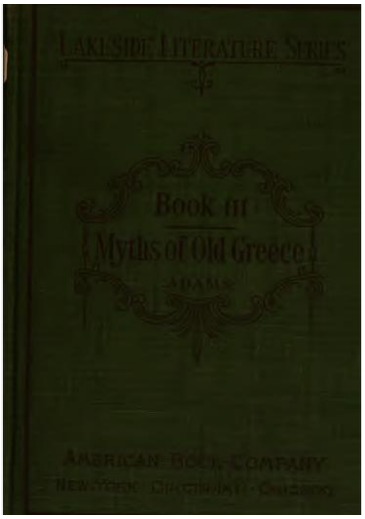
William Adams

Myths of Old Greece in Story and Song

United States (1900)

TAGS: Achilles Alcestis Apollo Ariadne Cassandra Cephalus Cupid Danae Daphne Dioscuri Eurydice Hercules Lotus Eaters / Lotophagoi Medusa Odysseus / Ulysses Orpheus Pegasus Persephone Perseus Phaethon Prometheus Proserpina Pygmalion Sirens Theseus Troy Zeus





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General information	
Title of the work	Myths of Old Greece in Story and Song
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States, English speaking countries
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1900
First Edition Details	William Adams, ed., *Myths of Old Greece in Story and Song,* "Lakeside Literature Series" Book III. New York, Cincinnati, Chicago: American Book Company, 1900, 256 pp.
ISBN	Not applicable for editio princeps
Available Onllne	Available at the Internet Archive (accessed: September 16, 2022).
Genre	Anthology of myths*, Educational stories*, Fiction
Target Audience	Children
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Creators



William Adams (Author)

William Adams is the author of the Lakeside Literature Series, a series of children's retellings of Aesop's Fables, Greek myths and Mother Goose fairy tales. The first volume, *Fables and Rhymes* (1898), appears to have been used as a North American teaching text.

Adams may be the same author who wrote under the penname 'Oliver Optic'. 'Oliver Optic' was a writer of boys' adventure series, editor of children's magazines and New England schoolteacher.

Sources:

Early American Textbooks, 1775–1900 by United States Department of Education, 1985, 13.

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Additional information

Summary

This is a factual book of fairly brief retellings of key Greek myths, which deviate little from their ancient sources such as Ovid. The stories are told without much background information or context to how the same characters fit into different stories. This approach is acknowledged by Adams at the start, who sees this as making the myths more accessible to children. Adams has also, according to his introduction, made an effort to retell the stories in a manner he believes would have been how they would have been orally related by ordinary Greek people.

Stories included are:

- The Gods,
- Proserpina,
- Prometheus and Epimetheus,
- Apollo and Daphne,
- Orpheus and Eurydice,
- Hercules,
- Alcestis,
- Phaeton,
- Perseus,
- Theseus,
- Ariadne at Naxos,
- The Golden Apple,
- Castor and Pollux,
- The Wrath of Achilles,
- The Fall of Troy,
- The Wanderings of Ulysses,
- The Homecoming of Ulysses.

At the end of each chapter, Adams adds relevant contemporary poetry. The stories are accompanied by simple black and white character drawings.

Analysis

Adams writes in his preface that it was important for his book of myths to "present the stories essentially according to the traditions" and have "some of the spirit of the old Greek and Latin myths". At the same time, he writes, he has also tried not to overburden young

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readers with facts or background detail to each myth. He has attempted to tell the myths "as they might have existed in the mouths of the people", by which he means he has presented them in a folktale style presumably influenced by the folk based approach of the brothers Grimm (p. 3.) This makes sense given that this anthology is a sequel volume to Adams' previous volumes of fairy tale.

Similarly to many other anthologies of this time period (e.g. Mary Helen Beckwith's 1896 *In Mythland*), Adams' portrays the Greek gods as figures who would have been loved and admired by the Greeks. As an example of how the Greeks believed everything in nature was alive, he claims they thought that "the spring of fresh water gurgled because it was happy" (p.10) and says "But the gods the Greeks loved most were the gods of the sky. They were beautiful and happy and kind. When the Sun drove his flaming chariot... the Greeks seemed to hear the Earth and the Waters laugh with joy." The negative elements of the gods depicted in mythology and the fear the Greeks felt for them are therefore not focused upon.

According to Adams, the gods of Olympus "had few cares. They would (…) leave Olympus (…) and the world would move on without them, just as usual. Happy, beautiful, careless Olympus." Thus whilst the portrait is idealised, an element of criticism in comparison to the more sober Christianity may be read into this; the gods are 'careless' and not really needed to run their own world (p. 12).

The character of Ariadne is portrayed as very gentle. Although she helps Theseus kill the Minotaur, once she hears its dying roar and knows Theseus has won, "She was timid now, and wished to flee and escape him, but her strength failed her and she sank fainting to the ground." (p. 165). Rather confusingly, the story ends happily with Theseus and Ariadne's escape and refers to Ariadne as his bride, but is then followed by a double spread poem by Thomas Davidson about Ariadne's abandonment with no explanation as to what has happened to her or why this is different from the implied marriage and happy ending of the main story. The spotlighted poetry therefore does not always match up with the versions of the stories being told.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and

Achilles Alcestis Apollo Ariadne Cassandra Cephalus Cupid Danae Daphne Dioscuri Eurydice Hercules Lotus Eaters / Lotophagoi Medusa Odysseus / Ulysses Orpheus Pegasus Persephone Perseus Phaethon Prometheus Proserpina Pygmalion Sirens Theseus Troy Zeus

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Concepts

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Abandonment Adventure Authority Fairy tale references Heroism Nature

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