Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Amazing Greek Myths of Wonder and Blunders: Welcome to the Wonderful World of Greek Mythology by Michael Townsend", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/826. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

Michael Townsend

Amazing Greek Myths of Wonder and Blunders: Welcome to the Wonderful World of Greek Mythology

United Kingdom (2010)

TAGS: Arachne Daedalus Dionysus / Dionysos Hades Hera Heracles Hercules Icarus Medusa Midas Olympians Pandora Persephone Perseus Pygmalion Pyramus Thisbe Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Amazing Greek Myths of Wonder and Blunders: Welcome to the Wonderful World of Greek Mythology
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2010
First Edition Details	Michael Townsend, *Amazing Greek Myths of Wonder and Blunders: Welcome to the Wonderful World of Greek Mythology.* New York at al.: Dial Books for young readers, a division of Penguin Young Readers Group, 2010, 160 pp.
ISBN	9781101195574 (ebook)
Genre	Adaptations, Graphic novels, Humor, Myths
Target Audience	Children (ages 8–12)
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Creators



Michael Townsend (Author)

Michael is an American author and illustrator from Pennsylvania, USA. He studied art at the School of Visual Arts (in NYC). Michael has written and illustrated numerous children's books, like *Mr. Ball Makes a To-Do List*, *Kit Feeny, Cute & Cuter* and more.

Source:

Profile at goodreads.com (accessed: August 14, 2019)

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Additional information

Summary

This book contains nine mythological tales written in comic form. First there is a brief introduction of various creatures of Greek mythology, such as the Cyclops, centaurs, Satyrs, Nymphs, Pegasus but also made-for-laugh ones such as a fairy goat or Mer-Donkey. There is an emphasis on the natural world of ancient Greece, where there was no technology, and on monsters, heroes and gods. The Olympian gods are mentioned, with the exclusion of Hephaestus and Ares, although Zeus, Hera, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Hermes, Hades, Aphrodite, Dionysius, Demeter are all included.

The tales described in this book are: Midas' golden touch, Pandora's box, Pygmalion, the abduction of Persephone, Arachne, Perseus, Pyramus and Thisbe (this story is rarely found in myths anthologies, and here it is narrated similar to Romeo and Juliet), Icarus' flight and Hercules' labours.

The drawings are colorful and also purposely exaggerated; the characters have wide-open big mouths, popping eyes, etc., and the stories are presented in a humorous way, with the intention of less seriousness. The captions relating to each character and story also include jokes.

Each tale opens with the title of the story and an illustration of all the main characters. The stories closely follow the myths, but with adaptations for children. In the final drawing there are comical mock pieces of advices by the Greek characters about mundane matters, like being kind to sheep, eating chicken with a loved one, socks and shoes etc.

Analysis

This book aims to introduce young readers to myths in a funny comics format. The light tone of the book is revealed from the introduction, which narrates, "the very first thing you should know about the world of Greek mythology is that it is full to the brim with strange and funny-looking creatures." (Kindle location 31). The drawings complete the text by offering colorful and funny-looking characters as noted above, thus amplifying the whimsical tone of the book.

The comic form allows the author to amplify emotions, for example, in describing Midas' greediness, his eyes appear as orbs of green and

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gold. Yet they also emphasize his daughter's sadness and also the king's later alarm. Thus it is possible to understand the stories from the pictures, even if one does not read the whole text. I shall now briefly note specific observations about each tale.

In the tale of Pandora, she is described as a little girl with a cat who happened to find a box from Zeus in her house (there is no mention of the creation of men or Prometheus). The author deliberately focuses on Pandora's behaviour and uses the drawings to illustrate her thoughts regarding the box. In the characters' list at the beginning of the story, the author makes a distinction between "the curious and sane Pandora" and "the curious and insane Pandora"; it is an interesting approach, to view Pandora's behaviour as belonging to two personalities and not make her entire character a deranged one. Furthermore, this approach makes curiosity a good trait, as long as it is moderated (similarly to the book *Pandora's Lunch Box* by Richard Clark). Yet there is no explanation as to why Pandora is so curious. Pandora becomes completely obsessed and crazy about this box and in the end manages to open it. She releases various monsters which symbolize evils and also a little bunny which symbolizes hope. The author uses linguistic puns to make the ending of the story more humorous; after releasing the monsters Pandora thinks: "maybe nobody will notice? A girl can hope". (Loc. 63).

The next tale, Pygmalion, depicts a sculptor who is obsessed about his statues and prefers them to real people. The caption notes: "the longer Pygmalion remained alone, the weirder things got." (Loc. 69). Pygmalion's loneliness is thus linked to his preference of the statues. The woman's statue is commissioned by someone else, yet when Pygmalion refuses to hand it over since he has fallen in love with it, it suddenly comes to life and there is a happy conclusion to the story.

The abduction of Persephone is also narrated humorously. Hades is described as sad and depressed, a god who wishes to enjoy the living things (flowers, animals). He becomes infatuated with Persephone and decides to make her his queen so "things will never be gloomy again!!!" (loc. 81). Persephone is shown in the illustrations as younger than Hades, and she is sad and crying at being in the underworld. She wishes to return home but Hades gives her a fruit so she cannot leave. In the end, she is still described as sad and resentful at going to Hades for her annual time there. The author therefore did not make this into a romantic love story, instead depicting Hades as a manipulative god, uncaring of Persephone's feelings.

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In Arachne's tale, Arachne admits she has "big head issues". In her tapestry, she weaves herself above the gods. This is how the author describes the concept of hubris very visually to the young readers. In the end, Athena turns her into a spider, so she does not have a big head any more.

In the story of Perseus, Danae is portrayed as grateful to Zeus who helped her get pregnant by touching her belly. This is of course the adaptation made for the young readers, yet it is a rare portrayal of Danae as thanking Zeus for her baby; her response to Zeus' act is not usually shown.

The author also refers to Icarus' behavior in the story on his flight. He is described as haughty, and not listening to his loving father. In the end, before he falls into the sea, Icarus comes to the realization that his father truly loved and cared for him, but too late.

Despite the light tone of the book, when relaying Hercules' deeds, the author draws him becoming mad under Hera's spell and doing terrible things (the panel is black and there is a caption "censored" on it). In the next panel Hercules seems to be shown standing with blood on his hands and also on the floor; another possibility is that it could be a fire in the house. Thus there is no avoidance of this cruel part of the narrative. The labours are briefly mentioned, each in one panel. The story ends with Hercules continuing to fight monsters and do "heroic things", yet missing his family. The caption states "the happy-sad ending". There is no further continuation of Hercules' exploits yet it is emphasized that Hercules missed his family for a long time, with no avoidance of this matter.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Arachne Daedalus Dionysus / Dionysos Hades Hera Heracles Hercules Icarus Medusa Midas Olympians Pandora Persephone Perseus Pygmalion Pyramus Thisbe Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Conflict Disobedience Emotions Love Punishment Revenge

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Addenda	The review refers to the E-book edition.

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