

Greek mythology is the rudiment of Roman mythology. Established from an estimated seven hundred to a thousand years prior to Roman civilization, Greek mythology was an installation for Roman myths and culture that followed. Romans took Greek mythology and adopted these ideologies into their own. Greek and Roman mythology have their differences and similarities. Each mythology takes on a different perspective in which they share their stories on behalf of the world around them; but each also carries similar ideologies and composition along with them.

Greek mythology is defined as “a collection of stories or myths of the ancient Greeks about their gods, heroes, and the natural world.”ⁱ In contrast, Roman mythology entails the beliefs on behalf of the gods in the city of Ancient Rome. It is important to understand, “myths are more than mere stories, and they serve a more profound purpose in ancient and modern cultures. In both mythologies, myths are sacred tales that explain the world and man’s experience.”ⁱⁱ Mentioned earlier, a major difference between the two lies in time period and predominantly location. Greek mythology was documented and distributed an estimated seven hundred to a thousand years before Roman civilization, in the famous *Iliad*, a Greek epic poem describing the siege of Troy, ascribed to Homer.ⁱⁱⁱ Roman mythology then followed a thousand years after the Greeks and was created by the people of Rome as a religion.^{iv} Roman myths were documented in the book *Aeneid*, a Latin epic poem by Vergil, recounting the adventures of Aeneas after the fall of Troy.^v The origin of Greek mythology is unknown, however in Roman mythology, “many Roman gods were borrowed from Greek mythology and myths of Roman creation from Greeks.”^{vi} In this we see an abundance of similarities across the board. These similarities are shared between the two because, “Greek culture was seen as the prestige culture for Romans, and assimilating it, the Romans were deliberately adding supremacy to their cultural

values.”^{vii} The assimilation of Greek mythology in Roman mythology is easily visible when comparing Gods and their names. An example of this parallel is the Greek god Aphrodite, and its Roman counterpart, Venus; both the goddess of love. And other big names are similarly mirrored, like the Greek god Hades and its Roman counterpart, Pluto; both gods of the underworld. And even further defining the parallel, the Greek god Zeus, and its Roman counterpart Jupiter; both king of the gods. Although, a distinguishing difference between the two is that Greek gods were named in accordance to a place of living or inanimate (non-living) object.^{viii} The list continues on, with each Greek god paired with a Roman counterpart and a similar domain. This again is due to the fact, “Roman gods are borrowed from Greek mythology, often with different traits.”^{ix}

Although similar in names and purpose, the two mythologies differ in the nature and mannerism of Gods. In Greek mythology, gods and goddesses are 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. In contrast, Roman deities were named after objects rather than human personality traits.”^x Both mythologies were composed of twenty-one gods and goddesses, with shared symbols and allocations of power to specific gods. Unlike Greek gods, Roman gods interestingly lacked an actual personality. Rather, “readers or listeners had to make inferences based instead primarily on the looks, or physical appearance of the gods.”^{xi} This in turn sets apart the portrayal of Greek gods and goddesses as more sophisticated and incredible beings, and also places a heavy reliance on interpretation for Roman god’s appearances due to its lack of description. Another primary difference is held within the actions of gods in Greek and Roman myths. In Greek myths gods and mortals in stories act “more individualistic, and often the deeds of an individual are more influential than the group as a whole.”^{xii} On the opposite spectrum, Roman

myths are much less individualistic, and are more based on collectivism. Greek mythology, again, is heavily reliant on the gods' human traits that determine their actions in myths. And counterintuitively, in Roman mythology gods and goddesses are “not gender specific to their individual characteristics, making their personalities not essential to the myths.”^{xiii}

Both mythologies include an abundance of “mortal” involvement on earth and their interactions with gods, but a very different emphasis is placed on human involvement according to each mythology. In Greek myths, “deities were important for the progression of life but mortals were just as important as it was their contribution in society that in the end mattered.”^{xiv} Greek gods are often seen taking shape as mortals and coming down to earth. In many myths we see the gods have sexual relations, or incidents of trickery as gods take the shape of mortals on earth. In contrast, Roman myths were “rooted in brave heroic deeds of gods, not mortals, as mortal life was not important after death.”^{xv} Again the end goal is Roman ideology was heaven, and a mortal's time spent on earth was diminutive to their time spent in eternity in the subsequent afterlife. Yet an important shared similarity was in which way both mythologies honored their gods. Honoring Greek gods was alike the Roman's way of worship in that:

People used to bring meals to either Mount Olympus, where gods lived or to the graves of family members who died. Drawing a symbol of a god in a hall of the house could represent that the family needed help of a god. In the family, if a son were sick the father would draw an object representing the Goddess Hygeia, so she could enter the house and cure the young child.^{xvi}

Another major difference between the two mythologies lies in each mythology's importance placed on the thoughts of the afterlife. Within Greek mythology, life after the death holds little to no importance. This is seen frequently within myths as many gods and mortals

travel in between the afterlife and back into the present time. With such ease of migrant travel between two very different stages of life, no concern is placed on the thought of life after death. The Greek perspective is “much more concerned with the physical life on earth as opposed to the afterlife. Mortals are remembered and rewarded for their good deeds on Earth.”^{xvii} However, in contrast, Roman mythology was more religious based, as the purpose of Roman mythology was used as a belief system. In Roman myths, appraisable human behavior validated, or secured their fate for Heaven in the afterlife. Romans even believed they “could earn a place among the gods and through their life on earth strove towards this goal.”^{xviii} In sum, “roman mythology completely disregarded the idea of mortality and said that only life after death is important.”^{xix} This then resulted in Romans not appraising mortal deeds, while in contrast Greeks validated and held a heavy reliance on mortal’s good deeds.

Greek and Roman mythology have their differences in origin, depiction of gods, and a variation in values, such as life after death; however, they still share the same foundation and composition. They both hold gods on an intangible pedestal that mortals should aspire to be. Although neither disclosed as fact or fiction, these myths provide culture ideals and moralities that built ancient civilizations. They set belief systems and enforced admirable qualities such as wisdom, beauty, and strength. These two ancient mythologies laid the framework for communities and helped provide a perspective and description of the makeup of the world and all things inhabiting.

ⁱ Lang, Jean. *Book of Myths - the Original Classic Edition*. Place of Publication Not Identified: Emereo Pty Limited, 2012. Web.

ⁱⁱ "Myths and Hereos." *PBS*. PBS, n.d. Web. 22 Nov. 2016.

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- ⁱⁱⁱ "Roman Mythology vs. Greek Mythology." *Kean University*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2016.
- ^{iv} "Myths and Legends." *Greek Mythology vs. Roman Mythology*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2016.
- ^v "Roman Mythology vs. Greek Mythology." *Kean University*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2016.
- ^{vi} Lang, Jean. *Book of Myths - the Original Classic Edition*. Place of Publication Not Identified: Emereo Pty Limited, 2012. Web.
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- ^x Lang, Jean. *Book of Myths - the Original Classic Edition*. Place of Publication Not Identified: Emereo Pty Limited, 2012. Web.
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- ^{xv} *Ibid.*
- ^{xvi} "Roman Mythology vs. Greek Mythology." *Kean University*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2016.
- ^{xvii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xviii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xix} "Myths and Legends." *Greek Mythology vs. Roman Mythology*. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 Nov. 2016.

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