Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: The Prometheus Project. Book 1: Trapped by Douglas E. Richards", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/957. Entry version as of November 07, 2026.

Douglas E. Richards

The Prometheus Project. Book 1: Trapped

United States of America (2010)

TAGS: Prometheus





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General information	
Title of the work	The Prometheus Project. Book 1: Trapped
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2010
First Edition Details	Douglas E. Richards, *The Prometheus Project, Book 1: Trapped*. London: Paragon Press, 2010, 192 pp.
ISBN	9780982618448
Genre	Novels, Science fiction
Target Audience	Children (8–14 year olds)
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 Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

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Creators



Douglas E. Richards (Author)

Douglas E. Richards is an American author from San Diego. He is the New York Times and USA Today bestselling author of numerous other novels. Richards earned a BS in microbiology from the Ohio State University, a master's degree in genetic engineering from the University of Wisconsin (where he engineered mutant viruses now named after him), and an MBA from the University of Chicago. In recognition of his work, Douglas was selected to be a “special guest” at San Diego Comic-Con International.

Douglas is the author of *Wired*, *Amped*, *The Cure*, *Game Changers* and many more thrillers, and kids novels.

Source:

Official website (accessed: February 11, 2020).

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

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Additional information

Summary

This is a sci-fi adventure story. The story follows Ryan Resnick and his sister Regan who have moved from California to Brewster Pennsylvania due to their scientists parents' new jobs. The children try to cope with the new environment, which they refer to as "snoozer" and boring. One day the siblings overhear their parents discussing their secret project and mentions the name "Prometheus Alpha". The children decide to sneak into their parents' work place and examine their mysterious project and why their parents had to lie to them about it. The children manage to bypass the tight security of the facility and finally meet their parents. The secret is that their parents work on a mysterious underground alien city and the children soon travel in this city and uncover some of its secrets, like a holographic zoo or an insect-like aliens who fix damage in the city.

Analysis

As noted, this is a sci-fi fiction. The connection to mythology, however, is strong. Not only are the secret project and city named Prometheus by the scientists, but the ancient myth is constantly referred to throughout the book. At first, Ryan who has overheard his parents talk about "Prometheus", searches for the name in the dictionary: "He cleared his throat. 'Prometheus,' he read aloud. 'A Titan of Greek mythology who stole fire from the Gods and gave it to mankind as a gift.' Stole fire, thought Ryan. So Prometheus was a thief. Just great." p. 6. The mention of theft makes Ryan feels bad, as if his parents might be doing something illegal. However, the children do not believe that their parents are criminal and decide to find out more. It can be argued that this definition does apply to the humans in the book, who accidentally discover the alien city and do try to force their way into it, revealing (or stealing?) its well-hidden secrets.

Dr. Harris, who is in charge of the project, explains to Ryan that "Prometheus stole fire from the Gods and gave it to mankind. This city offers us the technology of the Gods. But of equal importance, the name is also a reminder for us to be cautious and mature with our use of what we find here. Like fire, used incorrectly, the technology in this city could be extremely dangerous. We have insisted that our efforts here will be to advance human science for the good of humanity, not to make either weapons or money." pp. 42-43. This duality of benefit and danger will continue to surface throughout the book, as the

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scientists and children discover that, while the city was built by what appears to be an inquisitive and benevolent alien race (the Qwervy), it still holds dangers.

While the scientists compare the city's technology to Prometheus' gift of fire to humankind, a question still arises. Prometheus chose to jeopardize himself and give humankind fire in order to protect and save them, since without it they were suffering. The alien race did not build the city for the benefit of human kind, but rather as their own observation base since they decided it was not the time to encounter the human race openly. Therefore they are not like Prometheus in the original sense, since they did not voluntarily offer their assistance to humankind. Furthermore, the new technology can be equaled to the life-changing fire, yet in the original myth, told by Aeschylus in his trilogy *Prometheus*, the one who suffered was Prometheus. In this story, the dangers threatening humankind are by the hand of humans who might abuse the technology, hence it is another variation from the ancient myth. The ancient Prometheus taught humans many skills in order to help them survive; in this story, the new technology is not an essential for life, but a tool for further learning and development. Is humankind trying to overcome Prometheus in their creativity and technology? However, the importance of the mythological connection is that powerful gifts (even if accidentally discovered) should be handled with care and used only for the good of humankind.

A concluding note. An opposing opinion to the one noted in the book is apparent in a sci-fi movie trailer. In Ridley Scott's trailer for his 2012 movie *Prometheus* (as another installment in the Alien franchise), the character of Peter Weyland (played by Guy Pearce) presents his vision in a TED lecture from the year 2023. He mentions the fire stolen by Prometheus, stating that the gods were afraid to give humankind, since they were afraid of what humankind might do with it. He exclaims that fire was the first piece of technology and he counts the technological development of humankind since then. He concludes that humans became the gods now, due to their mastery of technology. The movie will of course gruesomely uncovers the fact that humans are not gods and the fatal dangers of alien technology.

While the author focuses on the dangers of technology, he neglects another crucial part of the Prometheus myth – the punishment of the gods in the form of Pandora, the gift which brought misery. Therefore one should wonder in this context whether the gifts of technology are doomed from the start.

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Prometheus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Conflict Family Heroism Magic
Addenda	The review refers to the Kindle edition.

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