Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Odd Gods: The Oddyssey by Adam J. B. Lane, David Slavin", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1088. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Adam J. B. Lane , David Slavin

Odd Gods: The Oddyssey

United States of America (2020)

TAGS: Cerberus Circe Hades Heracles Homer Odyssey Phaethon Poseidon Sirens Underworld Zeus





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Odd Gods: The Oddyssey
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America, Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2020
First Edition Details	David Slavin, *Odd Gods: The Oddyssey*. New York, HarperCollins, 2020, 217 pp.
ISBN	9780062839558
Genre	Fiction
Target Audience	Children (8–12)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@biu.ac.il
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, Lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Adam J. B. Lane (Illustrator)

Adam J. B. Lane is an author, illustrator and cartoonist. He was born in London and grew up in Pennsylvania. He studied at Harvard and the California Institute of the Arts.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: August 4, 2020);

harpercollins.com (accessed: August 4, 2020).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@biu.ac.il



David Slavin (Author)

David Slavin is an American author, writer and performer. He writes children's books, satire books, cultural and political commentary for leading newspapers, such as Los Angeles Times, the New York Times, Huffington Post. He has been a voice-over artist for over 20 years.

Source:

harpercollins.com (accessed: August 4, 2020).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@biu.ac.il

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Additional information

Summary

The publisher identifies this series as Diary of a Wimpy Kid meets Percy Jackson. This is the second book of the series, which follows the adventures of Oddonis. Oddonis and his twin brother, Adonis, are the twin sons of Zeus and his Norse goddess wife, Freya. While Adonis and his friends, Poseidon and Heracles, are considered in the Gods group, due to their looks and powers, Oddonis and his friends are in the Odd gods group. His friends include Mathena, goddess of math and poultry, Gaseous (his name indicates his speciality) and Puneous, the smallest god.

In this book, it is Zeus' birthday. Oddonis did not prepare a gift yet suddenly he finds a strange note in his pocket from Zeus' estranged brother, Hades. Upon reading the poem to his father, Zeus suddenly turns into a three-year old toddler, which causes havoc. In order to undo the curse, Oddonis, Adonis, their friends, together with their dog Trianus and their skeleton principal Deadipus must travel to the underworld and ask Hades to lift the curse. They board the Greek Freak ship, helmed by Phaeton (their chariot-bus driver). During their adventurous and dangerous journey to the underworld, the group encounters Cyclops (or Whyclops since he repeatedly asks WHY), from whom they escape with the help of a trick designed by Oddonis. Then they arrive at Mumce's, Cicrce's sister, island. Mumce wishes to be a mother to the children and to keep them prisoners in her island, which is filled with fun activities, like BBQ, amusement park and more. In the end, after turning the Gods group into pigs, she agrees to lift the spell and let them all go after the Odd group acts like annoying brats, making Mumce regret their imprisonment.

Next the group meets the fish-tailed sirens who captivate them with video games. Mathena frees them and they continue. The last strange place they arrive at is the underwear world, from which they also escape with the help of the Gods group (this strange place perhaps refers to the land of the Laestrygonians or maybe the Lotus Eaters since the underworld itself appears later). Finally they reach the underworld and meet Hades. They trick him into reciting the poem and bring them home. Hades is suddenly turned into a toddler himself and he and toddler Zeus meet and forget their old enmity. Oddonis gets the credit for his actions which saved the group and the happy ending see the gods back to their normal age.

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The text is accompanied by black and white illustrations that form an integral part of the plot. Through them, we see what Oddonis is thinking or the strange sights the group sees. The illustrations are vital to the flow and understanding of the story.

Analysis

The author of the series is a satirical writer and his ability is clearly apparent in the satirical and humorous tone of the book. Nothing is taken too seriously and the author mixes the Greek and Norse mythologies as well as inventing his own (odd) gods.

Making the Greek gods children or adolescents is common in children's books, for example in Joan Holub and Suzanne Williams' Goddess Girls and Heroes' in training series; or Ross Collins' Medusa Jones which shares a similar light tone with the current book, as well as the Perfect vs. Freaks groups.

This book makes fun of the gods and cleverly alters events and episodes from Homer's Odyssey to make them relevant to the story (and to the modern readers). Hence the Whyclops adaptation of the Cyclops of the Odyssey, and Mumce's island, which gives the author the opportunity to exhibit children's rude behavior that can even break a witch. The mythologically-inspired characters do maintain some of their traditional traits, albeit with some alterations. For example, Mathena, who is the goddess of math, is the cleverest one in the group and instead of owls she is accompanied by pigeons. Poseidon rules the seas and Heracles is all brawn and no brain. Adonis sees himself as perfect in everything, yet he is not as clever as his twin.

The moral of the story is the importance of keeping the joy and innocence of youth. When Zeus becomes a toddler, he drives his wife crazy and causes mayhem, yet this is the first time that Oddonis feels close to him and plays with him. He spends time with his toddler-dad and feels that they reconnect, since usually his father prefers the perfect Adonis. The same can be seen with regards to the rivalry between Hades and Zeus, who used to be very close but grew apart as they grew up. Returning to their childhood makes them forget all of their later animosity and reveals their true feelings towards each other. Oddonis refuses to accept their enmity and declares, 'my brother once told me, 'We're Gods. We fight. That's what we do.', Well, call me Odd, but I think there's more to being a God than that. If

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	you're a God, you've got to be GODLY, too! You know- like, GOOD! Both of you were good when you were little. Then you got big and messed it all up! So why don't you stop acting like grown-ups and start behaving like children again?" (p. 209). This is the true message of the story, as well as the author's social criticism, aimed not only at his younger readers but perhaps at their parents and society in general. What Adonis says summarizes the conduct of the Greek gods; they did fight quite a lot amongst themselves. Yet Oddonis does not accept it and tries to infuse more Judeo-Christian concepts of morality and brotherhood into them, with some success. The message of the story is that children can create havoc yet they are also pure in their emotions and adults can and should learn from them. Homer's millennia-old poem about a geographical as well as internal quest is perfectly fitted for this satirical illustrated book in 2020. The voyage is not just about facing and overcoming monsters. It is mainly about relationships, growing up, thinking ahead and most of all, it is about family. Odysseys wished to return home and our Odd group is equally anxious to return home as well but also reunite their family.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Cerberus Circe Hades Heracles Homer Odyssey Phaethon Poseidon Sirens Underworld Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Childhood Coming of age Communication Conflict Family Friendship Heroism Humour Intellect Journeys Magic

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