Babette Puetz, "Entry on: Athena: The Story of a Goddess by Imogen Greenberg , Isabel Greenberg ", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/718. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

Imogen Greenberg , Isabel Greenberg

Athena: The Story of a Goddess

United Kingdom (2018)

TAGS: Achilles Aphrodite Arachne Athena Hephaestus Hera Medusa Odysseus / Ulysses Paris (Trojan Prince) Perseus Poseidon Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Athena: The Story of a Goddess
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2018
First Edition Details	Imogen and Isabel Greenberg, *Athena: The Story of a Goddess*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.
ISBN	9781408892497
Official Website	www.bloomsbury.com (accessed: February 15, 2019)
Genre	Graphic novels, Picture books
Target Audience	Children (Older primary school children to younger teenagers, crossover)
Author of the Entry	Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington, babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

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



Imogen Greenberg (Author)

Imogen Greenberg is a UK-based writer and theatre professional. She is the coordinator at Tonic Theatre (accessed: May 28, 2018), an organisation which works for gender equality in the arts and creative industries. Greenberg was formerly a press and publications officer at the Globe Theatre in London.She has a degree in history and a strong interest in all things cultural and historical. She has written *Secret History: The Romans*, *Secret History: The Ancient Egyptians*, *The Aztec Empire* and *The Ancient Greeks* which are all illustrated by her sister Isabel Greenberg. She is also the author of the *Discover...* series.

Source:

Profile at londoncalling.com (accessed: Febryary 14, 2019)

Bio prepared by Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk and Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington, babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz



Isabel Greenberg (in the middle) with Mike Carey and Stuart Kelly by byronv2. Retrieved from flickr.com, licensed

Isabel Greenberg (Illustrator)

Isabel Grenberg is an illustrator and writer based in the UK. Isabel studied illustration at the University of Brighton and experimental animation at the Royal College of Art. She has worked for a variety of clients including The Guardian, Nobrow Press, The National Trust, Seven Stories Press, First Second and The New York Times. She won the Observer Jonathan Cape Graphic Short Story Prize in 2011.

Her first graphic novel *The Encyclopaedia of Early Earth* was

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published in 2013 and has been translated into French, Spanish, Korean, German and Chinese. It won the Best Book category at the British Comic Awards, was nominated for two Eisner awards, was one of NPR's 100 Books of the Year, the Guardian's graphic novel pick of the month and in the New York Times Graphic Books bestseller list. Isabel Greenberg's second graphic novel *The One Hundred Nights of Hero* came out 2016, and also made the New York Times graphic books bestseller list and became one of the Observer's best graphic books of 2016.

She has so far written and/or illustrated about twenty graphic novels, comics and children's books.

Imogen Greenberg and Isabel Greenberg are sisters.

Source:

Official website (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Bio prepared by Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk and Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington, babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz

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Additional information

Summary

This a humorous, illustrated, modern re-telling of the myths of Athena for a younger audience using elements of graphic novel storytelling. Some of the myths told are directly connected to Athena, but this expands into a re-telling of the myths around the Trojan War. This is preceded by a short introduction of each of the main characters of the book, both gods and heroes. The individual myths are not separated by headings, but flow into each other, almost like a biography of Athena. The myths covered are:

- Athena's birth from Zeus' head,
- The competition between Athena and Poseidon for the patronage of Athens,
- Athena and Erichthonius,
- Perseus and Medusa,
- Athena and Arachne,
- Paris and the golden apple,
- the Trojan War: Paris and Aphrodite, the start of the War, Achilles and Hector, Achilles' death, the Trojan Horse and the fall of Troy,
- Odysseus' return: Penelope and Telemachus, the Cyclops, Circe, the Sirens, Helios' cattle, Calypso, Odysseus' homecoming and the contest with the suitors.

These myths are all framed around the idea of young, proud, willful Athena learning a lesson: only to intervene with mortals when they call on her and only for very good causes and also to carefully pick your battles with other gods. Athena is represented as a strong-willed, clever, unconventional goddess and a strong female who gains experience and wisdom. The Olympic gods are very much portrayed as a family with quarrels which have serious consequences for mortals. Zeus as the head of the family and Athena's father at times gets annoyed with his favourite daughter's interfering in mortal affairs and tells her off. There is a happy ending, except for "Uncle Poseidon" who has finally been taught a lesson.

Every page is beautifully colour-illustrated in earthy tones. The illustrations bring the story to life. Athena is portrayed with a cheeky, clever facial expression which underlines her characterisation in the retelling of her myths. Many of the illustrations use speech bubbles and in this way do not just illustrate the written text, but enhance the

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	story and move it forward. Many text boxes have borders in the style of patterns on ancient vases. The inside covers show vases with pictures of the myths of Athena treated in this picture book.
Analysis	*Athena: The Story of a Goddess* is one of the many contemporary, humorous retellings of ancient myths that have become very popular in the last years. The difference between this and books like those of the *Percy Jackson* series is that this is a picture book, even though it is targeted at a slightly younger age group. The main focus of the retelling of the stories is not only to give an overview of the main myths regarding Athena, and tell about the goddess' life, but to show how Athena learns a lesson and gains maturity in her relationships both toward mortals and also to other gods. In addition to this didactic approach, the book views the myth from a feminist angle. It is a story of a family which is unusual in its divine status but is dealing with similar issues as any human family, such as sibling rivalry or children not following their parents' advice. Athena is portrayed as a rebellious teenager, i.e. in a way in which young readers may see themselves and their families reflected. The humorous depiction of the Olympians is clearly inspired by ancient Greek myths, as we read them in the Homeric epics, the Homeric Hymns or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The added element of humorous feminism is contemporary. The contemporary view of the myth and the focus on Athena's flaws and troubles make her not seem like an aloof goddess, but like a character who children or young adults can identify with. The depiction of family-quarrels, parent-child relationships, sibling-rivalry, friendship, jealousy and disobedience, together with the illustrations of the goddess' cheeky facial expressions, make Athena come alive as a character that appeals to readers of all ages.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Achilles Aphrodite Arachne Athena Hephaestus Hera Medusa Odysseus / Ulysses Paris (Trojan Prince) Perseus Poseidon Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures,	Adventure Appearances Authority Character traits Conflict Disobedience Family Gaining understanding Heroism Hierarchy

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and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Journeys Judgement Parents (and children) Punishment Reconciliation Relationships Siblings Travel War

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