



A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys

Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Six legends of Greek mythology, retold for children by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Included are The Gorgon's Head, The Golden Touch, The Paradise of Children, The Three Golden Apples, The Miraculous Pitcher, and The Chimaera. In 1838, Hawthorne suggested to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow that they collaborate on a story for children based on the legend of the Pandora's Box, but this never materialized. He wrote **A Wonder Book** between April and July 1851, adapting six legends most freely from Charles Anton's *A Classical Dictionary* (1842). He set out deliberately to "modernize" the stories, freeing them from what he called "cold moonshine" and using a romantic, readable style that was criticized by adults but proved universally popular with children. With full-color illustrations throughout by Arthur Rackham.

A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys Details

Date : Published September 27th 1994 by Everyman's Library (first published 1851)

ISBN : 9780679436430

Author : Nathaniel Hawthorne

Format : Hardcover 260 pages

Genre : Classics, Fiction, Fantasy, Mythology, Short Stories, Childrens

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From Reader Review A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys for online ebook

rr says

My recent time with Hawthorne and Hawthorne scholarship has made me cautious about taking anything Hawthorne said about himself at face value, but I am inclined to agree with him when he remarked that The Wonder Book was some of his best work. I've read many re-tellings of classical myths for both children and adults, and I put Hawthorne's renditions among the very (very) best. His intention is not to remain faithful to the myths' ancient forms (at least not in any straightforward understanding of "faithful"). Instead, Hawthorne recasts the tales into new shapes and animates them with his own blithe spirit. His touch and tone are delightful. His verbal pictures are sure and vivid. As I was re-reading the book today I found myself laughing out loud at some moments, crying at others, and altogether having a wonderful time. And the frame stories for each piece provide a pastoral and American coherence to the volume, making it a singular experience rather than an assorted collection.

Maninee says

14 year old me was a git and I cannot believe I was smug enough to add "unlike my peers" in a review. I'm surprised no one punched me in the face.

Review of 30 Sep, 2011

I have always been fascinated by Greek mythology and, unlike many of my peers, have been reading about it long before I even heard of the Percy Jackson series. Nathaniel Hawthorne's **Tanglewood Tales** was one of the first books that I had ever read on Greek mythology and nurtured my love for it. So when I saw the book on my school library shelf, I couldn't help picking it up.

This book was good read, though I must confess, I've read about most of the stories before from Roger Lancelyn Green's **Tales of the Greek Heroes**. But Hawthorne's way of storytelling is different from Lancelyn's and it was nice to read his version of the tales.

There were six stories in this book: The Pegasus, the magic pitcher, Pandora, the three golden apples, Medusa and Midas. All of them are famous Greek legends.

The writing dragged a bit most of the times but the descriptions were nice and Hawthorne's way of describing the gods is better than that of Lancelyn's (I especially liked his description of Mercury/Hermes as Quicksilver). The stories are written as though they are narrated by a character named Eustace. It's a good read but I think I like the **Tanglewood Tales** better 'cause it has a better collection.

Jacklyn (ReadingBliss) says

I read this to my son as our first literary introduction to greek myths and thought the framing of the narrator was endearing to the reader. I felt as if I were among the children being told the stories by the elder student

upon the varying natural sceneries. Not having much experience outside of Disney's interpretation of greek myths, I thought this was a great beginning. The stories were vivid, but not too long and included several illustrations throughout. There were several tales collaborated within this binding, all of which spoke of some moral or code of greed, vanity, friendship, etc. Most were foreign or only slightly familiar in essence, so all the stories were read with "fresh eyes" and were very enjoyable. On another note, I have not read any of Nathaniel Hawthorne's other works yet, but am familiar with him by name. He is a classic author with an older voice that reads of older times. Although I would guess that this edition has been edited to be slightly more modern, perhaps, it still reads with "thous" and "hithers". If that does not interest you, I would probably recommend a more current edition. Otherwise, I would recommend this children's classic to anyone with a child's sense of greek mythology. It has a beautiful binding, as well, that is comfortable to hold and decorative on the shelf.

The stories included are:

- 1) The Gorgon's Head (ft. Medusa)
- 2) The Golden Touch (ft. King Midas)
- 3) The Paradise of Children (ft. Pandora's Box)
- 4) The Three Golden Apples (ft. Atlas)
- 5) The Miraculous Pitcher
- 6) The Chimaera (ft. Pegasus)

Lmichelleb says

For someone who forgets what little she was taught of Greek myths, this was a delightful reintroduction. I was completely ignorant of the stories of Perseus and the Gorgon's head, the miraculous pitcher, and Hercules' three golden apples. The rest were only vaguely familiar. But I realize how much the themes of these old stories come up in more modern storytelling. I am convinced of the deep importance of reading these myths!

Hawthorne is a little too self-deprecating for me, and the introductions and conclusions tacked onto the myths seemed a bit odd, but I suppose they leant a bit of the charm to the overall magic of these great imaginings. I look forward to Tanglewood Tales!

Cait says

I liked that these classical myths were retold with the framing device of Eustace telling them to the children.

I was familiar with most of the stories, like King Midas, but I liked these version. Would make a good story to share with children.

Aware of Nathaniel Hawthorne but not read anything by him before.

Jacqueline says

I was a bit hesitant in starting this book, given my rather mixed-feelings on the only other Hawthorne book

I'd read (The Scarlet Letter) and the numerous retellings of Greek myths I've already consumed.

But, boy, am I glad I made the decision to read this delightful collection anyway!

Yes, I've heard the stories of Midas, Pandora, Pegasus, and others countless times. But until now, I'd never had the pleasure of hearing them told *so well* with such strikingly vivid imagery that makes the already fantastical stories even more spellbinding than they already were. Hawthorne's rendering of the mythological characters as three-dimensional human beings is just as remarkable--especially given that (in most tellings) these characters are so often overshadowed by the fantastical things that happen to them.

Some purists might object to the changes, additions, or omissions Hawthorne has made to the traditional tales. (Hercules' less-than-noble past is eliminated; the tale of King Midas is given a more definitive and satisfying ending) But the quality of Hawthorne's prose is so strong that it should silence all but the most vehement critics.

My only caveat is that I could've done without the "frame story" of a group of children "hearing" the tales from an older neighbor--although this did create some amusing meta-fictional moments, where Hawthorne references his contemporaries Herman Melville and Washington Irving.

All-in-all, a fantastic read!

Malapata says

Seis leyendas de la mitología clásica adaptadas para niños. El problema es que el estilo se ha quedado bastante anticuado, y resulta bastante pesado de leer. Sólo se salvan un par de leyendas, la de Perseo y las gorgonas y la de Hércules y las manzanas doradas, y aún así algunas páginas me las leí en diagonal.

Emelie Johansson says

A very beautiful edition of the book, the illustrations inside are amazing and really added to the story and the feeling. I loved the rewriting of the old myths/stories. It was divided into shorter chapters where you get a story and where you get to know the imaginary author and his audience. I thought that it was a cute and nice thing that added to the feel of the story.

Olga says

I am definitely not the target audience for this book, due to my age and living over a century after the book was written. Rating it therefore is somewhat of a tricky task.

The book includes six stories re-imagined (sort of) from the Greek mythology. A third of them have a very basic moral of "wouldn't it be nice to gather all bad people together and then just get rid of them all at once" - a notion way overly simplistic for my liking, which is why I did not rate the book very high. It is not all bad, the author does bring some neat twists and touch-ups to the classical myths here and there. It's okay is what I

would say ultimately.

Veena Soujanya says

Greek Myths by Nathaniel Hawthorne is a collection of 6 famous stories based on the myths and legends of Greek. These stories are narrated by Eustace Bright to a group of children who are his cousins. Keeping the legendary stories short and sweet the author presents the tales of "The Gorgon's Head", the tale of Medusa; "The Golden Touch", the story of Midas touch; "The Three Golden Apples", the narrative of Hercules and Atlas; "The Miraculous Pitcher", the fable of the pitcher which is always full and "The Chimaera", the legend of the winged horse, Pegasus. Easy to understand and straight to the point the stories are very interesting and entertaining.

Rian MacLoughlin says

A children's book, and perhaps a clever way of introducing children to the great works of Greek mythology. Well written, as Hawthorne always is, but perhaps to stiff a mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous.

Rebecca Van Wagner says

I absolutely loved this. It is witty and clever and funny. Would love to read again. Loved the illustrations!

Diana Nelson says

Fun introduction to Greek Mythology

Janet says

Nathaniel Hawthorne rewrote some of the most famous Greek myths, sanitizing and adapting them for American children. Somehow he manages to tell these stories without ever mentioning that a lot of the characters are gods. I kept thinking how much I should hate them, but I ended up enjoying them. Hawthorne's versions are well told, with a lot of humor tucked in. I especially liked the framing story of the college student who tells the stories, whom I suspect Hawthorne modeled after his younger self.

Skedatt says

I loved it. My kids (4 - 9yrs) loved it--they kept begging me to read it for longer. It makes an excellent read-aloud for all ages of children, since the stories are short enough (there are six in the book that take about an hour to read) and reworked enough to be perfect for children. They are not Disneyfied (considering that

Hawthorne predates Disney by a fair bit of time but you know what I mean), but the myths are enjoyably and appropriately told (as compared to dry and boring) with a nice side-dish of humor. For example, in describing Athena to Perseus, Hermes (known as Quicksilver here) says that

"(She) has all the arts and sciences at her fingers' ends. In short, she is so immoderately wise that many people call her wisdom personified. But, to tell you the truth, she has hardly vivacity enough for my taste; and I think you would scarcely find her so pleasant a traveling companion as myself. She has her good points, nevertheless; and you will find the benefit of them, in your encounter with the Gorgons."

To someone like me, who likes the way that language works and sounds, it is absolutely hilarious.

Stories included are Perseus and Medusa, King Midas, Pandora (which lays the blame more equally upon both parties, I found that most interesting), Hercules and the Golden Apples, Philemon and Baucis, and Bellerophon and the Chimaera. There are little nuggets of wisdom in each of the tales but not overbearing at all.

Apparently it continues in Tanglewood Tales. Looking forward to it!
