

Autism and Classical Mythology

(2009)

TAGS:



General information	
<i>Title of the work</i>	Autism and Classical Mythology
<i>Year of publication</i>	2009
<i>Original language</i>	English
<i>Target and Age Group</i>	Teachers including Special Needs teachers; general public, families of autistic children, therapists, psychologists, autism professionals, academics, students.
<i>Link (to resource)</i>	Autism and Classical Mythology Accessed on 5 August, 2020

Additional information

Contents & Purpose

The idea for the blog began at a meeting in 2008 with a special needs teacher, who mentioned to Deacy that, in her experience and those of her colleagues, autistic children often enjoy learning about classical myth. Starting with this anecdotal evidence, Deacy began to wonder why this might be the case, and whether – as a classicist who researches classical myth – there was anything she could do by way of creating resources. She started the blog in 2009 to set out her progress. For a while, the blog broadened into a disability blog more broadly. This was until the beginning of the ERC-funded project [*Our Mythical Childhood*](#) (2016-21), which is tracing the role of classics in children's and Young Adult culture. Deacy's blog presents her progress in her key role for the project which is to explore where classical myth might sit in autistic children's culture by producing sets of activities.

These activities engage with current thinking around supporting autistic children which includes the exploration of individual interests and passions, one of which can be myth. They consider how classical myth can facilitate communication and engagement for autistic children, including by utilising the potential for conceiving characters of myth as 'gateways' to understanding, identifying, contextualising and conceptualising oneself and others. They seek to empower autistic children by drawing on their strengths as well as addressing some of the sources of distress they may encounter, such as the sense that their actions are always beyond their control. Linked with this, the activities seek to offer an alternative model for articulating experience and for making sense of the world.

A first set of activities was completed in February 2018 and disseminated immediately via the blog. This is based on a specific episode in the myth of Hercules: the point where he is tasked to choose between two contrasting paths in life. Deacy opted for Hercules as a figure with particular appeal to autistic children, one reason being that he performs feats which others cannot, and yet, conversely, he experiences emotional overload and distress.

