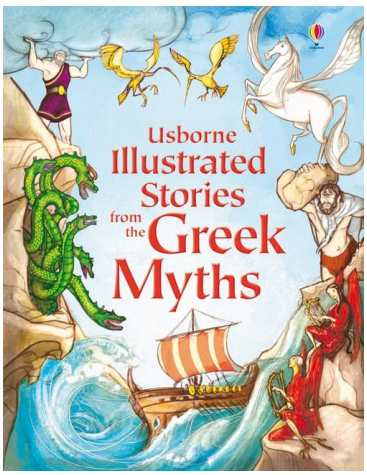
Sonya Nevin, "Entry on: Illustrated Stories From the Greek Myths by Simona Bursi, Linda Cavallini, Susanna Davidson, Alex Frith , Anne Millard, Matteo Pincelli, Russell Punter, Lesley Sims , Louie Stowell", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/365. Entry version as of November 01, 2026.

Simona Bursi , Linda Cavallini , Susanna Davidson , Alex Frith , Anne Millard , Matteo Pincelli , Russell Punter , Lesley Sims , Louie Stowell

Illustrated Stories From the Greek Myths

United Kingdom (2011)

TAGS: Achilles Aetiology Afterlife Andromeda Aphrodite Apples of the Hesperides Architecture Argo Argonauts Ariadne Athena Atlas Bellerophon Cerberus Charon Chimera / Chimaera Circe Crete Cyclops / Cyclopes Daedalus Demeter Dionysus / Dionysos Graeae / Graiai Hades Hera Heracles Hercules Hermes Icarus Jason Labyrinth Medusa Metamorphosis Minos Odysseus / Ulysses Olympus Pandora Pandora's Box Pegasus Penelope Persephone Perseus Polyphemus Poseidon Prometheus Sirens Telemachus Trojan Horse Trojan War Twelve Labours of Heracles Zeus



Courtesy of Usborne Publishing Ltd., publisher.



General information	
Title of the work	Illustrated Stories From the Greek Myths
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2011
First Edition Details	Russell Punter, Susanna Davidson, Alex Frith, Lesley Sims, Louie Stowe, *llIllustrated Stories From the Greek Myths*. London: Usborne Publishing Ltd., 2011, 184 pp.
ISBN	9781409531678
Genre	Illustrated works, Instructional and educational works, Myths, Short stories
Target Audience	Crossover (Children and Young adult)

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Creators



Simona Bursi (Illustrator)

Simona Bursi is a freelance illustrator. She trained in applied art and animation at the Institute of Art in Urbino, Italy. She has worked for several TV stations and for a number of publishing houses in Italy and beyond. The works she has illustrated in English include *Black Beauty*, *The Usborne Book of Greek Myths* and *Story of Pegasus*.

Source:

Milan-illustrations (accessed: August 1, 2022).

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Linda Cavallini (Illustrator)

Linda is a freelance illustrator based in Florence, Italy. She studied at art high school and fine arts academy. She trained at the Academy of Fine Art in Firenze. She also followed the dance company "ballet of Tuscany" as a stage assistant.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: July 4, 2018).

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Profile at the tatailab.com (accessed: July 4, 2018).

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Susanna Davidson (Author)

Susanna Davidson is a British author of over fifty fiction and non-fiction books for children, written mostly for Usborne Publishing. Her publications include retellings of traditional myths and fairy tales, such as *Cinderella* (Usborne), *Rapunzel* (Usborne), *The Story of Pegasus* (Usborne), *Baba Yaga the Flying Witch*, and *Little Red Riding Hood* (Usborne). Susanna Davidson also writes children's books on religion and history, including *The Story of Hannukah* (Usborne), *The Holocaust* (Usborne), and *Elizabeth I* (Usborne), as well as other non-fiction titles such as *Snails* (Usborne), *Penguins* (Usborne), and *Under the Ground* (Usborne). Under the name "Zanna Davidson", she writes modern children's fiction, including the *Fairy Ponies* and *Fairy Unicorns* series.

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Alex Frith (Author)

Alex Frith is a British children's author and editor. Alex has been writing children books for years on various subjects. Among his books: submarines, big book of dinosaurs, human body picture book and more. He has worked for Usborne publishing since 2005, contributing to the Young Reading series with myth-based titles including *Hercules: The world's strongest man* (Usborne Young Reading, Series 2, 2011) and *Stories of Thor* (Usborne Young Reading, Series 2, 2016). Alex Frith has authored other myth-based titles, such as *Illustrated Norse Myths* (Usborne, 2013), and many non-fiction (particularly science) titles, amongst which are: *What's Happening to Me?* (Usborne, 2007), *See Inside Science* (Usborne, 2007), and *Big Book of Big Dinosaurs* (Usborne, 2010).

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Anne Millard (Historical advisor)

History Consultant

Dr Anne Millard has a PhD in Egyptology. She is the author of a number of non-fiction historical books for children, including *From AD 1750 To AD 1914 The Age of Revolutions* (Usborne, 1979); *Usborne Book of the Ancient World* (Usborne, 1991); *Going to War in Ancient Egyp*t (Franklin Watts, 2006); *Explorers and Traders* (ed.; Weldon Owen, 2005). She has also acted as an advisor on numerous children's history books.

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Matteo Pincelli (Illustrator)

Matteo Pincelli. Matteo Pincelli is a freelance illustrator and storyboard artist based in Italy.

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Russell Punter (Author)

Russell Punter is a British children's author originally from Bedfordshire. He became a graphic designer and writer after attending art-college. He has written over forty children's books, predominantly with the publishers Usborne.

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Lesley Sims (Author)

Lesley Sims is a British editor and children's author. She trained as a barrister before moving into publishing. She is a managing editor for Usborne's *Young and First Reading* Series and is the author of many children's books.

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Louie Stowell , b. 1978
(Author)

Louie Stowell is a children's author specialising in non-fiction and in retellings of myths. She draws comics and has published work on how to make comics. Louie Stowell is an in-house writer for Usborne Publishing and Editorial Director for Ladybird. She also writes interactive fiction for Fiction Express. Under the Usborne banner, Louie has written numerous activity books, story books, non-fiction texts and creative writing guides for children of all ages. Born and raised in London, Louie studied English Literature at Exeter College Oxford, and now runs story-writing and comic-making workshops at schools and literary festivals. She draws upon ancient myths and fairytales in her writing, and is the author of the webcomic, *Deus Ex Suburbia,* which is about gods living in the suburbs. Her debut literary series, *The Dragon in the Library,* is due to be published in 2018 by Nosy Crow Publishing. She has a forthcoming second series, with the same publisher, due to be published in 2019.

Sources:

Profile at the johnsonandalcock.co.uk (accessed: Sepember 28, 2018)

Profile at the greenhouseliterary.com (accessed: September 28, 2018)

Webcomic at the godsnextdoor.wordpress.com (accessed: September 28, 2018)

Bio prepared by Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk and Kylie Constantine, University of

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Additional information

Summary

Illustrated Stories From the Greek Myths is a highly illustrated collection of short stories for children or young teens.

Contents:

- *The Wooden Horse:* Russell Punter (Author) and Matteo Pincelli (Illustrator),
- *The Minotaur: R*ussell Punter (Author) and Linda Cavallini (Illustrator),
- *Bellerophon and Pegasus:* Susanna Davidson (Author) and Simona Bursi (Illustrator),
- *The Twelve Tasks of Heracles:* Alex Frith (Author) and Matteo Pincelli (Illustrator),
- *Perseus and the Gorgon:* Lesley Sims (Author) and Simona Bursi (Illustrator),
- *The Odyssey:* Louie Stowell (Author) and Matteo Pincelli (Illustrator),

More Myths and A Guide to the Gods (summaries).

- *Creation*
- *Pandora's Box*
- *How the Seasons Came To Be*
- *Jason and the Golden Fleece*
- *Paris and the Beauty Contest*
- *Achilles (summary of the heel story).*
- *Icarus and Daedalus*
- *Gods and Goddesses – a Guide: a summary of areas of influence.*
- *A note about names – Greek-Roman equivalents*
- *Map of ancient Greece – with myths marked on it.*

Analysis

All of these stories are set in antiquity, as indicated through clothing, architecture, armaments, and, in some cases, a historical note associating the stories with a particular period.

The Wooden Horse tells the story of the Trojan War with emphasis on Helen's perspective. She "wasn't happy" with Menelaus; she falls for Paris and agrees to go with him. The illustration of the wooden

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horse reflects that from the 2004 film, *Troy*, demonstrating the far-reaching influence of that film upon visual conceptualisations of the mythical past. During the sack of Troy, Helen sees Paris killed by an arrow (as in the *Little Iliad*, 1); she expects that Menelaus will lock her up or kill her, so she is frightened when she is captured. When Menelaus forgives her, she realises that she has no choice but to return to Greece: "*At least I escaped with my life*" *she thought, as she sailed away.* The story concludes with Menelaus happy aboard ship, *reunited with his queen, whose beauty had launched a thousand ships*. This final phrase is an echo of Christopher Marlowe's sixteenth-century play, *Doctor Faustus* (Act 5, Sc.1). By including the paraphrase of *Faustus* in this retelling, the author familiarises young readers with this aspect of the later Troy tradition, as well as the ancient. By hearing it early in their lives, in this context, young readers are being inducted into a wider cultural tradition and helped to relate the lines of the play to their knowledge of myth. Through the focus on Helen's perspective, young readers are invited to consider the precariousness of her situation and, as such, to think critically and sympathetically about her actions. This runs counter to the many retellings which seek to blame Helen in a more straightforward way, and arguably encourages young readers towards a more open-minded view of this and other myths.

In ***The Minotaur***, an illustration has Aegeus play-acting as the Minotaur and a shadow-image of it appearing on the wall behind. The Minotaur itself is depicted with human's torso, legs, and arms, and a bull's head with red eyes – the red eyes suggesting an evil, supernatural quality. Ariadne pressures Theseus into the betrothal, preparing us for him breaking it. On Naxos, he resents her "bossing him around." This emphasis on Ariadne's faults extends the treatment of her found in Punter's 2009 *Minotaur*, on which this work is based. It suggests an attempt to further exonerate Theseus for his callous behaviour by providing additional information about why he 'did not want to marry King Minos' daughter'. Ariadne's prayer for vengeance is answered by Dionysus, who casts a forgetfulness spell on the crew, indirectly causing Aegeus' death. The story ends with Theseus sad that his father has died without knowing of Theseus' success.

In ***Bellerophon and Pegasus***, King Proteus' complaint appears in letter form: *Bellerophon was very rude to my wife*; a delicate allusion to the traditional (false) accusation of attempted rape. A *wizened old man* tells Bellerophon that he will need Pegasus and directs him to a

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nearby temple for help. Athena appears in a dream, gives him the magic bridle and tells him how to use it. Zeus is depicted appearing out of the clouds around Olympus to drive Bellerophon away. The god appears again, now in a chariot pulled by Pegasus. The story finishes with Bellerophon isolated now his *arrogance had angered the gods*, and Pegasus transformed into a constellation. Many retellings of this myth end with Bellerophon success against the Chimera; the decision to follow it through to Bellerophon's miserable end suggests an intention to challenge young readers with a degree of thought-provoking complexity in both the narrative structure and the characterisation of the protagonist.

The Twelve Tasks of Heracles opens with Heracles "sobbing", having killed his family. The narrator explains that *Zeus was not a good husband*, and that that is what lies behind Hera wanting to make Heracles suffer. Heracles is depicted kneeling in prayer before a statue of *his father, Zeus*. Zeus agrees to forgive him *if you can prove your strength, courage and determination*. Iolaus accompanies Heracles against the Hydra. Although he is referred to as Heracles' "nephew'" following the mythical tradition, Iolaus is depicted as a young man of a similar age to Heracles; this is a contrast to his typical depiction in antiquity as a significantly younger person, and was perhaps chosen in order to present them more as friends than as mentor/mentee or erastes/eromenos, with the friend dynamic more likely to maintain Heracles' relatable quality for the young reader. The illustration depicting the return of Heracles with the Erymanthian boar depicts Eurystheus hiding in a vase, an image derived from Greek vase paintings of this scene. The section *Heracles and the Women* ends with Heracles fighting his way to the beach, but there is no reference to fatalities or any harm done to Hippolyta. This allows for an action-packed narrative without emphasis on violence or harm being done to the Amazons. The story of Prometheus is told in brief when Heracles visits him to find the location of the Garden of the Hesperides. Heracles obtains a singular red apple, a change from the more typically plural golden apples. Charon is depicted as a skull-headed figure in a long, dark, hooded gown. Zeus announces Heracles forgiven on completion of the final task. Over the course of the labours, the illustrations show Heracles changing from beardless youth to a bearded man, helping to reinforce the idea of him proving his masculinity and coming of age. A final section summarises the snakes in the cradle story; Heracles' participation in the adventures of Jason and the Argonauts, and explains that *Legend says that when*

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Heracles died, he became a god. This is a likable Heracles who works hard and remains 'strong, brave, and cheerful'. His story is told at such length that young readers get a very thorough account of who Heracles is as a mythical figure.

Perseus and the Gorgon opens with complaints about the sea-monster, Cetus. Andromeda will be sacrificed; the royal family are grief-stricken; *none of them knew that help was on the way – and from a surprising young man*. Perseus is then introduced, helping to protect his mother (who is illustrated as the same age as him) from the unwanted attention of a king. Perseus promises to fetch the king Medusa's head if he will leave his mother alone, although he tells his mother that he will use the head to kill the king. An illustration shows Perseus imagining Medusa; she appears with snakes for hair and a snake body, as per the influential 1981 film, *Clash of the Titans*. This is also how Medusa is depicted when she appears in the story later on; she "slithered" around her cave. Perseus falls in love with Andromeda when he sees her, from a distance, about to be sacrificed. Perseus uses Medusa's head to defeat the sea-monster. Andromeda and her father invite Perseus to come back soon. Although the reader is left in no doubt that Perseus will return to Andromeda, the story actually ends with him saving his mother by killing the evil king and thus proving his worth by remembering his duty. The unusual device of opening the story with Andromeda works well as it sets up that part of the story effectively rather than it appearing as an add-on at the end.

The Odyssey contains a page of introduction to Homer. The story retains the disrupted chronology of original: a "big strong man, sobbing his heart out," opens the story on Ogygia. Odysseus sees the dead and speaks to Tiresias, but not to his mother or anyone else named. Back on Ithaca, his dog is "on its last legs" but does not actually die. Odysseus' old maid, Euryclea, finds the scar on his knee when she washes his feet (not, as per the Homeric *Odyssey*, a scar on his thigh when she gives him a bath). There is a Homeric echo in the description of how *Penelope smiled through her tears*. The story ends with Odysseus *home at last* with Penelope (rather than getting ready to face townsfolk). This is a detailed and dynamic retelling of the Odyssey which keeps a close connection to the epic throughout.

This is an enjoyable and action-packed collection of myths retold in way that is likely to be attractive to a modern teen. There is plenty of peril and difficult topics are included, with only the more extensive

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	violence and sexual content toned down. There is plenty of direct speech which facilitates the lively tone. There are stylish, modern illustrations on every page, laid out in a variety of ways that keeps the appearance of the stories fresh. While each of the titles in the collection works well on their own, the combination makes an effective collection. It is worth noting that the choice of myths to collate as *...The Greek Myths*, gives the impression of Greek myths being very male and combat-focused.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Achilles Aetiology Afterlife Andromeda Aphrodite Apples of the Hesperides Architecture Argo Argonauts Ariadne Athena Atlas Bellerophon Cerberus Charon Chimera / Chimaera Circe Crete Cyclops / Cyclopes Daedalus Demeter Dionysus / Dionysos Graeae / Graiai Hades Hera Heracles Hercules Hermes Icarus Jason Labyrinth Medusa Metamorphosis Minos Odysseus / Ulysses Olympus Pandora Pandora's Box Pegasus Penelope Persephone Perseus Polyphemus Poseidon Prometheus Sirens Telemachus Trojan Horse Trojan War Twelve Labours of Heracles Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Authority Coming of age Conflict Death Family Friendship Gender Gender expectations/construction Heroism Identity Morality Parents (and children) Sexuality Suicide
Further Reading	Blanshard, Alastair, *Hercules, a Heroic Life*, London: Granta Books, 2006. Eisenberg, William D., "Morals, Morals Everywhere: Values in Children's Fiction", *The Elementary School Journal* 72.2 (1971): 76–80. Miles, Geoffrey, "Chasing Odysseus in Twenty-First Century Children's Fiction" in Lisa Maurice, ed., *The Reception of Ancient Greece and Rome in Children's Literature. Heroes and Eagles*, Leiden: Brill, 2015. Miles, Sarah, "The Odyssey in the 'Broom Cupboard': *Ulysses 31* and *Odysseus: The Greatest Hero of them All* on 'Children's BBC',

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Addenda

Combines their separate publications: *The Wooden Horse* (2011), *The Minotaur* (2009) and *The Odyssey* (2011), plus *A Guide to Gods*.

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