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Joan Holub , Suzanne Williams

Amphitrite the Bubbly (Goddess Girls, 17)

United States (2015)

TAGS: Aglaia Amphitrite Aphrodite Apollo Ares Artemis Athena Dionysus / Dionysos Eris Gaia / Gaea Hades Harmonia Hera Heracles Hercules Medusa Nereus Panacea Pandora Persephone Pheme Pythia Thetis Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Amphitrite the Bubbly (Goddess Girls, 17)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2015
First Edition Details	Joan Holub and Suzanne Williams, *Goddess Girls: Amphitrite the Bubbly*. New York: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division, Aladdin Press, 2015, 278 pp.
ISBN	9781442488328
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, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.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



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?

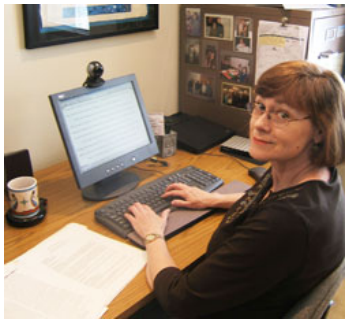
Suzanne Williams and I have written a new middle grade series called *Thunder Girls* (accessed: May 28, 2018), which is a twist on Norse mythology featuring strong girl characters. The first book Freya and the Magic Jewel releases May 2018 for ages 8–12, published by Simon and Schuster.

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

In this installment, we meet a new character, Amphitrite, a mermaid who is not a regular student at MOA academy. Amphitrite is a mermaid who dreams about living on land. In this combination of mythology and "the little mermaid", Amphitrite does not forsake her marine home for life on land, but learns to combine both. The story alternates between her narrative and Poseidon's, and the connecting theme is identity – who you really are.

Amphitrite's sister, Thetis, is summoned by Poseidon to participate in the Temple Games. Yet, Thetis does not wish to go and so the more adventurous Amphitrite takes her place (and her identity). Amphitrite is bright and bubbly, and she soon befriends Poseidon and the other students, while helping them defeat the ferocious giants sent by Gaia. The Temple Games take our heroes across the globe, from Rome to China, where they discover other cultures.

At the beginning of the story, all Poseidon wished for was a temple of his own, a place where he would be worshipped. In the end he realizes there are more important things and that meaningful friendship is more worthwhile. After realising this, he gets his reward in the form of the underwater temple in his honor. The insecure Poseidon realises, with the help of Amphitrite, how much he is truly appreciated by those he protects as a god.

Analysis

The theme of this book is identity and self-esteem. Both Amphitrite and Poseidon disguise their real selves in fear that others may not accept them. The fearless mythological god of the seas is, in fact, an insecure teenager. Poseidon is one of the most popular god-boys at MOA, yet his appearance does not reflect his true feelings; "he was constantly worried about what other students at the Academy thought of him. It was hard to measure up when you were competing with godboys like Ares, the god of war…it was an uphill battle, trying to gain Zeus's notice with these other guys around. Kind of exhausting actually." (pp. 152–153). Although Poseidon appears to be godboy who has it all, he is filled with doubt and self-questioning. Trying to win the attention of an authoritative figure like Zeus is also an experience many kids share – how to stand out in a crowd when you think you are invisible. This would probably be a very recognisable experience for

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many of the readers who feel such anxiety but also think that others have it easier and do not suffer from such fears. Poseidon epitomises the "popular guy" trope which exists in every school, those boys who seem nonchalant and unfazed by anything. Yet, even he has his own demons to face. It is important to show that all people, whether popular or not, face similar problems. This insecurity is what makes the gods human, and what make the characters so easy for youngsters to relate to.

Zeus, however, despite his flaws (which are usually comical), does notice Poseidon and encourages him. The role of the adult is very important, with Zeus also acting as a father-figure for many of the kids, giving them the love and support they sometimes lack at home. While the students' families are relatively non-existent in the stories, Zeus' role becomes more significant and he successfully fills it, in a complete contrast to his mythological persona. Zeus is described as a caring father for Athena, as a father-figure for Heracles. He also understands the anxieties shared by Amphitrite, Iris and even Poseidon. He may appear dense at times, and comical, yet he has a good heart.

Through his friendship with Amphitrite, Poseidon grows in self-understanding of himself and learns to overcome his fears. She is important to him, but he is at first unable to share his feelings with her; "he didn't want her to know how lonely he sometimes felt. He didn't want her to feel sorry for him." (p. 205). Ironically, had Poseidon confided in Amphitrite, he would have felt less lonely; the lesson he needs to learn is that if you truly care about someone, you need to be able to share your feelings with them. However, since the story focuses on young teenagers, it is understandable that they do not wish to expose their vulnerability.

Over the book, Poseidon gradually changes his position. By being helpful to others (he commends Pandora instead of chastising her), he feels better as well. This shows that true change starts from within and then affects those around us. When Poseidon relaxes and is able to support his friends, he is also encouraged by this good feeling. Thus his anxieties ease.

Amphitrite has 50 siblings, yet she also feels alone and an outsider, due to her desire to live on land, a wish she carefully hides from her family. Knowing that her family depends on her, she does not want to let them down. She is willing to supress her own wishes and dreams in

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order to meet their expectations. However, in the end, she gets her reward by being invited to MOA. Thus filial piety seems to be rewarded. Amphitrite plans to confront her father, Nereus, regarding her desire to live on land, yet Zeus' possible acceptance of her to MOA delays this confrontation. In the end the message is that youngsters should also follow their own wishes and dreams and not completely succumb to the will of a family. Families should be supportive, not constrictive.

Poseidon sums up his and Amphitrite's similar situations; "you may have pretended to be someone you're not, but in a way, I was too, I guess. Pretending to be secure and confident when I don't really feel that way." (p. 271).

These confessions (by both) show how they have matured from the beginning of the story and how their friendship has made them more secure and confident. They are ready to admit their insecurities and face them, rather than hide them anymore. This is the most important lesson they have shared, more important than the games or fighting the Giants. Friendship is again hailed as the most important aspect in teenage life. Poseidon is encouraged by his good friend, Delphinius, and by his new-found friend, Amphitrite. They help him gain confidence and find his true self.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aglaia Amphitrite Aphrodite Apollo Ares Artemis Athena Dionysus / Dionysos Eris Gaia / Gaea Hades Harmonia Hera Heracles Hercules Medusa Nereus Panacea Pandora Persephone Pheme Pythia Thetis Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adolescence Adventure Adversity Appearances Character traits Communication Conflict Emotions Family Fashion Freedom Friendship Girls Good vs evil Heroism Homesickness Humour Identity Individuality Integrity Invention Isolation/loneliness Journeys Joy of reading Judgement Learning Love Magic Magic powers Maturity Names Obedience Parents (and children) Past Peers Rejection School Siblings Success and failure Truth and lies Values War

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