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Kendare Blake

Mortal Gods (Goddess War, 2)

United States of America (2014)

TAGS: Achilles Andromache Aphrodite Ares Athena Atropos Calypso Cassandra Clotho Fates Hector Hera Hermes Lachesis Moirai Monsters Odyssey Persephone Poseidon Trojan War





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

General information	
Title of the work	Mortal Gods (Goddess War, 2)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Australia, United Kingdom, United States
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2014
First Edition Details	Kendare Blake, *Mortal Gods*. New York, NY: Tor Teen, 2014, 341 pp.
ISBN	1408330776
Genre	Fantasy fiction, Horror fiction
Target Audience	Young adults
Author of the Entry	Amy Arezzolo, University of New England, aarezzol@myune.edu.au
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Creators



Kendare Blake , b. 1981
(Author)

Kendare Blake is a writer of young adult short stories and novels in the genres of horror and fantasy. She was born in Seoul, South Korea, but grew up in Cambridge, Minnesota. She attended Ithaca College in New York and Middlesex College in London, from which she graduated with a Masters in Creative Writing. Her books include *Anna Dressed in Blood* (2011) and its sequel *Girl of Nightmares* (2012), the five books of the *Goddess Wars* series (2013–2015), and most recently, the *Three Dark Crowns* series.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: September 6, 2019).

Profile at Pan Macmillan (accessed: September 6, 2019).

Bio prepared by Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

Previous book: *Goddess War (*Series, Book 1): *Antigoddess*.

Next book: *Goddess War* (Series, Book 3): *Ungodly*.

Outside of the series, Kendare Blake has also published two prequel novellas set in this same universe,

- *When Gods and Vampires Roamed Miami* (2014) and
- *The Dogs of Athens* (2015).

Summary

As this novel is the second in the series, it is a continuation of many of the plots developed in the first book *Antigoddess*, a summary of which can be found here.

Picking up three months after the events of *Antigoddess*, Cassandra Weaver is still grieving the loss of her boyfriend, Aidan Baxter (Apollo) and is determined to avenge his death by killing Aphrodite and the remainder of the Olympians with her newly discovered, god-destroying powers.

The novel begins with Athena and Demeter discussing their next moves, following the deaths of Aidan, Poseidon and (as it seems) Hera, as well as her willingness to fight. Demeter insists that Athena finds additional figures to support her plight, including Artemis and Achilles, who Athena reluctantly agrees to find, although it is unclear at this stage in the novel what exactly she wants to do with him. This conversation establishes the main plot points of this novel in that the mission to find Artemis, discover Achilles and prepare for battle is central to the narrative.

Shortly after her conversation with Demeter, Athena allows Odysseus and Hermes to find Artemis in the Malaysian jungle. Both characters view Artemis as a potential ally; however, the trip is ultimately unsuccessful as Odysseus and Hermes soon discover the remains of the Goddess of the Hunt who has been horrifically hunted down by a group of "ravening beasts" (p. 91). Subsequently, Ares also discovers the remains of his half-sister and immediately attempts to kill Odysseus to extricate information about the location of Achilles' whereabouts.

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Athena begins to realise that she no longer can ignore Achilles' presence and that if she cannot find him herself, he will be used as a weapon against her, Hermes, Odysseus, Cassandra and her family and friends. This leads to Odysseus and Athena embarking on a trip to Australia which strains their budding relationship as they become divided over what to do with Achilles who Athena believes cannot be controlled and his lust for glory makes him unpredictable. Eventually, the pair find Achilles living self-sufficiently in the Australian bush just outside of Jindabyne, a small town located in the New South Wales Snowy Mountains region. Athena's intention to eliminate Achilles so that neither side of the wat can use him fails as it is revealed that Achilles' cannot die. Accordingly, Achilles returns to Kincade with Athena and Odysseus with plans to fight the other gods with them.

However, running simultaneous to this plot, Henry and Andie are attacked by Ares' wolves, Pain, Panic, Oblivion and Famine but are rescued by Calypso, who has come to find Odysseus and this introduction further strains Athena and Odysseus' relationship already stretched by their positions on Achilles.

These two events both culminate in the introduction of new residents to Athena and Hermes' home, which is already crowded by the increasing presence of Cassandra, Henry and Andie all seeking to train and prepare for the upcoming battle. Thus, a large portion of the novel is set within this domestic environment and allows much of the focus to remain on the evolving tensions between different combinations of characters such as Achilles, Odysseus and Athena, Cassandra, and Athena as well as Athena and Calypso.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to Cassandra, Hera is attempting to heal following her attack by Cassandra in the previous book. This leads to the introduction of the ulterior villains of the novel, the Moirae, the Fates who are described by Hera as the "gods of the gods" (p. 59). Fearfully Hera reveals that Atropos, Clotho and Lachesis are causing the deaths of the gods as well as instructing Hera and Ares what their next steps are.

These two narratives: Athena and Hermes's story and Ares's story eventually converge at the end of the novel, culminating in a final battle in which Athena and the others launch an assault against Ares, Hera and Aphrodite on Mount Olympus. Here, they come face to face with the main antagonists of *Mortal Gods* and to their Athena's surprise realises that Hera was not fatally wounded in the previous

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meeting at the end of *Antigoddess*. After facing one another, a major battle breaks out between the two groups. Cassandra finally succeeds in killing Hera by turning her completely to stone but is thwarted when she attempts to kill Aphrodite. Meanwhile, Achilles attempts to attack the Moirae but is seduced by their claims of immortality. This promptly causes Achilles to switch sides and attack his former allies by throwing a sword directly at Odysseus' chest that causes Athena to jump from Olympus and carry him to the underworld. Amidst this chaos, Hermes, Henry and Andie attempt to fend off Ares' wolves but Aphrodite soon uses the decapitated and decomposing head of Poseidon to call the ocean to flood Olympus, causing Hermes, Henry and Andie to become separated from Cassandra and Calypso. As the book comes to a close, it is revealed that Achilles has now become the weapon of the Moirae and while Athena and Cassandra are alive, the entire group is separated from one another, making their plans to defeat the remaining Olympians and now, the Moirae seemingly insurmountable.

Analysis

Mortal Gods continues what Kendare Blake established in *Antigoddess* by representing the Olympian Pantheon in a horrific guise that shows various gods and goddesses going to great, often gruesome lengths to kill one another in a desperate act of self-preservation. As such, *Mortal Gods* provides the reader with a vast swathe of highly visceral scenes that position classical motifs and identities such as Mount Olympus and the bodies of deities such as Hera, Aphrodite, Athena, Hermes and the Moirae in perverse ways. For instance, the reveal of the Moirae's bodies being both fused together and eaten away, as well as Blake's description of Poseidon's head in the climax of the book, are representative of this approach which not only unsettles the readers but subverts popular notions of the gods being represented comedically or with extreme fickleness.

Further, *Mortal Gods* continues to expand on the series' major classical motif of the Trojan War. In the sequel, various aspects of this event are included and assimilated with tropes belonging to fantasy-horror genre that this novel is situated within. This is achieved through the introduction of Achilles and by extension, discussion about Hector and further characterisation given to Odysseus in this sequel. More broadly, through these characters themes from the *Iliad* are interwoven, such as Achilles' desire for immortality which

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connects to Blake's broader consideration about how living for eons can ironically impede moral growth of those that live forever. While examined previously through Athena, Hermes, and Hera in *Antigoddess*, the presence of Achilles sheds further light on this theme by considering his reputation as a fearsome and effective soldier, albeit in a modern society where he is painted as unhinged and unpredictable.

As a result, Blake's use of Greek Olympians as well as others figures and motifs from antiquity such as the aforementioned Trojan War become conduits for themes and concerns relevant to a Young Adult audience. In addition to Achilles' reception as reflected through Athena and Odysseus' continued discussion throughout the novel, other concepts such as family, love, responsibility, and identity are expressed through the actions of Athena with regards to her relationships with both Hermes who she sees as her primary familial structure and Odysseus to whom she wavers between a sense of love and responsibility, as well as through Cassandra grappling with her grief after losing Aidan (Apollo) and running the risk of becoming consumed by her anger and desire to avenge his death. Broadly speaking, these examples reveal that through a reception of Greek mythology, Blake has developed variations of key deities, heroes, and other figures that in some way, shape or form are undergoing change (for better or for worse) that challenges their existing notions of identity. This overarching concept then firmly positions *Mortal Gods* as a Young Adult reception of Classical mythology for Blake uses these characters to represent concerns that are relevant to an audience largely beginning to question, develop or challenge their identities in relation to the world and people around them.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Achilles Andromache Aphrodite Ares Athena Atropos Calypso Cassandra Clotho Fates Hector Hera Hermes Lachesis Moirai Monsters Odyssey Persephone Poseidon Trojan War
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth	Adversity Conflict Death Emotions Journeys Memory Morality Romance

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Culture

Further Reading

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