Susan Deacy, "Entry on: British Museum Fun Book: Ancient Greece by David Farris , Sandy Ransford", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1081. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

David Farris , Sandy Ransford

British Museum Fun Book: Ancient Greece

United Kingdom (1999)

TAGS: Greek Philosophy Greek Religion Olympic Games Theatre





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

General information	
Title of the work	British Museum Fun Book: Ancient Greece
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1999
First Edition Details	Sandy Ransford, *British Museum Fun Book: Ancient Greece*. London: British Museum Press, 1999, 63 pp.
ISBN	9780714121680
Genre	Activity book*
Target Audience	Children (c. 6–11)
Author of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk
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Creators



David Farris , b. 1954
(Illustrator)

David Farris is the illustrator of numerous books for book adults and – above all children – including a number of activity books and joke books.

Bio prepared by Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk



Sandy Ransford (Author)

Sandy Ransford is a British children's author who was born in Sheffield. Her books authored to date include a number of joke books, activity books, puzzle books and titles on subjects including horses and riding, fashion and global warming.

Source:

us.macmillan.com (accessed: August 3, 2020).

Bio prepared by Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk

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Additional information

Summary

This short “fun book” comprises activities based on various aspects of ancient Greek history, culture and myth. The activities include “spot-the difference” puzzles, crosswords and brainteasers, all aimed to “test and perplex” (p. 4) the reader, along with games and jokes “to keep [them] chuckling” (p. 4). A checklist towards the start gives a brief explanation of the historical and mythical figures and places that appear in the book. Most of the activities can be carried out quite quickly by children on their own. These include filling in missing letters of ancient Greek words (p. 38), counting the eyes of Argus (p. 39) and spotting the differences between two drawings of a section of the Parthenon Frieze (p. 49). There is also a longer “Odyssey Game” for two or more players, requiring a die and a counter (pp. 33–35). The winner is the first to return home after encountering various challenges. Puns abound throughout the book via jokes and the titles of activities (e.g. “Deep Frieze, p. 49).

Analysis

In common with other “fun books” on historical topics, including those by the same author (e.g. Ransford 2000), this one maintains an irreverent approach to its topic while introducing key facts, figures and customs. In this regard, the author’s approach sets up comparable binary to other history books for children – such as those in the *Horrible Histories* series – which distinguish their use of humour from more serious approaches. See, for example, Deary 1995, surveyed elsewhere in this database. The starting premise – as set out in the introduction – is that ancient Greece can be “difficult” (p. 4) to learn about. However, the reader is told, “if you find it all a bit confusing, don’t worry, you are not alone” (p. 4). The author, then, presents herself as one who shares in children’s experiences of finding the educational core a challenge.

In keeping with the many educational studies into how children learn better through fun and when they are able to engage directly with a subject (e.g. O'Connor 2012), there are many opportunities for active learning. These include finding out about words and phrases used in everyday English (What’s in a word, p. 30), or about the composition of the Parthenon Frieze (“deep frieze” spot-the-difference activity, p. 49). While introduced as breaks from the activities to “keep you chuckling” (p. 4), the jokes interspersed through the book each add to

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	the reader's knowledge about specific ancient Greek customs or people.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Greek Philosophy Greek Religion Olympic Games Theatre
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Humour Knowledge Learning
Further Reading	Deary, Terry, *Horrible Histories: The Groovy Greeks*, New York: Scholastic, 1995. O'Connor, Doireann, "A pedagogy of freedom: Why primary school teachers should embrace educational emancipation, University of Notre Dame Australia ResearchOnline@ND, 2012, available at core.ac.uk (accessed: August 6, 2020). Ransford, Sandy, *British Museum Fun Book: Ancient Rome*, London: British Museum Press, 2000.

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