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Margaret Evans Price

A Child's Book of Myths and Enchantment Tales

United States of America (1924)

TAGS: Apollo Atalanta Bellerophon Callisto Ceres Circe Cupid Diana Epimetheus Hercules Icarus Jason Juno Jupiter Medea Midas Orpheus Pandora Perseus Phaethon Pluto / Plouton Pomona Prometheus Proserpina Psyche

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

General information	
Title of the work	A Child's Book of Myths and Enchantment Tales
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	English speaking countries
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1924
First Edition Details	Margaret Evans Price, *A Child's Book of Myths and Enchantment Tales*. Children's Press Choice, 1986. Compiled from Margaret Evans Price, *A Child's Book of Myths*. Rand Mcnally, 1924, and Margaret Evans Price, *Enchantment Tales for Children*. Rand Mcnally, 1926.
Genre	Illustrated works, Mythologies
Target Audience	Children
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Creators

Margaret Evans Price , 1888 - 1973
(Author)

Margaret Evans Price was an American children's book illustrator and one of the co-founders of Fisher-Price toys. She was born into the wealthy Evans family and was the cousin of Charles Evans Hughes Sr., a lawyer and Republican politician.

Evans Price was interested in art from a young age. At twelve, she sold her first illustrated story to the Boston Journal. She studied art at Massachusetts Normal Art School and at the Boston Academy of Fine Arts, then moved to New York and worked as a freelance illustrator for companies such as Rand McNally. In 1930, she founded Fisher-Price toys along with her husband Irving L. Price, and Herman G. Fisher. Evans Price was also Fisher Price's first Art Director, and designed pull-toys inspired by characters from her own books.

She is particularly known for her children's books of fairy tales. Her art was displayed in galleries, and she wrote for "Nature Magazine", "The Women's Home Companion", and "Pictorial Review".

Sources:

porkopolis.org (accessed: December 3, 2020),

brwnpaperbag.com (accessed: December 3, 2020),

meibohmfinearts.com (accessed: December 3, 2020).

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Additional information

Summary

This is a collection of Greek myths for children. It is a 1986 compilation of Price's 1924 *A Child's Book of Myths* and 1926 *Enchantment Tales for Children*. The text is illustrated throughout with Price's large, colourful drawings. The stories generally stick closely to Ovid's versions of myths. An Index of characters at the end provides further context on the characters in the stories.

Featured Stories:

- *Prometheus and the Fire of the Gods*,
- *Pandora's Box*,
- *Hercules*,
- *Apollo and Diana* (story of their birth and childhood),
- *Pegasus and Bellerophon*,
- *Jason and the Golden Fleece*,
- *Circe and Ulysses*,
- *Daedalus and Icarus*,
- *Pomona and Vertumnus*,
- *Atalanta and Hippomenes*,
- *Cupid and Apollo* (story of Daphne),
- *Orpheus and Eurydice*,
- *Phaeton and the Chariot of the Sun*,
- *Arcas and Callisto*,
- *The Golden Touch*,
- *Perseus and Andromeda*,
- *Pygmalion and Galatea*,
- *Romulus and Remus.*

Analysis

The Foreword by the unnamed editors of the 1986 edition positions Greek myths as stories told by "Greek and Roman grandmothers and grandfathers' to their grandchildren" (p. 7). The editors also make the claim that myth is primitive science: myths are supposedly often "imagined out of the wonder people felt for things they could not explain" (p. 7).

In this version of the Pandora story, Price avoids Hesiod's interpretation that Pandora is a punishment for mankind (*Theogony* 585–616). Instead, she substitutes benevolent sexism for hostile sexism: Epimetheus is lonely after Prometheus' imprisonment and the

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gods feel pity and create him a female companion for comfort. Comfort is thus implied to be a central purpose of women. The box is something Epimetheus happens to have in his house, rather than it arriving with Pandora. Pandora is also partially redeemed at the end by going to stand outside with Hope on her hand so that everyone can see and be comforted. Again, this softens the more aggressive misogyny of Hesiod in favour of a different form of gender-differentiation in which women are seen as sources of hope and inspiration to men.

Hercules' labours in this version are a punishment by his human foster father Amphityron for killing his music tutor Linus. Hercules has a "terrible temper", and although Amphityron tries to teach him anger management, nothing works (p. 20). When Linus tells him off for carelessness and tries to punish him, Hercules hits Linus over the head with his lute, killing him. How intentional this is supposed to be is ambiguous. The character of Eurystheus and the murder of Hercules' children are not present. The inclusion of Linus' murder, but not the children probably indicates child murder was seen as more disturbing than the murder of a teacher, perhaps related to 1920s youth culture and its lower expectations for adolescent respect for authority compared with previous decades.

Price disparages Juno for preferring animals to children. Jupiter, we are told, "was fond of beautiful children, but Juno, his wife, was hard-hearted and liked much better to pet her peacock than to fondle the dearest baby that ever lived" (p. 27). Here we see the narrative playing to an imagined child reader by criticising women who do not like children. There also seems to be an idea that beautiful is synonymous with good or worthy, seen in Jupiter's love of beautiful children specifically.

The Jason and the Argonauts retelling describes Medea as beautiful and kind, but the accompanying illustration gives her a long, stereotypically witchy nose. The ending in which she kills their children is replaced with a vague but ominous statement: "sad to relate, they did not live happily ever after, for Medea knew so much sorcery that she was forever practicing new magic and often she brought trouble on herself and Jason" (p. 53). This portrayal of Medea indicates ambivalent reception of witches and women who claimed to do magic at this time. The inconsistency in her appearance perhaps shows a desire to conform to stereotypically ugly images of witches in children's books alongside a desire to conform to trends of the hero's

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love interest needing to be beautiful.

Cupid's motivation in hiding his identity from Psyche is changed to wanting the two of them to live as equals. When she begs him to let her see him in the daytime, he answers, "If you beheld my face, perhaps you would fear me, perhaps adore me, but I would rather you should love me as an equal than adore me as a god" (p. 99). This is consistent with the positive attitude to the gods as benevolent powers and the idea that others would naturally worship them seen in late Victorian and early twentieth-century anthologies such as Firth (1894 *Stories of Old Greece*), Baldwin (1895 *Old Greek Stories*), Beckwith (1896 *In Mythland*), Kupfer (1897 *Stories of Long Ago in a New Dress*), Cather (1916 *Pan and His Pipes: and Other Tales for Children*) and Winder (1923 *Once Upon a Time: Children's Stories from the Classics*).

However, compared with most of these, Price seems concerned with the potential higher powers could overwhelm or intimidate their social lessers and the need to be careful about this. This can also be seen in her Daphne retelling, where Daphne is a shy nymph who flees Apollo seemingly because she is intimidated by him, and Apollo ends by acknowledging his mistake and apologising. There is perhaps an implied message to children to be careful about how they use their power, and implied support for greater equality in romantic partnerships.

Unusually, Price implies Phaeton survives after falling from the sun chariot in the sky. The fire on him is quenched by the river in which he lands. Phaeton not dying may suggest an idea the original is too disturbing, although Icarus still dies. Icarus' death may be seen as a more important cultural capital that should not be changed.

The illustrations are brightly coloured and depict key scenes. They make most of the characters blonde and are doll-like in style. Jupiter is depicted in a manner reminiscent of drawings of the Christian god. He wears long flowing white robes, has a long white beard and is surrounded by a holy glow (p. 129).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and	Apollo Atalanta Bellerophon Callisto Ceres Circe Cupid Diana Epimetheus Hercules Icarus Jason Juno Jupiter Medea Midas Orpheus Pandora Perseus Phaethon Pluto / Plouton Pomona Prometheus Proserpina Psyche

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Concepts

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Child, children Femininity Heroism Love Magic

Further Reading

Baldwin, James, *Old Greek Stories*, New York: American Book Company, 1895.

Beckwith, Helen, *In Mythland*, Boston: Educational Publishing Company, 1896.

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Winder, Blanche, *Once Upon a Time: Children's Stories from the Classics*, ill. Harry G. Theaker, London and Melbourne: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, 1923.

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