Michelle Wyatt, "Entry on: Gifts from the Gods: Ancient Words and Wisdom from Greek and Roman Mythology by Gareth Hinds, Lise Lunge-Larsen", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1396. Entry version as of November 07, 2026.

Gareth Hinds , Lise Lunge-Larsen

Gifts from the Gods: Ancient Words and Wisdom from Greek and Roman Mythology

USA (2011)

TAGS: Achilles Arachne Athena Epimetheus Fates Fortuna Furies Graces Hephaestus Hero(es) Hypnos Janus Minerva Muses Narcissus Nemesis Nymphs Pan Pandora Prometheus Sirens Tantalus Victoria Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Gifts from the Gods: Ancient Words and Wisdom from Greek and Roman Mythology
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	USA, UK, Canada, Australia
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2011
First Edition Details	Lise Lunge-Larsen and Gareth Hinds, *Gifts from the Gods: Ancient Words and Wisdom from Greek and Roman Mythology*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 2011, 90 pp.
ISBN	9780547152295
Genre	Mythologies, Myths, Picture books
Target Audience	Children (Recommended for readers aged 9-12; potential appeal for a wider audience)
Author of the Entry	Michelle Wyatt, University of New England, michellewyatt5@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk

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Creators



Gareth Hinds , b. 1971
(Illustrator)

Gareth Hinds is an award-winning illustrator from Washington DC. A graduate of Parson's School of Design, also having studied at the Rochester Institute of Technology, he creates computer games and critically-acclaimed graphic novels that are based on classic works of literature. Some of his graphic titles include *The Iliad* (2010) and *The Odyssey* (2010), and his novels can be found in bookstores and English classrooms across the United States. He taught at the Massachusetts College of Art in 2001, and his works have appeared in various exhibitions, including those of the New York Historical Society and the Society of Illustrators. He is also a contributor to periodicals like *The Onion*, *Game Developer* and the *Weekly Dig*. His latest graphic title, however, is *Poe: Stories and Poems* (2017).

Sources:

Official website (accessed May 6, 2021);

une.edu.au (accessed May 6, 2021).

Bio prepared by Michelle Wyatt, University of New England, michellewyatt5@gmail.com

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Lise Lunge-Larsen , b. 1955
(Author)

Lise Lunge-Larsen grew up in Norway, where her childhood home doubled as an antiquarian bookstore, and she was later educated in the United States. She holds a Masters Degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Minnesota, with a minor in Children's Literature, and she has a keen interest in using folktales and storytelling for teaching English to foreign language students. From 1981-87 she both instructed and directed the English Second Language program at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minnesota. She also served as an adjunct faculty member at the Hamline University in St. Paul, between 1982-1990, before beginning teaching Children's Literature at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, in 1990 and 1994. She speaks English, German and French alongside her native Norwegian, and she has thrice won the Minnesota Book Award. Her award winning titles include *The Tale of the Troll with no Heart in his Body, and Other Tales of Trolls from Norway* (1999), *The Race of the Birkebeiners* (2001) and *Tales of the Hidden Folk: Stories of Fairies, Gnomes, Selkies, and Other Hidden Folk* (2004). Around her home in Duluth, Minnesota, Lunge-Larsen is affectionately known as "The Troll Lady" for her ongoing engagement with Norway's mythical creatures.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: May 6, 2021);

gale.com (accessed: May 6, 2021).

Bio prepared by Michelle Wyatt, University of New England, michellewyatt5@gmail.com

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Additional information

Summary

Gifts from the Gods: Ancient Words and Wisdom from Greek and Roman Mythology is a collection of stories that function as an annotated index of words and phrases taken from classical mythology. The stories of Achilles, Pandora, Fortuna, the Furies and the Fates, among others, are retold for late childhood readers alongside vivid illustrations that convey much in the way of emotion and drama. As with many graphic novels, there are speech balloons, including one quoting the opening line of Homer's *Odyssey*, and the opening of Pandora's box is drawn with sound-effect lettering.

While there are no numbered chapters, the work consists of seventeen stories and each is preceded by a page highlighting the word or phrase inherited from the following story. These words are annotated with their modern definitions alongside short passages taken from works of children's and YA fiction where readers may have encountered them in their modern usage. For example, there are passages shared from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, Hans Cristian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* and from the Lemony Snicket books.

The author shares her rationale for the creation of the text in an author's note towards the end pages where she comments further on the proliferation of words and meanings derived from classical mythology. Here, she also lists the corresponding Greek and Roman names for the gods alongside each deity's function in the classical pantheon. A generous bibliography reveals that while the author has consulted the ancient poets Hesiod, Homer and Ovid, she has taken further inspiration from a diversity of modern works and scholars in the field.

Analysis

The text explicitly explores some of the contributions made by Greek and Roman mythology to the English language, and the stories adapted in this manner serve as an early introduction to the linguistic and cultural legacies of the classical period. These retellings of classical myth reflect many others, but the focus is skillfully shifted away from elements of sex and violence. For instance, Zeus' predatory behaviour is presented as mere flirtatiousness, and while Athena still turns Arachne into a spider, there is no mention of Arachne's first

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attempting suicide.

The lifelike illustrations, while complimentary to the prose, are somewhat more suggestive of the violence in classical myth with images of war, strife, power and hubris, and this pictorial acknowledgement may provide young readers with pause to contemplate histories of violence and the beliefs that have sustained them. Figures are drawn in the garb of the classical world, and there are columned buildings with intricate details. Zeus can be found trotting around wearing ancient garments, lightning bolt in hand, and aerial images give the reader a sense of having sound perspective on the action. While some images take a full page, the skillful placement of vignettes also provide the text with a vivid sense of theatre. At the end of each story, there are faint illustrations that complement further commentary on the reverberations of language from classical mythology, and the cultural legacy of the classical world is also suggested by illustrations of certain sculptures, of Da Vinci, Vasari and Shakespeare at work, and of the National Archeological Museum of Athens.

While the book is informative and interesting, and likely to attract more studious young readers of classical mythology, the clever illustrations surely serve to engage those children who demand a little more theatre from their literature. The text ultimately functions to inspire the curiosity of young readers to further exploration of classical myth and etymology.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Achilles Arachne Athena Epimetheus Fates Fortuna Furies Graces Hephaestus Hero(es) Hypnos Janus Minerva Muses Narcissus Nemesis Nymphs Pan Pandora Prometheus Sirens Tantalus Victoria Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Historical figures History Intertextuality Knowledge Learning Names Past

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Further Reading

Addis, Ferdie, *Opening Pandora's Box*, London: Michael O'Mara Books, 2011.

D'Aulaire, Ingri, and Edgar Parin, *D'Aulaires Book of Greek Myths*, New York: Doubleday, 1962.

Duborsarsky, Ursula, and Thoby Riddle, *The Word Spy*, Melbourne; Penguin Group, 2008.

Zafarris, Jess, *Once Upon a Word*, Emeryville: Rockridge Press, 2020.

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