Robin Diver, "Entry on: Stories of Long Ago: In a New Dress by Grace Harriet Kupfer", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1489. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

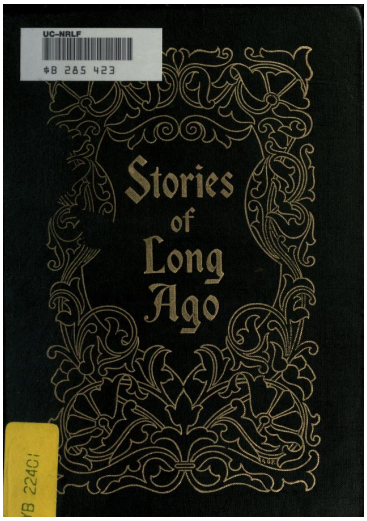
Grace Harriet Kupfer

Stories of Long Ago: In a New Dress

United States (1897)

TAGS: Aegeus Androgeos Apollo Callisto Ceres Diana Eurydice Hercules Io Jason Juno Jupiter Leto Medea Mercury Midas Minos Narcissus Orpheus Perseus Prometheus Proserpina Scylla Theseus





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General information	
Title of the work	Stories of Long Ago: In a New Dress
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	English speaking countries
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1897
First Edition Details	Grace H. Kupfer, *Stories of Long Ago: In a New Dress*. Boston, New York and Chicago: D.C. Heath & Co., 1897, 190 pp.
ISBN	Not applicable for editio princeps
Available Onllne	Stories of Long Ago: In a New Dress, ed. 1897 at Archive.org (accessed: August 2, 2022). Stories of Long Ago: In a New Dress, ed. 1909 at Archive.org (accessed: August 2, 2022).
Genre	Anthology of myths*, Fiction
Target Audience	Children (schoolchildren)
Author of the Entry	Robin Diver, University of Birmingham, robin.diver@hotmail.com
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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



Grace Harriet Kupfer , 1873 - unknown
(Author)

Grace Harriet Kupfer is an American author of *Stories of Long Ago: In a New Dress* (1897). Little is known about her although she also seems to be the author of volumes including *A Giant who Loved a Sea Nymph* (1897 republished in 2018 as *Polyphemus: The Giant who Loved a Sea Nymph*) and *Eclectic Readings Lives and Stories Worth Remembering* (c.1899).

Sources:

WorldCat (accessed: August 2, 2022).

Seller Listing (accessed: April 2, 2021).

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Additional information

Summary

This is a late nineteenth-century collection of Greek myths for children based fairly closely on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Each myth retelling is followed by a poem that links broadly to the themes of the story, by such authors as Thomas Moore, Tennyson and Shakespeare. The anthology is illustrated throughout with black and white images of famous artwork relating to the myths.

Featured Stories:

- The Kingdom Above the Clouds (introduction to the gods),
- The Great Bear and the Little Bear (Callisto),
- A Story of the Springtime (Demeter and Persephone),
- The Childhood of Apollo and Diana,
- Echo and Narcissus,
- How Narcissus Loved His Own Image,
- A Web and a Spider (Arachne),
- The Story of The Laurel (Daphne),
- The Story of a Sweet Singer (Orpheus),
- The Queen Huntress and a Bold Hunter (Actaeon),
- The Story of Perseus,
- How Perseus Went in Quest of Medusa's Head,
- How Perseus Won a Wife,
- The Story of Io,
- How a Mother's Pride Was Humbled,
- A Mighty Hero Of Olden Times (Hercules),
- The Story Of a Poisoned Shirt (Hercules),
- The Artisan's Wonderful Wings (Daedalus),
- A Cruel King (Minos and Aegeus),
- A Lock of Purple Hair, and What Came Of It (Nisus and Scylla),
- The Cruel King's Punishment (Minos and Aegeus),
- A Thread That Saved Many Lives (Theseus),
- How a Wicked City Was Destroyed (Baucis and Philemon),
- A Dream That Came True (Halcyone),
- The Story Of The Golden Fleece,
- How a Boy Loved a Stag (Cyparrisus),
- A Sea God and a Wicked Enchantress (Circe and Glaucus),
- A Youth Who Was Turned Into a Flower (Hyacinthus),
- A Wonderful Sculptor (Pygmalion),
- A Musical Contest Of Long Ago (Midas),
- A Giant Who Loved a Sea Nymph (Galatea and Polyphemus),

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- His Fourth Labor: The Boar,
- His Fifth Labor: The Augean Stables,
- More Labors,
- His Eleventh Labor: The Garden of the Hesperides,
- His Twelfth Labor: The Descent into Hades,
- The Choice of Hercules,
- The Tunic of Nessus,
- The Apple of Discord.

Analysis

This book begins with a preface saying that almost all children like fairy tales (with myth suggested to be a form of fairy tale) because they appeal to imagination. Kupfer asserts we cannot make school reading an effective means of education unless we also make it fun. She adds that myth is particularly valuable because it is an inseparable part of art and literature and has historical value. She says that she has not tried to make these stories moralistic, but that she has carefully chosen the illustrations and poems that go after the retold myths 'to cultivate a taste for what is purest and best in literature' and to 'awaken the true artistic sense' (p. 4).

In chapter one, introducing the gods, Kupfer tells us the Greeks were 'a race of brave men and beautiful women'. A clear gender differentiation is thus established as the ideal. The gods, meanwhile, are 'great and happy and good' (p. 9); this is thus established as an anthology that will attempt to make the gods into largely benevolent characters.

The gods are then introduced individually, and we are warned about Juno 'I am afraid you will not love Juno very much (...) for she was selfish and jealous, and, like all such people, often made herself and others very unhappy.' (p. 13). This sets up how Jupiter and Juno will be treated in this book: he is supposed to be kind and good, and she is the villain of several pieces.

Consequentially, in the Callisto story, Callisto is described as the opposite to Juno – 'a woman whom you will all love' because she is so good and kind (p.16). Juno hates her for her beauty and goodness and turns her into a bear from irritation. We later, however, learn that Jupiter has 'always loved Callisto' and this is why he eventually puts her in the stars (p. 20). The verb to love is constantly used in a platonic sense in this anthology, so this might be interpreted

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innocently, but the Ovid version is hinted at for those with existing knowledge through this inclusion.

Likewise, Juno hates the sweet Latona and torments her for no reason. Jupiter, who again 'loved her' sends her twin babies from heaven to cheer her up (p. 32). Io, meanwhile, is a friend who Jupiter comes down to speak to often because he finds so loveable, and Juno punishes because she cannot bear Jupiter to pay attention to anyone but her. She punishes Hercules because she hates his mother, but this time Jupiter is not mentioned.

Kupfer begins her Latona chapter by imagining an ancient Greek poet going to sit among the trees to write the story of Latona, seeing some frogs and writing them in as villains since 'poets (…) love beautiful things, and these frogs were very ugly indeed' (p. 31). Thus the poet supposedly created the story of the men who torment Latona and are transformed into frogs. He is implicitly criticised for doing so, since Kupfer reassures her child reader that they need not dislike frogs because of this. The Greek myths are thus made to seem as if they were created in a similar manner to nineteenth-century poetry, by a (male, middle class) poet going to sit in the solitude of nature for inspiration. This can be compared to Hawthorne's influential 1851 anthology which emphasised the myths' creation in oral culture and deemphasised literary versions in myth dissemination.

In spite of portraying most of her characters positively, Kupfer's is a rare children's version in which Aegeus kills Minos' son Androgeus because he is jealous of his popularity and skill in the games. The conflict between Minos and Theseus is therefore somewhat complicated in who is shown to be in the right. The chapter title 'A Cruel King' might be expected to refer to Minos but in fact seems to denote Aegeus. Minos' love for his son and grief at his loss is focused on, whilst Aegeus' interactions with his own son are not.

Also unusually, the story of Minos' war on Nisus and of Scylla's love for Minos appears in this anthology. This means Minos is shown as a desirable and magnetic character, not the straightforward unlikeable villain of most children's anthologies.

Overall, Kupfer provides close retellings of Ovid in most instances, with less innovation than in other popular children's anthologies of the time.

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aegeus Androgeos Apollo Callisto Ceres Diana Eurydice Hercules Io Jason Juno Jupiter Leto Medea Mercury Midas Minos Narcissus Orpheus Perseus Prometheus Proserpina Scylla Theseus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Heritage Heroism Learning Magic Nature Transformation
Addenda	Page numbers in this entry refer to Grace H. Kupfer, *Stories of Long Ago: In a New Dress*, Trieste, 2017. Also published as *Legends of Greece and Rome* from at least 1898.

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