Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Aphrodite & the Magical Box (Little Goddess Girls, 7) by Yuyi Chen, Joan Holub, Suzanne Williams ", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1296. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Yuyi Chen , Joan Holub , Suzanne Williams

Aphrodite & the Magical Box (Little Goddess Girls, 7)

United States of America (2021)

TAGS: Aphrodite Artemis Athena Pandora Persephone Prometheus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Aphrodite & the Magical Box (Little Goddess Girls, 7)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2021
First Edition Details	Joan Holub, Suzanne Williams, *Little Goddess Girls: Aphrodite & the Magical Box*. New York: Aladdin Quix, 2021, 88 pp.
ISBN	9781534479661
Genre	Fiction
Target Audience	Children (5–8 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 Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@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.

Creators



Yuyi Chen (Illustrator)

Yuyi Chen is an American children's book illustrator from Washington. She also did 3D modelling, design and texturing and animation. Her books include *Doris the Bookasaurus* and *Going to Grandma's House*.

Source:

Official website (accessed: August 11, 2020).

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



Photo courtesy of Joan Holub.

Joan Holub , b. 1956
(Author)

Joan Holub is a prolific children's author from the USA. Graduated from college in Texas with a fine arts degree. Worked as an art director at Scholastic trade books in New York. She has written and/or illustrated over 150 children's books. She has developed a range of series for teenagers on mythological themes: *Goddess Girls*, set in Mount Olympus Academy, *Grimmtastic Tales* series, set in Grimm Academy, *Thunder Girls*, about Norse gods set in Asgard Academy, and *Heroes in Training*, in which the male Greek gods, as very young men, set out on a range of adventures. For pre-school children, Jan Holub has written on a range of topics including several works with religious and historical themes. These include: *This Little President*; *This Little Trailblazer*, *Hooray for St. Patrick's Day!*, and *Light the Candles: A Hanukkah Lift-the-Flap Book*. Joan Holub trained in fine art and worked as an art director at a graphic design company before

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becoming a children's illustrator and then author.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Profile at the penguinrandomhouse.com (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Profile at the simonandschuster.com (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Bio prepared by Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk and Allison Rosenblum, Bar-Ilan University, allie.rose89@gmail.com and Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Questionnaire

1. What drew you to writing / working with Classical Antiquity and what challenges did you face in selecting, representing, or adapting particular myths or stories?

I learned to love Greek and Norse mythology in elementary school. I'm very comfortable adapting the framework of an existing myth or fairy tale by pushing it into a different setting, adding humor, and/or building in a nonfiction component. Staying true to the essential core of each myth along the way is important to me. A young *Goddess Girls* reader once told me she enjoyed the series because she "learned something". In other words, while she liked being entertained, she appreciated that her familiarity and factual understanding of the original myths was broadened at the same time.

2. Why do you think classical / ancient myths, history, and literature continue to resonate with young audiences?

Kids have questions about their world. So it's interesting to them to learn how ancient Greeks and other cultures answered questions

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about how their world worked in exciting tales of heroes and beasts. How did the sun cross the sky? In a chariot drawn by the god Helios. What caused night? The goddess Nyx's starry cape covered the sky. Thrilling stories of courage and danger, such as Heracles' twelve labors, the Trojan Horse, and the Argonauts never go out of style.

3. Do you have a background in classical education (Latin or Greek at school or classes at the University?) What sources are you using? Scholarly work? Wikipedia? Are there any books that made an impact on you in this respect?

I have an entire shelf of mythology resource books. Some of my favorite go-to sources are the *Scholastic Mythlopedia* series, Edith Hamilton's *Mythology, Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*, and www.theoi.com (accessed: May 28, 2018).

4. How concerned were you with "accuracy" or "fidelity" to the original? (another way of saying that might be – that I think writers are often more "faithful" to originals in adapting its spirit rather than being tied down at the level of detail – is this something you thought about?)

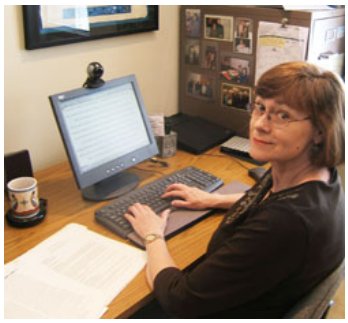
Each book in the *Goddess Girls* series (ages 8–12, Simon and Schuster) and *Heroes in Training* series (ages 7–10, Simon and Schuster) is a retelling of one or two Greek myths, with a twist. We stay as true as possible to the core bones of an original myth in order to give young readers a good understanding, but we include kid situations and humor to entertain. As an example, in *Goddess Girls #1: Athena the Brain*, Athena is summoned to attend Mount Olympus Academy, where Zeus is the principal. MOA teachers include Mr. Cyclops, who teaches Hero-ology, a class where students are graded on their abilities to maneuver small hero figures such as Odysseus, around a gameboard to enact the Trojan War, etc. Meanwhile, Athena, who is the goddess of invention among other things, inadvertently turns mean-girl Medusa's hair to snakes and gives her the power to turn mortals to stone by means of a shampoo-like invention called Snakeypoo at the MOA invention fair.

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5. Are you planning any further forays into classical material?

Suzanne Williams and I have written a new middle grade series called *Thunder Girls* (accessed: May 28, 2018), which is a twist on Norse mythology featuring strong girl characters. The first book Freya and the Magic Jewel releases May 2018 for ages 8–12, published by Simon and Schuster.

Prepared by Allison Rosenblum, Bar-Ilan University, allie.rose89@gmail.com and Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com



Courtesy of the Author from her personal website.

Suzanne Williams , b. 1953
(Author)

Suzanne Williams is an American prolific children's author and former elementary school librarian. She has written over 60 books for children.

She grew up in Oregon and graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's in library science from the University of Oregon. She currently lives in Reno, Washington.

Source:

Official website (accessed: May 29, 2018).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Questionnaire

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1. What drew you to writing / working with Classical Antiquity and what challenges did you face in selecting, representing, or adapting particular myths or stories?

Writing about Greek mythology was my co-author, Joan Holub's idea. She's loved mythology since childhood. Her enthusiasm for the subject got me excited about it too. *Goddess Girls* (ages 8–12) was our very first collaboration. Soon there will be 26 books in that series. One of the challenges we've faced in writing our (soon to be four) myth-based series for young readers is how to handle the sexual and violent content of many of the myths.

To downplay the violence, we often make it cartoonish and lighten it with humor. Since most of our gods and goddesses are pre-teens (as are our readers!), we deal with inappropriate sexual content by making changes that still allow us to keep to the spirit of the myth. For example: in introducing the Adonis myth, in which Aphrodite and Persephone fight over a beautiful youth they both desire, we decided to make Adonis a kitten, rather than a young man.

Another challenge has involved familial relationships among the various gods and goddesses. In *Goddess Girls*, Zeus is an adult, the principal of Mount Olympus Academy, the school attended by our "goddessgirls" and "godboys". In mythology he would likely have fathered a good portion of the student body! So we made a decision that only Athena would call him "Dad". (Until Hebe popped forth from a lettuce in Book 21, that is.) We do acknowledge many other family relationships. For example: Apollo and Artemis as brother and sister. Medusa and her sisters Euryale and Stheno. Persephone and her mother, Demeter.

2. Why do you think classical / ancient myths, history, and literature continue to resonate with young audiences?

Myths have got all the elements that draw us to stories: action, conflict, drama, humor, etc. What's not to like?

3. Do you have a background in classical education (Latin or Greek at school or classes at the University?) What sources are

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you using? Scholarly work? Wikipedia? Are there any books that made an impact on you in this respect?

Neither Joan nor I have a classical education. I did take an online Greek and Roman mythology class a few years ago, however. (Taught by Peter Struck, University of Pennsylvania.) Terrific class!

For our Greek mythology-based series, Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* is the reference we rely on the most. My co-author and I do consult Wikipedia and other online resources, especially for lists of monsters and maps and general information about ancient Greece. References for *Thunder Girls*, our soon-to-be-published Norse mythology-based series include: *The Norse Myth*s by Kevin Crossley-Holland, D'Aulaires' *Book of Norse Myth*s, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs* by John Lindow, *The Poetic Edda* (translated and edited by Jackson Crawford), and *The Prose Edda* by Snorri Sturluson (Penguin Classics).

4. Are you planning any further forays into classical material?

In addition to *Goddess Girls*, my co-author and I have also collaborated on a second Greek mythology-based series called *Heroes in Training* (ages 6–9). It's a humorous quest/adventure series with Zeus, Poseidon, Hades and other Olympians as ten-year-olds on the run from King Cronus and the Titans. *Freya and the Magic Jewel*, the first book in *Thunder Girls*, our Norse mythology-based series, publishes May 1, 2018. I travel to Norway frequently to visit my daughter, granddaughter, and Norwegian son-in-law, so I am very excited to be doing a Norse-myth series. Aladdin (Simon & Schuster) publishes all three of Joan's and my mythology-based series. We will be doing a fourth myth-based series with them soon – for ages 5–8. Tentative title is *Little Goddess Girls*, and it will be another Greek myth-based series.

Prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

Previous book: *Little Goddess Girls* (Series, Book 6): *Persephone & the Evil King*.

Next book: *Little Goddess Girls* (Series, Book 8): *Artemis & the Wishing Kitten*.

Summary

In the seventh book of the "Little Goddess Girls" series, the little goddess girls are traveling together, looking for adventures. Suddenly, a big carrot comes running towards them, holding a burning torch. He tells them his name is Prometheus Carrot. Then, he touches with his torch a glittery pink brick on the road and suddenly an elevator with a talking face shows up through the bricks. The carrot goes inside telling the elevator he wishes to go to Veggie-Boo-boo and the elevator moves. The girls wait and then tap the brick themselves and the elevator remerges. The elevator has 3 buttons: Land 1: Veggie-Boo-Boo, Land 2 Peek-a-Boo-Boo, and Land 3 Dragon-Boo-Boo. While the girls contemplate which button to push, a wooden box talks to them from inside the elevator, saying that she already pushed all the buttons. Then she asks them questions and tell them that her name is Pandora Box. On the back of the box it is written: "DO NOT OPEN THIS BOX, ZEUS'S ORDERS."

Veggie-Boo-Boo is the land of talking vegetables. They tell the girls that Prometheus brought them the fire and told them it was good for cooking yet they told him to take the fire away and that stealing from Olympus was wrong. The girls then leave the land and continue to travel along the magical elevator. Pandora tries to make them open her lid yet the girls refuse.

In Peek-a-Boo-Boo they land in a white room filled with statues of unicorns, winged horses, mermaids etc. The statues are laughing and it makes them pink. Apparently a group of babies are tickling the statues. The babies ask the girls to play hide and seek with them. Yet, they are cheating. Apparently the carrot was in this land as well but he decided that they didn't need fire. The girls then leave and move on to the final land.

In the last land, Dragon-Boo-Boo, the girls encounter dragons. Apparently they received fire from the Carrot. The Carrot explains to

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the girls why he stole the fire, "I'd once heard Zeus say fire is a game. I like games. Well, most games, anyway." (p. 69). While the dragon misbehave, suddenly Zeus arrives. He explains to the Carrot that he misheard him, "'I never said fire was a game!' Zeus called down to the carrot. 'I said another name for fire is flame.'" (p. 70).

Suddenly one of the dragons's tails knocks Pandora over and her lid opens. Five tiny purple dots which grow to the size of bees come out and tell the group that they are called Bad-Bads and then they fly off to make trouble in the other lands. Zeus tells them that these were magical punishment yet he reassures everyone that although the Bad-Bads will cause trouble in the lands, Hope, the butterfly lady, will help. She also makes Pandora her helper. Zeus and the Carrot then return to Olympus and ask the girls to come to Sparkle city for a pet contest.

Analysis

This story combines the theft of fire and Pandora's box aimed at very young readers. The goddess girls are mostly bystanders who watch the events unfold, although they show restraint by not opening Pandora's box lid. Pandora herself is a chatty and inquisitive box, yet she means no harm and her curiosity does not seem like a curse. On the contrary, in the end, Hope asks her to be her helper and explains, "'You're good at asking questions,' said Hope. 'Questions can get others to talk about their troubles. Which can make them feel better.'" (p. 78). Pandora can ask the residents of the lands about their problems and make them feel hopeful and happier. Turning Pandora's curiosity into a positive trait is a common treatment of her in modern children's literature (I thank Lisa Maurice for this comment).

It is not explained why the Bad-Bads were locked inside Pandora. Zeus only tells the Carrot that stealing is wrong and that his theft triggered the magical punishment. Zeus in this story does not wish to punish others or take revenge. He does not punish the Carrot as well. The Carrot willingly returns the torch back to Zeus and they fly to Olympus together in Zeus' hot air balloon.

This story is obviously aimed at very young readers, and the authors also decided to change the theft of fire to a more humorous story. Their Prometheus is not concerned with humankind, he stole the fire since he believed it was a game. This is a message to the young readers: stealing is wrong and fire is dangerous, you should not touch

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	it on your own. The story also conveys a message of hope and praises the positive aspects of curiosity, as long as it is used to help others.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Artemis Athena Pandora Persephone Prometheus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Emotions Friendship Good vs evil Journeys Magic
Addenda	The review refers to the Kindle edition (9781534479678).

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