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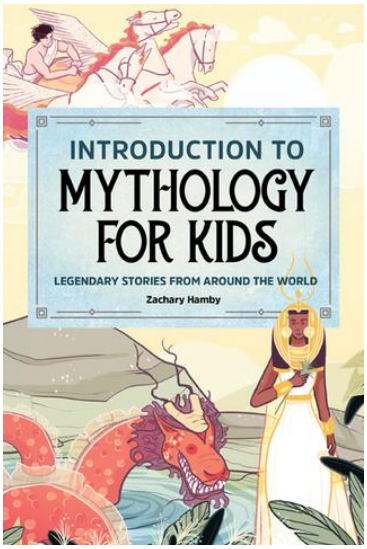
Zachary Hamby , Kailey Whitman

Introduction to Mythology for Kids: Legendary Stories from Around the World

United States (2020)

TAGS: Helios Phaethon Zeus





Courtesy of the Author

General information	
Title of the work	Introduction to Mythology for Kids: Legendary Stories from Around the World
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	UK, USA, worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2020
First Edition Details	Zachary Hamby, *Introduction to Mythology for Kids: Legendary Stories from Around the World*. Rockridge Press, Emeryville, CA, 2020, 98 pp.
ISBN	9781647393205
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Children (6–9 years old)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
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



Courtesy of the Author

Zachary Hamby (Author)

Zachary Hamby is an English teacher in rural Missouri. For the past sixteen years, he has taught a high school mythology course, which began as a simple teaching assignment but grew into a passion. He has written the *Reaching Olympus* series, the *Mythology for Teens* series, *The Hero's Guidebook*, and *Introduction to Mythology for Kids*. He resides in the Ozarks with his wife, Rachel (also an English teacher), and their two children, Luke and Jane. For more information about Zachary visit his website www.creativeenglishteacher.com or contact him by email at zachary@creativeenglishteacher.com

Bio prepared by 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 have been a high-school English teacher for 16 years, and right from the beginning a mythology elective has been a part of my course load. I quickly learned in order for my students to relate to ancient myths, I would need to adapt them into an appealing format. Creating my own mythology teaching materials led to the publication of a series of textbooks and my own website — through which I was approached by a publisher to write my first book of myths for children.

Selecting the myths was a difficult process simply because there are so many wonderful myths from which to choose, but I ended up selecting the myths which offer readers the most entertainment and the best life lessons. One of the best reasons to study myths is for the wisdom they teach. When writing a book for children, another challenge is making the myths age appropriate without losing the storytelling power of the originals.

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

Young readers are drawn to imaginative worlds, and that is what ancient myths provide. Studying mythology is like studying a map of the human imagination. Anything and everything can happen in a myth, and that makes them wondrous and timeless.

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?

Although I do not have a background in classical education, I have a small library of resources I have collected throughout the years. I have utmost respect for Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* although she herself admits she did not re-tell the myths for the purpose of entertainment. Her approach is scholarly; she gives you a full, well-researched version of the myths, which is wonderful for authors like me, who get the job of adapting them with storytelling style!

4. Why did you choose these specific myths for your book? Did your personal teaching experience influence your choice of myths?

As I selected the myths for my book, I based my selections on two criteria: what they had to say and how well they said it. All of the stories in the book clearly reflect their cultures, and, just as importantly, they are good stories. My wish is that readers find them both educational and entertaining.

I was already familiar with many of the myths since I had taught them before in my classroom; however, some of them were new finds — which have since become part of my classroom curriculum, of course.

5. How concerned were you with 'accuracy' or 'fidelity' to the original?

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Adapting ancient stories for modern audiences is a balancing act. On one side, I want to preserve fidelity to the original myth. After all, my version may be the only version someone ever reads, and I want to represent it accurately; however, on the other side, I want to make the story accessible and entertaining to modern readers because if they do not enjoy the myth, they won't seek out more. Meeting both of these goals may seem like an impossibility (and I'm sure I haven't always achieved it), but this is what guides my adaptation process.

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

In just a few weeks I will be releasing a new book called World Mythology for Beginners, which features a selection of Greek and Roman myths among 50 myths from around the world. While the book is not written expressly for children, all of the stories could be enjoyed by children and adults alike. Another book of mine is The Hero's Guidebook, which adapts the Hero's Journey (Joseph Campbell's monomyth) for kids using references to books, movies, and even video games.

For more information about Introduction to Mythology for Kids, visit my website, which includes free excerpts, by clicking here.

For more information about World Mythology for Beginners, visit this link.

For more information about The Hero's Guidebook, visit this link.

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



Kailey Whitman (Illustrator)

Kailey Whitman is an American illustrator and designer. Her works have appeared in a number of magazines and books, for example, *Wildwood*, *Coraline*, *A way between worlds* and more.

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Source:

Kaileywhitman.com (accessed: October 20, 2021)

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Additional information

Summary

This book offers various myths from around the world accompanied by page-long colourful illustrations. There is also an introduction on the nature of myths.

The book includes the following myths: Momotaro the peach boy; Gilgamesh and Enkidu; Vasilisa the wise; Anansi and the Sky God's stories; Finn MacCool faces a giant; Thor and Loki in the land of the giants; Maui slows the sun; Gluscabi and the wind eagle; the dragon's pearl; the search for the magic lake; Phaethon and the chariot of the sun; Isis and Osiris.

The book includes a glossary, references on myth and resources.

Analysis

At first the choice of myths presented in this volume might seem random and eclectic. However, there are similar themes which connect them to each other. In his introduction, the author explains that myths fill us with wonder and that they are ancient stories told by people who wondered about the workings of the world. He then adds, "myths also have lessons to teach. The heroes of myths go on adventures, and along the way, they learn lessons about right and wrong (sometimes the hard way). As you journey along with them, you can learn the same lessons." [location 55]. In this statement, the author argues that myths have a moral of their own as well as a pedagogical aim; there is a lesson to be learnt from them.

The author concludes that "Although the myths in this book come from all around the world, look for similarities within them. Since myths show a group of people's hopes, dreams, and fears, these similarities show us that maybe people are not as different as we might think." [location 61]. This is the main message of this volume; it shows by a careful depiction of various myths, that there are indeed similarities between humans all around the world, even if they live in different geographical environments or possess different cultural traits. In the end, there are recurring themes in myths which unite humans, such as families, journeys etc.

In this volume, the stories focus mainly on the adventures of children with which his readers can identify and on family and journeys. Each myth relates its own kind of family, friends and unique adventure,

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whether they are a wondrous Japanese peach boy, or the god Maui who worries about his mother; the relations between parents and children is accentuated in these myths.

Regarding the Greek myth of Phaethon, the author narrates the myth while implementing pedagogical morals. The adapted myth here appears to be taken from the second book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, including parts about the constellations on his celestial path and the scorching of the earth. Phaethon tells his father Helios that his friends do not believe him that the god is his father and they mock him. Helios then replies, ""Then they are not truly your friends. You have nothing to prove to them. Take my advice — not my chariot." [p. 69].

This is an insertion of an anti-bullying message to the young readers. If they do not listen to it, they might end up in trouble, just as Phaethon. Phaethon himself does not heed his father's warning, acting carelessly. Yet when he loses control over the chariot, he cries, ""Wait! Please! I've learned my lesson! I no longer want to drive the chariot!" [p. 71].

The lesson and moral of the story are accentuated by the author, in accordance with his introductory statement regarding the lessons the myths can teach us. The end of Phaethon is sensitively discussed. Zeus throws his thunderbolt at the chariot and Phaethon falls like a falling star and is not seen since. It is obvious that he has perished, yet the author prefers to tell his end more delicately due to the intended young audience.

Another lesson this myth has to teach us is about geography and climate. The author explains that "because of his carelessness, the earth now has places that are dry and scorched as well as those that are green and growing." [p.72]

There is a hidden ecological message here as well. Due to Phaethon's carelessness for the planet, he ruined parts of the land and nothing can grow there anymore. This is a lesson the readers should pay attention to and treat our world with respect.

Helios Phaethon Zeus

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and

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Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Emotions Friendship Journeys Parents (and children)
Addenda	The review refers to the Kindle edition.

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