Robin Diver, "Entry on: Stories of the Ancient Greeks by George A. Harker, Charles Dannelly Shaw", 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/1514. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

George A. Harker , Charles Dannelly Shaw

Stories of the Ancient Greeks

United States (1903)

TAGS: Amphitrite Aphrodite Apollo Ares Artemis Athena Hades Hephaestus Heracles Jason Pandora Persephone Perseus Poseidon Prometheus Theseus Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Stories of the Ancient Greeks
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	English speaking countries
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1903
First Edition Details	Charles D. Shaw and George A. Harker, *Stories of the Ancient Greeks*. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1903, 264 pp.
ISBN	Not applicable for editio princeps
Available Onllne	Available at Heritage-history.com and at Yesterdaysclassics.com (accessed: September 16, 2022).
Genre	Anthology of myths*, Fiction
Target Audience	Children
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Creators



George A. Harker (Illustrator)

George A. Harker is the illustrator of *Stories of the Ancient Greeks* by Charles Shaw (1903), about whom little else can be found.

Bio prepared by Robin Diver, University of Birmingham, RSD253@student.bham.ac.uk



Charles Dannelly Shaw , 1834 - 1909 (Author)

Charles Dannelly Shaw was an American author of biography and history about whom little can be found in the present day. He published *Stories of the Ancient Greeks* in 1903. The same author may be behind the texts 'An oration delivered at the Wigwam, Paterson, N.J., on July 4th, 1865' and 'The public services in memory of William McKinley: President of the United States' in 1901' and 'Manual, Second Presbyterian Church, 1840–1880, Paterson, N.J.' He seems also to have prepared the Henrietta Jane Bedford Papers for the Historical Society of Delaware in 1871.

Sources:

WorldCat (accessed: September 16, 2022).

Bio prepared by Robin Diver, University of Birmingham, RSD253@student.bham.ac.uk

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Additional information

Summary

This is a factual, unembellished children's anthology of Greek myths, Greek stories and Greek history. In the first section, Shaw retells key myths without much alteration. The second section relates key points of Greek culture and history, such as writers, wars and scientific discoveries. The retold stories include:

- The Gods of Greece.
- The Fire from Heaven (Prometheus).
- The Magic Box (Pandora).
- The Voices of the Gods (Oracles).
- Deucalion's Flood.
- In the Woods (Key woodland spirits).
- Under the Waves (Water spirits).
- In the Moonlight (Endymion).
- Among the Stars (Stories behind stars).
- The Kingdom under Ground (Persephone).
- Sowed Dragon's Teeth (Cadmus).
- The Race of Atalanta.
- Men Turned to Stone (Perseus).
- Black Sails or White (Theseus).
- Wings of Wax (Icarus).
- The Good Ship Argo (Jason).
- The Golden Fleece.
- Lost by Looking Back (Orpheus).
- The Horse with Wings (Bellerophon).
- The Singer and the Dolphin (Arion).
- A Fiery Runaway (Phaeton).
- What a Strong Man Did (Heracles).
- A Golden Girl (Midas).
- How Death was Conquered (Alcestis).
- The Shepherd Prince of Troy (Paris).
- The Trojan War.
- The Wooden Horse.
- The Giant's Cave (Odysseus).
- The Enchanted Island (Odysseus).
- Dangers of the Sea (Odysseus).
- A Friendly Land (Odysseus).
- The Wanderer's Return (Odysseus).
- The Splendid City (Athens).
- The Boy and the Fox (Spartan story).

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- The Olympic Games.
- The Great Lawgivers.
- The Ring of Polycrates.

After these, there are twenty-seven additional stories relating to ancient Greek history and culture.

Analysis

In the preface, Shaw tells us he writes this book because "He remembers what joy it was to him to read about the Greek gods .... He knows that life has been brighter to him .... because of the knowledge thus gained and the fancies thus kindled. It is his hope to brighten ... other young lives" with the same stories (preface). Greek myth is thus shown to be a nostalgic enjoyment for Shaw, and one which he wants to impart to other childhoods as it was imparted to his own. Shaw also claims that Greek myths are "the heritage of the race"; presumably this is an attempt to claim myth as the intellectual property of predominantly white and European societies (preface).

In the introduction, Shaw describes the history of the ancient Greeks in broadly neutral terms. This is in contrast to the Victorian myth anthologies of, for example, Nathaniel Hawthorne *A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys* (1851) and *Tanglewood Tales for Girls and Boys* (1853), Emma Firth *Stories of Old Greece* (1894) and Mary Helen Beckwith *In Mythland* (1896), which depict ancient Greece as a pure childhood of the world where people are innocent, curious and sweet. Presumably, the different approach taken by Shaw reflects the shift towards realism and perceived accuracy of the twentieth century.

Shaw claims as his main sources Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon and Plutarch. In reality, however, the mythology section of his anthology, like most children's anthologies, appears to draw primarily on Ovid, Apollodorus and the Athenian tragedians. The fact Shaw wishes his anthology to be seen as drawing primarily on the ancient historians, however, may reflect a view of history as a 'higher' form of literature than mythography, as well as perhaps a desire to introduce children early to the names of the ancient historians in particular.

Finally, Shaw tells us his book is intended both as "an introduction to further study for those who have the opportunity" and for those "who do not pursue their studies beyond the grammar grade." (Introduction.) The purpose of this wider audience, as well as being a

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wider pool of buyers, is presumably because, as Shaw claims, "nobody can claim to be well-educated who does not know" Greek myth. (Introduction.) Myths are thus presented as the bedrock of a proper education.

The Pandora myth is altered from its Hesiodic version to reflect nineteenth and early twentieth century ideals of companionate marriage and the nuclear family. Pandora is created because man is lonely. Athene gives her the gift of wisdom, which in this story means "This woman shall be wise to spin, to weave, to do all manner of household work, and to train up children in goodness." (Chapter Three.) Pandora's function as a warm and loving teacher, in which her own intellect primarily exists to help shape that of her future children, is thus particularly emphasised. Meanwhile, Apollo gives her the power of music, which means "She shall be able to sing sweet songs of love and home and hope and heaven .... To cheer man when he is tired, and to comfort him when he is sad." Thus gifts not obviously related to woman's role in the family are still made to be about that, with women's music primarily serving the role of comforting sad men. (Chapter Three.) The other gods, meanwhile, state in their gift speeches about Pandora that woman is "not a fighter", "more patient and steadfast' than man, and possessed of 'a warm and tender heart". (Chapter Three.) Overall, therefore, Shaw retains the idea in Hesiod of Pandora as symbol for all that is (perceived to be) different between men and women, but he alters Hesiod's more overtly hostile misogyny into the Victorian domesticity ideal of woman as in some ways morally superior to man but naturally oriented towards family and nurture.

In a similar vein, Poseidon specifically begins to think of finding a wife after Hephaestus builds him a house, because "He did not like to live there alone" (Chapter Seven). A connection is therefore drawn between wives, home and companionship. Poseidon and Amphitrite's courtship also proceeds along dating customs of the time, with the man "calling on" the whole family of the woman he is interested in to get to know her better.

In general, this anthology sticks closely to ancient (mostly Ovidian) literary accounts with little elaboration or altering of details. However, as is common in children's literature, it does sometimes change stories to be less violent, dark or upsetting, as when Apollo becomes a slave not in punishment for slaying Zeus' Cyclopes workers as in ancient versions, but because he "shot his arrows at them and greatly annoyed them." (Chapter Twenty-Four.) Apollo also accepts his

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	punishment for this fairly graciously, and it is almost implied to be a process of agreement between Zeus and himself, with Apollo stating he "should like to be a shepherd" for his friend Admetus during this year of punishment. (Chapter Twenty-Four.)
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Amphitrite Aphrodite Apollo Ares Artemis Athena Hades Hephaestus Heracles Jason Pandora Persephone Perseus Poseidon Prometheus Theseus Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Childhood Femininity Gender expectations/construction Joy of reading Punishment Romance

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