Sonya Nevin, Miriam Riverlea, "Entry on: Sticker Greek Myths by Lisa Jane Gillespie , Emi Ordas ", peer-reviewed by . Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/103. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

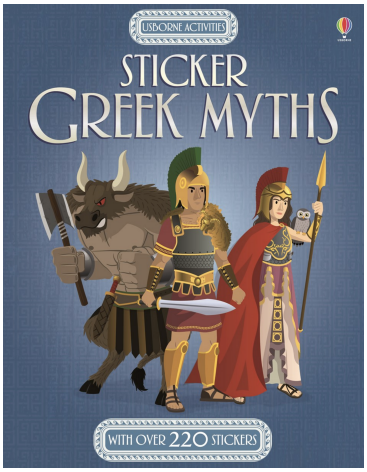
Lisa Jane Gillespie , Emi Ordas

# Sticker Greek Myths

*United Kingdom (2015)*

TAGS: Afterlife Apollo Architecture Argo Argonauts Ariadne Artemis Atalanta Athena Athens Bellerophon Chimera / Chimaera Crete Cyclops / Cyclopes Daedalus Demeter Diana Dionysus / Dionysos Gods Golden Fleece Hades Hera Heracles Hercules Hermes Hippolyta Icarus Jason Juno Jupiter Katabasis Labyrinth Laurel Wreath Maze Medusa Mercury Midas Minerva Minos Minotaur Neptune Odysseus / Ulysses Odyssey Olympus Orpheus Pegasus Persephone Perseus Pluto / Plouton Polyphemus Poseidon Proserpina Sirens Theseus Twelve Labours of Heracles Underworld Zeus






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| General information | |
|---|---|
| *Title of the work* | Sticker Greek Myths |
| *Country of the First Edition* | United Kingdom |
| *Original Language* | English |
| *First Edition Date* | 2015 |
| *First Edition Details* | Lisa Jane Gillespie, Emi Ordas, *Sticker Greek Myths*. London: Usborne Books, 2015, 34 pp. (24 pages + 10 sticker pages) |
| *ISBN* | 9781474907170 |
| *Official Website* | Go to usborne.com and type the keywords *Sticker Greek Myths* (accessed: August 2, 2018) |
| *Genre* | Illustrated works, Myths, Toy and movable books |
| *Target Audience* | Children (c. 3–11) |
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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.

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## Creators



### Lisa Jane Gillespie (Author)

Lisa Jane Gillespie (also known as Lisa Gillespie) is a writer of non-fictional texts for children and young adults. Born in Ireland and now based in London, she is the Managing Commissioning Editor at DK, a global publishing house. Prior to moving to DK, Gillespie was Senior Editor at Red Shed, an imprint of the publishing house Egmont. She also has a PhD in Organic Chemistry from Trinity College, Dublin. She has contributed to books on a diverse range of subjects, including science, mathematics, archaeology and the ancient world. She was a copywriter and editor at Usborne Publishing during the period she wrote the text for the *Sticker Greek Myths*. Her latest book, *100 Steps for Science: How it Works and Why it Happened*, was released in April 2017.

Bio prepared by Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com, and Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk



### Emi Ordas , b. 1985 (Illustrator)

Emi Ordas is an artist, born in Argentina in 1985 and based in Madrid, Spain. As a teenager, before publishing his first book, Ordas worked as a tattoo artist. He studied Graphic Design at Nueva Escuela de Diseño y Comunicación and now lives in Madrid. He has illustrated over 250 books in a variety of countries, including Argentina, Mexico, Puerto Rico, the USA, Canada, Spain, Belgium and the UK. He has also worked in animation, advertising, toy and game design, and app development. Ordas illustrated a number of volumes in the Usborne sticker-book series, including *Sticker Dressing Norse Myths*; *Sticker Dressing Pilots* and *Astronauts*; and *Sticker Dressing Special Forces*.



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Source:

Official website (accessed: June 26, 2018).

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## Additional information

Summary

Each 1 or 2-page section of *Sticker Greek Myths* presents a scene of figures within an ancient environment, accompanied by approximately fifty words of explanatory text.

The child reader/viewer is invited to use stickers that are specific to that section to build-up the scene. The stickers typically feature clothing and accessories such as weapons and ropes, and scene-specific items such as Heracles' lion-skin cloak and the Chimera's heads.

1. *Mount Olympus*: This section introduces the family of gods. Hera, Zeus, and Hermes are depicted before Mt Olympus, which is topped with bright white classical architecture. Hera holds a peacock fan, a nod to her traditional association with the peacock, and Zeus holds his familiar thunderbolt. The stickers provide clothing for all and winged sandals and herald’s staff for Hermes.

2. *Raging seas*: A stern-looking Poseidon watches as a giant snake-like sea-monster attacks Andromeda. Stickers provide Andromeda with a full dress (to go over her illustrated slip) and Poseidon with a crown and trident. A flying Perseus can be added to the skies above the monster. Perseus is not mentioned in the text, so without the assistance of a suitably knowledgeable adult, a child reader would be unlikely to understand Perseus' significance here.

3. *Apollo and Artemis* have a page each. Apollo's page is sun-lit; Artemis' is moon-lit. Stickers give Apollo a kilt, cloak, lyre, bow, sword, sandals, snake, and laurel wreath. Artemis receives a hunting dog, birds of prey, sandals and wrist guards, a bow and arrow, and a star-covered grey cloak.

4. *The Underworld* tells the story of the Seasons. The page orientation is switched 90 degrees, with a mourning Demeter depicted above ground on one page and Persephone and Hades on the other, below-ground. Stickers give Demeter a green dress and a long shawl; Persephone and Hades receive dark gowns and cloaks. The floor is studded with gems, and a final sticker adds more gems. This invites discussion of where gemstones come from and the origin of Hades' "Pluto" name, although this is not supported by the text. The text refers to Hades falling "madly in love" with Persephone and stealing her away. The results of Demeter's grief are presented matter-of-factly



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(i.e. without the blame that some children's books attach). Zeus steps in to order Persephone to distribute her time. Rather unusually, Hades is depicted as beardless. The Underworld environment includes grey classical architecture and demon/gargoyle-like statues.

5. *Odysseus and Polyphemus* depicts the moment before the crew blind the sleeping Polyphemus. Stickers dress Odysseus in armour, a crewman in a tunic with a rope, and provide both with flaming torches and a wineskin. Further stickers allow the reader to add extra sheep to the cave. The text does not specify that some of the crew were eaten, although the Cyclops is a "man-eating giant," nor does it explain the need to blind the Cyclops so that the cave can be opened. A less graphic (but still violent) version is preferred in which "Blind Polyphemus had no idea they were there." On the one hand, this obscures key elements of the story, but on the other, readers can be introduced to the Cyclops figure at an early age without it being too frightening.

6. *Athena* can be equipped in a breastplate and helmet, combined with dress, cloak and sandals. Further stickers give her a chariot, an owl, a spear, and a shield bearing an image of Medusa's head. The text explains her major areas of influence and that Athens was named after her. A city, presumably Athens, can be seen in the background beyond a harbour, to which ship stickers can be added. Daedalus and Icarus feature on the unrelated opposing page. Daedalus forms the main image, and Icarus can be added as a sticker. The text explains that the boy drowns and readers can choose whether to stick him in the sky or the sea.

7. *Perseus and Medusa* provides a short narrative of the myth which emphasises Perseus' trick of avoiding Medusa's gaze. The illustration echoes this, including a reflection of Medusa upon the shield sticker. The story is set in a dark cave environment, filled with the figures of soldiers who have been turned to stone before smashing to pieces. Stickers depicting victims add to this mess of remains. Stickers equip Perseus and Medusa in remarkably similar ways: sandals, greaves, wrist-guards, armoured kilts, and breastplates. Medusa also carries a bow. Perseus carries a shield and sword; he has a winged helmet and his sandals are winged. In a nice attention to detail, he appears the same as he does in his sticker on the Raging Seas page, although it might have been preferable to place the Medusa story before Raging Seas so that the idea of Perseus helping Andromeda on his way home from killing Medusa could be more readily understood.



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8. *Theseus and the Minotaur* places Ariadne on one page holding the thread, and Theseus on the other, facing the Minotaur. The text offers a retelling of the myth, focusing on the nature of the labyrinth and the Minotaur, and informing the reader that Theseus defeated the Minotaur and got out of the maze with help from Ariadne. The details of Minos, Ariadne's abandonment, and Aegeus are avoided. Stickers clothe Ariadne, Theseus, and the Minotaur (who receives a kilt), however only Ariadne and Theseus are clothed in underwear before the stickers are added, reinforcing the impression of the Minotaur's animalistic nature. The Minotaur has demonic red eyes, human fists, and wields an axe – the latter is an unusual addition which runs counter to the otherwise animal-orientated depiction. A grisly selection of skull and bone stickers adds further peril to the scene.

9. *Sailors and Sirens* takes Jason's encounter with the Sirens as its focus, perhaps because Odysseus features already in the Cyclops story. Jason is depicted on board ship with Orpheus and Atalanta. Antiquity disagreed about Atalanta's presence amongst the Argonauts. Some authors (e.g. Apollodorus, Bibliotheca 1. 9. 16) include her. Others (e.g. Apollonius of Rhodes, Argonautica 1. 768ff), have Jason prevent her from accompanying him over concerns about disputes for her affections. The stickers provide Jason and Orpheus with clothes and armour, Jason with a sword and the Golden Fleece, Orpheus with a lyre. Atalanta's stickers provide a dress and bow-and-arrow. The Sirens are depicted as beautiful dark-haired white women with large black wings. The story explains how Orpheus "had a less violent plan" than Jason and drowned-out the Sirens with his lyre (see Apollonius of Rhodes, Argonautica, 4.890-920).

10. *Magical creatures* depicts Bellerophon upon Pegasus fighting the Chimera. Stickers add snake and goat heads to the Chimera as well as flames, a pile of skulls and bones for the floor, arms and armour for Bellerophon, and a bridle for Pegasus. The story ends with the death of the Chimera.

11. *Heracles and Hippolyta* tells the story of the labour to fetch the Amazon queen's belt. Hippolyta and Heracles appear in a forest clearing amidst a crowd of Amazons who are in a varied state of armament. Hippolyta's stickers add a breast-plate and skirt, and special belt to hold, a large spear, crown, and sandals. Heracles receives a kilt, sandals, and his lion-skin cloak. Hera is available as a sticker, with the plot hinging on her causing trouble between Heracles and the Amazons. Hera's attire matches her clothing in the Mt.



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Olympus section.

12. *King Midas*, the final section, depicts the moment Midas' daughter begins to turn to gold (following a tradition established in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Golden Touch). The "troublemaking god Dionysus" is said to have given the gift of the golden touch, and he can be seen leaning around a column to catch the effect of his work. Stickers provide Midas with rich clothing, sandals, and a crown. A plate of golden apples can also be added to a table already weighed down by golden fruit.

Analysis

While there are a number of sticker books that focus on Greek mythology (including Stella Kalogeraki and Vangelis Papiomytoglou's *Greek Mythology Sticker Book*, 2012 and Rosie Dickins' *The Usborne Greek Myths Sticker Book*, 2013), this text is singular in its presentation. The gods, heroes and monsters are depicted in their underwear, and the stickers at the back of the book are in the shape of their clothes, armour, and other accoutrements. The concept is akin to paper or magnetic dolls that can be dressed in different outfits.

This is a delightful book which manages to tell the basic story of a considerable number of myths despite the format's emphasis on maximum illustration and minimum text. Greek myths are presented as varied and fantastical. The illustrations place all of the stories in a "long-ago" ancient setting, with tunics, sandals, and columns doing a lot of the work of signifying antiquity.

Emi Ordas' illustrations depict the world of Greek myth in a cartoon style. The colour palette is muted, with an emphasis on shades of red and brown. The clothing and weaponry are depicted in elaborate detail. Each myth features a different setting, ranging from the caves of Polyphemus and Medusa, the forests in which Apollo and Artemis hunt, to the otherworldly landscapes of the Underworld and Mount Olympus. With their round black eyes and fixed expressions, the characters convey little emotion. The only exception is Andromeda, who closes her eyes in terror as Poseidon's sea monster approaches the rock to which she is chained. The written text which accompanies this image ends with her left "to await her fate." (p. 4) It is up to the reader to stick in Perseus to liberate her.

The theme of relationships is emphasised in both the written and



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visual narrative. The Olympians are described as "one big, bickering family." (p. 2) King Midas and his golden daughter hold hands as he contemplates his folly. And aboard the Argo, Jason watches on while Atalanta wants to shoot the Sirens with her arrows, while Orpheus proposes a "less violent plan" to drown them out with his lyre (p. 18) The ability of this text to employ a single image to convey the full narrative of each story highlights the way in which myth can be distilled to its basic essence.

The text has an interactive element, but the possibilities for engagement are limited. The stickers can only be used once, and instructions are provided so that each sticker goes in a particular position. Many of the figures feature layers of robes, jewellery, and weapons, and the stickers are numbered so that they are stuck on in the correct order. Some of the stories do feature stickers that can be used more freely. The page featuring Perseus and Medusa includes stickers of other figures turned to stone (pp. 14-15), and the scene showing Polyphemus' cave has a flock of extra sheep (pp. 10-11). The Labyrinth has lizards and the bones of the Minotaur's victims, and the Underworld can be adorned with colourful gemstones.

Usborne has published more than twenty sticker books based on this premise. While most books in the series focus on generic themes, such as *Astronauts*, *Pirates* and *Action Heroes*, some of them, including *Romans*, *Shakespeare* and *Explorers*, feature particular identities, whether historical or fictional. By including Greek Myths in this hugely popular series of books, the publisher has normalised myths as something children may wish to explore, giving an accessible – scary yet sanitised – version of myths suitable for a very young audience. Several of the sections contain features that are not explained in the text, which an adult familiar with the material could expand on. There is something rather shocking about beholding the virgin goddesses Athena and Artemis in their undergarments, but this text certainly provides an accessible and memorable introduction to the world of Greek myth. In that sense, there is some assumed knowledge, but this knowledge is not a prerequisite as all of the sections can be understood and enjoyed as they are.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and

Afterlife Apollo Architecture Argo Argonauts Ariadne Artemis Atalanta Athena Athens Bellerophon Chimera / Chimaera Crete Cyclops / Cyclopes Daedalus Demeter Diana Dionysus / Dionysos Gods Golden



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| Concepts | Fleece Hades Hera Heracles Hercules Hermes Hippolyta Icarus Jason Juno Jupiter Katabasis Labyrinth Laurel Wreath Maze Medusa Mercury Midas Minerva Minos Minotaur Neptune Odysseus / Ulysses Odyssey Olympus Orpheus Pegasus Persephone Perseus Pluto / Plouton Polyphemus Poseidon Proserpina Sirens Theseus Twelve Labours of Heracles Underworld Zeus |
| Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture | Coming of age Family Friendship Gender expectations/construction Heroism Identity Intellect Parents (and children) Sexuality Storytelling |
| Further Reading | Weinlich, Barbara, "The Metanarrative of Picture Books: 'Reading' Greek Myth for (and to) Children", in Lisa Maurice, ed., *The Reception of Ancient Greece and Rome in Children's Literature. Heroes and Eagles*, Brill: Leiden, 2015. |
| Addenda | Usborne apps (accessed: August 2, 2018).<br><br>**From the point of view of a practitioner (Sonya Nevin):**<br><br>An additional note on how successful one of the authors found the use of this book within group activities with four-year-olds. The children had some familiarity with many of the myths, but not all. They enjoyed the crossover between their new knowledge of mythology and the familiar world of sticker books. The children took it in turns to pick a myth to do and then took it in turns to pick and add a sticker to that myth. This combination of individual choice and group work fostered a great deal of conversation about what the different stickers were and what the characters would do with them. The children were delighted to recognise the face of Medusa on Athena's shield. We spent a good deal of time going back and forth between the two illustrations and through constructive questioning they were able to deduce why someone might want an image of Medusa on their shield. It was impossible to convince the children that Poseidon is not a "baddie" due to his appearance in Raging Seas; this was perhaps understandable as they had no other reference for that god and he is |



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depicted looking stern in dark colours overseeing the attack on Andromeda. Despite having seen and talked about men wearing tunics and kilts in relation to other books, this issue came up again here, with children wondering aloud why the men were in skirts. This was perhaps related to their unfamiliarity with dressing men in these clothes in the familiar context of sticker books. Once we had talked about this again, this issue did not arise again in subsequent revisits to the book. The children were comfortable with the level of horror; although this included mock terror at seeing Medusa or the Chimera, they were not actually distressed. Nonetheless, the present reviewer felt it necessary to tone down the Odysseus and Polyphemus section, not relishing the prospect of explaining about blinding someone.



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