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Tera Lynn Childs

Oh. My. Gods. (Oh. My. Gods., 1)

United States of America (2008)

TAGS: Aphrodite Ares Asclepius Athena Hera Heracles Nike





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

General information	
Title of the work	Oh. My. Gods. (Oh. My. Gods., 1)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2008
First Edition Details	Tera Lynn Childs, *Oh. My. Gods.* New York, NY: Speak; Penguin GROUP, 2008, 228 pp.
ISBN	9780142414200
Genre	Fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Young adults
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Creators



Tera Lynn Childs , b. 1976
(Author)

Tera Lynn Childs is an American award winning YA author. Among her awards are Romance Writers of America RITA Award for Best First Book, the National Readers' Choice Award for Best First Book and more. The author holds a BA in Theatre from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and an MS in Historic Preservation from Columbia University.

She is the author of the "Oh. My. Gods." series, the "Forgive My Fins" mermaid romance series, the kick-butt monster-hunting "Sweet Venom" trilogy, and the "Darkly Fae" series.

Source:

Official Website (accessed: December 12, 2020).

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Additional information

Summary

Phoebe Castro is an American 18-year-old from South California. Phoebe is a cross-country runner and running makes her feel alive. It also makes her feel closer to her deceased father, who passed away six years ago. She plans to finish another year of high school and then attend the University of Southern California with her two best friends, Nola and Cesca. Phoebe's father was of Greek origin, and her mother, Valerie, a therapist, has gone on a family visit in Greece. However, upon her return, Phoebe's world is forever changed. Her mother has met and fallen in love with a Greek man, Damian Petrolas, and she plans to move with Phoebe to Greece with him, to the little island of Serfopoula in the Aegean. Phoebe is outraged at this sudden move across the world, but her mother is adamant and Phoebe must part with her friends and her former life in the USA.

After landing in Greece, Phoebe is impressed by the road on the subway and especially the exhibition of Marathon. Then they continue their journey to the island. Before arriving at the island, Damian and her mother confide with Phoebe that the island is a specially protected place and Damian (himself a descendant of the gods) is the headmaster of a unique school for the descendants of the Greek gods. Phoebe cannot believe this new revelation, that the mythological gods truly exist and that they even have descendants in the modern world. When they arrive to their new home, she meets Damian's daughter, Stella (Hera's descendant), who seems to be eager to make Phoebe's life a living hell. She even uses her power to interfere with Phoebe's food.

The next day she arrives at the school (which was originally created by Plato and was moved to this island to protects the faculty and students). She is impressed with the beautiful building and surrounding, yet she is automatically branded as "nothos," a new girl and "kako," bad blood, by the other students, since she seems to be without any connection to the gods.

The only two people who befriend Phoebe and share their experiences of the school with her are Nicole Matios and Troy Travatas, who are both descendants of the gods. Troy is a descendant of Asclepius while Nicole's lineage remains a secret at this point. Phoebe joins the track team and begins to fall in love with Griffin Blake, the handsome descendant of Ares. Griffin is dating Adara, an Aphrodite descendant,

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who acts like a typical obnoxious popular cheerleader.

With time, Phoebe gets used to her life at the school, yet she counts the days until she can return to the USA and go to college with her friends. One day, Stella offers to help her with her studies, on the condition that she breaks up Griffin and Adara's relationship, so that Stella can have Griffin for herself. Phoebe reluctantly agrees, since she wants to improve her average in order to go to college. Yet, slowly she begins to fall for Griffin who seems to be interested in her as well. It also turns out that Griffin and Nicole were very close as young children but something happened and they do not speak any more.

Apparently when they were seven, Nicole and Griffin stole the nectar of the gods and gave it to Hera's son. Apparently, "if a god consumes ambrosia before the age of two, it steals his immortality" (p. 225). They were brought to trial and as a result Nicole’s parents were exiled from the island and Griffin’s parents banished from the face of the earth. Nicole believed it was Griffin's fault, that he was the one who blamed her parents, yet she later discovers that his parents took the whole blame on themselves and received the ultimate punishment. With Phoebe's help, the two reconcile.

One day, Stella and Adara viciously tell Phoebe that Griffin was involved in a bet to see how long it would take her to fall for him. Phoebe feels upset and betrayed and confronts Griffin. He confesses it all started as a bet yet his feelings are genuine so the two make up and start dating. Griffin confides in Phoebe that he is also the only descendant of Heracles, a secret he had not told anyone.

In the end, Phoebe makes amends with Griffin and even Stella. She also wins an important race. Phoebe is sure that Troy used his power to make her win and feels like a fraud. However, Damian and the team coach, Lenny, tell her that after thoroughly researching her, they have discovered that she is also a descendant of the gods. Apparently her father was the grandchild of the goddess Nike. Phoebe is overwhelmed by this news and even more so when she hears that her father, a football player, was smitend by the gods since he used his power for self-advancement in this sport career. Hence the gods killed him. Phoebe cannot believe that his career meant more to her father than his family and that he would risk his life for it.

The book ends with Valerie's and Damian's wedding, to which even Nola and Cesca are invited. The two confide in Phoebe that they have

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decided not to go to USC, but to pursue other interests. Hence Phoebe decides that maybe it would be preferable for her to remain another year on the island and then attend Oxford with Griffin. Oxford is the preferable university for many of the high schoolers', perhaps the author wished to show how good is their high school since they can all attend prestigious universities after graduation.

Analysis

As with similar YA fantasy novels, the book emphasizes growing pains, first love and the search for self-identity. The mythological fantastical element is used as a mean to intensify the main heroine's personal struggles but also to provide her with the power to overcome them.

This unique high school which Phoebe attends on the island is similar to any stereotypical American high school with their own cliques (the cheerleaders, the geeks, the jocks), yet, here the cliques are also divided by their divine ancestry. This ancestry corresponds with the more typical high school groups: the cheerleaders are descendants of Aphrodite, the geeks are from Athena, the jocks from Ares etc. (Perhaps this is an influence from the *Percy Jackson* series).

Phoebe discovers how hard it is to fit in in a new place, a struggle with which anyone who moved school or home can identify, regardless of the mythological background. Being seen as a "regular" person without any powers only makes Phoebe stand out more in this unique environment (Phoebe's condition as powerless in a world of demigods can easily be replaced with real-life feelings of isolation, such as those caused by being of different race for example).

The mythological background offers us a glimpse into the hardships facing the demigods, despite the fact that their life might seem perfect. Troy tells Phoebe that his dream is to become a musician, yet, his parents refuse to accept his wish since as a descendent of Asclepius he must become a doctor. Many readers can identify with this message, how to comply with others preconceived expectations of them (I thank Lisa Maurice for this observation).

Phoebe must learn to overcome challenges without having any powers, but through self-reliance and belief in her own self and her ability. This is how she makes friends and also why Griffin falls for her, because she is true to herself and has her own inner powers. The lesson being that one can be exceptional without having exceptional

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powers, all they need is to have faith in their own abilities.

The gods appear remote from the everyday lives of their descendants, however, they can act cruelly as the story of Nicole and Griffin's parents show. Phoebe is distressed that her father may have knowingly risked his life for his career, which makes her wonder if he preferred football over his family. Although there is no direct involvement of the gods in the story, some traditional divine stereotypes persist, as in the case of Stella, the mean stepsister, who, not surprisingly is Hera's descendant, reflecting the fact that Hera's reputation is usually worse in the retelling of myths. Being related to Nike is currently related to Phoebe's ability to run fast and win races (and her obsession with Nike shoes). In the remaining books we may see her true powers manifest.

This book is different than other YA novels, since the gods have only a mild influence on the narrative. While their presence is strongly observed and they can cause serious trouble (for example to Nicole and Griffin) they do not appear as characters in this story. The main characters do not engage directly with any of the gods.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Ares Asclepius Athena Hera Heracles Nike
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Death Emotions Family Friendship Individuality Journeys Learning Love

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