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Zeus: The Origins and History of the Greek God

Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures of important places and historic art depicting Zeus and other Greek gods.
*Explains the historical origins of the god and the mythological tales about him.
*Includes a Bibliography for further reading.
“I will sing of Zeus, chiefest among the gods and greatest, all-seeing, the lord of all, the fulfiller who whispers words of wisdom to Themis as she sits leaning towards him. Be gracious, all-seeing Son of Cronos, most excellent and great!” – “The Hymn To Zeus”, attributed to Homer
Zeus is a god of apparent paradox: sublimely regal yet ridiculously fickle, a giver of laws but a slave to his own passions, a being of incredible power who is desperate to possess that which he cannot have. As the leader of the Greek pantheon on Mount Olympus, Zeus was the god of kingship (and the associated elements of law, oaths, the state and the protection of property) and the god of storms, controlling lightning, wind and thunder.
In many ways, one of Ancient Greece’s most complex gods is also the most understandable, since he seems so human, and because there is plenty of information about him that survived, including the original legends about his birth, his early deeds and his many relationships with other gods, lovers, and humans. Furthermore, scholars have been able to analyze the historical roots of "Zeus" as a concept, identifying what gods he is related to among other cultures, where the legends of Zeus originated, and what this information says about the Ancient Greeks.
One of the reasons Zeus remains one of the most recognizable gods in history is because of the spread of his influence. Due to the conquests of Alexander the Great, Zeus was brought along with other elements of Hellenization to Egypt and the Near East, and a few centuries later, Rome all but adopted him as their own chief god, Jupiter. From there, he was exported around the Roman Empire and fused with numerous other local gods in the process. Ultimately, Zeus was a prominent god from the period of pre-recorded history until the Christianization of Greece, which was complete by the early 7th century A.D.
It is difficult for modern observers to understand how a hot-headed, sex-obsessed god could command the love and admiration of so many Greeks, not to mention their cultural heirs throughout the Roman Empire. What did the worship of this god provide for his worshipers? How did belief in his existence fulfill their spiritual needs? How was he different from other members of his pantheon? This book explores the figure of Zeus, including his origins, the stories told about him, the way he was worshiped and how he is remembered today. Along with pictures and a bibliography, you will learn about the Greek god like you never have before, in no time at all.

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