Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Pegasus and the Flame (Pegasus, 1) by Kate O'Hearn", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/674. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Kate O'Hearn

Pegasus and the Flame (Pegasus, 1)

United Kingdom (2011)

TAGS: Apollo Diana Heracles Hercules Juno Jupiter Mars Mercury Pegasus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Pegasus and the Flame (Pegasus, 1)
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2011
First Edition Details	Kate O'Hearn, *Pegasus and the Flame*. Warwickshire: Hodder Children's Books (a division of Hachette Children's Books), 2011, 344 pp.
ISBN	9780340997406
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, Bildungsromans (Coming-of-age fiction), Novels
Target Audience	Children (6–10)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar- Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
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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



Photo Courtesy of the author.

Kate O'Hearn , b. 1950
(Author)

O'Hearn is a children's author. Born in Canada, she has lived in many places throughout the USA, with a special fondness for New York City, which she views as her home. The itinerant lifestyle with her family as a child, and the consequent experiences she accumulated, greatly influenced her imagination. These journeys and the stories she heard from her parents, contributed to her love of writing. O'Hearn writes that her books are the result of her love of fantasy and writing.

Source:

Official website (accessed: February 25, 2019)

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

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Additional information

Summary

This is the first installment in the *Pegasus* series. While the main protagonist, Emily Jacobs, is not a descendant of the gods, she is nonetheless a special Olympian deity, called "the daughter of Vesta" and "the flame of Olympus".

The main characters are Emily, a thirteen years old girl who recently lost her mother and whose police officer father works long hours; the class bully, Joel, who is interested in myths; and an Olympian thief named Paelen, who tried to steal Pegasus' bridle on Olympus but finds himself entangled in the events on earth.

The story narrates two parallel courses of events, on Olympus and on Earth. On Olympus, the gods are facing a fierce and ruthless onslaught of four-armed creatures called Nirads, who are bound to destroy Olympus and kill its inhabitants. Pegasus is sent on a rescue mission but falls to earth on Emily's apartment's roof. The story moves from Olympus to earth and there is a clear connection between the worlds. The wounded Pegasus lands on Emily's building and she nurses him back to health; she recognizes him from an old book of myths she read with her mother.

On earth, there is also a thriller element to the story, as Emily and her friends (together with Pegasus) are being hunted not only by the Nirads but also by a special government unit called CRU (Central Research Unit). This unit examines paranormal activities and its agents only have initials for their names. These cruel agents will stop at nothing in trying to capture and torture Emily and her friends in order to uncover their secrets. The events on Olympus have a causal connection to the events on earth, as a ferocious storm is raging in New York, apparently as a result of the divine battle. Emily and her friends must flee the agents on earth and help Pegasus find the mysterious "fire of Olympus" who can help the warring gods. Later, the goddess Diana descends to earth and helps the group. Diana discovers that Emily is in fact the mysterious fire of Olympus, although Emily finds it difficult to accept she is that special and has unique powers. The group is captured by CRU and tortured, yet Emily, Diana, Pegasus and Joel succeed in escaping and fly to Olympus. Emily steps in a large marble bowl at the Temple of the Flame, where the flame of Olympus once blazed and was now cold. When she steps in the bowl fires burst out of her chest in every direction and

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throughout Olympus, consuming her. By sacrificing herself, she rekindles the fire and helps the Olympians gods resume their power and fight the Nirads. When the flames withdraw, Emily is reborn out of the fire. She climbs down from the bowl feeling peaceful and without pain. Vesta welcomes her and congratulates her on her brave act. Emily then plans how to save her father who is still trapped by CRU on earth.

Analysis

The book is a classical coming-of-age story with mythological elements. It resembles the Percy Jackson series in the mixing of the modern world with Greek mythology. The book has a clear didactic message, in that the author dedicates this book "to all the horses everywhere; especially those who suffer under poor working conditions and horrific abuse", and she asks the reader to help horses in need. This is an interesting means of linking past and present and for using a mythical creature as a symbol to help suffering animals today. Thus even before it begins, the book carries an important message. This idea will continue to echo throughout the book, especially with the emergence of Diana who will punish cruel horse-owners. Diana is described here as the guardian of animals and of nature.

The adolescent heroes of this story share similar feelings and insecurities, while each tries to find his/her place in the world. Furthermore, each of them discovers they have greater power than they initially thought and a special destiny, irrespective of whether they are Olympians or not. This is a common theme in many coming-of-age stories, when teenagers discover that their lives carry special meaning, that they can become heroes and rescue themselves (metaphorically) from a mundane existence. Emily actually going through death and rebirth, with her human part dying when she sacrifices herself as the fire of Olympus so that she becomes immortal (this we learn from the second book in the series, although it is not explained in this installment). Yet she continues to feel and act like a regular human. It is the ultimate sacrifice, and perhaps the ultimate fantasy of many teenagers, to become divinities. Yet it is achieved by her selfless sacrifice. It is not certain at this stage, whether Emily is a god now. All we know by the end of the book is that she died and was reborn. Like Hercules or even more, like Jesus, who sacrificed himself according to the gospels to save humanity. Emily sacrifices herself to

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save Olympus and consequently, Earth, as the two worlds are linked.

The role of adults as guiding figures is also shown in this book. While the adolescents need to take care of themselves alone and make their own decisions, they are ultimately assisted by Emily's father and the goddess Diana. Thus there are good and bad adults who help to shape the young adults' self-identities. Emily's father and Diana are described as the good adults while the CRU members are the bad adults, who do not listen to Emily and her friends, do not believe in magic and try to harm and torture what they do not understand.

This book also deals with the sense of loss after the passing of loved ones. Emily deeply misses her mother and Joel is also an orphan who has lost his family and home, and suffers through the foster care system. This is a convenient plot mechanism which allows the children to escape their home and leave for Olympus without having any strings attached (Emily's father helps them to hide and run away). The author's personal experience of wide-ranging travels probably also influenced her decision to make the children so easily go from one place to another without becoming too attached to one place. The mythological connection, and especially Pegasus, is used as an essential healing tool for these children. Their connection to this mythical being (who, they strongly protest, is not merely a horse) helps them deal with their own feelings. Caring for the wounded Pegasus helps Emily and Joel put aside their own private suffering (about the loss of their family members) and care for someone else. They devote themselves to Pegasus who returns their affections. It gives them a new purpose to focus on and by helping him heal they are not preoccupied with their own pain but can gradually let go. They feel they have a purpose by helping this wounded wonderful creature. It accentuates the importance of animals as helping to ease trauma with children and also elderly people, something that research into animal-assisted therapy highlights.

Thanks to the combination of mythological components, that are the backbone of the story, with the modern elements, the book teaches that people are the same regardless of their origins, and they can unite and fight evil together. In contrast, the government officials are cruel people, who despise the unexplained and try to forcibly examine it, instead of lovingly accepting it. They are short-sighted and do not understand that their actions, which are allegedly meant to protect the world, will ultimately ruin it. The message is that fantasy and imagination, as well as living harmoniously with the nature around us,

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	are crucial to the preservation of our world; magic, and belief, are of vital importance, and things should not be dismissed just because they sound implausible. The government agents judge everything by the standards of science and cold-calculations, although some of them are versed in mythology. Yet they dismiss this knowledge and forcibly try to understand the facts behind the Olympians: how they travel, what are their powers etc. They do not believe in magic or let themselves feel anything. With her initial remark on horses the author presents an ecological message in this story, about respecting animals, but she also emphasises the importance of stories, and naïve belief in them; of not seeing everything through scientific lenses. Children (and adults) need to use their imagination and to dream. Only then they can save the world.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Apollo Diana Heracles Hercules Juno Jupiter Mars Mercury Pegasus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Animals Death Environment Family Friendship Journeys War
Addenda	The review refers to the Kindle edition

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