

## Creation 1: The very beginning

In the very beginning there was sky and earth. Sky was called Uranus, earth was called Gaia. They were lovers. They lay clasped in one another's arms. Sky pressed tightly against earth, earth holding sky. Not even a leaf could have passed between them.

Earth had given birth to many children but she was held so tightly by sky that there was nowhere for her children to go. They couldn't stand to their full height. They had to crouch in cracks and crevices in their mother's body. The children of earth were Titans, strange grey beings, their skin craggy and furrowed like rock that has been worn away by the weather. They longed to be able to stand, to step, to stride across the earth. But they were trapped by the weight of their father pressing down on them.

One of the grey Titans was called Cronus. He knew that he had to separate his parents. He found a hard stone and shaped it into a sickle with a blade as sharp as thought. He crept between his mother's legs. He reached up and sliced into the groin and belly of his father. With a terrible cry of pain the sky broke away from the earth. He rose up and up and up until he was high above the earth. He found the place he still inhabits today – far, far above our heads. And as he rose up, his gaping wound poured blood down upon the body of the earth; it rained and splattered down onto the ground. Wherever the blood of sky landed upon the earth, life appeared: trees and plants, bright-winged insects and feathered birds, scaled fishes and furred animals. The whole lovely, green, living world that we know today came into being at that moment.

And the grey Titans came running out from their cracks and crevices. They stretched, they shouted with joy, they stamped their great feet, they danced with delight. All the Titans danced. All the Titans danced except for one. One of them had other plans. His name was Prometheus, which means 'forethought'. While his brother Cronus had been shaping his sickle, Prometheus had been fashioning three stone jars. Now, as the rest of them danced, he carried the jars out into the light. He set them on the ground and began to scoop up handfuls of the blood-soaked soil. He filled the jars with the flesh of his mother and the spilled blood of his father. He packed the jars tight and fitted lids onto them. Then he buried the jars. He buried them in the earth. He buried them deep in the body of his mother. This would be a secret between him and her. One day he would return for them. And then he ran and joined hands with his brothers and sisters. He stamped his feet in the joyful circling measure of the Titans' dance.

Years and years passed. Two of the grey Titans, Cronus and Rhea, had children together. But their mother, the earth, warned Cronus that his children would be more powerful than he was. She warned him that one day his children would overthrow him. Cronus didn't want that and so he ate his children. He swallowed them whole, one after the other. The youngest of his children was called Zeus. Rhea, his mother, wanted to protect him. She hid the baby in a cave and then she wrapped soft blankets around a stone. She put the stone in Zeus' cradle. Cronus seized the stone and swallowed it.

Zeus grew up in secret. When he was old enough he appeared in Cronus' hall. Cronus took a liking to the stranger and made him his cup-bearer. One day, Zeus made his father a honey-flavoured drink but mixed it with a poison that made Cronus sick. First he vomited up the stone; then out of his throat came his other children: Poseidon, Hestia, Hades, Demeter, Hera. Straightaway Zeus and his brothers seized weapons and waged war on Cronus and the grey Titans. For years the terrible war raged. The stars were torn from their stations; mountains were levelled; the heat of the earth's heart spat and spouted its red flames across the world. For eons the war raged until at last Zeus was victorious. The grey Titans were bound with chains of adamant and hurled down to Tartarus – deep, deep, deep beneath the bowels of the earth.

Only two of the Titans were spared. Prometheus, whose name means 'forethought', and Epimetheus, who had chosen to turn their backs on war. They were allowed to continue tilling the soil of their green valley. Zeus and his brothers and sisters and their children built their palaces on the high slopes of Mount Olympus. Now that the Titans had been defeated, they ruled over the whole universe. They began to divide it amongst themselves. The three brothers – Zeus, Poseidon and Hades – threw lots

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into a helmet. Each closed his eyes and reached inside. Zeus plucked out the heavens – they would be his realm now; Poseidon drew out the wide waters of the sea; and Hades chose the underworld, that land far, far below where one day the dead would go. Zeus and his brothers had a name for themselves. They called themselves ‘gods’.