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Victor Juhasz , Helen L. Wilbur

Z is for Zeus: A Greek Mythology Alphabet

United States of America (2008)

TAGS: Argonauts Echo Eurydice Fates Hera Labyrinth Medea Midas Minotaur Narcissus Odysseus / Ulysses Olympians Olympus Orpheus Pandora Paris (Trojan Prince) Pegasus Poseidon Prometheus Sphinx Trojan War Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Z is for Zeus: A Greek Mythology Alphabet
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2008
First Edition Details	Helen L. Wilbur, ill. Victor Juhasz, *Z is for Zeus: A Greek Mythology Alphabet*, "Sleeping Bear Alphabets". Ann Arbor, MI: Sleeping Bear Press, 2008, 40 pp.
ISBN	9781585363414
Genre	Myths, Picture books
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@biu.ac.il
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Creators



Victor Juhasz , b. 1954
(Illustrator)

Victor Juhasz is a prolific and award-winning American artist and illustrator. He graduated from Parsons School of Design in 1975. As a student, his works were published in the "New York Times" and also featured regularly in "Rolling Stone", "Time Magazine", and "Esquire Magazine".

The main focus in his works is caricatures and humorous illustrations, but he also works in other media such as children's books. His work has been presented in various American museums and institutions.

Among the awards the illustrator has received are John Thomason Award for his work documenting the activities of the Marines (2017). He received old and silver medals and citations for his illustrations, the Society of Illustrators in New York City's Arthur William Brown Award (2012) and many more.

Source:

juhaszillustration.com (accessed: November 11, 2020).

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Helen L. Wilbur (Author)

Helen L. Wilbur is an award-winning American children books author. She holds a B.A. in English Language and Literature from the University of Chicago and an M. L. S. from Columbia University. Among her books are *M is for Meow: A Cat Alphabet, Finnegan* and *Fox, Lily's The Victory Garden* and *Little New York* and more.

Source:

Official website (accessed: November 11, 2020).

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Additional information

Summary

This book offers adapted lexical information on ancient Greek myths arranged alphabetically. Each letter refers to one entry, for example, A is for Ancient Greece, F is for the Fates, N is for Narcissus and Echo. The text appears on the side and most of the space is given to the colourful and whimsical illustrations. The book also includes a glossary of the gods, goddesses, and their symbols.

The entries include:

- A for ancient Greece,
- B – beauties and beasts,
- C – Chaos,
- D – Delphi,
- E – Eurydice and Orpheus,
- F – fates,
- G – gods and goddesses,
- H – heroes,
- I – Iliad,
- J – judgment of Paris,
- K – king Midas,
- L – labyrinth,
- M – monster,
- N – Narcissus and Echo,
- O – Olympus,
- P – Pandora and Prometheus,
- Q – quest,
- R – riddle of the Sphinx,
- S – Sirius,
- T – Trojan horse,
- U – underworld,
- V – voyage,
- W – water,
- X – Xanthus, Balius and Pegasus,
- Y – youth,
- Z – Zeus.

Analysis

In the introduction, the author explains that "since before the time of Shakespeare, people have used the phrase 'it's Greek to me' to mean

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something that is difficult or impossible to understand…by reading and studying the myths and their culture you can expand your understanding of the words, their meanings, and symbols, making them no longer Greek to you." The author encourages the readers to be inquisitive and learn more and to learn about the Greek culture in order not to make it "Greek to them." In the introduction, the author also lists various words which share a Greek origin, such as panic, music, museum, etc. Hence, the book covers broader themes, such as ancient Greece or beast besides more specific characters or myths.

The author conveys the message that ancient Greek culture still influences our world today. In the first entry on Ancient Greece, it is written that "everyday we should thank a Greek myth or legend from times antique. Because modern life is founded on ideas from the land of the Parthenon."

The author discusses the meaning of the Iliad, of heroes, gods and goddesses, hence the book combines mythological and literary references as well as historical facts. Sometimes the author chooses a general entry, for example, voyage, to narrate the story of Odysseus or water to discuss Poseidon. The entry on Sirius is used to explain how the Greeks viewed the stars.

From the list in the summary, we see that the author chose to include specific, more well-known stories, such as Narcissus or king Midas, but also chose general themes such as water and voyage in order to name various relevant myths. While the G and O entries appear similar, in the Gods and Goddesses entry the author offers a general description and explanation of the Greek gods and in the Olympus entry, he names the Olympian gods and gives each a short description (he includes Dionysus and not Hestia). Hade sin mentioned in the U entry for the underworld. Hence, the entries provide information on different aspects of Greek religion and myth as well as individual examples. The Trojan war is depicted in three entries, I, J and T, alluding to its significance and centrality in Greek Mythology. Q – the quest is dedicated to the Argonauts. Regrading Medea, in the brief (one column) account of the Argonauts story, it is noted that Medea assisted Jason and later married him, "yet Jason discovered that life with a witch has its difficulties." And that Medea was "jealous and vengeful." This description appears a bit one-sided since Jason was also to blame for forsaking Medea in Corinth.

The colourful illustrations are large and consist much of the page,

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they are humorous in nature and focus on the characters' facial expressions. They depict part of the stories. For example, in the entry Labyrinth, on one page we see the young boys and girls peeping through the maze walls, looking for the Minotaur, while on the opposite page we see the Minotaur standing and waiting, one hand on the wall and skulls at his feet.

On the cover, we have a large illustration of Zeus holding a lightning bolt, with a mischievous grin on his face. Below him are two small humans, looking up in fear and running away from the god. This illustration shows on the one hand how people revered and feared the gods, but mostly how shows the indifference of the gods to human suffering and how they toyed with humans. The gods look larger than life in comparison with the tiny humans, they do not stand a chance against him and they can only try to escape his bolt. In Zeus' individual entry, Z, he is depicted as causing a storm (again we see a couple on earth running for cover, this time not looking up), yet Zeus is not smiling, but looks behind in fear since Hera stands angrily behind him. When we compare this image with the book's cover we receive a more complete portrayal of Zeus, who executes his powers against innocent people, who fear him, whilst he himself is afraid of his wife. even his eagle appear scared of Hera and tightly hugs Zeus's neck. So the might king of the gods is not as mighty when his wife is mad at him. This is of course a comical illustration, but it also depicts Zeus' position in some of the myths.

To conclude, this is not a regular lexicon of ancient myths or mythological characters, but an examination of Greek mythology and culture, alphabetically arranged according to various themes.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Argonauts Echo Eurydice Fates Hera Labyrinth Medea Midas Minotaur Narcissus Odysseus / Ulysses Olympians Olympus Orpheus Pandora Paris (Trojan Prince) Pegasus Poseidon Prometheus Sphinx Trojan War Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Animals Emotions Family Journeys Love

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