

HERA

Hera (/ˈhɛərə/, [Greek](#) Ἥρα, *Hēra*, equivalently Ἥρην, *Hērē*, in [Ionic](#) and [Homer](#)) is the wife and one of three sisters of [Zeus](#) in the [Olympian pantheon](#) of [Greek mythology](#) and [religion](#). Her chief function was as the goddess of women and marriage. Her counterpart in the [religion of ancient Rome](#) was [Juno](#).^[1] The [cow](#), [lion](#) and the [peacock](#) were considered sacred to her. Hera's mother is [Rhea](#) and her father [Cronus](#).

Portrayed as majestic and solemn, often enthroned, and crowned with the [polos](#) (a high cylindrical crown worn by several of the [Great Goddesses](#)), Hera may bear a [pomegranate](#) in her hand, emblem of fertile blood and death and a substitute for the narcotic capsule of the [opium](#) poppy.^[2] A scholar of Greek mythology [Walter Burkert](#) writes in *Greek Religion*, "Nevertheless, there are memories of an earlier aniconic representation, as a pillar in Argos and as a plank in Samos."^[3]

Hera was known for her jealous and vengeful nature, most notably against Zeus's lovers and offspring, but also against mortals who crossed her, such as [Pelias](#). [Paris](#) offended her by choosing [Aphrodite](#) as the most beautiful goddess, earning Hera's hatred.

Leto and Artemis/Apollo

When Hera discovered that [Leto](#) was pregnant and that Zeus was the father, she banned Leto from giving birth on terra-firma, or the mainland, or any island at sea. Poseidon gave pity to Leto and guided her to the floating island of [Delos](#), which was neither mainland nor a real island and Leto was able to give birth to her children on the island. As a gesture of gratitude, Delos was secured with four pillars. The island later became sacred to Apollo. Alternatively, Hera kidnapped [Eileithyia](#), the goddess of childbirth, to prevent Leto from going into labor. The other gods bribed Hera with a beautiful necklace nobody could resist and she finally gave in.^[40]

Either way, Artemis was born first and then assisted with the birth of Apollo. Some versions say Artemis helped her mother give birth to Apollo for nine days. Another variation states that Artemis was born one day before Apollo, on the island of [Ortygia](#) and that she helped Leto cross the sea to Delos the next day to give birth to Apollo.^[40]

Io

Hera almost caught Zeus with a mistress named [Io](#), a fate avoided by Zeus turning Io into a beautiful white heifer. However, Hera was not completely fooled and demanded that Zeus give her the heifer as a present.

Once Io was given to Hera, she placed her in the charge of [Argus](#) to keep her separated from Zeus. Zeus then commanded [Hermes](#) to kill Argus, which he did by lulling all one hundred eyes to sleep. In [Ovid](#)'s interpolation, when Hera learned of Argus' death, she took his eyes and placed them in the plumage of the [peacock](#), accounting for the eye

pattern in its tail.^[43] Hera then sent a gadfly (Greek *oistros*, compare [oestrus](#)) to sting Io as she wandered the earth. Eventually Io settled in [Egypt](#), where according to Ovid she became the Egyptian goddess [Isis](#).

(Source: Wikipedia. "Hera.")

