Allison White, "Entry on: Tommy and the Maid of Athens by Joseph Hocking", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/307. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Joseph Hocking

# Tommy and the Maid of Athens

*United Kingdom (1917)*

TAGS: Athena Greek Philosophy Poetry Socrates






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

| General information | |
|---|---|
| *Title of the work* | Tommy and the Maid of Athens |
| *Country of the First Edition* | United Kingdom |
| *Country/countries of popularity* | United Kingdom |
| *Original Language* | English |
| *First Edition Date* | 1917 |
| *First Edition Details* | Joseph Hocking, *Tommy and the Maid of Athens*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917, 188 pp. |
| *Genre* | Action and adventure fiction, Detective and mystery fiction, Historical fiction, Mythological fiction, Novels, War fiction |
| *Target Audience* | Crossover (Intended for young adults) |
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## Creators



**Joseph Hocking , 1860 - 1937**
**(Author)**

Joseph Hocking was born 7 November, 1860, in Cornwell, England. His brother, Silas, and sister, Salome, also became successful novelists. He entered the Ministry of the United Methodist Free Church and worked as a minister, ordained in 1884. After this, he wrote his first novel *Harry Penhale – The Trial of his Faith* (1887). He often used his writing (particularly novels) to convey Christian, as well as philosophical ideas, completing nearly 100 titles in total. Hocking wrote both fiction and non-fiction, usually aimed at the young adults, often featuring male protagonists during the war. Hocking travelled extensively through Asia Minor and Greece and he often placed what he saw on his travels into his novels. He married in 1887 and his three daughters, Anne Hocking, Elizabeth Nisot and Joan Shill all became successful novelists.

Bio prepared by Allison White, University of New England, awhite55@une.edu.au



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## Additional information

Summary

A patriotic novel written during World War One, the protagonist of Hocking's *Tommy and the Maid of Athens*, John Penrose, is sent on a mission to discover suspected underhanded scheming amongst the powers in Athens. He enlists his friend Tom Pollard to help him on his quest, a man who had become famous for exposing a German spy in the war, and was known for his patriotic bravery. The novel is written primarily through the eyes of John, but at times the reader is given entry to Tom's part in the mission. Upon arrival, he meets a beautiful woman, eventually discovered to be 'Athene' or the elusive 'Maid of Athens.' Athene helps John and Tom on their mission as she is closely connected with the mastermind of the conspiracy and can offer them inside information about the plans. The protagonists do not know exactly what the conspiracy involves, only that 'something big, something mysterious' (22) is going on, particularly in Greece. They disguise themselves as Americans, pretending to be tourists and only interested in seeing the sights rather than considering anything political. Athene knows that they are really Englishmen, but is aware that they wish to stop the conspiracy. She helps them discover and thwart the conspirators, who intended to cause the downfall of the British Empire and give all power to Germany and the Kaiser with Greece as their ally (151).

Analysis

*Tommy and the Maid of Athens* is a patriotic novel for young readers written by the Methodist writer Joseph Hocking. In it, Hocking tells an exciting spy story through the eyes of a young Englishman who is caught up in a mission to overcome the enemies of Britain, using the scenery of Athens as a backdrop, and drawing on elements of the myths of Athene.

*Tommy and the Maid of Athens* has several elements of myth apparent. The goddess Athene helps John with his disguise of being an American (although he is English), and leads him to the head of the conspiracy in a little town outside of Athens. The storyline mirrors the story of Athena helping Odysseus in Homer's *Iliad*. Athene's clothes represent both the mythical Greece as well as aspects of the modern, her eyes are like flashes of fire, and she has the air of a goddess. She mysteriously knows all the underhanded dealings going on in Greece, but is never suspected. John falls in love with the beautiful Athene, but



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Athene chooses to stay in Greece as she feels it is her duty to continue protecting her people. This novel conveys the relationship between duty and love, right and wrong, strong and the weak, which are all key motifs in Hocking's writing. He uses *The Bible* to illustrate humanity, making numerous mentioning of the Almighty God who has helped them in their quest, and the protagonist always chooses to save a life, rather than to kill.

This Wartime English novel uses Greek myth as well as an allusion to a higher possession of knowledge to a particular effect – idealising the British Empire and looking down on the attitudes of the Germans and the Kaiser. The title of the book alludes to Byron's poem "The Maid of Athens," demonstrating the layered intertextuality of the British tradition of travelling the continent for inspiration. Through their adventures, John and Tom visit several iconic places in Greece, including the temple of Zeus, the Acropolis and the Parthenon. The novel constantly compares Ancient Greece with the Modern, especially in architecture, people, attitudes and mind. Notable Greek philosophers and poets are mentioned numerous times, e.g. Socrates, Plato, Pericles, and Xenophon. When John asks Tom if he knows any Greek history, he replies, 'precious little, sir. But I've read Plato's *Republic* and I know a bit about Socrates' (22). Demonstrating the importance of a classical education in British social life.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Athena Greek Philosophy Poetry Socrates

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture

Adventure Good vs evil Humanity Intellect Love Religious beliefs

Further Reading

Kent, Alan M., *Pulp Methodism. The Lives & Literature of Silas, Joseph & Salome Hocking*, Cornwell: Cornish Hillside Publications,



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2002.

Byron’s poem ‘Song’ “The Maid of Athens”.



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