Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Artemis & the Awesome Animals (Little Goddess Girls, 4) by Yuyi Chen, Joan Holub, Suzanne Williams ", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1193. Entry version as of November 02, 2026.

Yuyi Chen , Joan Holub , Suzanne Williams

Artemis & the Awesome Animals (Little Goddess Girls, 4)

United States of America (2020)

TAGS: Aphrodite Artemis Athena Medusa Olympus Persephone Perseus Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Artemis & the Awesome Animals (Little Goddess Girls, 4)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2020
First Edition Details	Joan Holub and Suzanne Williams, ill. Yuyi Chen, *Little Goddess Girls*: *Artemis & the Awesome Animals*. New York: Aladdin Quix, 2020, 96 pp.
ISBN	9781534431164 (ebook)
Genre	Fiction
Target Audience	Children (5–8 years)
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 Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk

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



Yuyi Chen (Illustrator)

Yuyi Chen is an American children's book illustrator from Washington. She also did 3D modelling, design and texturing and animation. Her books include *Doris the Bookasaurus* and *Going to Grandma's House*.

Source:

Official website (accessed: August 11, 2020).

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



Photo courtesy of Joan Holub.

Joan Holub , b. 1956
(Author)

Joan Holub is a prolific children's author from the USA. Graduated from college in Texas with a fine arts degree. Worked as an art director at Scholastic trade books in New York. She has written and/or illustrated over 150 children's books. She has developed a range of series for teenagers on mythological themes: *Goddess Girls*, set in Mount Olympus Academy, *Grimmtastic Tales* series, set in Grimm Academy, *Thunder Girls*, about Norse gods set in Asgard Academy, and *Heroes in Training*, in which the male Greek gods, as very young men, set out on a range of adventures. For pre-school children, Jan Holub has written on a range of topics including several works with religious and historical themes. These include: *This Little President*; *This Little Trailblazer*, *Hooray for St. Patrick's Day!*, and *Light the Candles: A Hanukkah Lift-the-Flap Book*. Joan Holub trained in fine art and worked as an art director at a graphic design company before

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becoming a children's illustrator and then author.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Profile at the penguinrandomhouse.com (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Profile at the simonandschuster.com (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Bio prepared by Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk and Allison Rosenblum, Bar-Ilan University, allie.rose89@gmail.com and Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Questionnaire

1. What drew you to writing / working with Classical Antiquity and what challenges did you face in selecting, representing, or adapting particular myths or stories?

I learned to love Greek and Norse mythology in elementary school. I'm very comfortable adapting the framework of an existing myth or fairy tale by pushing it into a different setting, adding humor, and/or building in a nonfiction component. Staying true to the essential core of each myth along the way is important to me. A young *Goddess Girls* reader once told me she enjoyed the series because she "learned something". In other words, while she liked being entertained, she appreciated that her familiarity and factual understanding of the original myths was broadened at the same time.

2. Why do you think classical / ancient myths, history, and literature continue to resonate with young audiences?

Kids have questions about their world. So it's interesting to them to learn how ancient Greeks and other cultures answered questions

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about how their world worked in exciting tales of heroes and beasts. How did the sun cross the sky? In a chariot drawn by the god Helios. What caused night? The goddess Nyx's starry cape covered the sky. Thrilling stories of courage and danger, such as Heracles' twelve labors, the Trojan Horse, and the Argonauts never go out of style.

3. Do you have a background in classical education (Latin or Greek at school or classes at the University?) What sources are you using? Scholarly work? Wikipedia? Are there any books that made an impact on you in this respect?

I have an entire shelf of mythology resource books. Some of my favorite go-to sources are the *Scholastic Mythlopedia* series, Edith Hamilton's *Mythology, Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*, and www.theoi.com (accessed: May 28, 2018).

4. How concerned were you with "accuracy" or "fidelity" to the original? (another way of saying that might be – that I think writers are often more "faithful" to originals in adapting its spirit rather than being tied down at the level of detail – is this something you thought about?)

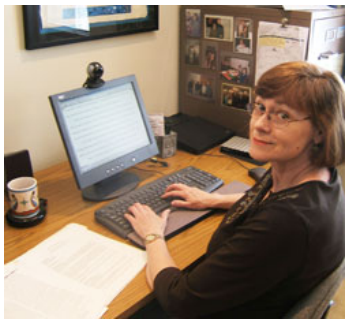
Each book in the *Goddess Girls* series (ages 8–12, Simon and Schuster) and *Heroes in Training* series (ages 7–10, Simon and Schuster) is a retelling of one or two Greek myths, with a twist. We stay as true as possible to the core bones of an original myth in order to give young readers a good understanding, but we include kid situations and humor to entertain. As an example, in *Goddess Girls #1: Athena the Brain*, Athena is summoned to attend Mount Olympus Academy, where Zeus is the principal. MOA teachers include Mr. Cyclops, who teaches Hero-ology, a class where students are graded on their abilities to maneuver small hero figures such as Odysseus, around a gameboard to enact the Trojan War, etc. Meanwhile, Athena, who is the goddess of invention among other things, inadvertently turns mean-girl Medusa's hair to snakes and gives her the power to turn mortals to stone by means of a shampoo-like invention called Snakeypoo at the MOA invention fair.

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5. Are you planning any further forays into classical material?

Suzanne Williams and I have written a new middle grade series called *Thunder Girls* (accessed: May 28, 2018), which is a twist on Norse mythology featuring strong girl characters. The first book Freya and the Magic Jewel releases May 2018 for ages 8–12, published by Simon and Schuster.

Prepared by Allison Rosenblum, Bar-Ilan University, allie.rose89@gmail.com and Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com



Courtesy of the Author from her personal website.

Suzanne Williams , b. 1953
(Author)

Suzanne Williams is an American prolific children's author and former elementary school librarian. She has written over 60 books for children.

She grew up in Oregon and graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's in library science from the University of Oregon. She currently lives in Reno, Washington.

Source:

Official website (accessed: May 29, 2018).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Questionnaire

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1. What drew you to writing / working with Classical Antiquity and what challenges did you face in selecting, representing, or adapting particular myths or stories?

Writing about Greek mythology was my co-author, Joan Holub's idea. She's loved mythology since childhood. Her enthusiasm for the subject got me excited about it too. *Goddess Girls* (ages 8–12) was our very first collaboration. Soon there will be 26 books in that series. One of the challenges we've faced in writing our (soon to be four) myth-based series for young readers is how to handle the sexual and violent content of many of the myths.

To downplay the violence, we often make it cartoonish and lighten it with humor. Since most of our gods and goddesses are pre-teens (as are our readers!), we deal with inappropriate sexual content by making changes that still allow us to keep to the spirit of the myth. For example: in introducing the Adonis myth, in which Aphrodite and Persephone fight over a beautiful youth they both desire, we decided to make Adonis a kitten, rather than a young man.

Another challenge has involved familial relationships among the various gods and goddesses. In *Goddess Girls*, Zeus is an adult, the principal of Mount Olympus Academy, the school attended by our "goddessgirls" and "godboys". In mythology he would likely have fathered a good portion of the student body! So we made a decision that only Athena would call him "Dad". (Until Hebe popped forth from a lettuce in Book 21, that is.) We do acknowledge many other family relationships. For example: Apollo and Artemis as brother and sister. Medusa and her sisters Euryale and Stheno. Persephone and her mother, Demeter.

2. Why do you think classical / ancient myths, history, and literature continue to resonate with young audiences?

Myths have got all the elements that draw us to stories: action, conflict, drama, humor, etc. What's not to like?

3. Do you have a background in classical education (Latin or Greek at school or classes at the University?) What sources are

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you using? Scholarly work? Wikipedia? Are there any books that made an impact on you in this respect?

Neither Joan nor I have a classical education. I did take an online Greek and Roman mythology class a few years ago, however. (Taught by Peter Struck, University of Pennsylvania.) Terrific class!

For our Greek mythology-based series, Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* is the reference we rely on the most. My co-author and I do consult Wikipedia and other online resources, especially for lists of monsters and maps and general information about ancient Greece. References for *Thunder Girls*, our soon-to-be-published Norse mythology-based series include: *The Norse Myth*s by Kevin Crossley-Holland, D'Aulaires' *Book of Norse Myth*s, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs* by John Lindow, *The Poetic Edda* (translated and edited by Jackson Crawford), and *The Prose Edda* by Snorri Sturluson (Penguin Classics).

4. Are you planning any further forays into classical material?

In addition to *Goddess Girls*, my co-author and I have also collaborated on a second Greek mythology-based series called *Heroes in Training* (ages 6–9). It's a humorous quest/adventure series with Zeus, Poseidon, Hades and other Olympians as ten-year-olds on the run from King Cronus and the Titans. *Freya and the Magic Jewel*, the first book in *Thunder Girls*, our Norse mythology-based series, publishes May 1, 2018. I travel to Norway frequently to visit my daughter, granddaughter, and Norwegian son-in-law, so I am very excited to be doing a Norse-myth series. Aladdin (Simon & Schuster) publishes all three of Joan's and my mythology-based series. We will be doing a fourth myth-based series with them soon – for ages 5–8. Tentative title is *Little Goddess Girls*, and it will be another Greek myth-based series.

Prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

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Additional information

Summary

In the fourth book of the *Little Goddess Girls* series, Athena, Persephone, Aphrodite, and their new friend Artemis, arrive at Thunderbolt Tower in Sparkle City. They are eager to meet Zeus, the king of the gods, who might grant their wishes. This time we are informed that the city is located in Greece and is situated on the top of Mount Olympus, the highest mountain. Athena wants to return to her home, Persephone wishes for good luck, Aphrodite for the gift of likability, and Artemis for courage.

Sparke City is a buzzing, magical place. Happy people walk the streets, some ride on the back of dragons.

The girls enter the tower via a talking door and a white rabbit escorts them to their room. The next morning they go to the throne room, where they are greeted by a giant blue head (balloon) floating in the room – Zeus. Apparently, Zeus is an 8-year-old boy, the same age as they are, who is slowly learning to control his powers. He tells them that he is busy since Titans are trying to take over Olympus. Yet, he promises to grant them their wishes if they can stop Medusa from causing trouble. The girls return to the Hello Brick Road and a friendly signpost advises them to consult with the Grey sisters. Suddenly three chickens with one beak arrive. Artemis can communicate with them and they tell her to go to Medusa's castle. Then they lay a silver egg, named Perseus, and fly away. While the girls think of their next move, they are whisked away by flying monkeys to Medusa's castle. When Medusa examines the silver egg, which Artemis accidentally drops, it acts as a mirror and Medusa turns herself to stone. Artemis then communicates with Medusa's army of stone animals, who return to their usual forms after Medusa turned to stone.

The girls return to Zeus who grant their wishes. Aphrodite receives a thinking crown, to stop her from speaking before thinking. Persephone receives seven seeds of four-leaf clovers to grant her good luck. The scared Artemis receives a necklace with a heart-shaped ruby to remind her of her brave heart. Finally, Athena receives a balloon to fly home with, yet it flies away carrying Zeus with it. Soon after, the glowing fairy goddess, Hestia, appears and tells Athena that all the girls are in fact, goddess girls. She also informs her that her magic flying sandals can take her home and back to Olympus when needed.

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When Athena clicks her heels and sends the magic words she is suddenly back home, with only several minutes gone by since she initially left for Olympus. Excited, she enters her home and the book ends.

There is a bit of tension hinted at when Artemis thinks that perhaps one of the snakes on Medusa's head moved after she turned to stone. This could point to further troubles this character may cause in the future.

The book includes a list of character list, a word list, questions on the story and authors' note, in which they briefly explain the Greek goddesses Artemis.

This series may appear to be a spinoff of the popular "Goddess Girls" series by the same authors, yet while the characters are similar (Greek goddesses), the setting and characterization are different. This series is also aimed at early readers and not at adolescents.

The black and white illustrations are cute and display the various scenes. They are not scary, with even Medusa being illustrated as a cute, young girl. The illustrations help convey the fantastic feeling of the series and the world of the young children which are the main heroines. Hence, the readers can more easily relate to the various characters. The illustrations emphasize the cuteness of the girls and animals for example. The heads are slightly oversized, as is common in children's illustrations (to emphasize the cuteness of characters).

Analysis

The influence of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (by Frank Baum, Chicago 1900) continues in this book, combined with Greek mythology reception and even elements of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (London 1865) which perhaps inspired the talking door and the white rabbit who welcomes the girls at the thunderbolt tower. Like the characters in Oz, the girls receive the gifts from Zeus, yet the gifts are just ornaments, the real power lies within each girl.

This story follows the myth of Perseus and Medusa, along with the Grey Sisters and Perseus, yet it is adapted to follow the fantastic and fluffy world of this series. Hence, there is naturally no beheading and no real frightening danger. The fact that all the girls are revealed to be goddess is a common trait of fantastic fiction since the readers can

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see themselves in the characters and wish they might have special powers too (like children who dress up as royalty or faeries etc.). These girls, while they are special on their own, are given recognition of their uniqueness by their newfound divine status. It does not, however, change their friendship or seems to be crucial to the plot at this point. The mentioning of the war with the titans may hint that in the next volumes their godly status would compel the girls to participate in the war.

Like the previous books in the series, this book emphasizes the strength of the main heroines and how their combined powers help them overcome any foe. They do not depend on any male hero to save them and even Zeus does not appear so powerful or intimidating. Hence, there is a strong message here of female empowerment. The girl can achieve their goals on their own, Zeus appears to grant their wishes, yet the girls already possess these strengths or qualities on their own.

As in various coming of age stories, this is a world without adults. The only adult who does pop in occasionally is the fairy goddess Hestia, who is the goddess of the home and therefore represents home, parenthood and is supposedly a guardian of the girls, although she quickly disappears. This is a land where an 8-years old is the mighty king of the gods and the ruler of Olympus. Even the villain is a young girl, hence, these adventures can fit within children's imaginary games (at school for example or at home). While it is a fantasy land, it also appears very safe, even with Medusa and the looming war. The children enjoy the adventures and also share responsibilities (for example Zeus) and must continue to learn new things in order to overcome obstacles.

The time-travelling element is more focused at the end of the book when we discover that Athena can go back and forth between the worlds. One may wonder why Hestia did not share this information with her sooner, yet this is part of the plot development. As in Stella Tarakson's *Hopeless Heroes* series or Elena Paige's adventures of Taki and Toula, we can assume that Athena's time-travelling would continue in the next volumes.

This book also gives the reader a concrete geographical location for these fantastic lands. While the authors were influenced by the completely fantastic world of Oz, they nevertheless locate this wonderland in Greece. Hence, they ground their fantasy in real-world

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	geography and culture. It remains to be seen whether in the next volume there will be more "real" elements incorporated within the fantasy. It may be that it was important for the authors to identify the origin of Olympus, as a real place with a connection to a real ancient culture in order to use the story not just for entertaining but also for educating the young readers.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Artemis Athena Medusa Olympus Persephone Perseus Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Emotions Friendship Journeys Magic

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