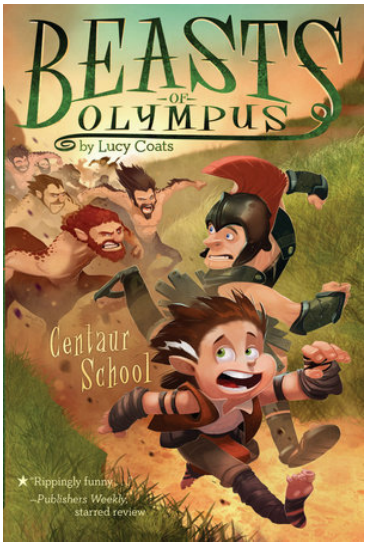
Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Centaur School (Beasts of Olympus, 5) by Brett Bean , Lucy Coats", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1294. Entry version as of November 15, 2026.

Brett Bean , Lucy Coats

# Centaur School (Beasts of Olympus, 5)

*United States of America (2016)*

TAGS: Athena Centaur(s) Chiron / Cheiron Griffins / Gryphons Hephaestus Heracles Phoenix (Bird) Zeus




Courtesy of the publisher, Penguin Random House.

| General information | |
|---|---|
| *Title of the work* | Centaur School (Beasts of Olympus, 5) |
| *Country of the First Edition* | United States of America |
| *Country/countries of popularity* | worldwide |
| *Original Language* | English |
| *First Edition Date* | 2016 |
| *First Edition Details* | Lucy Coats, *Beasts of Olympus: Centaur School*. Penguin Workshop USA, 2016, 144 pp. |
| *ISBN* | 9781101995051 |
| *Genre* | Fiction |
| *Target Audience* | Children (7–9 years) |
| *Author of the Entry* | Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@biu.ac.il |
| *Peer-reviewer of the Entry* | Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il<br>Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au |



This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

## Creators



### Brett Bean (Illustrator)

Brett Bean is an American cartoonist and illustrator originally from Seattle who currently resides in California. His work has been featured in TV, films, comics, games (digital and analog) manuals and more. Brett Bean is also the creator of the *Zoo Patrol Squad* and the illustrator of *Battle Bugs*.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: April 1, 2021).

Author's profile of CGMA (accessed: April 1, 2021).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@biu.ac.il



### Lucy Coats , b. 1961 (Author)

Lucy Coats is an British writer for children. She holds an MA in English Literature and Ancient History from the University of Edinburgh. She is also a member of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. In her books we can mostly find motifs from various legends and myths that she adapts for young readers. She published several picture books (including *King Ocean's Flute*, *The Animals Bedtime Storybook*), as well as novels for teenagers and young adults (including *Chosen*, *Hootcat Hill*). Among those inspired by Greek and Roman Mythology, besides the *Beasts of Olympus* series, Coats also wrote *Atticus the Storyteller's 100 Greek Myths* and *Great Beasts and Heroes – a 12 Book Series*. She also runs a blog and goes to school for



This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

reading sessions.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: July 4, 2018).

Twitter profile (accessed: July 4, 2018).

Bio prepared by Anna Mik, University of Warsaw, anna.m.mik@gmail.com



This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

## Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

Previous book: *Beasts of Olympus* (Series, Book 4): *Dragon Healer*.

Next book: *Beasts of Olympus* (Series, Book 6): *Zeus's Eagle*.

Summary

This is the fifth book in the "Beasts of Olympus" series. Pandemonius (or Demon as he is most commonly refer to in the series) is the 11-year-old half-mortal son of the god Pan and the mortal Carys. Demon is the official Beast Keeper of the Olympic gods and it is his responsibility to take care of the various beasts. In this story, Demon must write his notes and read the medicine books, but he cannot read the words properly, until Hephaestus devises special glasses for him. Demon must help Arnie the griffin with an irritating itch which causes his feathers to fall off. Demon discovers that Arnie's condition might be contagious and names it Purple Spotted Feather Plague. When he goes to his training with Chiron, he saves a young boy from raging centaurs. The boy is apparently Chiron's grandson, Prince Peleus. The prince was looking for his lost magical sword and had mistakenly interrupted a centaur ceremony. Later Demon helps a little wolf cub and in return, the wolves find Peleus' sword. Then Pan suddenly appears to ask Demon for a cure for his headache. In return, Pan teaches him how to play his magical pipes better.

Later Athena suddenly appears. Her owl Sophie has been acting weirdly and suffers from upside-down hiccups. Athena orders Demon to cure her, on pain of death. When Demon hurries to consult Chiron he encounters Peleus' mother, Endeis, the nymph of the mountain and Chiron's daughter. With her help he discovers that Sophie swallowed one of Eros' love potions.

Suddenly Athena returns in great alarm. She informs Demon and Endeis that the phoenix has gone blind and lost its voice. If the fire bird does not sing its special Song of Renewal it cannot guard against the fire devils and is may cause problems for Olympus and for the world. Demon and Peleus hurry to find the phoenix. They want to go there via the special transport system of the series, the Iris Express, provided by the messenger rainbow goddess, but she is occupied and in the end they fly on the Ethiopian Pegasi.

Upon arriving, they meet the giant Antaeus, who is suffering after his



This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

fight with Heracles. It is Antaeus who guards the phoenix and it was he who alerted Athena. The Phoenix signals to Demon that they must consult the ants, meaning a nearby nest of fire ants, the Myrmex.

When they arrive at the ants' dwelling, Demon discovers that Peleus is the son of one of the Myrmidons, who are the ants' "cousins". As a result the ant queen agrees to help the two and gives them special nectar for the Phoenix. The nectar heals the Phoenix and he is then able to sing his song and stop the fire devils who disappear. As a reward, Athena grants Demon a beautiful ornate book for him to write down his patient notes as Chiron's apprentice.

Analysis

In this story, Demon again must risk his life to save wondrous beasts while fearing the harsh consequence of failure. Being warned by the gods of what may happen to him if he fails is a recurring theme in the books, and each god and goddess describes imaginative ways of punishing Demon (burning him, turning him to a wood and then chop him etc.). However, while these threats are comical and absurd and the readers probably understand that no serious harm may actually come to Demon, one may wonder about the message. Demon must succeed no matter what; his life depends on it. Although one can also learn by failing, for Demon this is not an option. The readers may cheer the valiant and brave hero who defeats the odds but he never learns through failure, since he always succeeds; usually with the help of friends. This might be the real message; that we cannot succeed on our own all the time and it is okay to ask someone for help.

The author continues her tongue-in-cheek hidden references to mythological events and characters. Here Peleus, the young man, is of course Achilles' father, but many of the young readers are probably ignorant of the fact. Athena also mentions that Zeus made her help "some wretched hero son of his kill a gorgon." [location 512].

The labours of Heracles continue to follow the story in the background, as we witness the damage they cause to others.

In this story, Demon is not only risking his life on a rescue mission; he must also face his own difficulties. At first, it seems he may be suffering from some kind of dyslexia, "'Chiron says I have to make notes on all my new patients,' Demon replied. 'But the letters won't stay still. They all wiggle and try to run away when I read them, AND



This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

when I write them down.'" [location 28]. However, unlike Percy Jackson, Demon simply needs glasses. This is of course a positive message for young readers who might be facing the same situation and perhaps feel embarrassed to wear glasses. Demon is thrilled to have them though, as now he can read and write properly. Demon even learns from Hephaestus that Eros faced the same problem; the love god needs glasses as well.

Demon continues to be a kind-hearted hero who abhors violence. When he sees the centaurs attacking Peleus he thinks, "He was fed up with people thinking that everything could be sorted out with swords and violence." [location 94]. Later he wonders, "'Why do you heroes always have to be fighting?'" [location 905]. The author tries to undermine the common portrayal of a hero as someone who fights, and replace it with a new model, someone who can solve problems without resorting to violence, like Demon.

It is, of course, a fact that the vast majority of ancient mythology (from various cultures) involves people with swords and heroes who fight, yet the author tries to convey a message of peace and harmony, especially between people  and nature. The goddesses in the story also use violent threats; this time it is Athena who orders Demon around. Even the pleasant Hestia warns him (when he asks her for special food for the griffin), "She smiled. It was a smile with teeth in it. 'Don't make rash promises to goddesses, Pandemonius. They can lead you into all sorts of trouble.'" [location 430].

The most heart-warming and emotional moment in the story appears when Pan visits Demon. Pan is a careless father who only wants his son to help him after partying all night. He is certainly not a good role model. When Demon helps him, Pan praises him, "'Clever lad,' he said. 'You'll be as great a healer as Chiron in no time.' Demon glowed with pride. Praise from his father meant a lot to him, and he didn't often get it. He didn't often see him, in fact." [location 321].

This episode appears after Demon takes care of the young female wolf cub, so we can see the comparison between the caring wolf dad and Demon's estranged father. Yet Demon is happy that his father is proud of him and asks him to teach him to play the pipes. The unique pipes connect father and son and in a way this instrument is a replacement for Pan, since they are always with Demon, helping him to relax the beasts (and perhaps comfort himself).



This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

| | |
|---|---|
| | This book's is manly comedy-adventure, the readers can sympathize with Demon and hope for his success. Yet there are serious themes which the author conveys under the light-hearted tone. Demon appears to be calms and calculated even under terrifying consequences. Although he is always facing threats, since they are so absurd, they do not appear too dangerous and we are reassured that he will be fine. Demon is caring and loving, and readers who also need to tend to a family member might find solace in his heroism and compassion. He can be alone but not lonely which is also a powerful message. |
| Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts | Athena Centaur(s) Chiron / Cheiron Griffins / Gryphons Hephaestus Heracles Phoenix (Bird) Zeus |
| Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture | Adventure Animals Conflict Emotions Friendship Heroism Humour Integrity Journeys |
| Addenda | The review refers to the Kindle edition (9781848125803).<br><br>The illustrator of this Kindle edition is David Roberts and the publisher is Piccadilly Press, London.<br><br>See "Addenda" under *Beasts of Olympus* (Series, Book 1)*: Beasts Keeper*. |



This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.