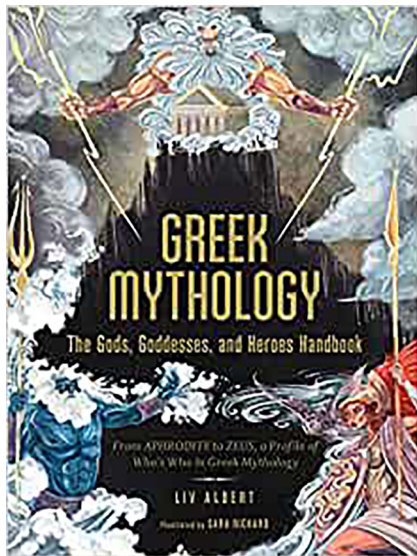


Greek Mythology. The Gods, Goddesses, and Heroes Handbook

Albert (L.) Pp.239, colour ill. Stoughton, MA: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2021. Cased, £12.99. ISBN:978-1-5072-1549-4.

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I enjoyed reading this, but what is not to like with Greek mythology? The title of the book tells you exactly what to expect and the illustrations by Sara Richard are exciting and beautiful in equal measure. I particularly liked the acknowledgement from the start that these stories began life as an oral tradition and that this inevitably means that there are potentially several versions and no one version is 'right'. This

does sometimes confuse students; I recall one very lively 'debate' with a Y8 class over the 'correct' order of Heracles' labours! The book is helpfully divided up into generic sections – Olympian Gods, deities (e.g. Titans, nymphs etc.) and heroes, both those with immortal parentage and those without. This allows characters such as Daedalus, Oedipus, and the Danaids to be included which rounds out the stories nicely and includes stories which might not, perhaps, be so commonly known. Obviously, this being Greek mythology, there are some stories which involve xenophobia or assault and mutilation, but they are carefully told, and sadly such things were and continue to be facts of life. The entries about each character are engaging and there are little additions at the end of some stories to pique the interest further and maybe encourage personal research. The book ends with a helpful index and reading list which is perhaps aimed more at teenagers but within the book there are references to films such as Disney's *Hercules* or the Percy Jackson books and films as well as the classic *Clash of the Titans*. I would think this was a useful addition to any school library, and although some of the entries might be a little graphic for very young pupils, this is Greek mythology, and that was never known for holding back!

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Daughter of Sparta

Andrews (C.M.) Pp. 375, map. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2021. Cased £14.99. ISBN: 978-0-316-54007-0.

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Claire M. Andrews, who has spent her life on both sides of the Atlantic and is now an enthusiast of Vermont's rugged outdoor activities, has penned quite a remarkable debut novel. Her *Daughter of Sparta* is not just self-avowedly feminist in its re-shaping of a very formidable ancient female identity through the guise of mythical Daphne, but Andrews has taken the quite minor (and somewhat distasteful, it might be added) myth of her protagonist and Apollo and woven it into a

truly cosmic saga. Instead of being a hapless victim of Apollo's amorous pursuit – where she is transmogrified into a laurel tree to evade the god's lust in the ancient accounts – Daphne emerges through Andrews' reworking as so powerfully self-assured that she is as much god-saviour as god-slayer.

True to the ancient myth(s), Daphne is exceptionally wary of the deities of Mount Olympus. Magically ensnared by Artemis – who ambushes Daphne and her brother during the Spartan *Carneia* to ensure her compliance – the young warrior is called upon to do no less than save the very deities she holds in such low regard. Artemis forces her brother, Apollo, upon the reluctant heroine to rescue nine mysterious items stolen from the home of the gods; as the human and her godly counterpart battle seemingly endless supernatural forces – the combat rarely lets up – their own relationship (without giving too much away) also evolves. The 'shock ending' to the novel certainly highlights how far Andrews' heroine has moved away from the ancient mythic stories regarding her fate, while also establishing a fine basis for at least one sequel (which the author is currently penning).

Another striking aspect of Andrews' vision for this re-imagined Daphne-Apollo relationship is the sheer scale of the canvas she paints them upon. Stretching from Sparta to Minoan Crete, Mount Olympus to Mount Kazbek, Hades to Tartarus, Andrews also has her reluctant heroine encountering everyone from Prometheus, the Minotaur, Centaurs and Arachne, to the riddling Sphinx of Thebes (along with many, many more creatures plucked from the ancient Greek imagination). It's a virtual 'who's who' of Greek mythology