Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths by Ingri and Edggar, Per Ola and Nils M. P. D'Aulaires", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/802. Entry version as of November 07, 2026.

Ingri and Edggar, Per Ola and Nils M. P. D'Aulaires

D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths

United Kingdom (1962)

TAGS: Argonauts Heracles Hercules Olympias Titans Trojan War





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

General information	
Title of the work	D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1962
First Edition Details	*D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths.* New York: Doubleday, 1962.
ISBN	9781524770648 (ebook)
Genre	Adaptations, Myths
Target Audience	Children (aged 8–12)
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Creators



Ingri and Edggar, Per Ola and Nils M. P. D'Aulaires (Author)

From the book's afterward section, written by John Cech, Director of the Center for Children's Literature and Culture, University of Florida:

The d'Aulaires were noted American artists and authors of children's books, who used color lithography for the pictures in their books. Ingri was from a Norwegian descent and Edgar was Swiss. They immigrated to New York in 1929 and became struggling artists. They later moved to Connecticut, working as hired artists and illustrators and continuing working on their own art. In 1940 they received the Caldecott Medal for their biography of Abraham Lincoln. Although they originally wanted to cooperate with Robert Graves on a book of Greek myths, in the end they parted ways from Graves, and produced their own version. They carried out thorough research for the Greek mythology books, travelling to Greece numerous times, and they tried to adapt classical art forms. Their artistic success is attested in the book's illustrations.

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Additional information

Summary

This is a revised edition of a 1962 book. The writing and illustrations appear to be the same as in the original. The book covers mainly the genealogy and myths related to the Olympian gods, adapted for children (Gaia "falls in love with Uranus", Zeus "marries" mortals etc.). It is a very detailed book that covers a large and varied range of stories, relating to the gods and mortals. It gives a description of the different traits of the gods as well as individual myths about them. The narrative opens with the creation of the world by Gaia and Uranus and then the birth of the gods and gigantomachy. Then the book delineates myths related to the various gods (Zeus, Hera, Hephaestus, Aphrodite, Ares, Athena, Poseidon, Apollo, Artemis, Hermes, Hades), retelling one or two myths for each god. For example, the story of Io is told in connection with Zeus, the section on Athena includes Arachne and the competition with Poseidon for patronage of Athens, while the section on Apollo uses the story of Delphi. Other myths then follow: stories of Nymphs, Satyrs and Centaurs, the stealing of fire by Prometheus, Pandora's jar, Deucalion and the flood, Helios and Phaethon, Pan, Echo and more. This section includes some less well known myths, such as those of Eos and Tithonus, Selene and Endymion, and Pan. The last part of the book is devoted to Zeus' mortal descendants and includes stories about Europa and Cadmus, Bellerophon, Midas, and Sisyphus, as well as the Argonauts' journey and Heracles' 12 labours, including the story of Alcestis. Oedipus' story is mentioned and also a shortened version of the Trojan war.

There are also illustrations, both color and black and white, between the stories. The book includes a detailed afterword, describing the d'Aulaires writing experiences and working methods, and an index.

Analysis

The book opens with quite a provocative statement: "when men still worshiped ugly idols, there lived in the land of Greece a folk of shepherds and herdsmen who cherished light and beauty. They did not worship dark idols like their neighbors, but created instead their own beautiful, radiant gods." (location 107). This statement places the Greek culture above others. The author also notes that the gods could do no wrong which is quite puzzling remark regarding the knowledge we possess on Greek myths.

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There is no doubt that the authors wished to introduce the readers to as many myths as possible and the book is detailed and elaborated, written in clear and flowing language. The gods are rather calm and caring for humans, except when humans hurt their pride (like Arachne, Niobe). The punishments of the gods are cruel, yet they are not random and only affect those who offend the gods. There is no moral judgment of their actions by the authors, who narrate the stories as closely to the original as they can.

This reverence of the gods is emphasized in the portrayal of the Centaurs, which are described "wild and vulgar" and who "did not honor any of the gods" (location 827). This may suggest that without any reverence to the gods one becomes less cultured and refined, and that the gods provide a cultural compass.

The book exhibits great care, beautiful art and research, both in the stories as in the illustrations, and it shows how the author wished to enrich children and provide an encompassing treasure trove of Greek myths. It is noted at the appendix that even darker stories are mentioned in the book (as the Oedipus tale) since "the d'Aulaires bring it all to life – fearlessly, openly, without dumbing down or sugarcoating." (location 1935).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Argonauts Heracles Hercules Olympias Titans Trojan War
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Conflict Death Heroism Love Punishment Revenge
Addenda	Revised edition: Ingri and Edggar Parin D'Aulaire, *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths*. Random House Children's Books, Kindle Edition, 1990, 208 pp.

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The review refers to the Ebook 1992 edition.

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