

Joan Holub , Craig Phillips , Suzanne Williams

## Cronus and the Threads of Dread (Heroes in Training, 8)

United States (2014)

TAGS: [Apollo](#) [Arachne](#) [Ares](#) [Artemis](#) [Athena](#) [Chronos](#) [Demeter](#) [Hades](#) [Hera](#) [Hestia](#) [Poseidon](#) [Pythia](#) [Rhea](#) [Zeus](#)



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

| General information                    |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Title of the work</i>               | Cronus and the Threads of Dread (Heroes in Training, 8)                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>Country of the First Edition</i>    | United States of America                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <i>Country/countries of popularity</i> | Worldwide                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <i>Original Language</i>               | English                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>First Edition Date</i>              | 2014                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <i>First Edition Details</i>           | Joan Holub and Suzanne Williams, <i>Cronus and the Threads of Dread</i> (Heroes in Training, 8). New York: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division, Aladdin Press, 2014, 115 pp. |
| <i>ISBN</i>                            | 9781442488519 (paperback)                                                                                                                                                                |
| <i>Genre</i>                           | Action and adventure fiction, Alternative histories (Fiction), Bildungsromans (Coming-of-age fiction), Humor, Illustrated works, Mythological fiction, Novels                            |
| <i>Target Audience</i>                 | Children (Older children, 8–14 years old)                                                                                                                                                |
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| <i>Peer-reviewer of the Entry</i>      | Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il<br>Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com                                                          |

## 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).

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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?**

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](http://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**

### **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.

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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).

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### **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.

Courtesy of the Author  
from her personal  
website.

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.

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.

## **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 Myths* by Kevin Crossley-Holland, D'Aulaires' *Book of Norse Myths*, *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

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 eighth book in the *Heroes in Training* series (see entry about [Zeus and the Thunderbolt of Doom \(Heroes in Training, 1\)](#)). The group is caught in a great battle against a giant spider and then Athena finally regains her cleverness. Then the group continues towards Cronus' temple in the sky, where Zeus finds out an awful truth about Cronus and himself.

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#### Analysis

The book follows Zeus' path as the leader as well as developing the theme of team effort.

Zeus again is feeling insecure: "What kind of leader keeps losing everybody?" (p. 11) he asks, after several friends have been captured again by the enemies. At one points he even wonders if his friends would follow Athena because she is smarter (interestingly her cleverness is attached to her magical thread of cleverness and not innate in her character; without it she is quite silly). He questions his destiny as the leader, yet his friends reassure him. A true leader wins the respect of his subjects, and Zeus had earned the love and trust of his friends.

The group acts bravely, but at one point we are reminded of their youth. Athena wonders, "Why is King Cronus worried about a bunch of kids?" (p. 37). Hera soon corrects her that they are Olympians and heroes. Yet they are still children who need to face the horrible truth of being persecuted by none other than their father, Cronus. Since we imagine the Olympians as the great gods, sometimes it is easy to forget that they are just children, with hopes and fears and insecurities, and the books are meant to emphasize exactly that. They may have amazing powers, but in the end, they are children. Nevertheless, the reader learns that if these children work together, they can achieve great things!

Cronus's temple is high in the sky and he wishes to make it Mt. Titan. The kids think he wishes to look down on everyone. It is interesting that the Olympians would later dwell on the top of a mountain and not directly in the sky. Zeus vows to one day conquer the mountain. It could be argued that this would make the Olympians as arrogant as Cronus since they dwell in the same place, but this line of thought is

not examined in the book, and the Olympians are presented as the antithesis of the Titans. The Titans are huge and monstrous; the Olympians are children, with all the innocence that is attached to youth. It could be argued that these books represent a conflict between generations, and indeed this is exactly how the conflict between the Titans and the Olympians was presented in the ancient tradition. Here this generation gap is illustrated and emphasised by portraying the gods as children, which, of course, also makes them more accessible to their readers. The role of the parent in the narrative is not entirely disregarded however; the mother figure is still important, with the Pythia directing and guarding them, and even their real mother, Rhea, saving them; it is only Cronus, the father, who is evil and whose rule needs to be broken.

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Classical, Mythological,  
Traditional Motifs,  
Characters, and  
Concepts

[Apollo](#) [Arachne](#) [Ares](#) [Artemis](#) [Athena](#) [Chronos](#) [Demeter](#) [Hades](#) [Hera](#)  
[Hestia](#) [Poseidon](#) [Pythia](#) [Rhea](#) [Zeus](#)

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Other Motifs, Figures,  
and Concepts Relevant  
for Children and Youth  
Culture

[Adventure](#) [Character traits](#) [Emotions](#) [Family](#) [Friendship](#) [Intellect](#)  
[Isolation/loneliness](#) [Relationships](#) [Self](#)

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