Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Uranus and the Bubbles of Trouble (Heroes in Training, 11) by Joan Holub, Craig Phillips, 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/536. Entry version as of November 02, 2026.

Joan Holub , Craig Phillips , Suzanne Williams

Uranus and the Bubbles of Trouble (Heroes in Training, 11)

United States (2015)

TAGS: Aphrodite Apollo Ares Artemis Athena Chronos Demeter Hades Helen Hera Hestia Menelaus Oracles Ouranos / Uranus Paris (Trojan Prince) Poseidon Rhea Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Uranus and the Bubbles of Trouble (Heroes in Training, 11)
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, *Heroes in Training: Uranus and the Bubbles of Trouble*. New York: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division, Aladdin Press, 2015, 116 pp.
ISBN	9781481435123
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, Alternative histories (Fiction), Bildungsromans (Coming-of-age fiction), Humor, Illustrated works, Mythological comics, Novels
Target Audience	Children (Older children, 8–14 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 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

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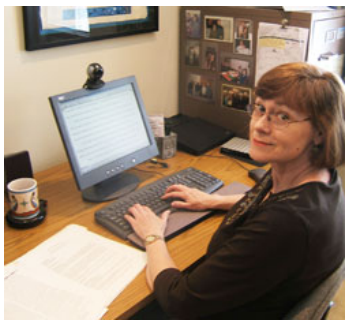
Craig Phillips (Illustrator)

Phillips is an Australian award winning illustrator who works with various publishers, including Random House, Simon & Schuster, Penguin, Scholastic, Bloomsbury, Egmont, Hardie Grant, and many more. As a child he was inspired by mythology and cartoons, and fantasy novels such as the *Hobbit* and *Conan the Barbarian*. He is still fascinated by the cartoons, comics, novels and stories that he enjoyed as a child and tries to capture that feeling in his work. His comics have been serialised in children's literary magazines and were collected and published as *Giants, Trolls, Witches, Beasts: Ten Tales from the Deep, Dark Woods* in 2017 by Allen and Unwin. He lives in New Zealand.

Source:

Official website (accessed: October 12, 2018).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com



Courtesy of the Author from her personal website.

Suzanne Williams , b. 1953 (Author)

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

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Source:

Official website (accessed: May 29, 2018).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University,
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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 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.

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

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

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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.

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Additional information

Summary

This is the eleventh book in the *Heroes in Training* series (see for example *Zeus and the Thunderbolt of Doom*). The Olympians are stranded on an island in the Aegean Sea, where they witness a mighty battle between Cronus and Uranus. The father-son conflict between Uranus and Cronus reflects Cronus' fight with his own children, the Olympians. Uranus reveals a prophecy that one day Cronus' child will overpower him and rule everything. Along the way they meet another Olympian, the beautiful Aphrodite. A twist on the story of the Trojan War is introduced when Paris and Menelaus fight over the puppy, Helen, due to a mistake made by Aphrodite. Thus the Olympians who try to save Greece are now being chased by angry Greeks because of this puppy matter.

Analysis

While the Olympians perform many hazardous tasks, the books constantly play on the duality in their characters. They are young children, around 10 years old, referred to as "kids"; yet at the same time, although they "looked like normal mortal boys and girls, they were actually immortals and their actions were mighty." (p. 2). This kind of reference on the one hand makes the readers identify with the heroes, who are the same age and experience feelings and emotions similar to them, yet at the same time it throws them into a fantasy world, giving the impression that the young reader could also be an immortal god, capable of great deeds. The gods are not childlike in their heroic actions, yet they are very childlike in their emotions and how they bicker and fight with each other. Yet their heroic deeds can only occur and succeed when they work together as a team. This also could be seen as a warning, however, for the reason that the Olympians being immortal could accomplish such deeds. So it is a safe environment for the readers to experience a fantasy world and imagine what they would have done in similar situations, knowing full well that they will not be facing such hazards.

As noted, Cronus and Uranus are fighting each other. In a way this could be interpreted as some kind of psychological defence of Cronus' behaviour, although it naturally does not justify it. Cronus suffers from his abusive father; Uranus tells him "you are a disappointment and a failure." (p. 8). Cronus replies (in a pouty voice, the authors emphasize), "you've always liked my brothers and sisters better than

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me." (pp. 8–9). Ironically, the only way for Cronus to be valued as worthy by his father, is for him to treat his own children badly. There is little wonder, that he does not know how to act lovingly as a father should. The reader might feel sorry for him, yet the characters obviously do not. Judging Cronus' past mean acts against them, they do not pity him and ignore this complex situation between their father and grandfather.

The aforementioned prophecy revealed by Uranus, causes yet more tension in the Olympian group. Hera instantly complains "why do boys always get to rule everything?" (p. 16). While Athena tries to calm her down by noting the important abilities over which the girls rule (cleverness, fires, etc.), yet one cannot ignore that Hera has a point, making a feminist claim against the mythical patriarchal world. While the authors try their best to empower the girls as equals, the ultimate ruler would still be a boy. Yet the important moral is that he cannot rule alone and he needs the cooperation and combined forces of his friends, both boys and girls.

This sets the stage for the appearance of another girl, Aphrodite who rises from the sea, sleeping, in a large shell. Aphrodite's looks are instantly noticed (Hera is jealous of course). The association of Aphrodite with a blond hair, on which there is a strong emphasis, is interesting. Though there is no classical description of Aphrodite's hair, the authors follow the post-classical association of blondness with beauty. In addition, Aphrodite, who just emerged from the sea, acts like a baby who has just discovered the world. While it is true in the context of the narrative, the authors chose to associate beauty, naiveté and at times silliness as related traits in the same character. Aphrodite is naïve and happy and filled with wonder, a dumb blonde. She even presents herself (unintentionally probably) very vainly: "My name is…" She paused and then giggled, as if trying to remember it. Then she said, "Oh, yeah. Aphrodite. I am the most beautiful girl you have ever seen!" (p. 38). It is curious to see Aphrodite stereotypically associated with vanity and silliness, in contrast with the other Olympian girls.

While the story focuses on the gods as children, their struggles and triumphs in a world where adults are mainly a source for fear, the mother image is still a strong source of comfort. The Pythia plays a somewhat quirky mother-figure, yet the real mother, Rhea, offers the true kindness and tenderness. When Zeus finally manages to see her, she commends him for becoming strong and tells him that his friends

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need him. Yet he complains that the other Olympians do not listen to him. He adds “They’re always fighting. And when I do help them, they never appreciate it.” (p. 89). Zeus sounds like a true parent, lamenting the rude behaviour of is children; to this Rhea replies, “being a leader is a thankless job.” Rhea teaches Zeus that he cannot rule in expectation of gratitude all the time; this is not what being leader is about. She encourages him, telling him that he is more important to them than they realise and that he must keep leading them. Only Zeus gets this opportunity to meet their mother, another sign of his uniqueness among the group. Since he is also the one who is struggling inwardly with his position, these comforting words are very needed by him. Even as a young ruler, he still needs to hear the calming words of his mother in order to proceed. He then gets the courage to tell his friends they must trust him since he is their leader. This new-found confidence makes them accept his request for now at least. Team work is the key to successful leadership. The Olympians are not perfect and they can also behave quite badly, yet what differentiates them form their enemies is their sense of family and belonging. This feeling keeps them from being torn apart. They are definitely stronger together, despite their special abilities. Each of them is unique by himself yet together they form an unbeatable team.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Apollo Ares Artemis Athena Chronos Demeter Hades Helen Hera Hestia Menelaus Oracles Ouranos / Uranus Paris (Trojan Prince) Poseidon Rhea Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adolescence Adventure Adversity Animals Authority Boys Character traits Conflict Desires Emotions Expectations Family Freedom Friendship Gaining understanding Girls Good deeds Good vs evil Heroism Humour Identity Individuality Integrity Invention Journeys Judgement Learning Magic Magic powers Maturity Names Parents (and children) Peers Rejection Relationships Respect Siblings Success and failure Travel Truth and lies Values War

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