Robin Diver, "Entry on: The Curse of the Dragon's Gold by Jacynth Hope-Simpson, Alberto Longoni", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1272. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Jacynth Hope-Simpson , Alberto Longoni

The Curse of the Dragon's Gold

United States of America (1964)

TAGS: Aegeus Aeneas Anchises Apollo Ariadne Ascanius / Iulus Creusa (Aeneas' Wife) Demeter Dido Dionysus / Dionysos Eumaeus / Eumaios Eurycleia Hades Hermes Laertes Maia Minos Minotaur Odysseus / Ulysses Penelope Persephone Telemachus Zeus



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



General information	
Title of the work	The Curse of the Dragon's Gold
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	English speaking countries
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1964
First Edition Details	Jacynth Hope-Simpson, *The Curse of the Dragon's Gold*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1964. May be a reissue of *The Hamish Hamilton Book of Myths and Legends* (1964) by Hope-Simpson but with illustrations by Raymond Briggs.
Genre	Mythological fiction, Mythologies
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Robin Diver, University of Birmingham, robin.diver@hotmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

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Creators



Jacynth Hope-Simpson , 1930 - 2008
(Author)

Jacynth Hope-Simpson (b. 1930, Birmingham, West Midlands) was a British children's author and editor. She grew up in Stratford-upon-Avon, then attended Lausanne University and St. Hugh's College, Oxford. She wrote and edited books about witches, such as *A Cavalcade of Witches* (1966) and *Witch's Cave* (1990), historical books such as *The Great Fire* (1961) and *Elizabeth I* (1971), and myth books such as *The Curse of the Dragon's Gold* (1964). At the time of the publication of *The Curse of the Dragon's Gold,* she lived in Plymouth with her husband and young daughter.

In 2008, Hope-Simpson was killed in a car crash in Tunisia where she was holidaying.

Sources:

Jacynth Hope-Simpson, *The Curse of the Dragon's Gold*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1964. Author biography.

Bournemouth Echo (accessed: November 4, 2020).

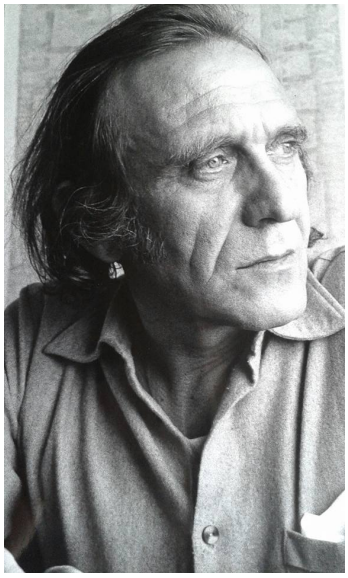
ISFDB, Summary Biography (accessed: November 4, 2020).

Amazon Listing: (accessed: November 4, 2020).

Goodreads Listing: (accessed: November 4, 2020).

Bio prepared by Robin Diver, University of Birmingham, RSD253@student.bham.ac.uk

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Alberto Longoni by Ranaan. Retrieved from Wikipedia, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 (accessed: February 2, 2022).

Alberto Longoni , 1921 - 1991
(Illustrator)

Alberto Longoni (b. in Milan, 1921) was an Italian painter and designer who also wrote and illustrated books, magazines, and album covers, and created graffiti paintings. He illustrated the children's anthology of myths *The Curse of the Dragon's Gold* (1964).

At the time of the publication of this work, he lived in Milan and divided his time between Milan and his Alpine studio retreat. The back cover of *The Curse of the Dragon's Gold* states he was known for the exquisite detail and wit of his illustrations.

Sources:

Jacynth Hope-Simpson, *The Curse of the Dragon's Gold,* Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1964. Illustrator biography.

Discogs Biography (accessed: November 5, 2020).

AskArt Biography (accessed: November 5, 2020).

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Additional information

Summary

This is a collection of Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, Norse, and Arthurian myths retold for children, closely adapted from the ancient source material. The featured Greek myths are retellings of the stories of Theseus, Persephone, Aeneas, Odysseus and the birth of Hermes. All except Theseus are loose child-friendly English translations of ancient poems (the Homeric Hymn to Hermes, Homeric Hymn to Demeter, *The Aeneid*, and *The Odyssey*). In the case of Theseus, Hope-Simpson writes in her introduction that this is the only story where she added material because "the original was very brief" (p. ix). The retellings are accompanied by line drawings every few pages that depict scenes from a distance, often incorporating multiple events of the story taking place simultaneously. The anthology ends with a source list.

Featured Stories:

- *The Flood* (the story of Utanapishtim as told to Gilgamesh),
- *The Fight for the Crown* (the war between Horus and Set),
- *Weighed in the Balance* (the Egyptian weighing of the heart in the land of the dead),
- *The Secret of King Minos* (Theseus, Ariadne and the Minotaur),
- *The Disgraceful Baby* (Hermes and his theft of Apollo’s cattle),
- *How Winter Came to the Earth* (Demeter and Persephone),
- *The Fugitive* (Aeneas' escape from Troy as told to Dido),
- *The Uninvited Guests* (Odysseus and the suitors),
- *Swimming to School* (the dolphin and the boy at Baiae),
- *How Thor Fooled the Giants* (the theft of Thor's hammer),
- *How the Giants Fooled Thor* (Thor and Loki at Utgard),
- *The Twilight of the Gods* (death of Balder),
- *The Curse of the Dragon's Gold* (Sigurd and the Saga of the Volsungs),
- *The Water-Monsters* (Beowulf),
- *The Giant's Daughter* (Culhwch and Olwen),
- *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*,
- "*In You my Death, in You my Life*" (Tristan and Iseult),
- *The Werewolf* (the man who was betrayed by his wife when she learnt he was a werewolf),
- *The Battle in the Pass* (Charlemagne and the death of Roland),
- *The Earthly Paradise* (poem).

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Analysis

In her introduction, Hope-Simpson writes that she avoided consulting modern retellings until after she had finished this book because "I was determined to tell these stories from early versions" (p. viii). Her anthology does indeed stick very closely to the various ancient poems on which it is based. She mentions the Theseus and the Minotaur retelling as the one in which she has taken most liberties since ancient versions of it are not very long.

Instead of being the son of Pasiphae and a bull, Hope-Simpson makes the Minotaur a mysterious monster that Minos like to "play with" and "fondle" and is rumoured to love more than his own daughter Ariadne (p. 16). Ariadne and Theseus are framed as allies, not lovers. Ariadne helps Theseus because she hates the cruelty of the Minotaur and her father. Rather than Ariadne getting the thread, Theseus uses to guide himself through the labyrinth from Daedalus, Ariadne now comes up with the idea by herself.

After he kills the Minotaur, Theseus is in a dreamy haze for the voyage home, and this causes him to accidentally leave Ariadne behind. He is so distracted with guilt about this that he then forgets to change the sails from black to white to let his father Aegeus know he is alive. The horror of Aegeus' death is, however, softened in this version. Instead of leaping to his death because he believes his son is dead, Aegeus steps too close to the edge of the cliff trying to see if the sails really are black and accidentally falls to his death. Theseus always looks back on what happened with Ariadne with confusion, and later hears bizarre rumours that she either gave birth to his child or married Dionysus. When he hears these, he does not know what to believe about what happened.

In the Persephone and Demeter chapter, Demeter's wrath towards humanity after Persephone's abduction by Hades comes on slowly. In the early stages of searching for Persephone, when in a moment of anger she transforms the boy who taunted her for her dishevelled appearance into a lizard, she "wept and was astonished at what she had done" (p. 39). When she later discovers Persephone's girdle floating in the pool, however, she "became as wild with grief as if she had only just learned that her daughter had disappeared" (p. 39). She curses the world, and in her rage snatches up farmers' ploughs and smashes them, in addition to refusing to let things grow on the earth as in other versions. This makes her appear rather more aggressive.

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The Aeneas story is not a full retelling of *The Aeneid*, just the story of the destruction of Troy, how Aeneas fled and how Creusa died. The tale is told in the first person by Aeneas, and a note at the end reveals he is telling the story to Dido. The clipped-out nature of this retelling means it would perhaps be confusing to a child who knows nothing about either Rome or the Trojan War. For a child's anthology, focusing on and ending with Creusa's death is also unusually morbid.

The Odysseus chapter gives a brief summary of his major adventures and then tells the story of his arrival in Ithaka and the defeat of his wife's suitors. Penelope is introduced in a manner reminiscent of her Victorian reception, defined by her love and loyalty but with no initial mention of the wiliness that defined her in Homer. She is "very beautiful. She was also very sweet-tempered and well-mannered, and ran her household skilfully. In fact, she was an ideal wife" (p. 52). Nonetheless, the retelling is a close adaptation of *The Odyssey* and so for most of the rest of the story, the focus is on Penelope's cleverness, not her supposed sweetness.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aegeus Aeneas Anchises Apollo Ariadne Ascanius / Iulus Creusa (Aeneas' Wife) Demeter Dido Dionysus / Dionysos Eumaeus / Eumaios Eurycleia Hades Hermes Laertes Maia Minos Minotaur Odysseus / Ulysses Penelope Persephone Telemachus Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Abandonment Adversity Death Family Journeys Violence

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