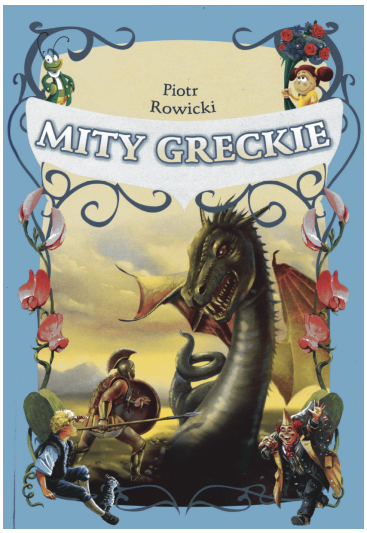
Piotr Rowicki , Iwona Walaszek

# Greek Myths [Mity greckie]

*Poland (2010)*

TAGS: Ariadne Cadmus Daedalus Demeter Epimetheus Europa Hades Icarus Kore (Persephone) Minos Minotaur Pandora Prometheus Theseus Zeus



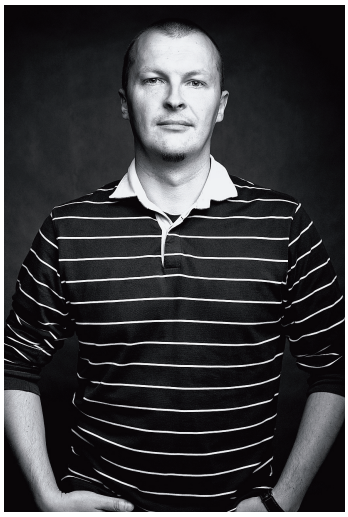

Courtesy of the publisher.

| General information | |
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| *Country/countries of popularity* | Poland |
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| *Target Audience* | Children |
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## Creators



Photograph courtesy of the Author.

**Piotr Rowicki , b. 1975**
**(Author)**

Piotr Rowicki is a historian, prose writer, and playwright, born in 1975 in Ostrów Mazowiecka (central Poland) and still resides there. A history graduate from the University of Białystok. Author of many detective (often historical) novels, books for children, and plays. He won many national literary competitions (prose and poetry). In 2009, he received a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture in the field of theatre. His best-known work is *Fatum*, 2011, a collection of ten short criminal stories which take us back to Baroque Gdańsk.

Source:

*Piotr Rowicki*, http://oficynka.pl/autorzy/piotrrowicki/ (accessed: March 20, 2013, no longer available).

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**Iwona Walaszek (Illustrator)**



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## Additional information

Summary

Based on: Katarzyna Marciniak, Elżbieta Olechowska, Joanna Kłos, Michał Kucharski (eds.), *Polish Literature for Children & Young Adults Inspired by Classical Antiquity: A Catalogue*, Faculty of "Artes Liberales", Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2013, 444 pp.

This is a retelling of some of the most popular Greek myths (Prometheus, Daedalus and Icarus, Pandora, Ariadne, Europa, Demeter and Kore) addressed to young children. Many of the unsuitable details are eliminated or modified.

Prometheus – his name means "forethought" – was the son of the Titan, Iapetus. He was the creator of humanity. The goddess Athena taught him architecture, astronomy, medicine, and crafts. He shared all that knowledge with humans. Later, he stole fire from the gods and gave it to the people. The theft enraged Zeus, who decided to punish both Prometheus and humans. He flooded human settlements and chained Prometheus to a rock in the Caucasus Mountains, sending an eagle to devour his ever-regenerating liver. The story ends with the father of the gods forgiving Prometheus and those that benefitted from his crime.

Daedalus was a brilliant Athenian architect. He built the Labyrinth for the king Minos of Crete. The Labyrinth was designed as a home for the Minotaur, a half-man, half-bull. After he built the Labyrinth, Daedalus was not allowed to leave Crete. He decided to construct wings made from wax and feathers, for him and his son, Icarus, as means of escape. When all was ready for departure, Daedalus warned Icarus not to fly too high because the sun's heat could melt the wax or too low because the surf would soak the feathers.

Pandora was the first woman created by the gods. She received a gift from them, a box she was not allowed to open. But curiosity won, and she opened the box, releasing evils that now plague humanity.

King Minos of Crete's daughter, Ariadne, falls in love with Theseus when he arrives in Crete to kill the Minotaur. She decides to help him. She gives him a ball of thread which he uses to find a way out of the Labyrinth.

Europa, who gave her name to the continent of Europe, was a beautiful daughter of the Phoenician king, Agenor. Zeus saw Europa



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as she was gathering flowers close to the seashore and instantly fell in love with her.

Demeter was the goddess of agriculture and the fertility of the soil. Her daughter, Kore, was kidnapped by Hades and became his wife, the Queen of the Underworld. Her mother suffered and brought famine to the world until Zeus agreed to let Kore return from the Underworld to the world of the living for part of the year.

## Analysis

The author adapted six selected myths for children. In the adaptation, the protagonists are young, a device that reduces the distance between the myth and the reader. The language is well adjusted to children; it is informal and full of humour, and colourful illustrations draw the reader's attention.

The story begins with an amusing family scene: Prometheus, as a bored child, is told by his father, who never used to be bored when he was his age, to find something interesting to do. Drought reduced the river to mud, and the young Prometheus cannot bathe – he does not use the mud as a beauty mask as women do (p. 2). He plays in the mud forming various shapes, and finally, makes a man out of the mud. His relatives do not appreciate or admire his creations (pp. 3–4); despite the lack of approval, the boy continues to work on his living project (p. 4). This first scene shows how the author tries to bring the mythical hero closer to the child reader by putting him in typical, everyday situations. Parents often have no time or desire to play with their children; on the other hand, children are often unable to interest their parents in what they are trying to do – drawings, building blocks or modelling play dough. It is easy for the readers to sympathize with Prometheus, who finds himself in situations familiar to their reality. This similarity of characters is strengthened by the dialogues using informal, everyday speech rather than archaic and sophisticated "mythical" language.

The author shows families in which children protagonists are loved and important. Agenor searches for his abducted daughter everywhere. Demeter grieves and looks for Kore herself, not as a mighty goddess but like an ordinary mother who lost her child. Even if the mythical families can be odd or unusual, like Minos' family struggling with the birth of a monstrous child, they care for their children's safety and wellbeing. Unlike other interpreters of the myth,



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| | Rowicki explicitly calls Minotaur's demise "a murder" and shows Pasiphae as a grieving mother. The father – Minos – gets angry and blames Daedalus, the builder of the Cretan Labyrinth, whom he bans from leaving the island. However, when Rowicki deals with Theseus' myth, the murder is not as evident – Theseus grabs Minotaur's furry hide and throws him into the sea – the monster could have survived.<br><br>The six short myths for children can be regarded as a basic introduction to Greek mythology. The valuable content, presented amusingly, can be easily assimilated by children and may encourage them to read more mythical stories. |
| Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts | Ariadne Cadmus Daedalus Demeter Epimetheus Europa Hades Icarus Kore (Persephone) Minos Minotaur Pandora Prometheus Theseus Zeus |
| Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture | Boys Child, children Conflict Family Humour Love Parents (and children) |
| Further Reading | *Piotr Rowicki*, http://oficynka.pl/autorzy/piotrrowicki/ (accessed: March 20, 2013, no longer available). |



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