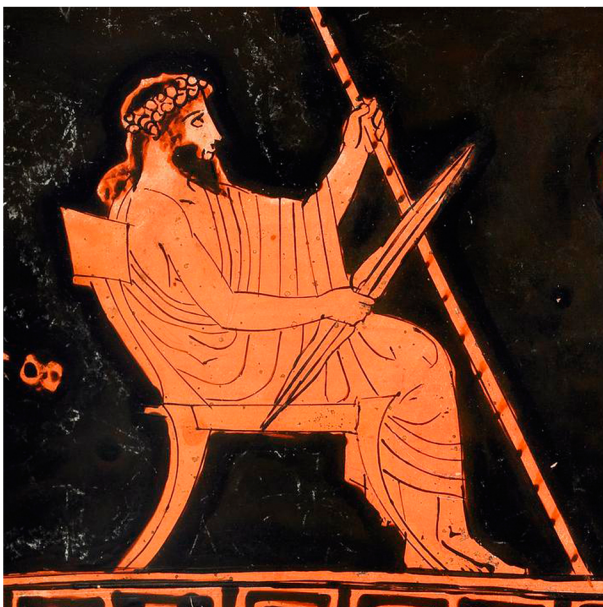


# Supreme gods in Greek and Chinese religions: **ZEUS AND THE JADE EMPEROR**

## MEET THE TWO GODS

Zeus is the king of the Greek gods. He lives on Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece, with his wife Hera and many other gods, most of whom are his children. He even gave birth to his daughter, Athena, out of his own head! Zeus can get very angry at times and can throw his thunderbolt down from Mount Olympus. Many people call out his name when swearing or making a vow 'by Zeus!' and people usually pray directly to him.

The Jade Emperor, as his title shows, is a Chinese god of the greatest power. He lives in the highest level of Heaven (the Ninth level) with his wife, the Empress, and rules over the world of gods. Differently from Zeus, the Jade Emperor does not use a weapon and people do not normally pray to him directly, though similarly to Zeus they can swear or make a vow by the god's name. Despite being a most powerful god, he is known to be calm and wise and to have good character.



**Zeus on his throne. 460-450 BCE.**

British Museum 1856,1213.1. Shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 licence.



**The Jade emperor on his throne. 1641 CE.**

Metropolitan Museum of Art 38.31.1. Open Access image.

## ACTIVITY ONE: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

**Task:** Look at these two pictures, on the left is an image of Zeus, and on the right is an image of the Jade Emperor. Answer these questions:

1. What are the gods holding in their hands?
2. What do they wear on their heads?
3. What clothes are they dressed in?
4. Is anyone else in the picture, if so, who?
5. Is there anything else which you find interesting?



**Zeus. 480-470 BCE. (Left)**

British Museum  
1867,0508.1114. Shared under  
a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 licence.



**The Jade Emperor. 14th century CE. (Right)**

*Records of Seeking the Gods, Sage Emperors, and Buddhist Leaders from the Origin to the Streams of the Three Teachings*  
三教源流聖帝佛帥搜神記  
(prefaced in the mid-Qing dynasty), Tong'an tang imprint, 1819. Digital copy shared by Chinese Text Project.

Now look at these images of Zeus and the Jade Emperor. Answer these questions:

1. What are they sitting on?
2. What comes out of their heads?
3. What clothes are they wearing?
4. What position are they seated in?
5. Is there anything else which you find interesting?



**Zeus. 555-540 BCE. (Left)**

British Museum 1867,0508.962.  
Shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0  
licence.



**The Jade Emperor. Ming Dynasty: 16th century CE. (Right)**

Digital image shared via  
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Museum of Fine Arts 1998.222 as  
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terms.



## ACTIVITY TWO: LADDERS GAME (TO COMPLETE IN PAIRS)

Using what you have learned from the passages and the picture activities, play this game!

Roll the dice and move the number of steps, if you land on a stairs tile then stop and answer a question below. Your teacher has the answers to the questions.

If you answer correctly, go up the stairs, if you answer incorrectly, stay where you are until your next turn.

The person with the most correct answers wins! You get a bonus point if you reach the end first.

### Questions:

Q: Who uses the thunderbolt as a weapon?

Q: Who lives in the Ninth Heaven?

Q: Who wears a fancy headdress?

Q: Who wears bright and formal clothing?

Q: Who is depicted as seated on a throne?

Q: Who is often called upon when people swear or make a vow?

Q: Who is the god people often prayed directly to?

Q: Who has many children who are also gods?

Q: Who has a wife?





### **ACTIVITY THREE: DRAWING AND PAINTING**



Draw a picture of either Zeus or the Jade Emperor, using the space given below. You can even paint them in colours which you consider suitable.



## ACTIVITY FOUR: WHEN THE JADE EMPEROR MEETS ZEUS...

If the Jade Emperor were to visit Zeus in his temple in Greece, what would they say to each other? Would the Jade Emperor bring a gift? What would Zeus show the Jade Emperor in his temple? How would Zeus treat his guest, the Jade Emperor? What would the Jade Emperor think of Zeus' temple? Zeus' temple might look like this.



**Pierre Moreau. Ca. 1760.**

Metropolitan Museum of Art 53.523.62(1). Open Access image.

The Jade emperor is usually calm, but Zeus can get very angry at times. Would they become friends, or, would they fight with each other? Would they compete with each other to determine who was stronger?

**Task:** Create a conversation between the two gods in the speech bubbles below.



