**Athena**Roman Name: Minerva **Ancient Greek Myths for Kids**

Athena was the goddess of wisdom. She could get angry, but more typically, she was wise, and kind, and understanding. Athena was born very oddly. Her father was the mighty Zeus. But she did not have a mother. Instead, as the myth goes, she was born directly out of Zeus' brain. Zeus loved all his children. But one of his favorites was Athena.

Athena held a powerful position in the ancient Greek god world. She was an Olympian, one of the council of 12, who held a seat on Mount Olympus. She also had a home there.

Here is a myth about Athena that shows how clever and practical she was.

***As the story goes ... The Competition,* Athena & Poseidon**

Nearly every town in ancient Greece had a god that looked after the townspeople. Towns rarely had more than one god to keep an eye on their best interests. Most gods did not share well. So usually, it was one town and if the town was lucky, one god to watch over it.

Poseidon loved watching over towns. He usually picked coastal towns since he was the Lord of the Sea. Poseidon was a very powerful god. His brothers were Zeus and Hades. Poseidon was a moody fellow, but he loved his wife and children and he loved attention. He liked having people build temples in his honor and bring him gifts. They were not very useful gifts for a god, but he enjoyed getting them anyway. As Greece grew and developed, new towns sprang up all the time. Poseidon was always on the lookout for new coastal towns.

He was not the only god who loved to be in charge. Athena, along with other gods, enjoyed that role as well. One day, both Athena and Poseidon claimed a new village.

Most of the time, humans were grateful when they were selected to be under the care of a god. But two gods? That was one too many. Poseidon wanted them to chose which god they wanted. But the people did not want to choose. They could see only trouble ahead if they did.

Athena, goddess of wisdom, daughter of Zeus, understood their worry. She challenged her uncle Poseidon to a contest. Both gods would give the town a gift. The townspeople could decide which gift was the more useful.

Poseidon slapped his specter against the side of the mountain. A stream appeared. The people were excited. A source of fresh water was so important! But when they tried to drink the water, they discovered it was not fresh at all. It was salt water!

Athena waved her arm and an olive tree appeared. The people nibbled at the olives. They were delicious! The people were excited. The olive tree would provide wood for building homes. Branches would provide kindling for kitchen stoves and fireplaces. The olives could be used for food. The fruit could pressed to release cooking oil. It was wonderful.

But theirs was a coastal village. The people could not risk angering the Lord of the Sea, the mighty Poseidon. As it turned out, they did not have to choose. Poseidon chose for them. He laughed his mighty laugh, sending waves crashing against the shoreline. Poseidon proclaimed his niece the winner!

That's how a small village gained a most powerful and wise guardian, the goddess Athena, a guardian who helped them rise to fame. In her honor, they named their village Athens.