Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Beast Keeper (Beasts of Olympus, 1) by Brett Bean , Lucy Coats", 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/1287. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Brett Bean , Lucy Coats

Beast Keeper (Beasts of Olympus, 1)

United States of America (2015)

TAGS: Centaur(s) Cretan Bull Griffins / Gryphons Hera Heracles Hestia Hydra Nemean Lion Pan Stymphalian Birds Zeus



Courtesy of the publisher, Penguin Random House.

General information	
Title of the work	Beast Keeper (Beasts of Olympus, 1)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2015
First Edition Details	Lucy Coats, *Beasts of Olympus: Beast Keeper.* New York: Grosset & Dunlap, Pinguin Group, 2015, 144 pp.
ISBN	9780448461939
Genre	Fiction
Target Audience	Children (7–9 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 Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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Creators



Brett Bean (Illustrator)

Brett Bean is an American cartoonist and illustrator originally from Seattle who currently resides in California. His work has been featured in TV, films, comics, games (digital and analog) manuals and more. Brett Bean is also the creator of the *Zoo Patrol Squad* and the illustrator of *Battle Bugs*.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: April 1, 2021).

Author's profile of CGMA (accessed: April 1, 2021).

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



Lucy Coats , b. 1961 (Author)

Lucy Coats is an British writer for children. She holds an MA in English Literature and Ancient History from the University of Edinburgh. She is also a member of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. In her books we can mostly find motifs from various legends and myths that she adapts for young readers. She published several picture books (including *King Ocean's Flute*, *The Animals Bedtime Storybook*), as well as novels for teenagers and young adults (including *Chosen*, *Hootcat Hill*). Among those inspired by Greek and Roman Mythology, besides the *Beasts of Olympus* series, Coats also wrote *Atticus the Storyteller's 100 Greek Myths* and *Great Beasts and Heroes – a 12 Book Series*. She also runs a blog and goes to school for

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reading sessions.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: July 4, 2018).

Twitter profile (accessed: July 4, 2018).

Bio prepared by Anna Mik, University of Warsaw, anna.m.mik@gmail.com

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	Next book: *Beasts of Olympus* (Series, Book 2): *Hound of Hades*.

Summary

This is the first book in the "Beasts of Olympus" series. Pandemonius (or Demon as he is most commonly referred to in the series) is the 11 years old half-mortal son of the god Pan and the mortal Carys. His father was absent during most of Demon's life, but one day Pan arrives at Demon's home and quite forcibly (and despite Demon's mother's pleading) takes Demon from his home to Olympus. At first Demon fears he will be sacrificed to the gods, but Pan reveals to Demon that he will be the new stable boy for the stables of the gods which are currently filthy and unkempt. Pan knows that his son loves animals and can communicate with them, so he persuaded Zeus to let him try.

Demon is scared at first to be away from everything and everyone he knows and loves and his fear is increased by Pan leaving him alone in this strange new place. Slowly Demon learns about the stables and the wondrous creatures that occupy them; these include a Griffin, the cattle of Helios and even unicorns. He is helped most by the god Hephaestus, but also by Hestia and the various nymphs who dwell by the stables.

As Demon gets used to his position and learns to love the strange beasts, and is loved by them in return, he discovers that a mortal hero on earth, Heracles, causes severe harm to the beasts. Demon treats the Nemean lion, the Cretan bull and the Stymphalian birds. One day Hera arrives and demands that he treats her beloved Hydra, whose heads had been cut off by Heracles. With the help of Hephaestus, who prepared a magical medical box for Demon, and the dryad Ophelia, Demon manages to reattach the heads and heal the Hydra, hence avoiding Hera's wrath and punishment.

At the end of the book there is a glossary with a short description of the different beasts, gods and goddesses, mythical beings and places that are presented in the stories. Black and white cartoonish drawings appear at the end of some chapters. They show a scene from the book or an individual beast (the Griffin or a unicorn etc.).

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Analysis

This story combines elements of a coming-of-age tale together with strong ecological and animal-friendly messages. The beasts, which are usually the sidekicks for the mythological heroes, become the main focus and the heroes depicted as evil for their treatment of the animals and the injuries they inflict on them. In this tale, therefore, as in many other Geek-mythology based fictions, for younger or older readers, the Greek gods as a group are not presented as benevolent or kind (see again *Hopeless Heroes*, or YA fiction such as "Mythsverse" series). They are petty, selfish and can be cruel. The first episode which recounts the first meeting between Pan and Demon is titled “The God Father”. This is of course a humoristic pun (although how many young readers will understand it is doubtable), yet it can hint at the author's own impression of the gods and their cruelty. While they are not described in this book as a crime syndicate, Demon does fear them and is compelled to follow their orders. As Demons explains, "Mortals who offended gods usually ended up as little piles of scorched ash, or as trees or rocks." [location 34].

Pan is the shepherd god, most associated with the forests and wild environment. In modern stories, he can be presented as wild and can be selfish at times (see for example a comical depiction of him in Mordicai Gerstein's *I am Pan*). In this story, however, he is an absent father to his half-mortal offspring. Demon is everything his father is not: caring, responsible, trustworthy.

This story shows that being a god does not necessarily makes you better. Demon is half-mortal and although he does have special abilities and can communicate with animals, his caring character is his most important trait and his kind nature with has nothing to do with divine powers. The message may be that we do not need to posses special powers in order to be truly unique and remarkable and success in what we choose to do.

This series, similarly to other books of its kind, uses the mythological setting as the canvas on which growing pains are illustrated. The young hero/heroine, whether mortal, demi-god or monster, is tasked with great responsibilities and oftentimes lack parental guidance. (see for example *The World's Bellybutton* by Tanya Landman; "Hopeless Heroes" series by Stella Tarakson). While in these examples the heroes are mortal children, in our story the titular character is the son

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of a god. While Demon's special ability is talking to animals, his human sensitivity and caring are his main strengths.

Demon is separated from his mother, his home, even earth, by a father he never knew. His fear that he might be served as a sacrifice to the gods is meant to enhance the drama and perhaps create a comical misunderstanding later. However, on a deeper emotional level, it reveals Demon's great fear of his father and also, of the gods who might ask for such a sacrifice. Demon openly admits how dangerous his divine father can be, "He wasn't too sure if that's what you did with a dad, but it was certainly what you did with a god. Especially if that god was Pan, ruler of forests and all wild creatures. A god who could call up a pack of ravening bears that would rip you to bits in an instant." [location 27]. This fearful feeling is intensified, when Pan lifts his son for a hug. This fatherly gesture might appear innocent, yet the author once more emphasizes the dread it caused Demon, "He was lifted up into a godhug that smelled of pungent green things, goaty musk and old, stale blood." [location 27]. The mention of blood can be perceived as a hint at Pan's perilous nature.

Furthermore, Pan completely disregards Carys', Demom's mother's, entreaties not to take her son. "She sounded like Demon's little black lamb Barley did when he wanted milk. She might as well have kept quiet. Pan stomped over her buts like a charging centaur." [location 34]. This impression of his mother, coming from Demon's perspective, perhaps unintentionally, completely diminishes the woman. She is a helpless sheep while Pan is a ferocious centaur. The centaurs were notorious in Greek mythology for their wild behaviour, especially towards women hence this reference alludes to Pan's alleged violent nature. Pan then forcibly takes Demon away from his tearful mother. While Demon misses his mother, to whom he refers as his whole family, he gradually becomes accustomed to his job on Olympus. He thinks of his mother and misses her, yet he does not ask his father if he could visit her, hence the mother is left out of the story at this point, weeping in the distance, with no real relevance to her child's life. The unsettling assumption that could be drawn is that the brutal "godfather" wins over the feeble mother and in the end it all works out for the best, although it is perhaps unlikely that the young readers would come to this conclusion.

Although Pan abandons Demon on Olympus (as he did during his childhood) so he can go and take care of his satyrs, Demon does not lack a father figure this time as Hephaestus slowly becomes his

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surrogate divine father. A similar warm representation of Hephaestus also occurred in the YA series "Demigods Academy" by Elisa S. Amore and Kiera Legend. It is possible that these authors thought that Hephaestus might be a warmer and more fatherly character since he was different than the other gods in that he was not handsome and was also mistreated (yet it should be noted that the mythological Hephaestus was not the kindest god, as his attempted rape of Athena shows).

In this series, however, Hephaestus gives Demon the guidance and protection he needs in this strange new world into which he was brought so suddenly. Hephaestus, unlike Pan, does not break his promises to visit Demon, and he also cares for Demon's well-being by providing him with a special collar with curled snakes which can heal injuries. Hence Hephaestus takes on the role of Apollo or Asclepius in this story. His help, especially his special robotic medical box helps Demon in his everyday tasks of caring for the various beasts.

In a complete contrast to her son, Hera is described as menacing and evil, with a voice like knives: "'STABLE BOY! COME HERE!' said a voice. It wasn't a nice creamy voice like Hestia's. It sounded like a thousand rusty knife blades snapping in a dark alley." [location 449].

The metaphor of a gangster returns here. Yet while she is described as bad-tempered, Hephaestus tries to defend her reputation. He tells Demon that she was the one who brought him back to Olympus after Zeus threw him away and that she is "grouchy" yet has a kind side too. It appears that although the author follows a more common thread of portraying Hera as harsh and uncaring, she also tries to give her a more rounded character, so that she is not completely evil at heart. Hence the author changed the origin story of Hephaestus to make Hera appear as a loving mother. Loving mothers are a key element in this story in comparison with negligent fathers.

Regarding the ecological message, the story highlights Heracles as the main villain since he harms many beasts. Furthermore, it is mentioned that Hera sent him 12 tasks as punishment for his killing of his wife and children. Hence, in a way, Hera is also at fault for the pain caused for the beasts. The fact that the author mentions Heracles' murder of his family in a book aimed at 7–9 years old may appear a bit puzzling, yet this is part of Heracles' evil characterization. Furthermore, unlike Heracles' poor family, the beasts can resurrect and live on Olympus (perhaps pertaining to the

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	beasts' special divine nature). The beasts themselves tell Demon, "We're immortal, of course, so we can't really die. After we get "killed" down there we come back up here to recover. And then they send us back down to do it all over again. No one really cares about us beasts. We're just entertainment – a bit of fun for the gods – their dangerous little pets.'" [location 180]. This is a powerful message. The beasts, according to the message of this story, should have received the same adoration as the other mortal heroes, yet they are treated as mere pawns by the gods (as mortals and as Demon himself). They are badly treated in order for the "heroes" to receive their honors.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Centaur(s) Cretan Bull Griffins / Gryphons Hera Heracles Hestia Hydra Nemean Lion Pan Stymphalian Birds Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Animals Death Emotions Family Heroism Journeys
Addenda	The review refers to the Kindle edition (9781848124394). The illustrator of this Kindle edition is David Roberts and the publisher is Piccadilly Press, London. Bio: David Roberts (b. 1970) is a British children's illustrator. He illustrates in both black and white and colour. He has illustrated many books, such as "Eddie Dickens and Unlikely Exploits" series, "Mariah Mundi" series, "Ales of Terror series", and more. David Roberts also creates picture books for young readers. His collaborations with his sister, the writer Lynn Roberts, *Rapunzel: A Groovy Fairy Tale* was shortlisted for a Blue Peter Book Award, and *Little Red: A Fizzingly Good Yarn*, was shortlisted for the Kate

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Greenaway Medal.

Source: Wikipedia (accessed: April 1, 2021).

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