

THE OLYMPIAN GODS

Greek	Latin	Role
Zeus	Jupiter	King of the gods. Associated with the sky and thunder.
Hera	Juno	Queen of the gods and wife of Zeus/Jupiter. Goddess of women and marriage. Constantly annoyed with her adulterous husband.
Athena	Minerva	Goddess of war, wisdom and crafts. Daughter of Zeus/Jupiter. Especially associated with the city of Athens.
Aphrodite	Venus	Goddess of love. Julius Caesar claimed to be descended from her.
Artemis	Diana	Goddess of the moon and of hunting. A sworn virgin. Sister of Apollo.
Apollo	Apollo	God of art, medicine and prophecy. Brother of Artemis.
Hephaestus	Vulcan	The limping blacksmith god. Associated with volcanoes.
Poseidon	Neptune	God of the sea and of earthquakes. Brother of Zeus/Jupiter.
Demeter	Ceres	Goddess of crops and fertility.
Hermes	Mercury	The messenger god. Associated with traders.
Dionysus	Bacchus	God of wine and vegetation. Famously wild.
Ares	Mars	God of war. More important in Rome than in Greece.

THE PHRASES



AN ACADEMY

An institution of higher learning or culture

The world's first academy was founded in Athens at the beginning of the fourth century BC by the philosopher Plato, perhaps one of the greatest and most influential thinkers of ancient Greece. It started as a simple association of like-minded intellectuals which was named after its meeting place near the grove of the hero Academus on the outskirts of the city.

Through the Academy, Plato taught young Athenian aristocrats (including the equally influential philosopher Aristotle) the arts of philosophy, geometry and mathematics. Even after Plato's death, the Academy continued as a centre of learning, developing ideas which would become the foundation of Western philosophy and which would have a profound influence on the development of Christian ideology hundreds of years later.

In modern English, the word 'academic' has come to imply 'out of touch', 'pointless' or 'obscure'. This of course is terribly unfair on the original Academics, whose philosophies lie at the very heart of later Western thought.



ACHILLES HEEL

A person's weak spot or vulnerability

Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
Of woes unnumber'd, heavenly goddess, sing!

Homer, *Iliad*, i.1–2, trans. Alexander Pope

The story of Achilles is central to the plot of the *Iliad*, Homer's epic poem of the Trojan War and Greek literature's earliest and perhaps finest work. The poem tells what happens when Achilles quarrels with Agamemnon, his commander-in-chief, and withdraws from the fighting around Troy.

Deprived of their best fighter, the Greek army is pushed back by the Trojans until Achilles' beloved friend Patroclus enters the battle wearing the hero's famous armour. The Trojans, thinking that Achilles has returned, begin to flee, but the Trojan hero Hector kills Patroclus and stems the tide. Devastated by his friend's death, Achilles vows revenge and defeats the unfortunate Hector under the walls of Troy.

At this point, the *Iliad* ends, but Achilles became such a huge figure in the Greek world that later writers (like modern fans who write home-made sequels to *The Lord of the Rings*) kept adding to the mythology around him. It was the Roman poet Statius who introduced the story that the baby Achilles had been dipped in the River Styx. This, Statius wrote, made him invulnerable except at the heel by which his mother had held him.

In Statius' version, Achilles is finally killed by a poisoned arrow that strikes the vulnerable spot, and ever since, any fatal weakness has been called an 'Achilles heel'.



AN ADONIS

An incredibly handsome man

Adonis is one of mythology's more mysterious figures. The ancient Greek writers can't even agree who his father was, and generally treat him as only semi-divine. On the other hand, Adonis has a long history as an object of cult worship, with deep roots in Near Eastern religion: he has strong similarities with the powerful Egyptian god Osiris, and his name comes from the same root as the Hebrew Adonai – one of the names of the God of the Old Testament.

The sources do agree, though, that Adonis was extraordinarily good-looking. At one point he had two of Greece's most powerful