, his wife was identified as Aglaia.

**Demeter**

In Greek mythology the goddess Demeter was the most generous of the great Olympian goddesses. The Greek goddess Demeter was beloved for her service to mankind in giving them the gift of the harvest, the reward for cultivation of the soil.

Also known as the Roman goddess Ceres, Demeter was the goddess of the harvest and was credited with teaching humans how to grow, preserve, and prepare grain. Demeter was thought to be responsible for the fertility of the land.

**Dionysus**

was the great Olympian god of wine, vegetation, pleasure and festivity. He was depicted as either an older bearded god or a pretty effeminate, long-haired youth. His attributes included the *thyrsos* (a pine-cone tipped staff), drinking cup, leopard and fruiting vine. He was usually accompanied by a troop of Satyrs and Mainades (female devotees or nymphs).

**The Titans**, also known as the elder gods, ruled the earth before the Olympians overthrew them. The ruler of the Titans was Cronus who was de-throned by his son Zeus. Most of the Titans fought with Cronus against Zeus and were punished by being banished to Tartarus.

**Gaea**

Gaea was Mother Earth. She mated with her son Uranus to produce the remaining Titans. Gaea seemed to have started as a neolithic earth-mother worshipped before the Indo-European invasion that eventually lead to the Hellenistic civilization.

**Uranus**

Uranus was the sky god and first ruler. He was the son of Gaea, who created him without help. He then became the husband of Gaea and together they had many offspring, including the Cyclopes, the Hecatoncheires, and twelve of the Titans.

His rule ended when when Cronus, encouraged by Gaea, castrated him. He either died from the wound or withdrew from earth.
**Cronus**
Cronus was the ruling Titan who came to power by castrating his Father Uranus. His wife was Rhea. Their offspring were the first of the Olympians. To insure his safety, Cronus ate each of the children as they were born. This worked until Rhea, unhappy at the loss of her children, tricked Cronus into swallowing a rock, instead of Zeus. When he grew up, Zeus would revolt against Cronus and the other Titans, defeat them, and banish them to Tartarus in the underworld.

Cronus managed to escape to Italy, where he ruled as Saturn. The period of his rule was said to be the golden age on earth, a time of peace and happiness that was honored by the Saturnalia feast. During the golden age, the people of the time had no need for laws or rules; everyone did right and as such, there was no need.

**Rhea**
Rhea was the wife of Cronus. She was the Titan of the earth and fertility. Cronus made it a practice to swallow their children. To avoid this, Rhea tricked Cronus into swallowing a rock, saving her son Zeus.

Rhea's symbol is the moon. She has another symbol, the swan, because it is a gentle animal. Also, her other symbol is two lions, supposedly the ones that pull her chariot.

**Oceanus**
Oceanus was the Latin word for the ocean, which the Greeks and Romans believed to be an enormous river encircling the world. Strictly speaking, it was the ocean-stream at the Equator in which floated the habitable hemisphere. This world-ocean was personified as a Titan, a son of Uranus and Gaea. Together with his wife Tethys, they produced the rivers and six thousand offsprings called the Oceanids.

**Tethys**
Tethys was the wife of Oceanus. She was mother of the chief rivers of the universe, such as the Nile, the Alpheus, the Maeander, and about six thousand daughters called the Oceanids.

**Hyperion**
Hyperion was the Titan of light, an early sun god. He was the son of Gaea and Uranus. He married his sister Thea. Their children were Helius (the sun), Selene (the moon), and Eos (the dawn).

**Mnemosyne**
Mnemosyne was the Titan of memory. She slept with Zeus for nine nights and gave birth to the nine Muses.

**Themis**
Themis was the Titan. Her name meaning "law of nature" rather than "human ordinance" was "of good counsel," was the embodiment of divine order, law and custom. She fought
with Zeus against the other Titans. She was the mother of the Fates and the Horae (Seasons).

**Iapetus**
Iapetus was the father of Prometheus, Epimetheus, Menoetius, and Atlas by Clymene.

**Coeus**
Coeus was the Titan of Intelligence. He was the father of Leto and Asteria.

**Cruis**
Cruis married his sister Eurybia and became the father of Astraeus, Pallas and Perses.

**Phoebe**
Phoebe was Titan of the Moon. She was the mother of Leto and Asteria.

**Thea**
Thea, along with her brother Hyperion, was the mother of Helios, Selene and Eos. She seems here a goddess of glittering in particular and of glory in general.

**Prometheus**
Prometheus was the wisest Titan. His name meant "forethought" and he was able to foretell the future. He was the son of Iapetus. When Zeus revolted against Cronus, Prometheus deserted the other Titans and fought on Zeus' side.

By some accounts, he and his brother Epimetheus were delegated by Zeus to create man. In all accounts, Prometheus was known as the protector and benefactor of man. He gave mankind a number of gifts including fire. He also tricked Zeus into allowing man to keep the best part of the animals sacrificed to the gods and to give the gods the worst parts.

For this Zeus punished Prometheus by having him chained to a rock with an eagle tearing at his liver. He was to be left there for all eternity or until he agreed to disclose to Zeus which of Zeus' children would try to replace him. He was eventually rescued by Hercules without giving in to Zeus.

**Epimetheus**
Epimetheus was a stupid Titan, whose name meant "afterthought". He was the son of Iapetus. In some accounts, he was delegated, along with his brother Prometheus by Zeus to create mankind. He also accepted the gift of Pandora from Zeus, which lead to the introduction of evil into the world.

**Atlas**
Atlas was the son of Iapetus. Unlike his brothers Prometheus and Epimetheus, Atlas fought with the other Titans supporting Cronus against Zeus. Due to Cronus's advance age, Atlas led the Titan's in battle. As a result, he was singled out by Zeus for a special punishment and was forced to hold up the world on his back.
**Metis**

Metis was the Titaness of the forth day and the planet Mercury. She presided over all wisdom and knowledge. She was seduced by Zeus and became pregnant with Athena. Zeus became concerned over prophecies that her second child would replace Zeus. To avoid this Zeus ate her. It was said that she was the source for Zeus' wisdom and that she still advises Zeus from his belly.

It may seem odd for Metis to have been pregnant with Athena but, never mentioned as her mother. This was because the classic Greeks believed that children were generated solely from the father's sperm. The women was thought to be nothing more than a vessel for the fetus to grow in. Since Metis was killed well before Athena's birth, her role doesn't count.

**Dione**

According to Homer in the Iliad, she is the mother of Aphrodite.

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**The Creation Story**

This story is written by both Aeschylus and Hesiod.

In the beginning, there was formless confusion of Chaos brooded over the unbroken darkness. Then out of the void appeared Erebus, the unknowable place where death dwells, and Night (Nyx). All else was empty, silent, endless, darkness. Then somehow Love (Eros) was born bringing a start of order. From Love came Light and Day. Once there was Light and Day, Gaea, the earth appeared.

Gaea alone gave birth to Uranus, the god of the heavens. Uranus became Gaea's mate. Together they produced the three Cyclopes, the three Hecatoncheires, and twelve Titans.

But, Uranus was a bad father and husband. He hated the Hecatoncheires. He imprisoned them by pushing them into the hidden places of the earth, Gaea's womb. This angered Gaea and she plotted against Uranus. She made a flint sickle and tried to get her children to attack Uranus. All were too afraid except, the youngest Titan, Cronus.

Gaea and Cronus set up an ambush of Uranus as he lay with Gaea at night. Cronus grabbed his father and castrated him, with the stone sickle, throwing the severed genitals into the ocean. The fate of Uranus is not clear. He either died, withdrew from the earth, or exiled himself to Italy. As he departed, he promised that Cronus and the Titans would be punished. From his spilt blood came the Giants, the Ash Tree Nymphs, and the Erinyes. From the sea foam where his genitals fell came Aphrodite.

Cronus became the next ruler. He imprisoned the Cyclopes and the Hecatoncheires in Tartarus. He married his sister Rhea, and under his rule the Titans had many offspring. He ruled for many ages. However, Gaea and Uranus both had prophesied that he would
be overthrown by a son. To avoid this Cronus swallowed each of his children as they were born. Rhea was angry at the treatment of the children and plotted against Cronus. When it came time to give birth to her sixth child, Rhea tricked Cronus. She secretly carried the child to Crete and then wrapped a stone in swaddling cloths. Cronus, thinking it was a baby, ate the stone.

The child was Zeus. He grew into a handsome youth on Crete. He consulted Metis on how to defeat Cronus. She prepared a drink for Cronus which would force him to vomit up the five other children. Rhea convinced Cronus to accept his son and Zeus was allowed to return to Mount Olympus as Cronus's cupbearer. This gave Zeus the opportunity to slip Cronus the specially prepared drink. This worked as planned and the other five children were vomited up. Being gods they were unharmed. They were thankful to Zeus and made him their leader.

Cronus was yet to be defeated. He and the Titans, except Prometheus, Epimetheus, and Oceanus, fought to retain their power. Atlas became their leader in battle and it looked for some time as though they would win and put the young gods down. However, Zeus was had other plans. He went down to Tartarus and freed the Cyclopes and the Hecatoncheires. Prometheus joined Zeus as well. He returned to battle with his new allies. The Cyclopes provided Zeus with lighting bolts for weapons. The Hecatoncheires he set in ambush armed with boulders. When the time was right, Zeus retreated drawing the Titans into the Hecatoncheires's ambush. The Hecatoncheires rained down hundreds of boulders with such a fury the Titans thought the mountains were falling on them. They broke and ran giving Zeus victory.

Zeus exiled the Titans who had fought against him into Tartarus. All except for Atlas, who was singled out for the special punishment of holding the world on his shoulders.

However, even after this victory Zeus was not safe. Gaea, angry that her children had been imprisoned, gave birth to a last offspring, Typhoeus. Typhoeus was a creature more terrible than any that had gone before. However, Zeus, having learned to control thunder and lightning stuck Typhoeus down. Typhoeus was buried under Mount Etna in Sicily.

Much later a final challenge to Zeus rule was made by the Giants. They went so far as to attempt to invade Mount Olympus, piling mountain upon mountain in an effort to reach the top. But, the gods had grown strong and with the help of Hercules, the Giants were subdued or killed.

Now, the world, having been cleared of all the monsters, was ready for mankind. Prometheus and Epimetheus were spared imprisonment in Tartarus because they did not fight with their fellow Titans during the war with the Olympians. They were given the task of creating man. Epimetheus was in charge of the task of giving the creatures of the earth their various qualities, such as swiftness, cunning, strength, fur, wings. Unfortunately, by the time he got to man Epimetheus had given all the good qualities out and there were none left for man. So he turned to Prometheus for help. Prometheus took
over the task of creation and sought a way to make man superior. He made man stand upright like the gods did and gave them fire.

Prometheus loved man more than the Olympians, who had banished most of his family to Tartarus. Because of Prometheus' love of man, Zeus created women. So when Zeus decreed that man must present a portion of each animal they sacrificed to the gods, Prometheus decided to trick Zeus. He created two piles, one with the bones wrapped in juicy fat, the other with the good meat hidden in the hide. He then made Zeus pick one pile. Zeus picked the bones. Since he had given his word, Zeus had to accept that as his share for future sacrifices. In his anger over the trick, he took fire away from man. However, Prometheus lit a torch from the sun and brought it back again to man. Zeus was enraged that man again had fire. He decided to inflict a terrible punishment on both man and Prometheus.

To punish man, Zeus had Hephaestus create a mortal of stunning beauty. The gods gave the mortal many gifts of wealth. This creation was Pandora, the first woman. A final gift was a jar which Pandora was forbidden to open. When she was completed, Zeus sent her to Epimetheus.

Prometheus had warned Epimetheus not to accept gifts from Zeus but, Pandora's beauty was too great and he allowed her to stay. Eventually, Pandora's curiosity about the jar she was forbidden to open became too great. She opened the jar and out flew plagues, sorrow and mischief for mankind. However, the bottom of the jar held one good thing - Hope. It was the only good thing in the jar and remains to this day mankind's sole comfort in misfortune.

However, a greater punishment lay in store for Prometheus. Zeus had his servants, Force and Violence, seize Prometheus, take him to Caucasus, and chain him to a rock with unbreakable adamanite chains. Here he was tormented day and night. Zeus gave Prometheus two ways out of this torment. He could tell Zeus who the mother of the child that would dethrone him was. Or meet two conditions: First, that an immortal must volunteer to die for Prometheus. Second, that a mortal must kill the eagle and unchain him. Eventually, Chiron the Centaur agreed to die for him and Hercules killed the eagle and unbound him.

Prometheus name has stood through the centuries, from Greek days to our own as the great rebel against injustice and authority of power.