Adad is the god of storms. He is usually shown carrying a lighting fork, symbolising his power over the storm forces of nature.

The Babylonian and Assyrian god Adad was known to the Sumerians as Ishkur, and is often shown with a lion-dragon or bull. Adad's wife was the goddess Shala.
Amurru is the god of nomadic peoples and their flocks. His symbols are a gazelle and a shepherd’s crook.

He became important when nomadic people called the Amorites moved into Babylonia from around 2100 B.C.
**Anu** is the sky god. He is the supreme ruler of all the gods. His symbol is the horned cap.

Mesopotamian myths tell the story of how the earth was separated from heaven at the beginning of time. In these myths, heaven becomes Anu's home.

Anu controls shooting stars, called 'kishru'. Anu is also in charge of the Bull of Heaven who can be sent to earth to avenge the gods.

Although Anu is an important Mesopotamian god, there are no known pictures of him.
Anzu is a giant bird with a lion’s head. It is so huge that whirlwinds and storms are caused when it flaps its wings.

In one story Anzu steals the tablet of destiny on which the supreme god writes the fate of the universe. Anzu is eventually killed by the god Ninurta who returns the tablet to its rightful owner.
Apkallu

This is a 'wise man' or 'sage'. Babylonian tradition says that there were seven Apkallu who lived at the beginning of time before the flood. They were sent by the god Ea to teach wisdom to humans.

They are shown as humans with wings. Some have the head of a bird, while others don't have wings and are dressed in the skin of a fish.
They protected people and sometimes hold a bucket and cone for purifying.

Apkallu

This is a ‘wise man’ or ‘sage’. Babylonian tradition says that there were seven Apkallu who lived at the beginning of time before the flood. They were sent by the god Ea to teach wisdom to humans.

They are shown as humans with wings. Some have the head of a bird, while others don’t have wings and are dressed in the skin of a fish.

They protected people and sometimes hold a bucket and cone for purifying.
This is a ‘wise man’ or ‘sage’. Babylonian tradition says that there were seven Apkallu who lived at the beginning of time before the flood. They were sent by the god Ea to teach wisdom to humans.

They are shown as humans with wings. Some have the head of a bird, while others don’t have wings and are dressed in the skin of a fish.

They protected people and sometimes hold a bucket and cone for purifying.
Ashur is the principal Assyrian god. He appears as a man wearing a horned cap.

Ashur is the main god of the first Assyrian capital city, also called Ashur. He became more important when the Assyrians conquered Mesopotamia.

Ashur is sometimes shown riding on a snake-dragon. He is pictured on Assyrian monuments, cliff reliefs and cylinder seals.
The Bull of Heaven is the constellation we call Taurus. He is controlled by the sky god Anu.

The Bull of Heaven appears in the Epic of Gilgamesh. After Gilgamesh upsets the goddess Ishtar, she convinces her father Anu to send the Bull of Heaven to earth to destroy the crops and kill people. However, Gilgamesh and Enkidu kill the Bull of Heaven.

The gods are angry that the Bull of Heaven has been killed. As punishment for killing the bull Enkidu falls ill and dies.
Ea is the god of the fresh waters known as 'apsu' on which the Earth floats. He is a god of wisdom, farming, building, magic and arts and crafts. Ea appears as a bearded man surrounded by flowing water.

Ea is attended by a god with two faces called Usmu (Isimud).

Ea's symbols are the goat-fish and a sceptre with a ram's head.

Many Mesopotamian myths emphasise the fun-loving and mischievous nature of Ea.

One Sumerian myth is called 'Inanna and Enki' (the Sumerian names for Ishtar and Ea). In the beginning of this story, Enki controls the 'me' which are the rules of the universe.

One day, Enki and Inanna get drunk and she tricks him into giving her the 'me'. When Enki realises that he has given the 'me' away, he tries to recover them from Inanna. But Inanna takes the 'me' back to her city. It is too late for Enki to get them back.
Ellil is one of the most important gods of Mesopotamia. Ellil is so powerful that the other gods can't even look at him. He is therefore only shown as a horned cap.

Ellil's main city is Nippur. Kings from all over Mesopotamia sent offerings to him there.

Ellil is the father of many other important Mesopotamian gods and goddesses.

Ellil guards the 'tablets of destiny'. These are cuneiform tablets on which he writes the fate of everything on earth.
Ereshkigal is the Sumerian goddess of the underworld.

Ereshkigal was a cunning and clever goddess who ruled over the underworld.

When Inanna (the Sumerian name for the goddess Ishtar) ventured into the underworld, Ereshkigal forced her to take off a piece of clothing at each of the seven gates before she reached her. Ereshkigal knew that if Inanna arrived naked, she would be stripped of her special powers.
Gula was a goddess of healing, a patroness of doctors and a constellation.

She often appears as a woman with stars and her dog.

People dedicated small statues of dogs to Gula because they believed it would help them avoid, or recover from, illness.
Human-headed bulls are protective creatures. They are found decorating objects dating mainly from around 3000-1800 B.C. and later are replaced by the lamassu guardian figures.
Ishtar is the morning and evening star (the planet we call Venus), and the goddess of love and war. She is shown as a woman standing on a lion, generally holding several weapons.

Ishtar was sometimes thought to be the daughter of the moon god Sin. Since the lunar month usually has 30 days, Sin's sacred number is 30. As Ishtar was Sin's daughter, her sacred number is 15.
Lama is a goddess people prayed to for their own personal protection. She appears as a woman in a long, tiered skirt.

Lama is often shown on cylinder seals leading people into the presence of important gods and goddesses.
Lamashtu is an evil demon who preys upon unborn and newborn children. She had a hairy body, a lioness’ head with donkey’s teeth and ears, long fingers and fingernails and the feet of a bird with sharp talons.

She is often shown standing or kneeling on a donkey, nursing a pig and a dog, and holding snakes.

Pregnant women often wore amulets of Pazuzu, the demon who fought against Lamashtu.
A lamassu was a human-headed winged bull or lion.

Huge sculptures of lamassus guarded Assyrian palace doorways and city gates. They were there to frighten away the forces of chaos.
Marduk is the city god of Babylon.

When Babylon became the capital of Babylonia (from about 1500 B.C.), Marduk became more important. Marduk is sometimes called 'Bel' which means 'lord'.

Marduk's symbols are a spade and the Mushhushshu snake-dragon.

In Babylonian mythology, Marduk is called upon to fight an army of demons led by the goddess Tiamat.
He goes into battle when the other gods agree to elect him as their leader. He hunts down Tiamat, kills her and is crowned as the supreme god.

The citizens of Babylon celebrated a New Year festival, during which the king would kneel before a statue of Marduk and vow that he was a good ruler.

The Mushhushshu protects many of the supreme gods. Its name means ‘furious snake’.

Gods like Marduk, Ashur, Ellil and Nabu all rode on a mushhushshu dragon.
Nabu was the god of scribes and the patron of writing and wisdom. In Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian times, Nabu was sometimes associated with irrigation and agriculture. Nabu rides on the back of a Mushhushshu snake-dragon.

Nabu's most important temple was at Borsippa, near Babylon.
The symbol of Nabu is a wedge, which stands for either a cuneiform sign or a stylus.

Nergal is a warrior and underworld god. His symbol is a mace, often decorated with lion-heads.

Nergal lives in the underworld with his wife Ereshkigal. He uses forest fire, fevers and plague as weapons against humans.
Ninhursag is an important Sumerian goddess who is often called 'mother of the gods'.

Ninhursag was important in early Mesopotamian mythology but she does not appear in the mythology of later periods.
Ninurta is a god of war. He is often shown holding a bow and arrow and a sickle sword.

Ninurta is sometimes shown running on the back of a monster with a lion’s body and scorpion’s tail, which is chasing after a lion monster with a bird’s wings, feet and tail.
Pazuzu is a demon who protected humans against plague and evil forces.

He has a human body with the feet and claws of an eagle, and the head of a monster.

Pazuzu is especially strong at fighting against the powers of the malicious goddess Lamashtu.
their lower half is like a bird with a scorpion's tail.

Scorpion people served the sun god Shamash and were powerful protectors against demons.

In the Epic of Gilgamesh, a terrifying scorpion-man and scorpion-woman guard the gate of the mountain where the sun rises.
Shamash is the sun god. He is also the god of truth and justice because he can see everything. Shamash holds a knife with a jagged edge so that he can cut his way through the mountains at dawn.

Shamash’s symbol is a disc, sometimes with sun-rays, or a winged disc.

He was thought to travel in a boat, but from about 1000 BC/BCE his symbol became a horse, and later, a chariot.
Sin is the moon god. His symbols are the crescent moon, the bull, and a tripod (which may be a lamp-stand).

Sin had a beard made of lapis lazuli and he rides on a winged bull.

The lunar month usually has 30 days, so Sin’s sacred number is 30.
In the Babylonian Epic of Creation, Tiamat is an angry goddess, who decides to destroy the other gods. She creates a vast army of demons. The other gods decide that Tiamat should be killed, but they are all afraid.

Marduk agrees to kill Tiamat if he is made supreme god. Marduk kills Tiamat and, to make heaven and earth, cuts her body in half. From her eyes flow the rivers Tigris and Euphrates.
The Ugallu has a human body with the head of a lion and the feet of a bird. He is a demon who protects people against evil demons and illnesses.
Usmu is an official of the god Ea. He has two faces. Usmu acts as a messenger and is sometimes shown bringing a bird-man before Ea.
Gods, Goddesses, Demons, and Monsters of Mesopotamia