

THE ULTIMATE MOTHER

As introduced in *The Lost Hero*, Gaea is one tough mother.

To better understand the threat of Gaea in *The Lost Hero* (and *The Son of Neptune*), you must first know a bit more about the facts scholars have uncovered about her.

Are these statements about the Earth Mother's place in Greco-Roman mythology **FACT** or **FICTION**?

1. Gaea was born of sea foam and drops of blood from her father, Uranus.	
2. Our popular perception of a tolerant, generous, fragile “Mother Earth” is misleading: Gaea was portrayed as quite fickle and cruel in the Mediterranean world.	
3. Known as Gaea to the Greeks and Terra to the Romans, both names for the deity have a different meaning than that of our English word “earth.”	
4. It was Gaea who convinced the Titan Kronos to eat Zeus and the rest of his children to prevent them from overthrowing him.	
5. In Roman mythology, the Earth goddess was also linked to the fertility goddess, Ceres.	
6. Greeks and Romans understood the offspring of the Earth goddess very differently—they were natural entities for the Greeks, but more associated with human principles for the Romans.	

DID YOU KNOW ... ?

- Gaea was the grandmother of Prometheus, who tricked Zeus in order to give man the gift of fire—in the ancient world, the symbol of learning and technology.
- Gaea's “birth” from Chaos was understood by the Greeks as the receding of the void to reveal earth. The Roman writer Ovid altered the concept of Chaos to be understood as an unformed primordial mass.
- In artistic representations, Gaea was almost always portrayed as an attractive woman half-buried in the earth—a kind of reversal of the Egyptian sky goddess Nut from the Kane series!
- For both Greeks and Romans, an oath sworn by Gaea was considered one of the most binding since there was no way to escape Earth if it was violated. Even in ancient times, it wasn't wise to swear on your mother!

ANSWER KEY

THE ULTIMATE MOTHER

1. **FICTION** - This describes the birth of Aphrodite, the giants, and the nymphs. Gaea was born out of the primordial void the Greeks called Chaos.
2. **FACT** - In classical myth, Gaea was quite cruel—she was horrified at the appearance of her first children and banished them to the pre-Hadean abyss.
3. **FICTION** - Both the Greek root “ge” and the Latin “terra” translate as *land*.
4. **FICTION** - Gaea actually helped Zeus’ mother Rhea trick Kronos into believing a stone wrapped in swaddling was Zeus, which he summarily swallowed.
5. **FACT** - The Romans celebrated both manifestations of the goddess in late January in celebrations for the protection of the seed and the sower.
6. **FACT** - Among Gaea’s offspring were Uranus {Sky}, Pontus {Sea}, and Ourea {Mountains}; Terra was mother to Fama {Popular Rumor, or “fame”}.