**Glossary: Greek Myth and Religion**

|  |
| --- |
| **GODS AND RELIGION** |
| hiera  | holy mattesr / religion |
| iconography | the symbols attached to a particular god in art |
| polytheism | belief in many gods |
| anthropomorphism | giving human form and characteristics to something not human |
| epithet | an adjective or phrase regularly added to a name to show a quality they have eg Zeus the Thunderer, ox-eyed Hera |
| chthonic | connected to the earth or the underworld eg Hades is a chthonic deity |
| cornucopia | a horn shell that contained an endless supply of food and drink |
| diadem | a crown often worn by gods or kings |
| aegis | the breastplate or shield of Athene that contained an image of a Gorgon (probably Medusa) in the centre |
| acropolis | the highest point in a Greek polis, usually reserved for religious buildings |
| oracle | something said by a priest or priestess which was said to be the words of a god – often unclear or ambiguous |
| lyre | a small Greek harp |
| caduceus | a traveller’s staff, associated with Hermes |
| **HERACLES, THE UNIVERSAL HERO / TEMPLES AND SACRIFICE** |
| sanctuary | sacred space, usually containing one or more temples and altars |
| pollution | being unclean in the eyes of the gods |
| colonnade | an open-air walkway with a covered roof, supported on one side by columns |
| cella (naos) | room in a temple that contained the cult statue |
| opisthodomos | rear room in a temple, containing the polis’ and/or temple’s treasures eg offerings to the god |
| Ionic frieze | continuous strip of marble going all the way around a temple (eg on the Parthenon) |
| Doric frieze | continuous strip divided into square spaces called metopes (eg on the Temple of Zeus at Olympia) |
| hiereus/hiereia | priest/priestess |
| mantis | a seer, person who is said to be able to see the future |
| augur | someone who read the flight of birds to predict the future |
| blood sacrifice | the killing of an animal as an offering to a god |
| hecatomb | the sacrifice of 100 or more bulls during large festivals in honour of a god |
| altar | structure a bit like a stone table outside a temple where blood sacrifice was carried out |

**Glossary: Greek Myth and Religion**

|  |
| --- |
| FOUNDATION STORIES / FESTIVALS |
| Attica | the region around Athens in south-eastern Greece |
| polis | a Greek city-state eg Athens, Elis |
| kylix | drinking cup |
| Panathenaia | Athenian festival celebrating Athene’s birthday every year |
| Great Panathenaia | Athenian festival for Athene which took place every four years; had more athletic and literary contests than the Panathenaia |
| rhapsode | performer who recites epic poetry such as the Odyssey at a festival contest |
| amphora | storage jar containing olive oil  |
| apobates | chariot race in which the rider would get off his chariot and jump back on again at high speed |
| peplos | robe or dress |
| tribes of Athens | ten tribes named after heroes of Athens, and based on regions. They competed at festivals. |
| City Dionysia | Athenian festival held every spring in honour of Dionysus. Involved drama, parade of orphans, parade of tribute. |
| choregos | chorus director who paid for a set of plays at the City Dionysia |
| pompe | grand procession eg at the City Dionysia |
| komos | revel or party held in honour of Dionysus at the City Dionysia |
| libation | drink offering of wine poured out in honour of the gods |
| Theoric Fund | money used to pay for the poor to attend the theatre in ancient Athens |
| MYTH AND SYMBOLS OF POWER |
| Centauromachy | mythical battle between Centaurs and Lapiths |
| Lapiths | a mythical race of men based in Thessaly, central Greece |
| Centaur | mythical creature – half-man, half-horse |
| Amazons | a mythical race of women from Asia Minor (region in the western two-thirds of the country we call Turkey today) |
| Amazonomachy | mythical battle between Greeks and Amazons |
| DEATH AND BURIAL / JOURNEYING TO THE UNDERWORLD |
| prosthesis | laying out the body of the dead for two days for mourners to visit |
| lament | a passionate expression of grief |
| ekphora | ancient Greek funeral procession |
| Kerameikos | area of Athens that included the main burial ground outside the city |
| stele (pl. stelai) | stone slabs often with images carved on them and commonly used as tombstones |
| Anthesteria | Greek festival to Dionysus and the dead in late January/early February |
| Genesia | Greek festival to dead ancestors in late September |
| oral tradition | passing information by word of mouth rather than written records or literature |