Sonya Nevin, Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Make a Wish, Midas! by Joan Holub, Leslie Patricelli", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy, Dorota Mackenzie, Lisa Maurice and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/296. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Joan Holub , Leslie Patricelli

Make a Wish, Midas!

United States (2015)

TAGS: Architecture Dionysus / Dionysos Metamorphoses (Ovid's) Midas Ovid Pan





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

General information	
Title of the work	Make a Wish, Midas!
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States; United Kingdom; other English-speaking countries
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2015
First Edition Details	Joan Holub, *Make a Wish, Midas!* (Mini Myths). New York: Abrams Appleseed, 2015, 22 pp.
ISBN	9781419709524 / 9781419709524 (Brdbk edition) / 9781613127384 (ebook)
Official Website	abramsbooks.com (accessed: July 27, 2018)
Genre	Alternative histories (Fiction), Didactic fiction, Mythological fiction, Picture books, Toddler book*
Target Audience	Children (c. 0–4)
Author of the Entry	Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

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.

Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Dorota Mackenzie, University of Warsaw, dorota.mackenzie@gmail.com Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, mauril68@gmail.com Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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Creators



Photo courtesy of Joan Holub.

Joan Holub , b. 1956
(Author)

Joan Holub is a prolific children's author from the USA. Graduated from college in Texas with a fine arts degree. Worked as an art director at Scholastic trade books in New York. She has written and/or illustrated over 150 children's books. She has developed a range of series for teenagers on mythological themes: *Goddess Girls*, set in Mount Olympus Academy, *Grimmtastic Tales* series, set in Grimm Academy, *Thunder Girls*, about Norse gods set in Asgard Academy, and *Heroes in Training*, in which the male Greek gods, as very young men, set out on a range of adventures. For pre-school children, Jan Holub has written on a range of topics including several works with religious and historical themes. These include: *This Little President*; *This Little Trailblazer*, *Hooray for St. Patrick's Day!*, and *Light the Candles: A Hanukkah Lift-the-Flap Book*. Joan Holub trained in fine art and worked as an art director at a graphic design company before becoming a children's illustrator and then author.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Profile at the penguinrandomhouse.com (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Profile at the simonandschuster.com (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Bio prepared by Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk and Allison Rosenblum, Bar-Ilan University, allie.rose89@gmail.com and Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Questionnaire

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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 learned to love Greek and Norse mythology in elementary school. I'm very comfortable adapting the framework of an existing myth or fairy tale by pushing it into a different setting, adding humor, and/or building in a nonfiction component. Staying true to the essential core of each myth along the way is important to me. A young *Goddess Girls* reader once told me she enjoyed the series because she "learned something". In other words, while she liked being entertained, she appreciated that her familiarity and factual understanding of the original myths was broadened at the same time.

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

Kids have questions about their world. So it's interesting to them to learn how ancient Greeks and other cultures answered questions about how their world worked in exciting tales of heroes and beasts. How did the sun cross the sky? In a chariot drawn by the god Helios. What caused night? The goddess Nyx's starry cape covered the sky. Thrilling stories of courage and danger, such as Heracles' twelve labors, the Trojan Horse, and the Argonauts never go out of style.

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?

I have an entire shelf of mythology resource books. Some of my favorite go-to sources are the *Scholastic Mythlopedia* series, Edith Hamilton's *Mythology, Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*, and www.theoi.com (accessed: May 28, 2018).

4. How concerned were you with "accuracy" or "fidelity" to the original? (another way of saying that might be – that I think writers are often more "faithful" to originals in adapting its

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spirit rather than being tied down at the level of detail – is this something you thought about?)

Each book in the *Goddess Girls* series (ages 8–12, Simon and Schuster) and *Heroes in Training* series (ages 7–10, Simon and Schuster) is a retelling of one or two Greek myths, with a twist. We stay as true as possible to the core bones of an original myth in order to give young readers a good understanding, but we include kid situations and humor to entertain. As an example, in *Goddess Girls #1: Athena the Brain*, Athena is summoned to attend Mount Olympus Academy, where Zeus is the principal. MOA teachers include Mr. Cyclops, who teaches Hero-ology, a class where students are graded on their abilities to maneuver small hero figures such as Odysseus, around a gameboard to enact the Trojan War, etc. Meanwhile, Athena, who is the goddess of invention among other things, inadvertently turns mean-girl Medusa's hair to snakes and gives her the power to turn mortals to stone by means of a shampoo-like invention called Snakeypoo at the MOA invention fair.

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

Suzanne Williams and I have written a new middle grade series called *Thunder Girls* (accessed: May 28, 2018), which is a twist on Norse mythology featuring strong girl characters. The first book Freya and the Magic Jewel releases May 2018 for ages 8–12, published by Simon and Schuster.

Prepared by Allison Rosenblum, Bar-Ilan University, allie.rose89@gmail.com and Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Leslie Patricelli (Illustrator)

Leslie Patricelli is an illustrator based in Hailey, Idaho, USA. Patricelli majored in communications from the University of Washington, and

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Photo courtesy of Leslie Patricelli.

took classes at the School of Visual Concepts in Seattle. She first worked as an advertising copywriter. Her work is primarily aimed at books for a preschool audience and carried out for Candlewick Press. She has recently begun branching out into writing children's literature. She created Rover the dog for Windows XP help.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: January 13, 2018).

Profile at the goodreads.com (accessed: June 26, 2018).

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Additional information

Summary

The character "Midas" here is a pre-school-aged child in the modern era. He loves his green toy dinosaur and the colour yellow. Given a series of choices, he always picks the yellow option. During a painting session with yellow paint he begins to wish that all of the things in his life – his house, his car, his mother – were yellow. In a moment of impulsiveness, he turns and paints his stuffed green dinosaur yellow. Now his beloved dinosaur is painted, Midas understands his mistake. He bends down to touch the dinosaur as if it is ill. In tears, he cries "No more yellow", as his mother comes running. We see him watching the dinosaur go round in a washing machine. The story concludes with him hugging his cleaned dinosaur, with the caption, "I like yellow, but I love you just the way you are." A one-page summary of the myth follows, written for adults or slightly older children (c. 4–8).

Analysis

This short and lovely book perfectly and brilliantly captures the essence and moral of the myth of King Midas and the gold in an intelligent but informal way. It is part of a beautifully illustrated series that creatively transposes ancient myths into the real-life scenarios faced by pre-school-aged children. Subtle ancient-style features are included in the design of each volume in the series: a brightly-coloured Greek key runs vertically along the cover beside the spine; the series name is written on a scroll, with the "S" of "myths" written in a jagged, inscription-like style; on the spine, the main character is shown standing upon a Doric column, with the name of the book written on the column, and the image of the character atop a column is repeated in the interior title-page.

Toddler Midas loves yellow above all colours. He even wishes his mother were yellow. When he colours his beloved dinosaur toy yellow it upsets him and he exclaims "no more yellow". Luckily the toy can be washed back to its original colour and Midas admits that he likes yellow but loves his toy the way it is. A theme, or moral lesson, is included in the fore-notes in the style of a dedication. In *Make a Wish, Midas!*, the dedication is "To wishing and wanting". This plays out in the book through Midas' wish to make all of the things he loves yellow – with yellow as a witty stand-in for the mythical Midas' wish to turn things into gold (as seen in the myth's most famous iteration, Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 11.90–194). As in the traditional myth, there is a

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cautionary note in the tale, as the book invites young readers to act and choose carefully and thoughtfully. This cautionary note works on multiple levels. At its simplest level, this story urges children to look after their toys; to avoid damaging them by thoughtlessly colouring them or otherwise changing them. Many young children go through phases in which they are somewhat obsessive about a particular colour or other theme, and it is likely that children will recognise this in Midas. The book's moral cautions children against going too far with this instinct, specifically against trying to change things to make them conform to their own desires. Midas learns that thoughtless, over-hasty wish fulfillment does not really bring contentment. There is also a pro-diversity message within the story's moral. The phrase, "Just the way you are", has a history of use in encouraging diversity and acceptance, promoting the idea that people do not need to change key aspects of their identity (usually ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or religion) in order to be likable. Midas' realisation that his dinosaur is not the "wrong" colour is part of his growth into a more accepting and less egocentric view of the world. As this retelling features a young black family, this book also conveys the message that Greco-Roman myth is for everyone, regardless of ethnicity. Through these messages, *Make a Wish, Midas!* follows the tradition of myths as moral instructors for children and communicates the traditional moral of this myth by discouraging people from acting on thoughtless desires. Rather unusually, the main story does not touch on the other traditional association of this myth – discouragement of greed. As the readership is anticipated to be very young, it is age-appropriate that the moral message is not over-diffused; warnings against greed would arguably have been less relevant for young children than discouragement from acting over-hastily, which is perhaps the reason that the greed element was not emphasised.

The summary at the end of the book describes how Dionysus offered Midas a wish to thank him for a favour. The results make Midas "very sad", and Dionysus tells him how to "wash away his 'golden touch'". The summary stresses Midas' greed rather than his thoughtlessness, meaning that there is a slight discrepancy of emphasis between story and myth summary. This may have been influenced by the strong association of this myth with moral cautions concerning greed and the anticipation that adult readers would expect to find this theme somewhere within the book. The tale of Midas and the ass' ears, also found in Ovid, is omitted.

This series introduces very young children to some of the names and

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	images associated with antiquity, preparing them for encountering these images and characters again in different contexts. At a very fundamental level, these books also act on and communicate the idea that ancient mythology contains concepts that can help in children's development – social and emotional. Children at the outer edge of the age bracket for these books can also enjoy the summary that comes at the end of the book, which creates the opportunity for an early encounter with the sophisticated concept of characters reappearing in different contexts and stories, and stories working on different levels – things which are likely to stimulate thought and a nuanced approach to stories and story-telling. This aspect is reinforced in *Make a Wish, Midas!* by the observation in the summary that "in some versions of this myth" Midas turned his daughter to gold. This book is a perfect example of how an ancient myth can be conveyed clearly with few words. It is very helpful that the author included the real mythological tale at the end for reference. It is truly a tale, as the cover says "for the young and the young at heart".
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Architecture Dionysus / Dionysos Metamorphoses (Ovid's) Midas Ovid Pan
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits Child, children Gaining understanding Learning Morality Multiculturalism Parents (and children)
Further Reading	Griffiths, Alan H., "Midas" in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003 (ed. pr. 1949), 978. Hawthorne, Nathaniel, "The Golden Touch" in *A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys*, Boston: Ticknor, Reed and Fields, 1852. Roberts, Deborah H., "The Metamorphosis of Ovid in Retellings of Myth for Children", in Lisa Maurice, ed., *The Reception of Ancient Greece and Rome in Children's Literature. Heroes and Eagles*, Leiden:

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Brill, 2015, 233–256.

Weinlich, Barbara, "The Metanarrative of Picture Books: ‘Reading’ Greek Myth for (and to) Children", in Lisa Maurice, ed., *The Reception of Ancient Greece and Rome in Children’s Literature. Heroes and Eagles*, Leiden: Brill, 2015, 83–104.

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