*Greek mythology evolved thousands of years ago. There was a need to explain natural events, disasters and events in history. Myths were created about gods and goddesses that had supernatural powers, human traits and human emotions*

**Personification Of Laws Of Nature**

For the ancient Greeks, Zeus is the commanding god of the universe, the ruler of heaven and Earth. He is the god of all aerial phenomena, the personification of the laws of nature, the lord of the state, and the father of gods and men.

As the god of aerial phenomena he can produce storms, showers and intense darkness. At his command the mighty thunder rolls, the lightning flashes, and the clouds open and pour forth their refreshing streams upon the Earth.

As the personification of the laws of nature, he represents the unchanging and harmonious order by which the world is governed. He is the god of regulated time as marked by the changing seasons, and by the regular pattern of day and night. His father Cronus, on the other hand, represents the whole of time, or eternity.

As the lord of the state, Zeus is the founder of kingly power and the upholder of all institutions connected with the state. He is the special friend and supporter of princes, whom he guards and assists with his advice and counsel. He protects the assembly of the people, and, in fact, watches over the welfare of the whole community.

**Father Of Gods And Men**

As the father of the gods, Zeus sees that each god performs his or her individual duty, punishes their misdeeds and settles their disputes. For each of them, he acts as a counselor and mighty friend.

As the father of men, he takes a protective interest in the actions and well-being of mortals. He watches over them with care, rewarding truth, charity and uprightness, but severely punishing lying, cruelty and lack of hospitality. Even the poorest wanderer finds in Zeus a powerful supporter, for he orders that the mighty people of the Earth should help the needy.

The Greeks believed that the home of their mighty and all-powerful god was on the top of Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece. Its summit, wrapped in clouds and mist, was hidden from mortal view. Zeus lived here with his wife Hera in a palace made of gold, silver and ivory. Lower down on the mountain were the homes of the other gods and the palaces where the heroes, or demi-gods, lived.

**Worshipping Zeus**

The worship of Zeus was incredibly important to the religion of the Greeks, so statues of him were both numerous and magnificent. He is usually represented as a noble and imposing man, his face expressing all of the lofty majesty of the supreme ruler of the universe. He is recognizable by his rich flowing beard and the thick masses of hair that fall to his shoulders.

He is always accompanied by an eagle, which either balances atop his scepter or sits at his feet. In his uplifted hand Zeus usually carries a bundle of thunderbolts, ready to be hurled, while in his other hand he holds the lightning. His head is frequently encircled in a wreath of oak leaves.

Zeus was first worshipped at Dodona in the Epirus region of northwestern Greece. This famous oracle at the foot of Mount Tomarus was the most ancient in Greece. Here, the voice of the eternal, invisible god was supposed to be heard in the rustling leaves of a giant oak, announcing to mankind the will of heaven and the destiny of mortals. Later, Zeus was worshipped at Olympia in Elis, an ancient district in southern Greece. At Olympia, there was a magnificent temple dedicated to him, containing a colossal statue. Crowds of devout worshippers flocked to this temple from all parts of Greece.

**Rewards And Punishments**

The Greeks believed that Zeus occasionally assumed a human form and descended from his heavenly home. He came down to visit humankind and observe their proceedings, with the goal of punishing the guilty and rewarding the good.

On one occasion Zeus descended with his son Hermes and made a journey through Phrygia, in present-day Turkey. They looked for shelter everywhere they went, but nowhere did they receive a kindly welcome until they reached the humble cottage of an old man and his wife. The couple entertained them with great kindness and gave them what little food they could. To reward them for their generosity, Zeus asked the pair to name any wish they desired and it would be granted. The old couple begged that they might serve the gods for the rest of their lives, and end life together. After living the remainder of their lives in worship, they both died at the same instant. They were transformed by Zeus into trees, to remain forever side by side.

One another occasion, Zeus made a journey through Arcadia, a region in Greece. The people of Arcadia recognized him as the king of heaven and honored him with great respect. But Lycaon, their king, doubted the divinity of Zeus. He ridiculed his people and vowed to murder the supreme god. Before Lycaon could execute his wicked plan, however, Zeus turned the Arcadian king into a wolf.

**Gods Of Confusion**

The Roman god Jupiter, frequently confused with the Greek Zeus, is identical with him only by being the head of the Olympic gods. Jupiter is the lord of life, having absolute power over life and death. In this respect, he differs from Zeus, who was to an extent controlled by the sway of the Fates.

The Fates were three goddesses who controlled the destinies of gods and men. Zeus often descends to visit mankind, either as a mortal or under various disguises. Jupiter, however, always remains essentially the supreme god of heaven, and never appears upon Earth.

*From "The Myths and Legends of Ancient Greece and Rome" by E.M. Berens.*

Directions: After reading and annotating, write a short paragraph that explains the central idea of the article. Use at least two details from the article to support your response.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_