


Prometheus

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Prometheus, in Greek religion, one of the Titans, the supreme trickster, and a god of fire. His intellectual side was emphasized by the apparent meaning of his name, Forethinker. In common belief he developed into a master craftsman, and in this connection he was associated with fire and the creation of mortals.



Prometheus

Prometheus, gilded cast bronze by Paul Manship, 1934; at Rockefeller Center, New York, New York.
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The Greek poet Hesiod related two principal legends concerning Prometheus. The first is that Zeus, the chief god, who had been tricked by Prometheus into accepting the bones and fat of sacrifice instead of the meat, hid fire from mortals. Prometheus, however, stole it and returned it to Earth once again. As the price of fire, and as punishment for humankind in general, Zeus created the woman Pandora and sent her down to Epimetheus (Hindsight), who, though warned by Prometheus,

married her. Pandora took the great lid off the jar she carried, and evils, hard work, and disease flew out to plague humanity. Hope alone remained within.

Hesiod relates in his other tale that, as vengeance on Prometheus, Zeus had him nailed to a mountain in the Caucasus and sent an eagle to eat his immortal liver, which constantly replenished itself; Prometheus was depicted in *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus, who made him not only the bringer of fire and civilization to mortals but also their preserver, giving them all the arts and sciences as well as the means of survival.



The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica This article was most recently revised and updated by Amy Tikkanen, Corrections Manager.

Prometheus Bound

Prometheus Bound, oil on canvas by Jacob Jordaens, 1640; in the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne, Germany.

245 × 178 cm.

Universal History

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