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Joan Holub , Suzanne Williams

Hestia the Invisible (Goddess Girls, 18)

United States (2015)

TAGS: Aglaia Amphitrite Antheia / Anthea Apollo Ares Artemis Athena Atlas Calliope Dionysus / Dionysos Hades Hephaestus Hera Heracles Hercules Hestia Iris Kydoimos Pandora Persephone Pheme Pygmalion Zeus

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

General information	
Title of the work	Hestia the Invisible (Goddess Girls, 18)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2015
First Edition Details	Joan Holub and Suzanne Williams, *Goddess Girls: Hestia the Invisible*. New York: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division, Aladdin Press, 2015, 245 pp.
ISBN	9781481450003 (ebook)
Genre	Alternative histories (Fiction), Bildungsromans (Coming-of-age fiction), Fiction, Humor, Mythological fiction, Novels, School story*
Target Audience	Children (Older children, 8–12 years old)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaounde1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.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

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

Suzanne Williams , b. 1953
(Author)

Suzanne Williams is an American prolific children's author and former

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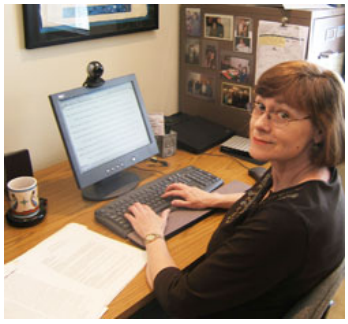

Courtesy of the Author from her personal website.

elementary school librarian. She has written over 60 books for children.

She grew up in Oregon and graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's in library science from the University of Oregon. She currently lives in Reno, Washington.

Source:

Official website (accessed: May 29, 2018).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Questionnaire

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?

Writing about Greek mythology was my co-author, Joan Holub's idea. She's loved mythology since childhood. Her enthusiasm for the subject got me excited about it too. *Goddess Girls* (ages 8–12) was our very first collaboration. Soon there will be 26 books in that series. One of the challenges we've faced in writing our (soon to be four) myth-based series for young readers is how to handle the sexual and violent content of many of the myths.

To downplay the violence, we often make it cartoonish and lighten it with humor. Since most of our gods and goddesses are pre-teens (as are our readers!), we deal with inappropriate sexual content by making changes that still allow us to keep to the spirit of the myth. For example: in introducing the Adonis myth, in which Aphrodite and Persephone fight over a beautiful youth they both desire, we decided to make Adonis a kitten, rather than a young man.

Another challenge has involved familial relationships among the

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various gods and goddesses. In *Goddess Girls*, Zeus is an adult, the principal of Mount Olympus Academy, the school attended by our "goddessgirls" and "godboys". In mythology he would likely have fathered a good portion of the student body! So we made a decision that only Athena would call him "Dad". (Until Hebe popped forth from a lettuce in Book 21, that is.) We do acknowledge many other family relationships. For example: Apollo and Artemis as brother and sister. Medusa and her sisters Euryale and Stheno. Persephone and her mother, Demeter.

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

Myths have got all the elements that draw us to stories: action, conflict, drama, humor, etc. What's not to like?

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?

Neither Joan nor I have a classical education. I did take an online Greek and Roman mythology class a few years ago, however. (Taught by Peter Struck, University of Pennsylvania.) Terrific class!

For our Greek mythology-based series, Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* is the reference we rely on the most. My co-author and I do consult Wikipedia and other online resources, especially for lists of monsters and maps and general information about ancient Greece. References for *Thunder Girls*, our soon-to-be-published Norse mythology-based series include: *The Norse Myths* by Kevin Crossley-Holland, D'Aulaires' *Book of Norse Myths*, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs* by John Lindow, *The Poetic Edda* (translated and edited by Jackson Crawford), and *The Prose Edda* by Snorri Sturluson (Penguin Classics).

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

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In addition to *Goddess Girls*, my co-author and I have also collaborated on a second Greek mythology-based series called *Heroes in Training* (ages 6–9). It's a humorous quest/adventure series with Zeus, Poseidon, Hades and other Olympians as ten-year-olds on the run from King Cronus and the Titans. *Freya and the Magic Jewel*, the first book in *Thunder Girls*, our Norse mythology-based series, publishes May 1, 2018. I travel to Norway frequently to visit my daughter, granddaughter, and Norwegian son-in-law, so I am very excited to be doing a Norse-myth series. Aladdin (Simon & Schuster) publishes all three of Joan's and my mythology-based series. We will be doing a fourth myth-based series with them soon – for ages 5–8. Tentative title is *Little Goddess Girls*, and it will be another Greek myth-based series.

Prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

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Additional information

Summary

In this installment, we meet Hestia, the goddess girl of the hearth. Hestia is extremely shy and tries to avoid speaking in class, for example. She even added hoods to her chitons so she can hide her face, calling this “her invisibility strategy” (p. 23). Hestia is extremely private. At school, “keeping her hooded head down and avoiding eye contact with anyone, she managed to ward off conversation.” (p. 29).

The humans on earth have a contest to find an “MOA student they feel most deserves recognition for his or her service to humankind.” (p. 10). For the competition, the students are asked to think of a symbol or logo which best symbolizes them. In addition, Pheme offers to write an article about Hestia and gets some of the facts wrong. Shy Hestia is now the center of attention and she also needs to create a special dessert for Zeus’ banquet.

In the end, what makes Hestia more outgoing is her own courage and decision to change and start talking to others. Pheme’s article helps her as well, although it is her decision to be more open which makes the real difference. When she is doing what she loves, then everyone else is also caught up in the excitement and she overcomes her shyness. Hestia is using her own inner fire to warm up to other people and let them know her and her special cooking talent.

Analysis

The title of the book is *Hestia the Invisible*, which does not denote Hestia’s special skill, but rather her social conduct. Of course, this conduct means she misses out on friendships as well, with some of the students not even knowing her name. In the course of the story she will have to grow and learn how to contact others and create relations with them. The authors were probably playing here on the meaning of the hearth as the soul of the house, the indoors, reflecting the closed and internal reserved aspect of Hestia. Yet, the hearth could also be the center of the house, a place of gathering and family – a notion which is not emphasized in this portrayal.

In *Pallas the Pal*, Zeus explained to Hera the basic principles of gods-mortals relations. Here we have another such remark. Since Hestia loves cooking, she chooses a kettle as her symbol. Yet, her teacher remarks, “Remember, the symbol you choose will influence how

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mortals see you. You don't want to appear too humble." (p. 28). This is an interesting view on immortals; if they are too humble, they will not be recognized enough by mortals. According to this view, the gods need to be noticeable in order to be respected. Next, Hestia overhears a part of Aphrodite's conversation, and believes that Aphrodite is insulting her for being too ordinary. This hurts Hestia "Everyone wanted to be special in some way. Even ordinary old her." (p. 31). Shyness does not mean that the person does not want to be recognized in some way; they are not being anti-social but rather reflecting the difficulties that may arise in creating social interactions. Hestia's invisibility does not help others know her as she would have liked. Hestia admits to herself, "but being practically invisible wasn't so great either." (p. 31). She slowly begins to understand that being too shy is not a good solution either, because it gives others the wrong impression about her. Once again, the authors sensitively refer to common types of social behaviour in teenagers and transform them to the mythological world. In every class there is the extremely shy person. The story of Hestia shows them that in order to avoid misunderstandings and create friendships, people need to step out of their shells as well. Hestia, longing for recognition, understands she must make a change herself.

The role of the adults is introduced here through the lunch ladies. Hestia thanks them for easing her loneliness, by letting her work with them in the kitchen. The adults here figure in Hestia's life and take the place of her friends until she learns to connect with others. Being able to be apprenticed as a cook means a lot to Hestia, "This opportunity meant the world to Hestia, making her feel needed, appreciated, and much more a part of MOA. It had pretty much changed her life. For the better." (p. 40). We understand that Hestia's shyness also results from her insecurities concerning her abilities. Cooking allows her to do something she loves, and gives her confidence. The Gray ladies, the school counselors, also offer her advice, providing another connection, although she does not understand the advice at first.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aglaia Amphitrite Antheia / Anthea Apollo Ares Artemis Athena Atlas Calliope Dionysus / Dionysos Hades Hephaestus Hera Heracles Hercules Hestia Iris Kydoimos Pandora Persephone Pheme Pygmalion Zeus

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adolescence Adventure Appearances Character traits Coming of age Communication Desires Emotions Expectations Friendship Gaining understanding Girls Humour Identity Individuality Integrity Invention Journeys Judgement Learning Love Magic Magic powers Names Peers Relationships Respect School Self Success and failure Teenagers Travel Truth and lies Values Violence
Addenda	This review refers to the kindle edition.

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