

Greek God Project

- 1) Write a 500 word dictionary style introduction to a god of your choice. (See the *OCD* entry below (on Athena) for an example).
- 2) Choose two literary passages and two pieces of ancient art that help support your entry and do a close reading of two or three of your four texts. (ca 500 words, not including the passages).
- 3) Consider how you present the material. I recommend finding a nice template; [Here are a few offered by google.](#)

Athena

Bremmer in M. Martin (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Athenism* (2006).
RCTP

Athena In *Iliad* 5, 733–7, *Homer describes how Athena took off the finely-wrought robe ‘which she herself had made and worked at with her own hands’ and ‘armed herself for grievous war’. This incident encapsulates the paradoxical nature of a goddess who is as skilled in the preparation of clothes as she is fearless in battle; who thus unites in her person the characteristic excellences of both sexes. At the greater *Panathenaea in Athens, she was presented with a robe, the work of maidens’ hands (see *ARRĒPHORIA*), which traditionally portrayed that battle of the gods and giants in which she was the outstanding warrior on the side of the gods.

Her patronage of crafts is expressed in cults such as that of Athena Ergane, Athena the Craftswoman or Maker; it extends beyond the ‘works’ of women to carpentry, metalworking, and technology of every kind, so that at Athens she shared a temple and a festival with *Hephaestus and can, for instance, be seen on vases seated (in full armour!) in a pottery. Her love of battle is seen, as we saw, in myth, and also in such cults as that of Athena Victory (*Nike); she is regularly portrayed fully armed, one leg purposefully advanced, wearing her terror-inducing *aegis.

She is also closely associated with the masculine world in her mythological role as a helper of male heroes, most memorably seen in her presence beside Heracles on several of the metopes of the temple of *Zeus at *Olympia. Indeed her intervention in battle often takes the form of ‘standing beside’ a favourite (e.g. *Il.* 10, 278–94). (She has accordingly been seen as every man’s ideal elder sister, in contrast to the tomboy Artemis and sexy Aphrodite (P. Friedrich, *The Meaning of Aphrodite* (1978)); but these modern western categories scarcely fit the Greek family.) Her virginity is a bridge between the two sides of her nature. Weaving is a characteristic activity of ordinary young girls, but a perpetual virgin, who is not subject to the distinctively feminine experience of *childbirth, is a masculine woman, a potential warrior.

The warlike Athena is scarcely separable from Athena Polias, the goddess of the Acropolis (see *ATHENS*, *TOPOGRAPHY*) and protectress of cities. ‘City-protecting’ was most commonly performed by goddesses rather than gods; and the other great protectress was the other great warrior-goddess of the *Iliad*, Athena’s close associate *Hera. Athena exercised this function in many cities besides Athens, including Sparta and (in the *Iliad*) Troy. Athens was unique only in the degree of prominence that it assigned her in this role.

A few cult titles and festivals of Athena seem to indicate interests other than those discussed so far; and it has often been suggested that her familiar classical functions have been pared down from a much broader original competence. But this is too much to deduce from stray allusions to cults the details of which are usually very little known. The ‘Athena Mother’ of *Elis (Paus. 5, 3, 2) is a puzzle; and Athena’s limited intrusions upon the preserves of other gods at Athens—the cult of Athena of Health (*Hygieia) for instance—may simply reflect a tendency of city-protecting gods to have a finger in every pie.

Athena is unique among Greek gods in bearing a connection with a city imprinted in her very name. The precise linguistic relation between place and goddess is teasingly difficult to define: the form of her name in early Attic inscriptions is the adjectival *Ἀθηναία*, which suggests that she may in origin be ‘the Athenian’ something, the Athenian Pallas for instance (*Παλλὰς Ἀθηναία* being a regular Homeric formula). But this account still leaves the shorter name-form Athena unexplained. Athenians themselves, of course, stressed the goddess’s association with their city enthusiastically. She was foster-mother of the early king *Erechtheus/*Erichthonius, and had competed, successfully, with Poseidon for possession of Attica. In Panhellenic mythology, however, she shows no special interest in Athens or in Athenian heroes. The

association with Athens does not appear to affect her fundamental character.

Her most important myth is that of her birth from the head of Zeus. It stresses her unique closeness to Zeus, a vital quality in a city-protecting goddess, and at the same time the gap that divides her, a child without a mother, from the maternal side of femininity. In the oldest version (Hes. *Theog.* 886–90) Zeus became pregnant with Athena after swallowing *Metis; she was thus also a kind of reincarnation of *mētis* (*μῆτις*), ‘cunning intelligence’.

It has in fact been suggested that Athena’s characteristic mode of action, a mode that unifies her apparently diverse functions while differentiating them from those of other gods with which they might appear to overlap, is the application of *mētis*. Her *mētis* appears obviously in her association with crafts and in her love (Hom. *Od.* *passim*) for wily *Odysseus; more obliquely, it is argued, it is for instance to be seen in her title Hippias, ‘of horses’, which she acquires via a product of *mētis*, the bridle, whereas *Poseidon Hippius embodies the animal’s brute strength. In warfare she would express rational force, *vis temperata*, in contrast to the mindless violence of Ares. One may doubt, however, how fundamental the opposition to Ares and the role of *mētis* in fact are in defining her military function.

Precursors of Athena have been identified in Mycenaean military or palace-protecting goddesses; the only solid evidence is a tantalizing reference in a Linear B tablet from Cnossus to A-ta-na po-ti-ni-ja.

Burkert, *GR* 139–43; M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (1978; Fr. orig. 1974); S. Deacy and A. Villing (eds.), *Athena in the Classical World* (2001); S. Deacy, *Athena* (2007).
RCTP

Athenaeum. *Hadrian’s famous institution for the study of Greek *rhetoric and letters in the centre of Rome. In the 4th cent. AD it was the setting for public *declamation in Latin as well. Its location is uncertain.

E. Haldeman, *Ennius* 1981, 57 ff.; M. Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome* (1987).
AJSS

Athenaeus (1) (fl. c. AD 200), of *Naucratis in Egypt. His only extant work, *Δειπνοσοφισταί* (‘The Learned Banquet’), was probably completed in the years immediately following the death of *Commodus in AD 192; other chronological inferences are uncertain. It belongs to the polyhistoric variety of the symposium form (see *SYMPOSIUM LITERATURE*), practised earlier by *Aristoxenus and *Didymus (1). It is now in fifteen books (originally perhaps 30); there is also an Epitome, which covers existing gaps. At the ‘banquet’, which extends over several days, philosophy, literature, law, medicine, and other interests are represented by a large number of guests, who in some cases bear historical names (most notably *Galen); a Cynic philosopher is introduced as a foil. The Roman host, Larensis, probably the author’s patron, is attested epigraphically (*CIL* 6, 212). The symposiac framework, if not devoid of humour and (sometimes heavy-handed) characterization, is subordinate in interest to the collections of excerpts which are introduced into it. These relate to all the materials and accompaniments of convivial occasions; they are drawn from a vast number of authors, especially of the Middle and New *Comedy, whose works are now lost; they are valuable both as literature and as illustrating earlier Greek manners. The order of these extracts sometimes suggests the use of lexica (Didymus (1), *Pamphilus (2)) or of *διδασκαλία* (see *DIDASKALIA*), as well as of lists of *καμψόδμοι* (people made fun of in comedy); but Athenaeus has collected much independently from the great writers; he cites some 1,250 authors, gives the titles of more than 1,000 plays, and quotes more than 10,000 lines of verse.

Text G. Kaibel (Teubner, 1887–89); Epitome: S. P. Peppink (1937–9).

Text and translation S. D. Olson (2007–).

