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Eric A. Kimmel , Pep Montserrat

King Midas & Other Greek Myths

United Kingdom (2016)

TAGS: Arachne Echo Epimetheus Hades Icarus Jason Midas Narcissus Orpheus Pandora Perseus Prometheus





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

General information	
Title of the work	King Midas & Other Greek Myths
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom, Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2016
First Edition Details	Eric A. Kimmel, *King Midas & Other Greek Myths*. London, Simon and Schuster, 2016, 112 pp.
ISBN	9781471158001
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Children (5 years and up)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@biu.ac.il
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Creators



Courtesy of the author

Eric A. Kimmel , b. 1946
(Author)

Eric A. Kimmel is an American author who has written more than 50 children's books. He received a B.A. in English literature from Lafayette College, an M.A. from New York University and a PhD in education from the University of Illinois. He was the recipient of the National Jewish Book Award in 2004, 2008, 2011, 2013, and is the only author who has won this award for a picture book twice. He won the Caldecott Honor Medal for *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins*, and the Sydney Taylor Picture Book Award for *The Chanukkah Guest and Gershon's Monster.*

Source:

Official website (accessed: August 2, 2020).

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



Pep Montserrat (Illustrator)

Pep Montserrat is a Spanish artist, illustrator and graphic designer from Barcelona. He graduated in 1988 from Llotja Art School (Barcelona, Spain). He teaches illustration in La Massana Arts & Design school since 1998. He illustrates mostly children books and also makes editorial art for newspapers and magazines.

The artist won several awards, among them: Best Illustrated Book for Children Award, 1997, and International Board on Books for Young People Honor List inclusion, 1998, both for *The Gift* by Gabriela

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Keselman. Pep Montserrat has also gained recognition for his original story in the picture book *Ms. Rubinstein's Beauty*.

Source:

Official website (accessed: August 2, 2020).

encyclopedia.com (accessed: September 30, 2020).

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Additional information

Summary

This book provides retelling of various myths, adapted for young readers. The myths are: Prometheus and Epimetheus' gifts to the animals, Prometheus' stealing of fire, Pandora's box, Persephone and her abduction by Hades, Echo and Narcissus, Arachne's contest with Athena, Pygmalion and Galatea, King Midas and the golden touch, Orpheus and Eurydice including Orpheus' murder by a tribe of wild maidens, Jason and the golden fleece including how Medea helped him an dhow she killed and rejuvenated his father, Aeson and how she escaped from Pelias' daughters (the killing of her children is not included, she escapes after tricking Pelias' daughters), Daedalus and Icarus, Theseus and the Minotaur, including his betrayal of Ariadne, Perseus and Medusa and the saving of Andromeda.

The stories are accompanied by large and colourful illustrations.

Analysis

As this book is aimed at young readers, the myths are adapted accordingly. The chosen stories do not necessarily have a happy ending (myths seldom do), yet they do carry an educational message which the author emphasizes.For example, in the story of Prometheus, the author mentions that the gift of fire made humans the rulers of the earth and wonders "have they proved worthy of Prometheus's gift? Not always. Yet humans still have the power to choose." (p. 5). This is the message of the story, that humans can choose to either be worthy of the god's gift or not. In the following myths, we see examples of various choices on how different characters choose to lead their lives.

The story of Pandora is quite altered from the Hesiodic version. Pandora is created after Epimetheus pleads to Zeus. She is also is not created as a punishment from Zeus, which makes the biggest alteration from the ancient myth. Pandora finds a box in Epimetheus' house and he warns her not to open it; in hindsight it appears that he knew what was hidden within. Furthermore, Pandora is tricked into opening the box. While she is curious, a voice from inside the box tells her that they (whoever they are) are locked inside, therefore Pandora opens it out of kindness and her wish to help them. In this version the blame for opening the box is almost lifted from Pandora. Furthermore, the authors says "the gods had given her the gifts of kindness and compassion. She could not turn away from a creature in trouble." (p.

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10). Pandora was acting according to her gods-given kind nature and certainly not out of malice or even curiosity.

Epimetheus tells her that the evils in the box were his own doing, "when I gave gifts to the animals, I had some ugly things left over that I thought no one deserved to have…I could not get rid of them, so I put them in the box." (p. 11). This is another significant alteration, which overturns the original myth. Instead of Zeus, putting the evil in the box to punish humanity, it is Epimetheus who puts them away in order to save humanity from them. Yet Epimetheus, who is revealed to be a wise man, tells Pandora "the gods created these trouble for a reason. They are part of creation, for better or for worst, and we must endure them." (p. 12). This is a Judeo-Christian message on God's mysterious ways, not necessarily the Greek gods' who were very specific in their creation of the evils. Hence the moral is that we must endure good and bad times, especially with the aid of Hope.

According to my interview with the author, Dr. Kimmel says that "the classical version blames Pandora for letting all the troubles into the world. The ancients never could pass up a chance to downgrade or blame women. My version, leaving Hope in the box to comfort humankind isn't original. It's probably the best-known version of the story in the US. Its source is one of the great American writers, Nathaniel Hawthorne. He wrote two collections of classical mythology for children: *Tanglewood Tales* and *Twice-Told Tales*. He admired the stories in the original but felt they needed to be adapted for a younger audience. He was right. His books have become classics of American children's literature. I used his version of Pandora as the model for my own." The author explains that his book introduces the ancient myths to young reader in a bright and clear way, and the children can later encounter the ancient versions of the myths which can be more intimidating, at an older age.

Regarding the myth of Persephone and Hades, it starts as a competition between Aphrodite and Eros. Aphrodite bets that she can make Hades fall in love and shoots him with her son's arrow. Ultimately Persephone professes her love for him as well and explains to her mother that she needs to comfort the souls in the underworld. This alteration is meant to make the tragic and scary kidnapping story into a romantic and less traumatic tale. The author probably follows Hawthorne's influence in making Persephone split the year in half between the upper and under worlds. He follows him as well in the inclusion of Midas' daughter who turns to gold.

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In the story of Arachne, Athena is furious with the weaver who weaved scenes which depicted the cruelty of the gods. Athena asks her if she would like to be the greatest weaver and Arachne accepts her offer and is turned into a spider. The tragic transformation of Arachne becomes another foolish act of her conceit, since she agreed to be transformed (in hindsight) due to her greed.

To conclude, the author makes some alterations to the ancient myths and tries to emphasize the moral of each story. While the stories are aimed at a younger audience, he does not spare the readers from death (for example, how Orpheus was killed by arrows and his body torn) or Theseus' cowardly act towards Ariadne and his negligence in replacing the sails. The murder of Medea's children, however, is missing. Hence the author was careful to choose which parts of the myth the readers could understand and cope with and which might be too much for them at this stage.

The tales are meant to show the readers how the ancient Greeks viewed their stories. The author notes at the beginning of the book that the myths are "wonderful stories" [p. xi] which hold basic themes that are still relevant for heroic characters today. He wants to share with the readers the connection between the spoken language and idioms to their original myths (for example Pandora's box). Finally he refers to stretching of the magination and connects Icarus' wings with the modern landing on the moon. It may be argued in fact that the author stretched his own imagination in his retelling of the myths in order to illustrate the lessons the readers can learn from them.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Arachne Echo Epimetheus Hades Icarus Jason Midas Narcissus Orpheus Pandora Perseus Prometheus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Death Emotions Family Love Magic Revenge

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