Joan Holub , Leslie Patricelli

Please Share, Aphrodite!

United States (2015)

TAGS: Aphrodite Athena Hera

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General information	
Title of the work	Please Share, Aphrodite!
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2015
First Edition Details	Joan Holub and Leslie Patricelli, *Mini Myths: Please Share, Aphrodite!* New York: Abrams Appleseed Books, 2015, 24 pp.
ISBN	9781419716782 (Brdbk edition)
Official Website	abramsbooks.com (accessed: July 26, 2018)
Genre	Didactic fiction, Mythological fiction, Picture books, Toddler book*
Target Audience	Children (Young children, 1–3 years old)
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 Joan Holub.

Joan Holub , b. 1956
(Author)

Joan Holub is a prolific children's author from the USA. Graduated from college in Texas with a fine arts degree. Worked as an art director at Scholastic trade books in New York. She has written and/or illustrated over 150 children's books. She has developed a range of series for teenagers on mythological themes: *Goddess Girls*, set in Mount Olympus Academy, *Grimmtastic Tales* series, set in Grimm Academy, *Thunder Girls*, about Norse gods set in Asgard Academy, and *Heroes in Training*, in which the male Greek gods, as very young men, set out on a range of adventures. For pre-school children, Jan Holub has written on a range of topics including several works with religious and historical themes. These include: *This Little President*; *This Little Trailblazer*, *Hooray for St. Patrick's Day!*, and *Light the Candles: A Hanukkah Lift-the-Flap Book*. Joan Holub trained in fine art and worked as an art director at a graphic design company before becoming a children's illustrator and then author.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Profile at the penguinrandomhouse.com (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Profile at the simonandschuster.com (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Bio prepared by Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk and Allison Rosenblum, Bar-Ilan University, allie.rose89@gmail.com and Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Questionnaire

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1. What drew you to writing / working with Classical Antiquity and what challenges did you face in selecting, representing, or adapting particular myths or stories?

I learned to love Greek and Norse mythology in elementary school. I'm very comfortable adapting the framework of an existing myth or fairy tale by pushing it into a different setting, adding humor, and/or building in a nonfiction component. Staying true to the essential core of each myth along the way is important to me. A young *Goddess Girls* reader once told me she enjoyed the series because she "learned something". In other words, while she liked being entertained, she appreciated that her familiarity and factual understanding of the original myths was broadened at the same time.

2. Why do you think classical / ancient myths, history, and literature continue to resonate with young audiences?

Kids have questions about their world. So it's interesting to them to learn how ancient Greeks and other cultures answered questions about how their world worked in exciting tales of heroes and beasts. How did the sun cross the sky? In a chariot drawn by the god Helios. What caused night? The goddess Nyx's starry cape covered the sky. Thrilling stories of courage and danger, such as Heracles' twelve labors, the Trojan Horse, and the Argonauts never go out of style.

3. Do you have a background in classical education (Latin or Greek at school or classes at the University?) What sources are you using? Scholarly work? Wikipedia? Are there any books that made an impact on you in this respect?

I have an entire shelf of mythology resource books. Some of my favorite go-to sources are the *Scholastic Mythlopedia* series, Edith Hamilton's *Mythology, Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*, and www.theoi.com (accessed: May 28, 2018).

4. How concerned were you with "accuracy" or "fidelity" to the original? (another way of saying that might be – that I think writers are often more "faithful" to originals in adapting its

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spirit rather than being tied down at the level of detail – is this something you thought about?)

Each book in the *Goddess Girls* series (ages 8–12, Simon and Schuster) and *Heroes in Training* series (ages 7–10, Simon and Schuster) is a retelling of one or two Greek myths, with a twist. We stay as true as possible to the core bones of an original myth in order to give young readers a good understanding, but we include kid situations and humor to entertain. As an example, in *Goddess Girls #1: Athena the Brain*, Athena is summoned to attend Mount Olympus Academy, where Zeus is the principal. MOA teachers include Mr. Cyclops, who teaches Hero-ology, a class where students are graded on their abilities to maneuver small hero figures such as Odysseus, around a gameboard to enact the Trojan War, etc. Meanwhile, Athena, who is the goddess of invention among other things, inadvertently turns mean-girl Medusa's hair to snakes and gives her the power to turn mortals to stone by means of a shampoo-like invention called Snakeypoo at the MOA invention fair.

5. Are you planning any further forays into classical material?

Suzanne Williams and I have written a new middle grade series called *Thunder Girls* (accessed: May 28, 2018), which is a twist on Norse mythology featuring strong girl characters. The first book Freya and the Magic Jewel releases May 2018 for ages 8–12, published by Simon and Schuster.

Prepared by Allison Rosenblum, Bar-Ilan University, allie.rose89@gmail.com and Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Leslie Patricelli (Illustrator)

Leslie Patricelli is an illustrator based in Hailey, Idaho, USA. Patricelli majored in communications from the University of Washington, and

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Photo courtesy of Leslie Patricelli.

took classes at the School of Visual Concepts in Seattle. She first worked as an advertising copywriter. Her work is primarily aimed at books for a preschool audience and carried out for Candlewick Press. She has recently begun branching out into writing children's literature. She created Rover the dog for Windows XP help.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: January 13, 2018).

Profile at the goodreads.com (accessed: June 26, 2018).

Bio prepared by Allison Rosenblum, Bar-Ilan University, allie.rose89@gmail.com and Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk

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Additional information

Summary

Little Aphrodite won an apple, yet she refuses to share it with her friends. At the front page, under the title, we see a picture of Aphrodite standing on an ionic column, kissing the apple in a nice reference to the original Greek myth. Aphrodite is literally putting herself up on a pedestal. This serves as a hint to the following story. The first two pages have one word and one picture each: Aphrodite. Apple. This symbolizes the importance of the apple (for Aphrodite). It gets the same room as she does. Then we see a young toddler asking to trade his apple. He refuses a crown (symbolizing power?) and a puzzle (symbolising wisdom?), yet Aphrodite offers him her toy, which is a wooden horse on wheels, in a nod towards the Trojan War narrative, albeit altered. Aphrodite here is willing to exchange the horse for the apple, whilst in the original tale the apple initiated the chain of events that resulted in the wooden horse (which was actually dedicated to Athena). Yet the horse symbolizes an imminent threat and in the setting of this picture book, the sight of the horse (to those who have knowledge of the original myth) could hint at coming troubles.

Aphrodite is happy with her win and ignores the sad faces of her friends. In a two-page spread, she exclaims “I Won I Won I Won”. Here we see how the apple takes up almost the entire first page (the apple appears on the left page and Aphrodite on the right, so it is visible even before we notice her, making it the focus of attention). It seems as if the apple grows in direct result of Aphrodite’s vanity.

Aphrodite then reaffirms that the apple is hers, yet her friends ignore her boasting. We see how the apple shrinks to its normal size, accentuating that it is no longer that important to Aphrodite, who prefers the company of her friends. Only when she offers to share the apple with them, they do invite her to play with them.

On the last page we have the narration of the golden apple. Interestingly, the role of Eris in introducing the golden apple and causing the mayhem is omitted form this brief retelling. The story ends with the win of Aphrodite over Hera and Athena.

Analysis

The apple is a dominant feature in the story, its large size is easily

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discernible in the drawing.

The choice of this story is somewhat baffling. In the original myth Aphrodite did not use her win to boast in front of the other goddesses, and what followed was the Trojan War. Therefore there is no original Classical moral in this story (unlike Midas's golden touch, for example).

This book shows the challenge of reframing a classical theme in a book for extremely young readers. The sexuality of the original story is eliminated, and the premise is altered to a simple moral about sharing. Given that the original story lacks this particular moral, the extrapolation is clearly driven by the board book format and the intended very young readers.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Athena Hera
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Boys Character traits Child, children Diversity Friendship Girls Learning Rejection Sharing
Addenda	The review refers to the Kindle edition.

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