Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: The Gods and Goddesses of Olympus by Aliki Liacouras Brandenberg", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1186. Entry version as of July 13, 2026.

Aliki Liacouras Brandenberg

The Gods and Goddesses of Olympus

United States of America (1994)

TAGS: Aphrodite Apollo Ares Artemis Athena Demeter Dionysus / Dionysos Eros Hades Hephaestus Hera Hermes Hestia Persephone Poseidon

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

General information	
Title of the work	The Gods and Goddesses of Olympus
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1994
First Edition Details	Aliki Brandenberg, *The Gods and Goddesses of Olympus*. Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 1994, 48 pp.
ISBN	0064461890 (paperback)
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Children
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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

Aliki Liacouras Brandenberg , b. 1929
(Author)

Aliki Liacouras Brandenberg is a Greek-American author and illustrator of children's books. She has written and illustrated more than 50 books. The author's parents were originally from Greece. She started to draw at an early age hence she was enrolled by her parents in art classes. The author graduated from the Philadelphia Museum School of Art in 1951 and then worked as a freelance artist and taught classes in art. Her Greek heritage is a recurring theme in her works; for example in *Three Gold Pieces*, *The Gods and Goddesses of Olympus*, and the biography Diogenes. She used to travel a lot all over Europe. Aliki Liacouras Brandenberg won the Pennsylvania School Librarians' Association Award in 1991. Aliki illustrated books for other authors as well, including for her husband Franz Brandenberg.

Source:

pabook.libraries.psu.edu (accessed: November 8, 2020).

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Additional information

Summary

The book offers adapted information on the Greek creation myth and the Olympian gods for children, as well as Hades and Eros, accompanied by lavish page-long colourful illustrations. The information about the gods contains their names and attributes. The gods and goddesses included are Zeus, Hera, Hephaestus, Aphrodite, Eros, Ares, Poseidon, Athena, Hermes, Artemis, Apollo, Hades, Demeter and Persephone, Dionysus, Hestia. The book also adds the story of Gaia and Uranus as well as Rhea and Cronus.

Analysis

The introduction tells the readers that the myths were meant to "explain the mysteries of life." (p. 4). Hence, it gives the readers a feeling of mystery and excitement, as they are about to unravel some ancient truths.

The book is well adapted for young readers by avoiding any explicit mention of sexual conduct or violence. The colourful illustrations correspond well with the tone of the narrative. For example, when the beginning of the world is narrated, Gaea is depicted as a brown figure and only after she gives to Uranus does she become green and the illustration becomes brighter. Hence, the illustrations complement the text rather than just adorning it. It is noted that Uranus rained on Gaea which is a very nice way to explain their union to children while referring to ancient fertility myths as well.

After the narration of the creation of the world, the author continues to describe the various gods, inserting her own moral judgment on their conduct. For example, Aphrodite is depicted as a blonde goddess, to whose charms all fall victim. Ares "was a god not even a mother could like" (p. 27). This is the author's personal evaluation since the god who was truly disliked by his mother was Hephaestus, who is described here as being born with bad luck. In Homer, it is Zeus who is actually the one who greatly disliked Ares, as he bluntly tells him in the *Iliad* (5.889ff).

Regarding Hades, his illustration employs black and brown tones, echoing the underworld in which he resides. The author relates that Zeus "told Hades to kidnap Persephone" (p. 38) which is a slight exaggeration of Zeus' role in the myth.

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Hera is described quite negatively. The author explains that "jealousy darkened her days" (p. 20). She is also said to cause Dionysus' and his companions' madness. This is a typical description of Hera as the mean and jealous goddess, despite the fact that it was Zeus who was responsible for much of her grief. For a different depiction of Hera see Doris Orgel's *We Goddesses: Athena, Aphrodite, Hera* (2000).

In this book, Zeus is said to have "many other wives" (p. 18) since his debauchery is toned down for the young readers. Hence, it appears as if Hera is unjustly jealous of his legitimate wives. In contrast, Zeus is described as "wise and fair" (p. 18) with Hera portrayed as a mean (and unfair) goddess who only acts out of jealousy.

The book ends with a secretive note for the readers: "the next time you hear a clap of thunder, or feel the wind…what will you think? Is that Zeus shaking his thunderbolt? …they are still with us" (p. 48). The readers hence become part of this alternative regarding the continuous existence of the gods. A similar approach can be found in *I am Pan!* by Mordicai Gerstein (2016).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Apollo Ares Artemis Athena Demeter Dionysus / Dionysos Eros Hades Hephaestus Hera Hermes Hestia Persephone Poseidon
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Appearances Character traits Desires Emotions Family Love Punishment

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