

How Ganymede became Cupbearer to the Gods of Mount Olympus – Oral Story

Let me tell you the story of how Ganymede, prince of Troy, came to be cupbearer to the gods.

As you know, the twelve most powerful gods lived on Mount Olympus. They often sat together, as we are now: talking, drinking, squabbling and watching the mortal world below.

Jupiter, king of the gods, sat on a golden throne. God of the sky, of thunder and lightning, he was known for his quick temper and if angered he would throw lightning bolts. He also had the power to turn into an animal. This came in useful when he chose to visit the human world and meddle in their affairs.

He turned to his wife Juno, queen of the gods, goddess of women and marriage who was debating battle and bloodshed with her son Mars, god of war. Mars was handsome and vain and was the troublemaker of the gods. If there was conflict or turmoil in the world, you could be sure that Mars would be behind it.

Jupiter asked Juno, his queen, if she was ready for a drink. She nodded, and Jupiter clicked his fingers with an almighty thunderclap. All of the lesser gods held up their cups as they knew that the goddess Juventas would soon be there to pour rich golden nectar: the magical liquid that was the drink of the gods. Juventas rushed in. She was cupbearer (and daughter of Jupiter and Juno). It was her job to serve the gods with nectar and Jupiter must be served first.

Just as she reached the king of the gods, Juventas caught her foot on the hem of her robe and she plunged forward. The nectar in the cup she was carrying flew up, up, up... and down, down, down, into the face of the horrified and furious Jupiter. His face glistened gold. Rich, yellow liquid dripped from his nose and ears. It dribbled down his beard and oozed into his robes. His rage exploded in lightning bolts and rolls of thunder.

Jupiter, king of the gods, rose to his feet and pointed a finger straight at poor quivering Juventas. If she had not been immortal she would have died in that instant. "Never, never, never again will you serve me nectar!" he thundered. "You will no longer be cupbearer." Juventas fled. She knew that Jupiter would not change his mind.

So, the gods were left with a problem. Who would bring them nectar now? They looked to each other. Kind Vesta shook her head sadly. As goddess of the hearth and home she knew that keeping the gods happy would not be an easy job. Even Minerva, goddess of wisdom, shrugged her shoulders. She could not think of anyone on Mount Olympus who would be suitable.

Then Jupiter took the shape of an eagle and soared down to the world of men to find a new cupbearer. He swooped high and low, over hills and valleys, using his eagle eyes to scan the land. After many days, Jupiter found what he was looking for: a youth worthy of serving the gods, handsome, noble and princely. In fact, he was a prince. Prince Ganymede of Troy.

Although Jupiter did not offer Ganymede a choice (gods seldom do unless it is a trick!), Ganymede was rewarded with the gift of immortality, the honour of living on Mount Olympus with the gods and good fortune for Troy, at least for a time.



Written with reference to **The Orchard Book of Roman Myths**
by Geraldine McCaughrean (Chapter 1)

Adult Reference Sheet

Discuss and record ideas for display on working wall. This is a long list so choose most pertinent points and add more as they arise in discussion over the block.

What did we learn about Roman gods and goddesses?

- The most important Roman gods live on Mount Olympus (large mountain in Greece)
- Roman gods have human emotions – they lose their tempers/fall in love
- Roman gods are not all good (or all bad)
- Roman gods can turn themselves into animals (and have other magical powers)
- Roman gods eat and drink
- Roman gods are immortal (explain term)
- Roman gods interfere with the lives of humans
- Roman gods encourage and expect a sense of duty
- Some gods are related to each other
- Jupiter is the king of the gods, and some gods are more important than others

God/goddess	Key Facts
Jupiter	King of the gods/ Husband to Juno
Juno	Queen of the gods/Wife of Jupiter/Goddess of marriage and babies
Venus	Goddess of Spring and love/ (Mother of Aeneas)
Mars	God of war/ Created by Juno
Neptune	God of the seas/Brother to Jupiter
Ceres	Goddess of harvests/Sister of Jupiter
Juventas	Cupbearer to the gods
Ganymede	Prince of Troy/Made immortal by Jupiter
Apollo	God of music, archery, sports and the Sun. Son of Jupiter/Brother of Diana
Diana	Goddess of the Moon, woodland and hunting/Sister of Apollo
Liber	God of countryside and wine
Vesta	Goddess of hearth and home/Sister to Jupiter
Mercury	God of trade and messenger to the gods.
Cupid	Makes people fall in love, firing an arrow at their heart/Son of Venus
Minerva	Goddess of wisdom, art and craft/Warlike.
Vulcan	Blacksmith god/Makes thunderbolts for Jupiter under a volcano