Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Artemis the Brave (Goddess Girls, 4) by Joan Holub, Suzanne Williams ", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/293. Entry version as of October 31, 2026.

Joan Holub , Suzanne Williams

Artemis the Brave (Goddess Girls, 4)

United States (2010)

TAGS: Actaeon Aphrodite Apollo Artemis Athena Daphne Dionysus / Dionysos Hades Orion Pandora Persephone Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Artemis the Brave (Goddess Girls, 4)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2010
First Edition Details	Joan Holub and Suzanne Williams, *Artemis the Brave* (Goddess Girls). New York: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division, Aladdin Press, 2010, 240 pp.
ISBN	9781416982746 (paperback) / 9781405511667 (ebook)
Genre	Alternative histories (Fiction), Bildungsromans (Coming-of-age fiction), Fiction, Humor, Mythological fiction, Novels, School story*
Target Audience	Children (Older children, 8–12 years old)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, mauril68@gmail.com Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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



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 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

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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?

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 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

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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.

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

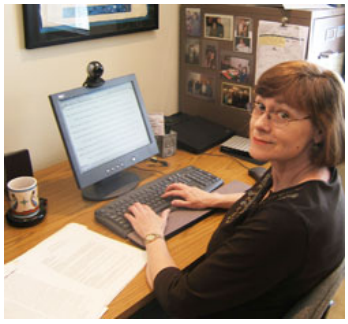
Suzanne Williams and I have written a new middle grade series called *Thunder Girls* (accessed: May 28, 2018), which is a twist on Norse mythology featuring strong girl characters. The first book Freya and the Magic Jewel releases May 2018 for ages 8–12, published by Simon and Schuster.

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

Suzanne Williams , b. 1953
(Author)

Suzanne Williams is an American prolific children's author and former

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Courtesy of the Author from her personal website.

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

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

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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 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 Myths* by Kevin Crossley-Holland, D'Aulaires' *Book of Norse Myths*, *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?

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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

Summary

General summary for the series see under *Athena the Brain*.

In this installment we follow the adventures of Artemis, the goddess of hunt and her meeting with Orion. The book explores the meaning of true bravery as well as first love and honesty.

Analysis

We begin this story hunting (fake) mythological creatures with the goddessgirls, as part of Mr. Ladon Beast-ology class. Again a humorous wink at the mythological, serpentine Ladon. Artemis is struggling to maintain her façade; “She longed to admit that her hands had trembled too. It would have been a relief to share her fears, but the others had such confidence in her fearlessness that she was too embarrassed to do so.” (p. 19). Like the previous installment, finding who you really are and the courage to admit imperfections to friends is an important part of growing up, for mortals as well as goddesses.

The authors enter a Roman mythological pair into the mix, when Artemis think about her relations with her twin Apollo; “Unlike some siblings she’d read about, like Medea and Absyrtus or Romulus and Remus, the two of them had always got along.” (p. 22). Showing the authors’ influence both from Greek and Roman myths leads to the occasional awkwardness when the two worlds are mixed. In another allusion to Rome, the gods are preparing for the school play, Eros and Psyche, which was introduced by Apuleius.

Later Artemis encounters the new boy, Orion Starr, whose dog is named Sirius (a nice pun). Since Orion’s skin shimmers like the skin of the gods, Artemis immediately assumes he is a godboy. Orion presents himself as a talented actor and orator. He presents to Artemis the awards he received for his acting, which are placed on his belt; therefore Orion’s belt demonstrates Alnitak, Alnilam, and Mintaka which are all celestial stars belonging to the constellation Orion. Once again the authors prove their vast knowledge and their clever ways of introducing this knowledge into the story in original ways. Apollo tells his sister that Orion is a mortal and that his wish was to become a star; another pun. Ironically however, Orion does not know how to shoot arrows and Artemis will teach him.

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As in the previous books, when a girl meets a boy she is interested in, she begins to watch her reflection and think of her appearance. It is hard to balance romance with girl power; although the goddesses act like typical young teenagers (Artemis is 13), it seems as if the goddessgirl are a bit too much into makeup and clothes, especially when boys are involved. Yet what matters in the end is that the girls do not lose their own individual identity and even the godboys notice the real nature of the girls. Inner beauty and character are ultimately what matters. There is the convention of the teenage girls who are preoccupied with the looks and it is hard to completely ignore it, even if the series is aimed at empowering these same young girls. The authors cannot completely disregard the things that their readers will mostly relate to, therefore they do invest time in descriptions of clothes and makeup. Yet at the same time the moral of the story is not the beauty makeovers or who wears the better clothes, but friendship and being true to yourself. The treatment of the romance reveals a fundamental discomfort in the book regarding girl-boy relationships. Artemis, like other goddessgirls before her, struggles with matters to do with her appearance in a way that seems counterproductive to the novel's purported feminism. Or in Aphrodite's words: "First rule of friendship: never, ever dump your friends over a guy." (p. 133).

Later after getting over her crush, we finally read about the school play, Eros and Psyche. In an interesting twist, Aphrodite is playing Psyche!! Orion is holding the fake stars in the show. "Artemis grinned. 'Well, Orion always said he wanted to be a star. Looks like Zeus made his wish come true.'" (p. 207). He even gets stuck in the decoration. Yet no one wants to free him; "Seems to me Orion's getting the star treatment he deserves." (p. 213). In the myth Orion becomes a constellation; here he gets stuck in a decoration of stars; similar ending yet less traumatic for the readers.

After the show, the girls go to the market where they come across Actaeon. He asks Artemis to practice archery with him one day. The girls note to Artemis that he seems cute. However, Artemis thinks, "she knew she was brave in some ways, but was she brave enough to try romance again so soon? She glanced back at Actaeon and caught him looking her way too. He waved, and she blushed." (p. 214). In this light novel for young readers, first love replaces the cruel passion and cruel punishments of the gods. Hence Actaeon can be considered a potential love interest, in complete contrast to the horrid mythological story. Apollo also loves Daphne who does not return the favor and no harm is done as well. Here the gods are juvenile and kind. How the

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	mythology could have been if the gods were kinder and believed in true love, we can only wonder. To sum up, the book follows two fundamental themes, about bravery and about judging by appearance. The two are nevertheless linked. What is true bravery? Is it just fighting monsters? Or maybe telling a boy you like him? And perhaps the bravest thing is to admit when you are wrong – about boys, about your friends and correcting that mistake. Second, you should never judge a book by its cover, or a boy by his belt. You should seek the inner character – this is the lesson Artemis painfully learns.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Actaeon Aphrodite Apollo Artemis Athena Daphne Dionysus / Dionysos Hades Orion Pandora Persephone Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Appearances Character traits Coming of age Conflict Emotions Friendship Knowledge Love School Teachers
Addenda	The review refers to the Kindle edition.

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