This resource recounts one version of the mythological story of Poseidon. The following passage is from Book of Greek Myths by Ingri and Edgar Parin D’Aulaire. Published by Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., New York, 1962, pp. 9, 38–41.

AN INTRODUCTION TO MYTHOLOGY

IN OLDEN TIMES, when men still worshipped ugly idols, there lived in the land of Greece shepherds and herdsmen who cherished light and beauty. They did not worship dark idols like their neighbors, but created instead their own beautiful, radiant gods.

The Greek gods looked much like people and acted like them, too, only they were taller, handsomer and could do no wrong. Fire-breathing monsters and beasts with many heads stood for all that was dark and wicked. They were for gods and great heroes to conquer.

The gods lived on top of Olympus, a mountain so high and steep that no man could climb it and see them in their shining palace. But they often descended to earth, sometimes in their own shapes, sometimes disguised as humans or animals.

Mortals worshipped the gods and the gods honored Mother Earth. They had all sprung from her, for she was the beginning of all life.

POSEIDON, LORD OF THE SEA

Poseidon, lord of the sea, was a moody and violent god. His fierce blue eyes pierced the haze, and his sea-blue hair streamed out behind him. He was called the Earthshaker, for when he struck the ground with his trident, the earth trembled and split open. When he struck the sea, waves rose mountain high and the winds howled, wrecking ships and drowning those who lived on the shores. But when he was in a calm mood, he would stretch out his hand and still the sea and raise new lands out of the water.
In the days of Cronus and the Titans, the sea was ruled by Nereus, son of Mother Earth and Pontus, the seas. Nereus was an old sea god with a long gray beard and a fishtail and was the father of fifty sea nymphs, the lovely Nereids. When Poseidon, the Olympian, came to take over the kingdom of the sea, kind old Nereus gave him his daughter Amphitrite for his queen and retired to an underwater grotto. He gave the new king and queen his palace at the bottom of the sea. It was made of the palest gold and lay in a garden of corals and shimmering pearls. There Amphitrite lived contentedly surrounded by her forty-nine Nereid sisters. She had an only son, whose name was Triton. He had a fishtail instead of legs, like his grandfather Nereus, and rode about on the back of a sea monster, trumpeting on a conch shell.

Poseidon was rarely at home. He was a restless god and loved to race the waves with his team of snow-white horses. It was said that he had created the horse in the shape of breaking waves. Like his brother Zeus, Poseidon had many wives and many children, but Amphitrite was not jealous.

One of the islands that Poseidon raised out of the sea was Delos. It was so newly created that it was still floating about on the water. The little island was barren. Nothing grew on it yet except a single palm tree. In its shade, the two great gods Apollo and Artemis were to be born.

Zeus, the brother of Poseidon and the most powerful of all the gods, had married the goddess Leto, and when Hera, the jealous wife of Zeus, found out that Leto was expecting twins, she flew into a jealous rage and ordered all the lands in the world to refuse Leto shelter. Chased away from every land, poor Leto wandered from place to place and could not rest to give birth to her twins.

At last she came to Delos and the little island welcomed her. Since it was still floating and not quite land, it was free from Hera’s bidding. Exhausted, Leto sank down in the shade of the palm tree, but still she could not give birth to her twins, for Hera forbade Ilithyia, the goddess of childbirth, to go to her. Without her help no child could be born. All the other goddesses felt sorry for Leto and tried to sway Hera by offering her a beautiful necklace. It was nine yards long, made of gold and amber, and Hera could not resist it. She let Ilithyia go, and Iris whisked her down the rainbow to Leto.

Leto’s first child was Artemis, a girl as beautiful as the moon, with hair as dark as the night. She was to be the goddess of the hunt and all newborn creatures. Then Apollo came into the world. He was fair in the sun and he was to be the god of music, light, and reason.

Zeus was filled with joy at the sight of his beautiful twins and he gave them each a silver bow and a quiver full of arrows. The arrows of Artemis were soft as moonbeams
and brought painless death, those of Apollo were hard and piercing as the rays of the sun.

Zeus blessed the little island and fastened it to the bottom of the sea. Grass and flowers burst forth from the barren ground and Delos became the richest of all the Greek islands. Pilgrims flocked to it and loaded it with temples and treasures to honor Leto and her twins.