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Joan Holub , Suzanne Williams

Clotho the Fate (Goddess Girls, 25)

United States of America (2019)

TAGS: Aphrodite Apollo Arachne Ares Artemis Atalanta Athena Atropos Cassandra Clotho Hera Lachesis Meleager Tantalus Zeus





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Clotho the Fate (Goddess Girls, 25)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2019
First Edition Details	Joan Holub and Suzanne Williams, *Goddess Girls: Clotho the Fate*. New York: Aladdin Press, 2019, 272 pp.
ISBN	9781481470254 (eBook)
Genre	Bildungsromans (Coming-of-age fiction), Mythological fiction, Novels, Romance fiction, School story*
Target Audience	Children (Older children, 8–12 yrs)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@biu.ac.il
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, Lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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?

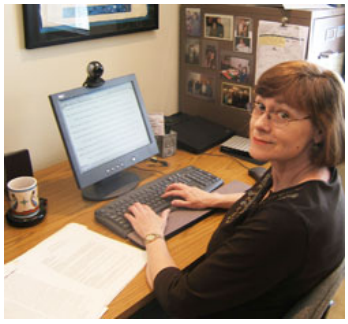
Suzanne Williams and I have written a new middle grade series called *Thunder Girls* (accessed: May 28, 2018), which is a twist on Norse mythology featuring strong girl characters. The first book Freya and the Magic Jewel releases May 2018 for ages 8–12, published by Simon and Schuster.

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

Suzanne Williams , b. 1953
(Author)

Suzanne Williams is an American prolific children's author and former

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Courtesy of the Author from her personal website.

elementary school librarian. She has written over 60 books for children.

She grew up in Oregon and graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's in library science from the University of Oregon. She currently lives in Reno, Washington.

Source:

Official website (accessed: May 29, 2018).

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

Questionnaire

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?

Writing about Greek mythology was my co-author, Joan Holub's idea. She's loved mythology since childhood. Her enthusiasm for the subject got me excited about it too. *Goddess Girls* (ages 8–12) was our very first collaboration. Soon there will be 26 books in that series. One of the challenges we've faced in writing our (soon to be four) myth-based series for young readers is how to handle the sexual and violent content of many of the myths.

To downplay the violence, we often make it cartoonish and lighten it with humor. Since most of our gods and goddesses are pre-teens (as are our readers!), we deal with inappropriate sexual content by making changes that still allow us to keep to the spirit of the myth. For example: in introducing the Adonis myth, in which Aphrodite and Persephone fight over a beautiful youth they both desire, we decided to make Adonis a kitten, rather than a young man.

Another challenge has involved familial relationships among the

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various gods and goddesses. In *Goddess Girls*, Zeus is an adult, the principal of Mount Olympus Academy, the school attended by our "goddessgirls" and "godboys". In mythology he would likely have fathered a good portion of the student body! So we made a decision that only Athena would call him "Dad". (Until Hebe popped forth from a lettuce in Book 21, that is.) We do acknowledge many other family relationships. For example: Apollo and Artemis as brother and sister. Medusa and her sisters Euryale and Stheno. Persephone and her mother, Demeter.

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

Myths have got all the elements that draw us to stories: action, conflict, drama, humor, etc. What's not to like?

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?

Neither Joan nor I have a classical education. I did take an online Greek and Roman mythology class a few years ago, however. (Taught by Peter Struck, University of Pennsylvania.) Terrific class!

For our Greek mythology-based series, Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* is the reference we rely on the most. My co-author and I do consult Wikipedia and other online resources, especially for lists of monsters and maps and general information about ancient Greece. References for *Thunder Girls*, our soon-to-be-published Norse mythology-based series include: *The Norse Myths* by Kevin Crossley-Holland, D'Aulaires' *Book of Norse Myths*, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs* by John Lindow, *The Poetic Edda* (translated and edited by Jackson Crawford), and *The Prose Edda* by Snorri Sturluson (Penguin Classics).

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

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In addition to *Goddess Girls*, my co-author and I have also collaborated on a second Greek mythology-based series called *Heroes in Training* (ages 6–9). It's a humorous quest/adventure series with Zeus, Poseidon, Hades and other Olympians as ten-year-olds on the run from King Cronus and the Titans. *Freya and the Magic Jewel*, the first book in *Thunder Girls*, our Norse mythology-based series, publishes May 1, 2018. I travel to Norway frequently to visit my daughter, granddaughter, and Norwegian son-in-law, so I am very excited to be doing a Norse-myth series. Aladdin (Simon & Schuster) publishes all three of Joan's and my mythology-based series. We will be doing a fourth myth-based series with them soon – for ages 5–8. Tentative title is *Little Goddess Girls*, and it will be another Greek myth-based series.

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

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Additional information

Summary

Clotho, an eleven years old goddess girl, is one of the fates, who is responsible for spinning the Thread of Fate. Together with her sisters, 12 years old Lachesis and 13 years old Atropos, they predict the destiny of mortal new-borns. They work closely as a team each night and they travel from one place to another for their nightly routine, like nomads. While her sisters like this setting, Clotho secretly yearns for a permanent home and some companionship. According to Zeus' rules, the sisters may not mingle with mortals.

One day Clotho secretly goes to the Immortal Marketplace, where she stumble across Cassandra's bakery and then visits Arachne the spider's dilapidated craft shop. Arachne, who detests the immortals, especially Athena who had turned her into a spider, soon befriends Clotho. During her time in the market, Clotho finds herself involved in a new game shop, where interactive games involve mortal as well as immortal juveniles and she meets new friends like brave Atalanta and goddess girls Aphrodite, Athena, Persephone and Artemis as well as Ares, Poseidon and Apollo. The mortal Tantalus overhears her conversation with Arachne in which she explains a mistake she caused 12 years earlier, when she tangled the thread of Prince Meleager. Tantalus cunningly uses her secret the next day, during Zeus' birthday party in order to show the gods that they are not perfect, that they can be tricked and make mistakes. His disruption ruins the party and Clotho has to confess to Zeus, as well as to her sisters, what she has been doing, and how she has been breaking Zeus' rules. In the end, she is forgiven, Tantalus is punished, and the sisters find a permanent place in Arachne's shop, much to Clotho's delight.

Analysis

The *Goddess Girls* series examines juvenile life and themes of maturation. The gods and goddess described in it suffer the same feelings of loneliness and insecurities as their modern readers. In the present story, the emphasis is on the feeling of loneliness and the need for a home. Clotho loves her sisters and her job, yet she wishes to have one place to call home, her own place. This sentiment resonates with a need to belong, both to a certain place and to people. Clotho feels lonely and finds some comfort in her knitted finger-puppet animals. Not only she does not have a home (or a pet as she wishes), because of the need to keep her identity secret, she is not

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allowed to meet mortals or go to where all the other goddess girls hang out. The mortals are angry at the fates blaming them for destroying their lives and for their life decisions, although the Fates are not guilty at all. Clotho does not understand this resentment and wishes to explain the truth to the mortals. Furthermore, Clotho wishes to break Zeus' rules a bit. As a typical teenager, she wishes for more excitement and adventure, while her sisters, who are also teenagers, gladly follow these rules which make them feel safe.

An unlikely friendship develops between the grumpy and aggrieved Arachne and Clotho. Arachne is angry at the immortals, accusing them of caring about nothing except punishing mortals. Clotho, who is immortal herself, tries to placate Arachne and in the end she understands that Arachne is lonely. Hence the two become friends and finally, Arachne suggests that the Fates continue to live in her house. Clotho even has her own pet, a stray kitten who enters the shop, thus strengthening her feeling of a safe and loving home. She welcomes the goddess girls and boys (including Athena) to her shop, since they liven up the place. While Arachne showed disrespect to an immortal and therefore was punished, Clotho pities her loneliness and eventually, Arachne's feelings brighten.

The characters of Atalanta, Meleager and Tantalus are marginal in this tale. They all meet in an interactive game arena, where groups must face a mechanical Calydonian boar. While it is noted that Meleager's mother tricked destiny (the myth of the burning log which is connected to his life span), the story is not developed and only serves to reflect Clotho's mistake while spinning Meleager's Thread of Fate. As noted the story is used by Tantalus to reprimand the gods.

Regarding Tantalus, he is quite harmless and far removed from his gruesome portrayal and cannibalistic actions in the myth. In our story, rather than his own son, he only bakes little finger puppets into a cake, from which Demeter eats. He tries to confront the gods and show that they can be tricked and in doing so reveals Clotho's mistake with Meleager's thread.

When the party is over, Zeus explains to the Fates: "Do you know how close we came to real trouble just now? If mortals come to believe that immortals make mistakes just like they do, they'll lose respect for us. That's why I make rules, to avoid that kind of misunderstanding. Yet you broke them. Explain yourselves!" (p. 240). We understand that there is a very delicate balance and tenuous trust between the gods

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and humankind. The gods must appear flawless (even when they are clearly not), in order to receive the respect of humans. This approach echoes throughout the series, how important it is for humans to respect the gods or receive punishment. While this notion may be referring to ancient Greek religion, the authors deliberately chose in the series to make the gods conscious of their image and reputation. This is of course very different form how they were presented in the original ancient Greek myths. In this series Zeus is all powerful and while he does have some flaws, he is benevolent and caring nonetheless, for humankind as well as for the gods. The rules are not made up for nothing (perhaps a hint to the juvenile readers who disrespect rules?). While children and teenagers do not always understand or accept rules made by adults, they should understand that the rules are made for their protection (in a healthy family/society). Therefore rules and limitations are not always bad, since they also provide security for children as well as society in general.

In the end, the rules are bent, the Fates are allowed to meet mortals and advise them, and the importance of mutual understanding and communication surpasses the initial caution of separating the Fates from mortals. The message is that talking creates understanding and avoids misunderstandings, unlike Zeus' initial thoughts and rules. Furthermore, humans are in charge of their own destiny and the choices they make are what ultimately decides their fates and not any divine intervention.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Apollo Arachne Ares Artemis Atalanta Athena Atropos Cassandra Clotho Hera Lachesis Meleager Tantalus Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Family Friendship Isolation/loneliness Magic Punishment

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Addenda The review refers to the Kindle edition.

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