Oliver Brookes, "Entry on: Lego Minifigures (Series): Battle-Goddess by The LEGO Company ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/315. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

The LEGO Company

# Lego Minifigures (Series): Battle-Goddess

*(2014)*

TAGS: Athena






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

| General information | |
|---|---|
| *Title of the work* | Lego Minifigures (Series): Battle-Goddess |
| *Country/countries of popularity* | Worldwide |
| *First Edition Date* | 2014 |
| *First Edition Details* | Battle-Goddes from Lego Minifigures Series 12 (set number: 71007) was released in October 2014. |
| *Official Website* | lego.com (accessed: August 3, 2018). |
| *Genre* | Blocks*, Figurines*, Mythological fiction, Toy and movable books |
| *Target Audience* | Children (5+) |
| *Author of the Entry* | Oliver Brookes, The Royal College of Nursing, orbrookes@gmail.com |
| *Peer-reviewer of the Entry* | Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk<br>Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@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.

## Creators



**The LEGO Company (Company)**

The LEGO Group (accessed: July 6, 2018) is a toy manufacturer founded in 1932 by Ole Kirk Kristiansen, in Bilund, Denmark. Having no overt classical associations, they are most famous for their manufacture of the LEGO brick first released in 1958, and minifigures as of 1974. LEGO define themselves as providing "good quality play" through their products that enrich a child's life, and lay the foundation for later adult development. All of their products are based on the underlying philosophy of 'learning and development through play*.

The LEGO Brand identifies their core values as "imagination, creativity, fun, learning, caring, and quality'. Through this play, they believe they believe that we learn 'by putting things together, taking them apart, thereby creating new things, and developing new ways of thinking about ourselves and the world (accessed: May 24, 2018). Aside from the physicality of construction that LEGO offers, there is also the way of learning and development through the use of minifigures. A standard LEGO minifigure, for instance those found in the City theme, may fulfil roles in the police, fire department, or airports. However, as LEGO has grown increasingly in popularity, so has its connection with popular culture. Some of its most popular sets are within the Star Wars, Marvel, Disney, and DC Comics franchises.

Prepared by Oliver Brookes, The Royal College of Nursing, orbrookes@gmail.com



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## Additional information

Summary

The classically-themed LEGO minifigures have one key similarity. This is that they have an instantly recognisable iconography. The simplification of these key figures makes them easier to distinguish and identify. These figures can be identified by their core attributes by individuals with varying levels of knowledge of the Classical world. One of the figures chosen by LEGO to be adapted into this form is the Greek goddess Athena. Athena has the strongest, and most identifiable, iconography of the ancient Greek pantheon. It could be for this reason that the goddess was adapted for minifigure form. As Farshtey explains in a volume on the history of these figures, it becomes immediately possible to tell where a minifigure 'comes from and what kind of job it has by looking at the details of its…clothing and its accessories*.' She is instantly recognisable, with the different elements of her iconography easily translatable to functional accessories.

* Farshtey, G., 2013, 8.

Analysis

The LEGO depiction of the goddess is consistent with Ancient painted and sculpted depictions. It seems that the addition of long flowing blonde hair has been added to emphasise her femininity. This could be seen as an attempt to make the goddess explicitly female. Certain elements are exaggerated to capitalise on the typified image of the Classical world. This is particularly evident in the repeated geometric motif surrounding the shield's edge. However, it is these simple stylistic additions that will allow the individuals to identify it as 'something Ancient'. These can be identified as such: Name, helmet, dress, accessories, armaments, aegis.

There is a need for the child to have some degree of familiarity with these myths, concepts, and imagery, irregardless of their complexity. The minifigure depiction of the goddess builds upon this as it is a highly concentrated collection of her iconography with allusion to her role in the Classical world, and with particular reference to individual myths.



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Athena possesses both masculine and feminine traits. Through her fluidity she is a deity with many functions, various of which overlap with those of other gods. She has associations with war, craft, horses, her virginity, justice, and she is a frequent patron of heroes*. Many of these elements are manifested in the minifigure's iconography.

The name of the minifigure is only viewable through accessing the minifigure section of the LEGO website. This forces the viewer, regardless of age to draw upon their own experiences to form the context and narrative for the minifigure. No deities in the LEGO minifigure series are named directly. In this instance, the figure that corresponds with the iconography of Athena is named 'Battle-Goddess'. This name manifests and simplifies an aspect of a multi-faceted deity. This recalls Athena's role in mythological conflicts and her perceived role in historical conflicts too. This offers a stark contrast to another classically-themed minifigure, Spartan Warrior, who shares some of Athena's iconographical elements, but who is designed to be more masculine.

The helmet is a key iconographic element that links the figurine to the Classical World. The figure's white crest immediately distinguishes it from the red used for the Roman Commander and Spartan Warrior minifigures. The helmet appears closest to the Chalcidian type. Other examples of Greek helmets may have been avoided as the nose and cheek guards would obscure the figures face. It is typical for a painted or sculpted depiction of Athena to wear a Corinthian helmet pushed onto the back of her head, although the iconography is not restricted to this and other helmets also prove popular. It is likely that this type was avoided due to technical limitations of fixing the accessory to the minifigure's head. Following on from other Classical figures associated with warfare, the helmet immediately draws the attention of the viewer and creates a direct association with warfare. The long blonde hair that is fixed to the helmet contrasts the goddess' hair that is typically short and tied. This placed an emphasis on the femininity of the figure, creating a contrast to the helmet.

The wooden shafted spear is a typical aspect of the iconography of the ancient Athena The golden spear-head used by this minifigure contrasts the grey and silver spear of the Spartan Warrior. The use of brown paint to simulate wood is more realistic, however the colour of the gold emphasises the goddess as a divine being. The addition of the spear reinforces Athena as a martial deity.



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The circular shield is reminiscent of that of the hoplite. This element is recurrent in Athena's iconography and reinforces the martial image of the goddess, and that of a protectress. The shield has a geometric pattern around its outer edge. This is used particularly on Attic red-figure vases in the fifth and fourth centuries to contain mythic scenes on vases. This geometric pattern to an extent also typifies 'Greekness' and allows the viewer to place the figure in the Classical world.

It is likely that the figure of the winged horse or Pegasus is placed on the shield due to its popularity as a mythical motif. Its popularity in contemporary children's culture may be owed in part to Disney's *Hercules* (1997) where Pegasus plays a central part. This motif is popular in painted depictions of the goddess where a figure of a horse, or Pegasus is evident. Whether intentional or not, the addition of the Pegasus motif recalls the popular Corinthian myth of Athena's role in crafting the bridle for Bellerophon.

The minifigure's dress and design has no emphasis on particular style. This is likely due to technical limitations, as the simplification allows the figure to still maintain its primary purpose of play. The front of the figure's feet have a printed simple two line motif that simulates the appearance of sandals, again playing on the notion of 'Greekness', as these would have been worn by both deities and mortals. The torso of the dress, like the shield, has a repeated geometric pattern around the neck. The gold and brown colouring bears comparison to the geometric bases and borders used by vase painters. This colour is in keeping with the figure's colour scheme, whilst the white plays upon the notion of purity. This may perhaps be an allusion to the popular epithet of Athena Parthenos, or to signal her femininity.

To conclude, even in the creation, design, and development of this particular LEGO minifigure, we are able to see the strength of Athena's iconography. These elements are consistent with sculpted and painted depictions throughout the Classical world, and even through slight variations in other cultures. This iconography that is projected onto the minifigure allows the identification of the goddess despite differing levels of knowledge and experience of the Classical World. It is such that the image of gods and goddesses form the ancient world are so embedded into contemporary culture that their image is as recognisable to peoples of all ages, as other figures of history, contemporary society, and culture.



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| | * Deacy, S., 2008. |
| Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts | Athena |
| Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture | Pop culture references Religious beliefs War |
| Further Reading | Deacy, Susan, *Athena*. London: Routledge, 2008.<br><br>Farshtey, Greg and Daniel Lipkowitz, LEGO *Minifigure: Year by Year A Visual History*, London: Dorling Kindersley, 2013.<br><br>LEGO, *LEGO Battle-goddess biography* (accessed: August 3, 2018).<br><br>LEGO Group, *LEGO Group About us* page (accessed: August 3, 2018).<br><br>LEGO Group, *LEGO Group brand* (accessed: August 3, 2018). |



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