Robin Diver, "Entry on: The McElderry Book of Greek Myths by Eric A. Kimmel , Pep Montserrat", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1492. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Eric A. Kimmel , Pep Montserrat

The McElderry Book of Greek Myths

United States (2008)

TAGS: Arachne Ariadne Athena Daedalus Demeter Dionysus / Dionysos Echo Epimetheus Eurydice Galatea Hades Icarus Jason Medea Medusa Midas Narcissus Orpheus Pandora Persephone Perseus Prometheus Pygmalion Theseus



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General information	
Title of the work	The McElderry Book of Greek Myths
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	English speaking countries
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2008
First Edition Details	Eric Kimmel, *The McElderry Book of Greek Myths*. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2008, 112 pp.
ISBN	1416915346, 9781416915348
Genre	Anthology of myths*, Fiction, Picture books
Target Audience	Children (young children)
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



Courtesy of the author

Eric A. Kimmel , b. 1946
(Author)

Eric A. Kimmel is an American author who has written more than 50 children's books. He received a B.A. in English literature from Lafayette College, an M.A. from New York University and a PhD in education from the University of Illinois. He was the recipient of the National Jewish Book Award in 2004, 2008, 2011, 2013, and is the only author who has won this award for a picture book twice. He won the Caldecott Honor Medal for *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins*, and the Sydney Taylor Picture Book Award for *The Chanukkah Guest and Gershon's Monster.*

Source:

Official website (accessed: August 2, 2020).

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



Pep Montserrat (Illustrator)

Pep Montserrat is a Spanish artist, illustrator and graphic designer from Barcelona. He graduated in 1988 from Llotja Art School (Barcelona, Spain). He teaches illustration in La Massana Arts & Design school since 1998. He illustrates mostly children books and also makes editorial art for newspapers and magazines.

The artist won several awards, among them: Best Illustrated Book for Children Award, 1997, and International Board on Books for Young People Honor List inclusion, 1998, both for *The Gift* by Gabriela

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Keselman. Pep Montserrat has also gained recognition for his original story in the picture book *Ms. Rubinstein's Beauty*.

Source:

Official website (accessed: August 2, 2020).

encyclopedia.com (accessed: September 30, 2020).

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

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Additional information

Summary

This is a collection of short, simple Greek myths for children with bright, colourful illustrations. The text has large, well-spaced font broken up regularly by its large illustrations.

Featured Stories:

- Prometheus,
- Pandora's Box,
- Persephone and Hades,
- Echo and Narcissus,
- Arachne,
- Pygmalion and Galatea,
- King Midas and the Golden Touch,
- Orpheus and Eurydice,
- Jason and the Golden Fleece,
- Daedalus and Icarus,
- Theseus and the Minotaur,
- Perseus and Medusa.

Analysis

The anthology begins with an introduction by Kimmel, which asks what Greek myths can 'possibly have to say to children who live in a world of cell phones, the Internet, iPods and DVDs?' (p. xi). Kimmel answers by listing the reasons: Myths are 'wonderful stories', they are about 'basic themes in the movies we see and the books we read today' and they 'contain the hopes and dreams of humanity.' Kimmel even claims 'There is a clear connection between Icarus's wings and Neil Armstrong's walk on the moon.' (p. xi).

This book is probably intended for fairly young children, with its large text, bright, colourful illustrations often featuring smiling figures, and tendency to change details so the characters behave in kinder ways. For example, Pandora is created because Epimetheus is lonely without Prometheus, not as a punishment. Pandora opens the box because the creatures trapped inside pretend to beg her for help, and she cannot resist because the gods gave her the gifts of 'kindness and compassion' (p. 10). Epimetheus comforts Pandora and says it was not her fault and he should have told her what was in the box. Epimetheus' kindness to Pandora in particular is a contrast to other anthology retellings; for example Forbush's 1928 children's myth

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anthology *Myths and Legends of Greece and Rome* where Forbush adds the detail that Prometheus and Epimetheus want to kill Pandora in retaliation for opening the box but eventually relent.

On the other hand, Kimmel includes a curious grisly detail that the earth is formed from the bodies of dead defeated Titans, reminiscent of the Ymir myth in Norse mythology. This is not, therefore, an anthology entirely without violent or gory moments.

In this version, Persephone falls in love with Hades after he abducts her and thus does not wish to leave. This is a common adaptational choice in recent anthologies, possibly to make this myth less disturbing (e.g. McCaughrean 1992 *The Orchard Book of Greek Myths*; Milbourne and Stowell 2010 *Usborne Book of Myths and Legends*; Brack, Sweeney and Thomas 2014 *Brick Greek Myths*).

In the illustration, where Hades and Demeter argue and Persephone sits beside Hades, he looms large and red above her, looking almost demonic. His arms are wrapped around her and she smiles, looking young and almost childish. Possibly Persephone's youthful appearance is meant to invite identification from the child reader.

The Midas retelling is partly about the importance of using one's resources to help others and do charity. This is a contrast to more conservative children's versions in which the message seems to be about being content with existing social station and resources.*

In Kimmel, Dionysus tells Midas at the start of the story that he should consider using his money to help the poor, something Midas scornfully rejects. Later, Kimmel explicitly points out that Midas' golden touch actually makes him share the experiences of the poor he would not previously help. Midas exclaims 'What use is my wealth? It cannot buy me a cup of cold water or a crust of dry bread. Now I know what it means to be hungry, thirsty, frightened, and alone.' (p. 46). After the golden touch is taken away, Midas opens his palace to feed everyone and becomes a great benefactor due to his newfound empathy.

In this version, as in some ancient accounts, Medusa is turned into a gorgon as punishment for bragging about her beauty (also the case in Baldwin's 1895 *Old Greek Stories* and Reeves' 1969 *Heroes and Monsters: Legends of Ancient Greece*). This version, however, is almost mocking to Medusa for her vanity even at the moment of her death. Medusa asks if Perseus is afraid of being overcome by her

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	beauty and this is why he will not look at her. Perseus makes fun of her in response, tells her to take a look at her own beauty and turns the mirror on her. Medusa screams that she was beautiful once and will be beautiful again, after which Perseus kills her. * For further analysis see the survey entry on Enid Blyton's 1930 *Tales of Ancient Greece* and how the Midas retelling interacts with the Baucis and Philemon retelling to promote a particular view of social station.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Arachne Ariadne Athena Daedalus Demeter Dionysus / Dionysos Echo Epimetheus Eurydice Galatea Hades Icarus Jason Medea Medusa Midas Narcissus Orpheus Pandora Persephone Perseus Prometheus Pygmalion Theseus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Appearances Good deeds Heroism Morality Travel

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