Chloe Roberta Sadler, "Entry on: Who Let the Gods Out? (Who Let the Gods Out?, 1) by Aleksei Bitskoff, Maz Evans", 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/369. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Aleksei Bitskoff , Maz Evans

Who Let the Gods Out? (Who Let the Gods Out?, 1)

United States (2017)

TAGS: Aphrodite Athena Cerberus Charon Erebus Gods Hades Harpies Hephaestus Hera Hermes Hestia Hypnos Immortality Pegasus Sisyphus Styx Tartarus Thanatos Underworld Virgo Zodiac





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

General information	
Title of the work	Who Let the Gods Out? (Who Let the Gods Out?, 1)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States; United Kingdom; German; Czech Republic
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2017
First Edition Details	Maz Evans, *Who Let the Gods Out?* New York: Chicken House, 2017, 307 pp.
ISBN	9780547225494
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, Alternative histories (Fiction), Fantasy fiction, Humor, Magic realist fiction, Mythological fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Children (9–12 reading bracket; chapter book: Suitable for reading to younger audiences, or for independent reading in 9–12 group.)
Author of the Entry	Chloe Roberta Sadler, University of Roehampton, sadlerc2929@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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



Aleksei Bitskoff by Wa88kazza. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 (accessed: February 2, 2022).

Aleksei Bitskoff (Illustrator)

Bitskoff is an Estonian-born British illustrator, character designer and children's book illustrator. He received his Master of Arts degree in Illustration from Camberwell College in 2010. He is also the author of a number of children's books.

Source:

Official website (accessed: July 4, 2018).

Bio prepared by Chloe Roberta Sadler, University of Roehampton, sadlerc2929@gmail.com

Maz Evans (Author)

Maz Evans is a British author who began her career as a TV journalist. She has also worked as a lecturer of creative writing and a lyrics writer for the stage. Her first children's novel *Who Let the Gods Out* was published by Chicken House in February 2017, with the sequel, *Simply the Quest* published in August 2017. The third instalment of the series, *Beyond the Odyssey* was published in April 2018 and the fourth, *Against All Gods*, in 2019.

Who Let the Gods Out was selected as the Waterstone's Children's Book of the Month; it also entered the best seller list (according to davidhigham.co.uk, accessed: October 5, 2018). Evans was also shortlisted for the BAFTA Rocliffe New Writing Forum and the Scriptangel contest with her television script AFTER LIFE.

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.

Evans is also the founder of Book Buddy whose aim is "to help schools match up with interested donors to get books into their libraries" (cited from here, accessed: October 5, 2018).

She also writes for stage. Her original musical, *H. R. Haitch*, co-created with composer Luke Bateman, is being produced by Iris Theatre in London, and she has won a number of awards for her song-writing. Evans also runs creative writing events, which have been featured in many literary festivals, including Hay and Latitude. Evans also takes these creative writing events into schools.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: February 8, 2021).

Profile at the chickenhousebooks.com (accessed: February 8, 2021).

Bio prepared by Chloe Roberta Sadler, University of Roehampton, BA and MRes graduate, sadlerc2929@gmail.com

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.

Additional information

Translation	German: *Die Götter Sind Los*, trans. Ilse Rothfuss, Hamburg: Chicken House, 2017. Czech: *Kdo pustil ty boho?!*, trans. Alžběta Kalinová, Praha: Fragment, 2017.
Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	*Simply the Quest*, 2017, *Beyond the Odyssey*, 2018, Untitled fourth book, 2019.
Summary	*Who Let the Gods Out?* is the story of an ordinary boy, Elliot Hooper, who discovers that all of the Greek myths are true and that he is the only person who can save the world. Elliot has a secret: his mother, Josie, is unwell. She has trouble remembering things and is often confused. Sometimes she goes missing and Elliot finds her doing strange things, like planting vegetables in the middle of the night. And on top of it all, Virgo, the youngest member of the Zodiac Council, crash lands in the cowshed on his farm, Home Farm. Virgo and Elliot accidentally release Thanatos, who was being held prisoner for trying to use his Chaos Stones to enslave the human race. Now Elliot and Virgo must race Thanatos to retrieve the Stones before he can carry out his plan. Luckily, Elliot and Virgo have the help of the gods; Zeus, Hermes, Hephaestus, Athena and Aphrodite as well as Pegasus. The first stone is located on the Crown Jewels and the gang manage to retrieve the stone before Thanatos does, but whilst they are on their mission, Patricia Porshley-Plum (who is very rich and has had it in for the Hoopers for years) has tricked Josie into selling the farm. In his anger, Elliot takes the Earth Stone to the underworld with the intention of bargaining with Thanatos. He wants Home Farm and his mother's health back in return for the Stone. But Thanatos poisons Elliot, and with the last of his strength Elliot uses the Stone to cause the roof of the cave to collapse on top of Thanatos, trapping him there.

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.

Virgo rescues Elliot, and they head back to the farm to enjoy what time they have left there together. But at the last minute, it is revealed that Patricia Porshley-Plum does not have enough money to buy the farm. On the TV, Hermes has transformed into Patricia and is announcing that Patricia is donating all of her money to charity.

Analysis

The connections with the classical world in Maz Evans' debut novel are clear: Zeus, and his children Athena, Aphrodite, Hephaestus and Hermes play an integral role in the plot. Many of the classical characters will be familiar to the intended British audience from the primary school curriculum, where classical deities are introduced as a topic in Key Stage Two (ages seven to eleven). Beginning Key Stage Two coincides with the progression to chapter books in accompanied reading, and most children will progress to reading chapter books independently during the Stage. However, Evans goes beyond the Key Stage Two curriculum by involving gods outside the "Olympian twelve" and by using daemons and other mythological creatures in her "worldbuilding." Students will learn about heroes, the underworld and basic information about ancient life. These additional characters sit well within the realms of familiar topics for Key Stage Two readers and beyond.

Evans' skill with "worldbuilding" and storytelling bring these ancient characters to life. By tapping into the archetype often represented by each god, daemon and constellation, Evans is able to update the characters, making them easily relatable to her pre-teen audience. However, Evans' world has a vast number of characters, many of whom are not humans, which characteristics and traits, for example constellations which can fly and heroes who are immortal. To help her readers stay on top of the many characters and special characteristics Evans uses two main tactics. With minor characters, the reader need not know anything about the mythological creature in order to follow the story, or find a section amusing, but Evans always references the main characteristic of the mythological being. For example harpies are depicted as squabbling over objects much as vultures might squabble over meat, but it is not necessary to know anything about what the ancient Greeks believed about harpies in order to find their petty arguing amusing.

With major characters such as Zeus or Thanatos, meanwhile, Evans gives each god, daemon or constellation a distinctive presence, with

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.

their own. These memorable and easily recognisable characteristics reflect the central function of each god. This is perhaps most obviously and successfully done with Hermes. Hermes has many of the traits of a stereotypical, working class, urban youth. For instance, he has nickname for everyone in the book: "babe", "bruv", and so forth. His speech, which is reminiscent of "text speech" (short hand used in SMS messages and online forums) connects clearly to his role as the “messenger god”. Additionally, Evans boils down each deity and daemon to a simple statement such as "messenger god" or "daemon of death", giving each of them a hook which she mentions nearly every time the character appears. This hook, coupled with the distinct traits she gives each of the characters makes a large pantheon easier to get to know for the pre-teen readers.

However, Evans’ success with modernising the Greek gods perhaps excludes her treatment of Aphrodite and Athena. Evans pulls on Aphrodite’s role as goddess of love, giving her a pink sports car and a voluptuous presence, missing her role as a warrior goddess, and on Athena’s role as goddess of wisdom, making her bookish, prudish and uptight, perhaps missing entirely the more interesting aspects of the goddesses, for example her connection to courage, strategy and skill. In addition, Virgo, who is the second most important character next to Elliot, is in many ways the stereotype of an uptight, bossy and "stressy" woman. In a book with such a wide appeal due to its plethora of female characters, and its relation to the curriculum topics, to find such gendered characters, especially from a female author could be seen as a missed opportunity to send positive messages about gender roles to a new generation.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Athena Cerberus Charon Erebus Gods Hades Harpies Hephaestus Hera Hermes Hestia Hypnos Immortality Pegasus Sisyphus Styx Tartarus Thanatos Underworld Virgo Zodiac
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Adversity Child, children Family Friendship Heroism Magic powers Parents (and children) Small town life Teachers

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.

Addenda	Edition used by author of the entry: Maz Evans, *Who Let the Gods Out*, Frome, Somerset: Chicken House, 2017, 368 pp.

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.