

Book Review

Athena. A Periodic Table of Greek Mythology

Teixeira (M.) (ed.). Pp. 286, ills. Contubernaes Books, 2024. Paper, US\$24.99. ISBN: 978-1-961822-16-0. <https://contubernaesbooks.com/a-periodic-table-of-greek-mythology>.

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The Working Classicists' *A Periodic Table of Greek Mythology* presents its subject in an inventive and engaging format which allows a modern audience to understand the vast and chaotic nature of Greek mythology. With only 2 pages per figure, one for the text, another for an illustration, the depth of storytelling is impressive. As its name indicates, it breaks down various characters from Greek myths into categories laid out in a periodic table (which readers can get a colour copy of by scanning a QR code on p. 11, where a black and white version is printed).

The book is part of the 'Working Classicists' project, which itself aims to bring together classicists from underprivileged backgrounds as well as broaden access to the subject. A total of 117 authors relate the stories of 128 figures from Greek mythology, and the introductory chapter relays some impressive statistics to showcase the success of projects such as 'Working Classicists': almost 80% of authors are from working class backgrounds; 48.7% identify as female, 29.1% as male, and 15.4% as non-binary; 46.2% have postgraduate degrees.

Familiar stories of Olympians, Titans, and figures from the Trojan War are featured alongside some less familiar individuals from myth (Ixion, Iphis, Nausicaa). Despite its 128 entries, there is a remarkable sense of synergy even with each author's voice coming through, which adds to the engaging nature of the book.

While the primary purpose of each entry is to relate the myths surrounding the selected figure, there is a clear emphasis on the fact that these stories are not static. More than once the reader is reminded that these myths are constantly being reinvented for modern readers. As a scholar currently researching Hermaphroditos, I was particularly struck by how the importance for modern communities was strongly incorporated into this entry (120–121). Neither is this book just a surface-level introduction to Greek mythology; the reader is encouraged to ask questions about these figures (questioning what makes someone bad in the 'Antagonists' section is such an example, [73–93]).

Each entry is consistent, with the main text accompanied by an illustration of the figure and a pronunciation guide. The illustrations are fun inclusions, even if sometimes unexpected (the Minotaur illustration on p. 87 is an example of the excellent way of delving into what myths do or do not specify with the torso of a man and the lower half of a bull).

Some readers may wish for more references to ancient sources and modern scholarship, particularly in the endnotes, but *A Periodic Table of Greek Mythology* is still an engaging introduction to Greek mythology. Its style and format create an accessible introduction to Greek mythology, with some encouragement to critically engage with these characters. Overall, it is a useful tool for learning about Greek mythology and sparking conversations based on the different figures and categories, which would be suitable for anyone looking for a diverse introduction to Greek mythology. The volume would also be appropriate for school groups to inspire conversations from the questions raised within the book.

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