Paper Two: Greece VS Rome

Both Greece and Rome were ancient Mediterranean countries, and Rome copied much of the Greek culture, but Rome and Greece were very different. From the art and culture, to the politics, to the fascinating mythology and philosophy, Greece and Rome had their own styles. Diving deep into one category, mythology, we see many similarities but as well as an immense difference in the two cultures and what they believe in. Both societies have faith in their higher powers, the gods. Many are familiar with the Greek gods Zeus, Poseidon, Aphrodite, Hades, and etc. but we tend to forget about the Roman gods who are extremely similar because many of the Roman gods were borrowed from Greek mythology, just named differently; Jupiter, Neptune, Venus, and Pluto are just a few. Gods in Greek mythology were the collection of stories or myths of the ancient Greeks about their gods, heroes and the natural world. They came from the Iliad written by Homer. Gods in Roman mythology were the mythological beliefs about gods in the city of Ancient Rome. They came years after the Greeks. “The Greek Gods and goddesses were based on human personality traits such as Love, Honor, Hatred, Dignity, as well as their roles in life determined by what they were god of” whereas the Roman gods were “Deities named after objects rather than human personality traits” (Diffen Contributors). The Greek God Zeus and the Roman God Jupiter are the leaders of their differing Kingdoms. Focusing in on them we can find a multitude of similarities as well as differences and why this is.

“Zeus, the youngest son of Cronus and Rhea, he was the supreme ruler of Mount Olympus and of the Pantheon of gods who resided there. Being the supreme ruler he upheld law, justice and morals, and this made him the spiritual leader of both gods and men. Zeus was a celestial god, and originally worshiped as a weather god by the Greek tribes” (Mythica). Zeus was always seen as the weather god, having his main attribute as the thunderbolt, he controlled thunder, lightning, and rain. “The name Zeus is related to the Greek word *dios*, meaning "bright". His other attributes as well as lightning were the scepter, the eagle and his aegis (this was the goat-skin of Amaltheia)” (Mythica). Zeus was known as the Protector. He became the Chief Judge as well as the Peacemaker and most importantly he was the Civic God. In the Mythica article it explains how he brought peace in a time of violence. Zeus was given many names, some meaning Savior, Orderer, Overseer of the Polis, and Guarantor of Political Freedoms. These names explain only the tiny bit of power this god withheld. Zeus possessed a power that many of the gods and people either worshiped him for, or envied him for. He oversaw the conduct of civilized life and has many mythological tales. One of the most famous tales, conveyed by Hesiod in his *Theogony*, told the tale of “How Zeus usurped the kingdom of the immortals from his father. This mythological tale of Zeus' struggle against the Titans had been caused by Cronus, after he had been warned that one of his children would depose him. Cronus knowing the consequences, as he had overthrown his father Uranus. To prevent this from happening Cronus swallowed his newborn children [Hestia](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/h/hestia.html), [Demeter](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/d/demeter.html), [Hera](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/h/hera.html), [Hades](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/h/hades.html) and [Poseidon](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/p/poseidon.html), but his wife Rhea (who was also his sister) and [Gaia](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/g/gaia.html) her mother, wrapped a stone in swaddling clothes in place of the infant Zeus. Cronus thinking it was the newborn baby swallowed the stone. Meanwhile Rhea had her baby taken to Crete, and there, in a cave on Mount Dicte, the divine goat Amaltheia suckled and raised the infant Zeus. When Zeus had grown into a young man he returned to his father’s domain, and with the help of Gaia, compelled Cronus to regurgitate the five children he had previously swallowed (in some versions Zeus received help from [Metis](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/m/metis.html) who gave Cronus an emetic potion, which made him vomit up Zeus' brothers and sisters). However, Zeus led the revolt against his father and the dynasty of the Titans, defeated and then banished them. Once Zeus had control, he and his brothers divided the universe between them: Zeus gaining the heavens, Poseidon the sea and Hades the underworld. Zeus had to defend his heavenly kingdom. The three separate assaults were from the offspring of Gaia: they were the [Gigantes](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/g/gigantes.html), [Typhon](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/t/typhon.html) (Zeus fought them with his thunder-bolt and aegis) and the twin brothers who were called the [Aloadae](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/a/aloadae.html). The latter tried to gain access to the heavens by stacking Mount Ossa on top of Mount Olympus, and Mount Pelion on top of Mount Ossa, but the twins still failed in their attempt to overthrow Zeus. As he did with the Titans, Zeus banished them all to "[Tartarus](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/t/tartarus.html)", which is the lowest region on earth, lower than the underworld” (Mythica). With this story we can understand the level of power and high standard Zeus is seen to obtain. To go from having everything taken from him to possessing everything, we see his determination, strength, and loyalty. With this story we can also see a bit of irony. Normally father and son in a religious aspect are seen to be either one with each other (Christianity) or at least on good terms with a solid relationship. It’s interesting to look at Greek mythology and see that not only is the relationship between Zeus and his father destroyed, we see him take the kingdom from him. This is not an action you would normally assume from a god because gods are holy and just but that’s what makes Greek Mythology so interesting and different from other forms of beliefs. “Zeus had many Temples and festivals in his honor, the most famous of his sanctuaries being Olympia, the magnificent "Temple of Zeus", which held the gold and ivory statue of the enthroned Zeus, sculpted by Phidias and hailed as one of the "Seven Wonders of the Ancient World". Also the [Olympic Games](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/o/olympic_games.html) were held in his honor. The Nemean Games, which were held every two years, were to honor Zeus. There were numerous festivals throughout Greece: in Athens they celebrated the marriage of Zeus and Hera with the Theogamia (or Gamelia). The celebrations were many: in all, Zeus had more than 150 epithets, each one being celebrated in his honor” (Mythica).

As we venture away from Greece, we enter the Roman world and take a look at Jupiter, Zeus’s counterpart. There is not much of a difference between these two gods. Both are considered the ultimate gods as well as both being the gods of the sky. “Jupiter is the supreme god of the Roman pantheon, called dies pater, "shining father". He is a god of light and sky, and protector of the state and its laws. He is a son of Saturn and brother of Neptune and Juno (who is also his wife). The Romans worshipped him especially as Jupiter Optimus Maximus (all-good, all-powerful). This name refers not only to his rulership over the universe, but also to his function as the god of the state who distributes laws, controls the realm and makes his will known through oracles” (Mythica). We can see from this description that there is not much of a difference in how the Romans view Jupiter to how the Greeks view Zeus. This is mainly due to the fact that the Romans stole most of their ideas from the Greeks to begin with. Zeus has more depth because of all the stories whereas Jupiter is considered to be more of a significant god, with many people confiding in him because he is all. “He had a temple on the Capitol, together with Juno and [Minerva](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/m/minerva.html), but he was the most prominent of this Capitoline triad. His temple was not only the most important sanctuary in Rome; it was also the center of political life. Here official offerings were made, treaties were signed and wars were declared, and the triumphant generals of the Roman army came here to give their thanks” (Mythica). Jupiter was given names like heavenly, of the light, thunder, and of the lightning. Like Zeus, his attribute is the lightning bolt and the eagle is both his symbol and messenger. Jupiter and Zeus are nearly identical.

Historians will proceed to find the similarities and differences between these two dominating nations. There is always more to uncover when it comes to politics, religion, and culture. Time will continue to unveil many truths about Rome and Greece, the gods were only the beginning.