

## Gods of Wind, Storm, and Sky

People throughout the world have worshipped gods they believed were associated with weather occurrences. The German god, Thor, and the Greek god, Zeus, were believed to be keepers of heavenly thunderbolts and lightning. Ancestors of many cultures believed in the weather gods. These myths were a way to define the world in which they lived because they did not have scientific knowledge to do so.

Thor was a god common to all early Germanic peoples. He is frequently pictured as a great warrior with awesome strength. He had a striking red beard and is often depicted holding a hammer. Thor's name is the German word for “thunder.”

In ancient Greek religion, Zeus was the chief god, regarded as the sender of thunder, lightning, rain, and winds. His traditional weapon was the thunderbolt. Zeus was identical to the Roman god, Jupiter, and he was often pictured as a bearded, mature man. Zeus was called “the Father of Both Gods and Men.” Jupiter also is called “Jove.” He is the top ancient Roman and Italian god. Like Zeus, Jupiter is a sky god thought to have the power to send rain in times of drought; all places struck by lightning were considered his property.

Indra was the chief of the Vedic gods of India. Indra armed herself with lightning and thunderbolts. Among Indra's allies were the Rudras, who rode the clouds and directed storms, and Vishnu, who later became one of the three principal gods of Hinduism. As Hinduism evolved, Indra became the god of rain, a caretaker of the heavens, and guardian of the East.

In Greek religion, Helios was the sun god. He drove a chariot daily from east to west across the sky. Through the centuries, the worship of Helios spread as he increasingly became identified with other gods, including Apollo. Apollo was the god of prophecy, music, medicine, and poetry.

## Unit 13

- Zeus and Thor are gods of ancient myths. Describe some modern mythical beings.
  
- How do you explain our apparent need for myths?
  
- Some people are intolerant of those who have contrary views. What are some ways to handle this type of situation?