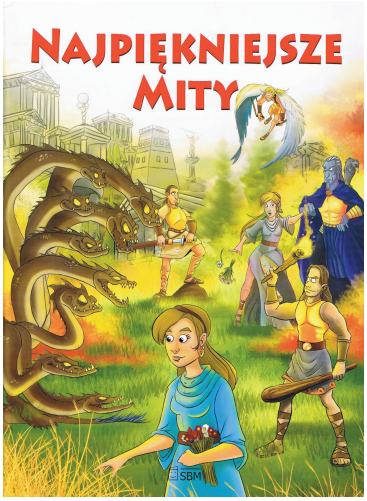
Summary: Karolina Zieleniewska, Analysis: Marta Pszczolińska, "Entry on: The Most Beautiful Myths [Najpiękniejsze mity] by Elżbieta Safarzyńska, Mateusz Stefanko", peer-reviewed by Katarzyna Marciniak and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1480. Entry version as of November 01, 2026.

Elżbieta Safarzyńska , Mateusz Stefanko

The Most Beautiful Myths [Najpiękniejsze mity]

Poland (2011)

TAGS: Argonauts Ariadne Athena Atlas Chiron / Cheiron Circe Daedalus Demeter Hades Heracles Hercules Icarus Jason Kore (Persephone) Medea Odysseus / Ulysses Polyphemus Sisyphus Thanatos Theseus Trojan War



Courtesy of the Wydawnictwo SBM.

General information	
Title of the work	The Most Beautiful Myths [Najpiękniejsze mity]
Country of the First Edition	Poland
Country/countries of popularity	Poland
Original Language	Polish
First Edition Date	2011
First Edition Details	Elżbieta Safarzyńska, *Najpiękniejsze mity*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SBM, 2012, 32 pp.
ISBN	9788378450016
Genre	Anthology of myths*, Myths
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Summary: Karolina Zieleniewska, University of Warsaw, k.zieleniewska@hotmail.com Analysis: Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw, m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl
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Creators



Photograph of the Author with her daughter Martyna, courtesy of the Author.

Elżbieta Safarzyńska , b. 1974
(Author)

Elżbieta Safarzyńska is a contemporary writer and author of many stories for very young readers and teenagers. She is a sociology graduate from the University of Szczecin who admits that she would rather have studied psychology. She wrote the series *Magiczny świat* [Magic World], 2008; *Polskie legendy i podania ludowe* [Polish Legends and Folk Stories], 2009; *Duchy Bałaganiuchy* [Messy Ghosts], 2009; *Zjadacz Snów, czyli historia Smoka Zenobiusza* [The Dream Eater, or the Tale of Zenobius the Dragon], 2009, and others. Classical mythology is only one of many sources of inspiration for this author.

Source:

Tthe material provided by the Author.

Bio prepared by Karolina Zieleniewska, k.zieleniewska@hotmail.com



Mateusz Stefanko (Illustrator)

Mateusz Stefanko lives in Złotoryja. He is an illustrator and a graphic designer. His illustrations for children's books *Najpiękniejsze Mity* and *Kuba i czarodziejskie nożyczki* are available on his fb profile, Mateusz Stefanko Art.

Bio prepared by Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw,

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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.

A selection of Greek myths for very young readers. Includes eight of the most famous stories about ancient gods and heroes: Demeter and Kore, Daedalus and Icarus, Sisyphus, the Trojan Horse, Theseus and Ariadne, Hercules, the Argonauts' journey, and the adventures of Odysseus. The book is aimed at very young children; it contains abbreviated versions of myths made suitable through the elimination of horrors and atrocities.

Analysis

A young target audience requires eliminating or simplifying unsuitable threads, which is a doubly justifiable strategy, especially if the book is only 32 pages long. For instance, Jason's journey has a happy end; Daedalus' myth begins on the island of Crete, not in Athens; Theseus sails home with Ariadne and does not abandon her on Delos; only the Spartans take part in the Trojan War; Heracles does not die on his funeral pyre because the gods heal him. Not all instances of suffering and cruelty are eliminated from the myths: Heracles kills his children, Hippolyta, Geryon and Augeas, tricks Atlas and is called "clever" (p. 24); his wife Deianira commits suicide.

Parts of the text would benefit from being read with an adult present who could reassure children, afraid and concerned for the safety of the protagonists. This is the case with the story of the abduction of Persephone. The myth starts in a mythical meadow; in the description, the author uses many diminutives: little violets, little plants, little flowers and so on. It is the meadow where Kore was enjoying a beautiful day. Then, in a terrifying contrast, Hades, the god of the Underworld, kidnaps Kore laughing wickedly, and they both plunge into an abyss. The narrative moves on to show the mother's grief and despair, while the reader remains uncertain of the fate of the abducted girl. A gloomy illustration shows the kidnapper looking like a zombie crushing the delicate hand of the terrified girl. The fact that Hades fell in love with Kore is hardly comforting to the readers as

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they do not know if the girl could forgive him and reciprocate his feelings.

Another terrifying character is Thanatos in the myth of Sisyphus. As Sisyphus seems to be a pleasant man and everyone likes him, his encounter with the huge, pale, sinister Thanatos, with red eyes and a shining scythe, seems so distressing that it may have been more horrifying than any actual punishment.

In conclusion, retelling the eight myths constitutes an appropriate introduction to Greek mythology. It may encourage readers to reach for more books about classical antiquity and eventually, sources suitable for older audiences and later, hopefully, even original sources.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Argonauts Ariadne Athena Atlas Chiron / Cheiron Circe Daedalus Demeter Hades Heracles Hercules Icarus Jason Kore (Persephone) Medea Odysseus / Ulysses Polyphemus Sisyphus Thanatos Theseus Trojan War
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Death Family Journeys Punishment Suicide Violence War

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