Miriam Riverlea, "Entry on: Legendary Ladies: 50 Goddesses to Empower and Inspire You by Ann Shen", 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/722. Entry version as of November 01, 2026.

Ann Shen

Legendary Ladies: 50 Goddesses to Empower and Inspire You

United States of America (2018)

TAGS: Aphrodite Artemis Athena Demeter Eos Gaia / Gaea Hecate Muses Psyche





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

General information	
Title of the work	Legendary Ladies: 50 Goddesses to Empower and Inspire You
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America, Australia
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2018
First Edition Details	Ann Shen, *Legendary Ladies: 50 Goddesses to Empower and Inspire You*. San Francisco: Chronicle Booke, 2018, 127 pp.
ISBN	9781452163413
Genre	Illustrated works, Instructional and educational works
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com
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Creators



Ann Shen , b. 1984
(Author)

Ann Shen is an author, illustrator and designer. She was born and raised in Los Angeles, where she still lives. She was interested in art from a young age, and studied at the University of California San Diego and the Art Centre College of Design. She has written and illustrated two books, *Bad Girls Throughout History* (2016) and *Legendary Ladies* (2018). In addition, her cute, whimsical illustrations are printed on t-shirts, coffee cups, and other merchandise. Her design clients include Facebook, *The New York Times*, and Disney, among many others.

Source:

Official website (accessed: March 25, 2019)

Bio prepared by Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com

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Additional information

Summary

This lavishly illustrated collection features the stories of fifty female divinities and heroines from across the world. There are ten classical entries. In addition to well-known Olympians like Athena, Aphrodite and Artemis, more obscure figures, like Tyche, the goddess of Fortune, and Eos, the Dawn, are also included. The entries are arranged into five chapters – Creativity and Manifestation, Love, Power, Protection, and Reinvention, highlighting cross-cultural connections and universal themes within the mythic narratives. In her introduction, Shen writes that the "stories are wildly diverse; yet some are similar across great distances, illustrating what we value despite borders between us." (p. 10). Each entry includes the figure's origin and a brief summary of their mythology, and concludes with an italicised message describing the circumstances when it would be helpful to call on this figure. The written text is accompanied by Shen's colourful paintings, depicting each goddess in a setting that highlights her key associations and symbols.

Analysis

This book is a recent example of the genre of new age literature celebrating goddess worship (formerly popular in the 1980s and 1990s). Its promotional material recommends it to readers who enjoyed Clarissa Pinkola Estés' *Women who Run With the Wolves* (1992). Each entry concludes with a suggestion for ways in which each goddess might influence an aspect of a woman's life. For example, Demeter can be called on "for her blessings when you want to plant, harvest, and grow your deepest dreams into reality" (p. 63), while Hecate should be summoned "at night by candlelight when you are looking for protection; physical and spiritual." (p. 84) The text emphasises the archetypal power of the goddess to protect and empower women. The introduction states that:

> "The divine feminine has always been here and will continue to be a part of our stories. Now it's up to you to honour it within yourself, because you are a descendent of these wild, wilful women. They are our collective mothers, after all." (p. 11)

The use of direct address confirms the intended audience of the text to be women, of all ages and cultural backgrounds. The text's subtitle, with its emphasis on empowerment and inspiration, reveals a feminist

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	agenda. The goddesses are presented as accessible figures rather than remote, omniscient divinities, and their great variety celebrates different forms of femininity. Though it is not primarily a children's book, Shen's vibrant illustrations, some of which depict the goddesses with the oversized eyes and slender waists of Disney princesses, nonetheless imbue the book with significant aesthetic appeal for young readers. Each goddess' story is told in simple, accessible language, with the longer, more complex narratives distilled into a few short paragraphs. The brevity of the storytelling appears to have disappointed some readers, who have commented online that they would have liked more detail (see for example the comments at goodreads.com, accessed: March 25, 2019). In an interesting paradox, the written text does not shy away from the violent and sexual elements of the myths, yet the style of the illustrations serves to soften these confronting details. In this way, this crossover text manages to appeal to multiple audiences.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Artemis Athena Demeter Eos Gaia / Gaea Hecate Muses Psyche
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits Femininity Gender Gender, female Religious beliefs Storytelling

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