

# DEMETER



# MYTHOLOGY SHEETS

I love you all!



A Look-It-Up Guide to the Goddesses of Mythology

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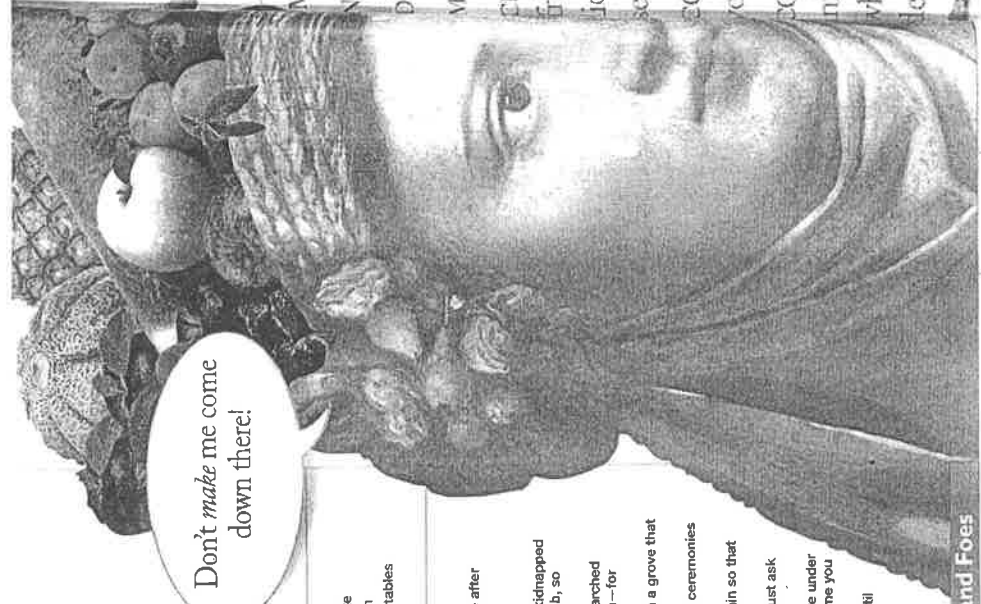
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# DEMETER

## HAVE YOU SEEN HER?



Don't make me come down there!

Sounds Like: dih-mee'-tur  
 Roman Name: Ceres  
 Aliases: Doso, Deo  
 Generation:  Titan  
 Olympian  
 Other

Divine Powers: Agriculture and crops (especially grains)  
 Bringer of the seasons  
 Fertility

Attributes: Basket  
 Bundle of wheat  
 Crown of wheat  
 Fruit  
 Vegetables  
 Grain

### Top 10 Things to Know About Me:

10. My dad, Cronus, swallowed me whole after I was born!
9. I gave the gift of grain to humans.
8. When my daughter Persephone was kidnapped by Hades, I was too upset to do my job, so humans starved.
7. I disguised myself as a mortal and searched high and low—maybe not low enough—for Persephone.
6. I cursed Erysichthon for cutting down a grove that was sacred to me.
5. The Eleusinian Mysteries were secret ceremonies held in my honor.
4. I showed Triptolemus how to sow grain so that he could teach other humans.
3. My family is a little bit complicated. Just ask my brothers!
2. Most grains, fruits, and vegetables are under my control. You can thank me next time you put berries in your cereal!
1. I tried to make Demophon a god—until his mom interfered.

MISSING: My daughter

NAME: Persephone

DESCRIPTION: Beautiful goddess

MISSING FROM: Earth

CIRCUMSTANCES: Was picking flowers with mom and friends. Reportedly got into a dark-colored chariot, license plate: dead2U. Driver described as creepy. Last seen entering gates of the Underworld.

COMMENT: Persephone, come home. Am pouring your favorite cereal.

MOM! Hades is bothering me!

CONTACT: If you have any information regarding the whereabouts of this girl, please contact demeter@grain-goddess.mt-o

### REALITY CHECK

People around the world still celebrate the harvest. Thanksgiving Day, celebrated in the United States, has its origins as a harvest festival.

Want to know more? Go to <http://www.fallharvest.org> or <http://www.tribaltribe.org> for more info.



Persephone (1)

### Family, Flings, Friends, and Foes

#### Parents



Cronus and Rhea

#### Siblings



Zeus



Hades



Poseidon



Hera



Hestia

#### Orispring



Persephone

#### Flings



Poseidon



Aion



Pluto

#### Friends



Philomelos



King Celeus



Triptolemus



Demophon

#### Foes



Hades



Melanira



Erysichthon



# DEMETER LOST "Who's hungry?"

**MOTHER LOVE**  
Demeter yearns for her daughter and makes humans long for food.

Demeter heard the echo of her daughter's cries for help and frantically looked for her everywhere, weeping all the while. While Demeter searched for Persephone, she ignored her duties as the goddess of grains. The neglected crops withered and died, and people starved.

Unfortunately, Persephone had nibbled a few pomegranate seeds given to her by Hades. Zeus and Hades reached a compromise: Persephone would spend most of the year by her mother's side on Earth, and the rest of the year in the Underworld as Hades' wife and queen.

**IT'S GREEK TO ME**  
There are two generations of Olympian gods and goddesses. The first generation includes the offspring of Titans, siblings Zeus, Demeter, Hades, Hera, Hestia, and Poseidon. The second generation includes Zeus's offspring Aphrodite, Apollo, Ares, Artemis, Dionysus, Hermes, and Hephaestus.

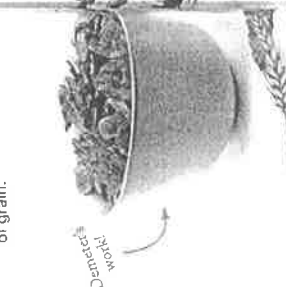


**GOT GRAIN?**  
The goddess of grains gives a great gift to humans. Demeter, the goddess of grains, was one of the most worshipped deities in ancient Greece. Her gift of crops led people to settle in towns and cities, and abandon their difficult lives as nomadic hunters and gatherers. The primary grains grown in ancient Greece included barley, wheat, and millet. All these grains could be used to make breads or porridge cereals. According to ancient stories, Demeter

taught Triptolemus, a son of King Celeus, how to sow, or plant, grain. Then she gave him a dragon-powered chariot so that Triptolemus could travel the world and teach the skill of all humanity.

Hades, ruler of the Underworld, had made a secret arrangement with Zeus for Persephone's hand in marriage. One afternoon Persephone was picking flowers with some of her nymph friends. Hades roared up in his chariot and kidnapped the girl, dragging her back to the Underworld with him. All that Persephone left behind were the scattered flowers she had picked.

**REALITY CHECK**  
Demeter's Roman name, Ceres, is the origin of the English word cereal, which is usually made of grain.



"Enjoy the breakfast of champions—it's on me!"

When Demeter learned what had happened to her daughter, she demanded that Hades return Persephone to her. Demeter's neglect caused humans great suffering and sorrow. So Zeus joined Demeter in insisting that Hades release Persephone—but on one condition: that the girl hadn't eaten anything in the Underworld.

Persephone



**"Who can think about food at a time like this?"**

## OH, BABY!

Demeter goes undercover as a babysitter, with some fiery results.

While she was searching for Persephone, Demeter disguised herself as an old woman. She was met with kindness by King Celeus and his wife, Metanira. Unaware that the old woman was a goddess, the royal couple invited Demeter to live with them as a nanny for their sons Demophon and Triptolemus.

As a reward for their kindness, Demeter decided that she would make Demophon **immortal**. So each night the goddess breathed gently on the child, coated him with **ambrosia**, and put his body in the fire so that his **mortality** would burn away.

One night Metanira walked into the nursery and screamed in horror at the sight of her baby burning in the fire. With that, the spell was broken, and Demophon was fated to remain a **mortal**. Instead of honoring Demophon, Demeter showed her favor to Triptolemus by teaching him the secrets of agriculture.



## ERYSICHTHON'S EMPTINESS

A king offends the goddess and gets really, really hungry. Erysichthon was a selfish king who made the mistake of offending Demeter. The king needed a new hall for feasts, so he cut down a grove of trees that was sacred to the goddess. In the process, the king killed a **Dryad** who was very special to Demeter. To punish the king, Demeter asked the goddess Aethon to curse Erysichthon. From then on, no matter how much Erysichthon ate, he was always insatiably hungry. He ate all his crops and spent all his money on food and was still desperate for something more to eat. He even sold his own

daughter into slavery many times to get more money for food. Erysichthon's entire kingdom was laid waste by his appetite. Yet the king was still famished. Finally, Erysichthon began to eat himself—limb by limb—until there was nothing left.

## REALITY CHECK

Prader-Willi syndrome is a genetic disease that affects the hypothalamus, a part of the brain that normally registers feeling hunger and fullness. People afflicted with this disease have a constant and uncontrollable urge to eat.

Want to know more? Go to: [www.pwpsociety.org](http://www.pwpsociety.org)

## THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES

Top-secret rituals celebrate Demeter and Persephone.

Demeter and Persephone were the central figures behind the Eleusinian Mysteries, secret religious rituals that took place in the village of Eleusis for over two thousand years. Because participants were sworn to secrecy when they were initiated into the cult, only a few facts are known about the Eleusinian Mysteries. It is believed that worshippers were plunged into water and subjected to alternating darkness and light, and that a sacred chest and basket were involved (but no

one knows exactly what was hidden inside them). The rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries were designed to symbolize a pattern of death and rebirth, just as the events in the story of Demeter and Persephone symbolize the changing of the seasons and the "death" and "rebirth" of crops.

"I'd tell you more, but then they wouldn't be mysteries!"



Want to see know more? Go to: <http://homepage.unic.com/cpanada/GMU/Eleusis.html>

A staged re-creation of the Eleusinian Mysteries from the early 1900s.



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Demeter

**Demeter**, «*dih MEE tuhr*», was a goddess of fertility in Greek mythology. Her name comes from the Greek words for *Mother* and *Earth*. Demeter was associated especially with grain. For this reason, the Romans later identified her with their harvest goddess, Ceres.

Demeter was a daughter of Cronus, ruler of the race of gods and goddesses called *Titans*, and his sister Rhea. Demeter had children by Zeus, king of the gods, and Poseidon, god of the sea. In Arcadia, in southern Greece, both Demeter and Poseidon were worshiped in the form of horses.

The only significant myth about Demeter tells of her search for her daughter Persephone. Persephone had been kidnapped by Hades, the god of the underworld, to be his bride. For details of this myth, see [Persephone](#).

Demeter's greatest festival, the Eleusinian Mysteries, took place in Eleusis, near Athens. However, many communities celebrated other rites honoring Demeter. The Eleusinian Mysteries were held shortly before the autumn planting. A rule of secrecy surrounded the festival, and so few details about it are known. However, the rite must have been concerned at first with the death and rebirth of grain. Those who participated in the ceremony were promised happiness in an afterlife.

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## Demeter

Demeter was an Olympian goddess, daughter of the Titans Cronos and Rhea, granddaughter of Gaia, sister to Zeus, and a goddess of agriculture. Demeter was also connected to Ceres, a Roman goddess of vegetation.

Scholars believe that her name can be interpreted as "mother earth" or "grain mother." Sometimes Demeter was equated with Cybele, Gaia, or Rhea, who were all mother goddesses. She was the goddess who controlled the growth of most vegetation and crops. Demeter's legends focus around the abduction of her daughter Persephone by Hades. It was believed that a famine resulted from Demeter's despair. Since Persephone was also a goddess of vegetation, her abduction by Hades to the underworld for the winter was believed to be the reason why the winters were cold and no plants could grow.



Demeter and her daughter were believed to have given the world morals and law. Many festivals dedicated to Demeter and Persephone included secret rituals, and many allowed only the participation of women. Scholars believe the rituals were secret because of the mystery surrounding the powers of life and death, earth and the underworld, attributes with which both Demeter and Persephone were associated.

The most famous festivals dedicated to Demeter and Persephone were the rituals known as the Eleusinian Mysteries. Scholars believe that those rituals guaranteed its followers the support of the pair and, thus, received a better life and fate after death. During Demeter's search for Persephone, the cities of Eleusis and Sicily gave her hospitality or information, and in return, she taught the inhabitants about agriculture and rituals. Those two places became significant centers for Demeter's cult.

The mysteries at Eleusis were performed in the autumn (Boedromion), and in the spring (Anthesterion), while the "lesser mysteries" would be performed near Athens. Sicily always was associated with Demeter and Persephone; myths formed during the Hellenistic and Roman periods placed Persephone's abduction on Sicily. She was believed to have been taken underground near a spring outside of Syracuse, where a festival was held each year. Most major festivals dedicated to the pair occurred during the harvest or sowing seasons. The most important festival, celebrated all over Greece, was the Thesmophoria, which took place in the fall. Thesmophoria's ceremonies encouraged fertility.

In Arcadia, the worship of Demeter was paired with that of Poseidon. Poseidon and Demeter's children were Despoina and Arion. In Arcadia, Demeter was called Melaina ("The Black One") and Erinys ("Avenger"), which was in reference to her underworld aspects. In some traditions, Demeter was believed to be the mother of Artemis. She was also called Demeter Chloe ("The Green"), and each spring a festival called the Chloia occurred at Eleusis to honor crop growth. Demeter was also worshipped as a goddess of the underworld at Sparta as well as in Argolis. During the Chthonia festival in Argolis, four elderly women sacrificed a cow in her name.

Artistically, Demeter was depicted by herself or paired with Persephone, as well as with the other 12 Olympian gods and goddesses. Most artistic scenes depicted the abduction and return of Persephone. In many works,

Demeter is shown seated with a poppy, torches, and a scepter. Demeter and Persephone's iconography was very similar.

Demeter was linked to Ceres, a Roman goddess of vegetation. Her name derives etymologically from the root "ker," meaning growth. Ceres' origins are mysterious, but there is early evidence of her worship in Rome. Ceres sometimes was worshipped with another earth goddess named Tellus. In 493 BCE, a temple was built in Ceres' honor on Aventine Hill in Rome, which was famous for its artwork and became a center for plebeian activities. Although the temple was burned down in 31 BCE, it was later restored by Roman Emperor Augustus. Ceres was honored at a festival on April 19, called the Cerialia, and she was also honored in January.

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