Natalia Kapatsoulia , Filippos Mandilaras

Odysseus' Journey [Το ταξίδι του Οδυσσέα (To taxídi tou Odysséa)]

Greece (2012)

TAGS: Calypso Circe Cyclops / Cyclopes Odysseus / Ulysses Polyphemus Poseidon Sirens Troy Underworld





Courtesy of the Publisher. Retrieved from epbooks.gr (accessed: July 5, 2022).

General information	
Title of the work	Odysseus' Journey [Το ταξίδι του Οδυσσέα (To taxídi tou Odysséa)]
Country of the First Edition	Greece
Country/countries of popularity	Greece
Original Language	Greek
First Edition Date	2012
First Edition Details	Filippos Mandilaras, *Το ταξίδι του Οδυσσέα* [To taxídi tou Odysséa], Greek Mythology [Ελληνική Μυθολογία (Ellīnikī Mythología)]. Athens: Papadopoulos Publishing, 2012, 16 pp.
ISBN	9789604844012
Genre	Illustrated works, Instructional and educational works, Mythological fiction, Myths, Picture books
Target Audience	Children (4+)
Author of the Entry	Katerina Volioti, University of Roehampton, Katerina.Volioti@roehampton.ac.uk
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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



Natalia Kapatsoulia (Illustrator)

Natalia Kapatsoulia studied French Literature in Athens, and she worked as a language tutor before embarking on a career as a full-time illustrator of children's books. Kapatsoulia has authored one picture book *Η Μαμά πετάει* [Mom Wants to Fly], which has been translated into Spanish *Mamá quiere volar*. Kapatsoulia, who now lives on the island of Kefalonia, Greece, has collaborated with Filippos Mandilaras on multiple book projects.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Profile at the epbooks.gr (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Bio prepared by Katerina Volioti, University of Roehampton, Katerina.Volioti@roehampton.ac.uk



Filippos Mandilaras , b. 1965 (Author)

Filippos Mandilaras is a prolific and well-known writer of children's illustrated books and of young adults' novels. Mandilaras studied French Literature in Sorbonne, Paris. His latest novel, which was published in May 2016, is entitled *Υπέροχος Κόσμος* [Wonderful World], and it recounts the story of teenage life in a deprived Athenian district. With his illustrated books, Mandilaras aims to encourage parents and teachers to improvise by adding words when reading stories to children. Mandilaras is interested in the anthropology of

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extraordinary creatures and his forthcoming work is about Modern Greek Mythologies.

Sources:

In Greek:

Profile on EP Books' website (accessed: June 27, 2018).

i-read.i-teen.gr (accessed: June 27, 2018).

Public Blog, published 15 September 2015 (accessed: June 27, 2018).

Press Publica, published 28 January 2017 (accessed: June 27, 2018).

Linkedin.com, published published 6 May 2016 (accessed: February 6, 2019).

In English:

Amazon.com (accessed: June 27, 2018).

On Mandoulides' website, published 7 March 2017 (accessed: June 27, 2018).

In German:

literaturfestival.com (accessed: June 27, 2018).

Bio prepared by Katerina Volioti, University of Roehampton, Katerina.Volioti@roehampton.ac.uk

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Additional information

Adaptations

The book is an adaptation of the book published in 2010 within the series *My First Mythology*, published also in English, French and Spanish:

Filippos Mandilaras, *Το ταξίδι του Οδυσσέα* [To taxidi tou Odyssea], Athens: Papadopoulos Publishing, 2010, 36 pp.

Demo of 9 pages available at epbooks.gr (accessed: October 13, 2021).

Summary

The author and the illustrator offer an entertaining account of a well-known story about Odysseus, his companions, and their travels to foreign lands. Ancient figures are made accessible by resembling personas from modern popular culture.

The account begins with the fact that Odysseus sailed from Troy with 12 ships and reached the land of Kikones. Subsequently, Mandilaras writew about the land of the Lotus Eaters, Odysseus' dealings with the Cyclops Polyphemos, and the damages to the fleet incurred by the Laestrygones. The story also mentions the spells of the witch Kirke, Odysseus' descend to Hades to obtain Teiresias' advice, the encounter with the Sirens, and how the ship passed through Skylla and Charybdis. Teiresias' prophesy came true, according to Mandilaras, because at the land of Helios Odysseus' companions killed cattle and this outraged Zeus, who threw the thunderbolt and destroyed the ship. The book ends with Odysseus washed ashore on Kalypso's island. The narrator says that many more trials ensued before Odysseus finally managed to return home.

Analysis

Mandilaras uses a mixture of formal language and colloquialisms that children would be acquainted with. For example, we read that Polyphemos takes a bite out of Odysseus' men (*τους κάνει μια χαψιά*), rather than eating or devouring them. The text rhymes and hence flows more like poetic verse, rather than prose. Lines 1 and 2, as well as 3 and 4 of each verse rhyme. There is also some dialogue in speech bubbles, emulating popular comic magazines.

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Natalia Kapatsoulia's illustrations are very catchy, and accentuate elements of the text. I would like to focus on the illustrations' two main features, gender stereotyping and modernisation, as these are relevant to issues of representing Classical mythology.

Throughout the book, the men are portrayed muscular with facial hair, beards specifically. The illustrations portray men other than Odysseus and his companions as savages. The Kikones are ape like and angry. The Laestrygones are also very savage. Polyphemos, above all, has a massive and grotesque top-heavy body and his wrist metal bands allude to Roman gladiators.

Women are slender and tall, with doll-like figures. They have a tiny waist, long brown hair, and accentuated large eyes, which is a sign of female allure. Kirke, who is supposed to be a witch, is shown holding a magic wand. And yet she is not scary, but pleasing and attractive. She is alluring in a playful way, and far from a malicious witch. All women have young female characteristics and not those of mature individuals. At the very end of the book, Kalypso is depicted like a mermaid with her two legs joined together resembling a tail fin. At the land of the Lotus Eaters, the attractive woman is serving lotuses to the men.

The depiction of the three sirens' facial grimaces and body language (the middle figure has her hand raised as if appealing to the crowd) recalls a girl band from contemporary popular music culture. Another example of modernisation is Teiresias wearing sunglasses. Perhaps children are not expected to know that seers were blind. Yet, Teiresias is parodied by being depicted wearing sunglasses and holding up a wine vessel. Teiresias is transformed from a wise man to a rather comical and laid-back character. He is also in the underworld, where he cannot see well. If there is no sunlight, why is Teiresias wearing shades? It remains a little unclear what purpose(s) the shades are serving. We have different layers of reception here. The mythical character has been watered down and his impairment has been reduced. Shades are also a fashion item in modern popular culture.

There is relatively mild depiction of gore. Odysseus is not shown poking a shaft into the Cyclops' eye, but the Cyclops is depicted bleeding from the eye. In Odysseus' encounter with Kirke, where Odysseus is presumably the male wearing the helmet, Odysseus is shown trying to cut her hair with a sword. It is not explained what that gesture means in the text, which says that Odysseus takes out his sword and forces Kirke to turn his men back to human from pigs.

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Odysseus is threatening her with the sword, not to kill her but to cut her hair. Still, we have quite violent connotations with a muscular man (holding a sword) pulling a female figure from the hair. Yet, Kirke is not in pain, as no pain is depicted in her facial expression.

On the whole, we have a modernised depiction of a well-known mythological story. The illustrations recall something from children's comic magazines, including perhaps stories of Asterix and Obelix as suggested by the helmet on Odysseus' head. This way, mythology becomes very accessible for young children.

Mythology is approached from a present-day position. The mythological story provides a baseline to convey other messages about perseverance, endurance, and the use of cunningness and ingenuity. Another key message is the propensity of humans to comply with their fate. They do not always succeed, or win in every fight and battle. It is clear that many of Odysseus' men die during the journey. Do we have the survival of the fittest? Does Odysseus survive because he is the central hero, and thus needed for the story, or does he survive because he is good at surviving? The story does not tell us clearly. Yet, going beyond the factual, the narrative here teases children's imagination by portraying travel to distant and foreign lands as adventurous.

In reading this book, children should be able to learn some of Odysseus' trials, names of places and mythical personalities, and about Odysseus' intelligence to outwit the Cyclops. Children will learn, moreover, that the gods must be obeyed, or else there shall be trouble. Gods are portrayed as powerful and unyielding. If one disobeys something, there is no room for forgiveness. Odysseus' men killed the cattle and Zeus retaliated with the thunderbolt. Hopefully, children will be intrigued about what happened after Kalypso, and would wish to read more books in the series entitled *Greek Mythology*. Children and adults may also wish to read Homer's *Odyssey*.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Calypso Circe Cyclops / Cyclopes Odysseus / Ulysses Polyphemus Poseidon Sirens Troy Underworld

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Death Gender expectations/construction Heroism Modernity Punishment Religious beliefs Survival Travel
Further Reading	Information about the book at the epbooks.gr, published March 16, 2012 (accessed: July 9, 2018).
Addenda	A selective account of stations in Odysseus' journey home. The book was published in Greek in 2012, and is part of a series of 12 booklets on Greek Mythology."

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