Evangelia Desypris , Daniela Stamatiadis

Getting to Know the Olive [Γνωρίζω την ελιά (Gnōrízō tīn eliá)]

Greece (2007)

TAGS: Athena Olympic Games Poseidon





Courtesy of the Publisher. Retrieved from epbooks.gr (accessed: July 5, 2022).

General information	
Title of the work	Getting to Know the Olive [Γνωρίζω την ελιά (Gnōrízō tīn eliá)]
Country of the First Edition	Greece
Country/countries of popularity	Greece
Original Language	Greek
First Edition Date	2007
First Edition Details	Evangelia Desypris, *Γνωρίζω την ελιά* [Gnōrízō tīn eliá], Creative Entertainment [Διαθεματικές Δραστηριότητες (Diathematikés Drastīriótītes)]. Athens: Papadopoulos Publishing, 2007, 16 pp.
ISBN	9789604126965
Official Website	epbooks.gr (accessed: August 23, 2019).
Genre	Illustrated works
Target Audience	Children (aged 5+)
Author of the Entry	Katerina Volioti, University of Roehampton, Katerina.Volioti@roehampton.ac.uk
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Creators



Evangelia Desypris , b. 1973
(Author)

Evangelia Desypris is a primary school teacher. She has taught in public and state schools for twenty years. Desypris studied Pedagogics at the University of Athens and has written just under one hundred activity books (some in the form of card games) for young children, mostly of preschool and early-school age. Desypris' work has been used extensively by teachers, educators, and parents to impart subject-specific knowledge, as well as to develop children's skills and capabilities within and beyond the school curriculum (see here).

Sources:

Profile at skroutz.gr (accessed: August 23, 2019).

Bio prepared by Katerina Volioti, University of Roehampton, Katerina.Volioti@roehampton.ac.uk



Daniela Stamatiadis , b. 1972
(Illustrator)

Daniela Stamatiadis, a graduate of the School of Fine Arts, is a freelance painter and illustrator of children's books. Stamatiadis received the Piter pan award (Swedish IBBY) in 2016.

Sources:

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Additional information

Translation

English: *Getting to Know the Olive*, trans. Vayia Kakava, Papadopoulos Publishing, 2009, 16 pp.

Summary

The opening pages inform us that olive oil is precious and its production labour-intensive. Oil goes well with food that is consumed on a daily basis, such as bread and salad. Next, children are asked to count the number of olives on branches and to estimate the capacity of oil containers of different shapes. Then, children are taken back to the past, to the mythic contest between Athena and Poseidon, the Olympic Games, and the biblical story of Noah's Ark. In the closing page there are instructions for making a three-dimensional paper image of an olive branch.

Analysis

The purpose of this book is to familiarise young children with olive oil, one of Greece's staple foods. Children are offered drawing exercises that aim to improve children's close observation, as well as arithmetic ability. This book, which was first published in Greek in the same year (2007),* targets English-speaking children at nursery and the first grade of primary school. The English version has become particularly popular in Greece in recent years. The book is on sale in archaeological museums, including the New Acropolis Museum. A further index of the book's success is that the Association of Cretan Olive Municipalities and the International Olive Council offer free copies to children who visit Crete.**

The book's educational objectives are detailed in the opening page, as well as on the back cover. These range from language acquisition to mathematics, and from environmental and religious education to the customs of ancient and modern Greece. The content is particularly varied, and it seems to fit nicely within the Greek primary-school curriculum.*** As we read in Greek in the publisher's webpage, the book gives classroom ideas to teachers.****

Mythology and history are grouped together, and the two terms are linked with a hyphen in the text: "Mythology-History". The link seems to reflect school curricula in Greece, where learning about the ancient

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gods precedes that of ancient history.***** The subtitle of the history text book for the third grade of primary school (Γ' Δημοτικού) reads 'From Mythology to History' (my translation, 'Από τη Μυθολογία στην Ιστορία' in Greek).****** Suited to the audience's young age (five year-olds), the book details how the olive was a gift to the city of Athens by the goddess Athena (p. 12).******* Children can compare and contrast Athena and Poseidon, and their gifts. The olive was more valuable than Poseidon's gift, the horse. Daniela Stamatiadis' illustration showcases a typical depiction of the two gods. Athena wears a helmet and carries a spear, while Poseidon holds a trident.

The coverage of the Olympic Games comes after that of the mythic competition between Athena and Poseidon for the patronage of Athens. This may imply, correctly, that the Games started at a later time, well after a mythological event. No date (and hence historical information) is given for the first Olympic Games. Rather, in view of the book's title, Evangelia Desypris explains how Greek athletes applied olive oil to their bodies, and how winners at the Games were awarded an olive wreath, a 'kotinos' in ancient Greek (p. 13). Moreover, we read that oil was extremely precious to the Greeks and they called it "liquid gold". The presentation of the Olympic Games communicates a message about the function and esteem of olive oil in ancient times. Readers may think that oil was valuable then, just as it is today. Another connection between Classical antiquity and the more recent past is as follows. In the book's section about Greek folklore we read that in traditional weddings in Cyprus people used to wear olive wreaths, which were regarded fertility symbols (p. 15).

Stamatiadis' depictions of oil containers in the section about capacity (p. 9) appears to encourage further comparisons between past and present. In addition to modern jars, a bottle labelled 'OIL' in Greek (ΛΑΔΙ) and a glass jug, we see also an ancient and a more traditional shape. The ancient one, with two handles on its round body, resembles a Greek amphora. This seems to be the only representation of an archaeological specimen in this book. The other shape, with its wide cylindrical body covered in wickerwork, recalls a demijohn. Modern versions of demijohns exist in Greece, for which plastic has replaced wickerwork. The shape, nonetheless, is old-fashioned, as it was favoured some generations ago when extended families relied on the storage of large quantities of oil in the household. Once again, the different shapes construct a narrative about the diachronic salience of oil, and the Greek past blends nicely with the present.

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Vayia Kakava's language is clear and easy to follow. Kakava has translated further popular books by Papadopoulos Publishing, including Philippos Mandilaras' 'The Battle of Marathon.'********

* epbooks.gr/γνωριζω-την-ελια (accessed: July 6, 2022).

** oliveoiltimes.com (accessed: July 6, 2022)

*** pi-schools.gr (accessed: July 6, 2022).

**** epbooks.gr/getting-to-know-the-olive (accessed: July 6, 2022).

***** See Ariadne Konstantinou, 2020 forthcoming "Our mythical … prehistory? Ancient Greek myth and Mycenaean civilization in Modern Greek education", in Lisa Maurice (ed.), *Our Mythical Education*, University of Warsaw Press.

****** pi-schools.gr/books/dimotiko/history (accessed: July 6, 2022).

******* Compare to Elena Paige, *Athena finds her Confidence*, entry by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University

Taki and Toula Time Travelers (Series, Book 2): *Athena Finds Her Confidence* (accessed: July 6, 2022).

******** *Η μάχη του Μαραθώνα* (accessed: July 6, 2022).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Athena Olympic Games Poseidon
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Communication Environment Heritage School Teachers

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Further Reading	amazon.com/Getting-Know-Olive-Evangelia-Desypris (accessed: August 23, 2019). oliveoiltimes.com (accessed: August 23, 2019). iscreta.gr (accessed: August 23, 2019).
Addenda	Published in English. Soft bound. Translated by Vayia Kakava. From the series *Creative Entertainment* [Διαθεματικές Δραστηριότητες].

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