DinoBibi Publishing

History for Kids: Greek Mythology

United States of America (2019)

TAGS: Argonauts Chimera / Chimaera Fates Heracles Hercules Hesiod Homer Hydra Muses Olympians Pan Pegasus Perseus Sphinx Theseus Titans Tyche





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General information	
Title of the work	History for Kids: Greek Mythology
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First Edition Details	Dinobibi, *History for Kids: Greek Mythology*. [S. l.]: Dinobibi, 2019, 83 pp.
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Creators



DinoBibi Publishing (Company)

From the limited information on the DinoBibi website, it appears that the publisher focuses on travel guides as well as world history, all adapted to young children. For example, in their *History for Kids* series, various world mythologies can be found, including Greek, Norse, Sumerian and more. The series also includes a history of Ancient Rome, Egypt and more. The company also publishes travel guides designed for children.

Source:

Official website (accessed: August 11, 2020).

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Additional information

Summary

The book offers a broad and general introduction to Greek mythology. It consists of an introduction, conclusion and six chapters. The following themes are covered: Chapter 1: Who were the Greeks: some information regarding ancient Greece and its culture (e.g., philosophy, maths, drama); it also covers the beginning of mythology. Chapter 2: an abridged creation myth, an introduction of several Titans: Gaia, Nyx, Erebus, Tartarus, Eros, the role of Cronus and the creation of humankind. Chapter 3: Gods, Goddesses: Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, Ares, Apollo, Hermes, Dionysus, Hera, Demeter, Aphrodite, Athena. The other divinities include Pan, Hephaestus, Tyche, The Nine Muses, The Fates. Chapter 4: Myths, Monsters and Heroes, a brief introduction to the ages of the world, the concept of metamorphosis, heroic tales (short versions of the myths of Perseus, Theseus, Heracles, and the Argonauts); introduction of mythological monsters: Sphinx, Hydra, Chimera, the Sirens, Pegasus (included among the monsters in this book). Chapter 5 provides information on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The final chapter, 6, discusses the place of Greek mythology in the modern world.

The author(s) cover as many themes as possible in such a relatively short book, then they elaborate on each myth. The book contains small pictures as well as photos of the various deities and monsters. The language is clear and straightforward, even slangy at times, aimed at the young readership. There is no explicit reference to erotic themes or sexual acts. For example, it is noted that “Gaia and Uranus fell in love”. The muses “are friends of Apollo and often hang out with him.” However, the authors do mention that Hercules killed his sons during a fit of madness caused by Hera.

Analysis

In the introduction, the authors explain that in this book the readers will learn a lot about ancient Greek mythology and they refer to classical reception by noting that “The colourful characters in Greek mythology are loved by many to this day. Even some of the stories people write today are inspired by Greek myths!”

The myths are brief, and there is no elaboration on them. It also appears as if the authors altered some myths, as we can see from the following example of the myth of Pandora. It is explained that Zeus did

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not like humans, primarily due to their physical likeness to the gods. He also resented Prometheus for giving them fire. Hence Zeus decided to punish mortals with the creation of Pandora: “To punish humans, Zeus made the first woman, Pandora, and gave her gifts like sickness, death, war, and hard work.” (location 232) The authors make these misfortunes part of Pandora’s gifts from Zeus, in contrast to the Hesiodic myth, in which the ills are locked in a jar and Pandora is endowed with other presents from the gods. There is no further elaboration on the myth, and it is merely explained that the “’gifts’ were things that the gods were immune to, which made Zeus feel better” (location 232). Zeus’ ego is the reason behind these evil gifts. The focus in this version of the myth is on Zeus, while Pandora is hardly mentioned. Even her most remarkable trait, her curiosity, is not brought up. She does not do anything with these gifts which were granted to her.

As noted, Hercules’ killing of his sons is mentioned, although the myth of Hercules’ labours is briefly narrated and the adultery of Zeus with Alcmene is only hinted. (Hercules is identified as Zeus’ son, and this is why Hera hates him in the story). The authors explain that the labours were the means through which Hercules could make up for what he did, and they even conclude his story by commenting that “Hercules was able to complete every task, even though some were almost impossible. He was able to live happily for a long time after that”. While the murders committed by Hercules are mentioned, there is no reference to his tragic demise. Perhaps the authors wished to end his story on a happy note, in contrast to its harsher beginning. The “Happily ever after” theme almost connects Hercules with fairy tales, which also combine tragic as well as uplifting elements.

The book offers a very positive evaluation of Greek mythology and the continuing influence of the Greeks: “The Greeks were amazing people. Many of their ideas and inventions had an impact on every other civilization, including our own. Greece is sometimes called the 'Cradle of Western Civilization' because of how much it influenced the rest of Europe and eventually, America.” This comment reflects the American origin of the book and highlights the connection between the ancient Greeks and modern American society.

Regarding the actual myths, as noted, the presented versions are rather short and mention only a limited number of names. However, the book does mention the tension between humankind and the gods. In the creation myth, Prometheus gave humans “the ability to walk

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upright on two legs. This gift was a big deal because until then, only the gods and goddesses had been able to walk on two legs." Later it is emphasized that "Zeus did not like humans. They looked too much like the gods, and Zeus thought the gods should be special."

The notion that Zeus resented humans since they seem to appear similar to the gods (and because they lacked respect for gods) is rather novel. Later in the book, Zeus is described as the leader and as "everyone's favourite god" who was supposed to help humans.

The sixth chapter discusses the reception of Greek mythology today, and it is refreshing to see how the reception is being added to books, especially those aimed at young children. It reads: "The Greeks have a big influence on our lives. Believe it or not, the crazy stories they came up with are important. First of all, the Greeks were smart. They knew a lot about the world and never stopped trying to figure out more. The stories Greeks wrote are just as good, if not better than books we write today." The Greeks, it is explained, showed how they felt about the world in their myths. While we may argue with the book's assertion that "To the Greeks, everything they wrote was based on facts" and that we should view the stories as history, nevertheless for the ancient mythographers the line between history and myth was frequently blurred or obscured.

The book emphasizes the moral learning from these stories, not the fantastic elements; we should turn to the myths for guidance on how one should or should not act. "A lot of the stories involved smart people doing not-so-smart things. There are still, to this day, lessons we can learn from Greek myths, they can teach us how to be more patient, kind, and forgiving." This statement can also be questioned since many myths focus on envy and cruelty. Nevertheless, this book explains that we should not be jealous like, for example, Hera, that we should mimic the good and not the bad. Hence the book does not only provide a brief introduction to the world of Greek myth, but it also illustrates their importance for modern society, for the readers, thus bridging the old and the new.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Argonauts Chimera / Chimaera Fates Heracles Hercules Hesiod Homer Hydra Muses Olympians Pan Pegasus Perseus Sphinx Theseus Titans Tyche

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Emotions Good deeds Joy of reading
Addenda	The review refers to the Kindle edition.

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