



Let Us Be Myth-O-Manic!

Our teacher has discouraged us from reading the Myth-O-Mania books by Kate McMullen. These books parody well-known Greek myths and are told from the point of view of Hades, king of the underworld. The underlying conceit of all of the stories is that Zeus is “a big fat liar” in having written *The Big Fat Book of Greek Myths*, and that it is up to him, Hades, to set the record straight. In each retold Greek myth, Hades tells the “real” story, which usually involves him having had a significant hand in the turn of events. While our teacher can’t prevent us from reading these books at home and on our own time, I believe she is doing us a disservice by disallowing us to use them for book reports and silent reading periods, and here’s why.

First of all, these books are highly entertaining; they encourage kids to want to know more about the Greek myths. They can be particularly effective with kids who may be reluctant readers otherwise. If someone doesn’t generally like to read, but they do want to read these particular books, what good can come of discouraging that? Reading is reading, and if reading is a value in our society then kids need to have some freedom of choice in what they decide to read.

Second, the Myth-o-Mania books expose kids to plenty of things that *are* accurate about the Greek myths. For example, McMullen doesn’t change what the various characters are gods and goddesses of. Zeus is still the king of the gods; Poseidon the god of the sea, and Hades the god of the Underworld. Hera is still the goddess of marriage; Athena the goddess of war and wisdom, Artemis the goddess of the hunt, Aphrodite of beauty, and Demeter of the harvest, etc. Neither does McMullen change the relationships between the gods. Zeus, Hades, Poseidon, Hera, Hestia and Demeter are all still brothers and sisters. Athena is the daughter of Zeus. Cupid is the son of Aphrodite, etc. These are all relationships that I probably wouldn’t even know about if it weren’t for these great books.

Admittedly, McMullen takes a great deal of license with the stories, but that license far from diminishes their educational value. Once a kid is interested in a subject, they will usually go out of their way to find more and more information about them, such that a kid that gets hooked on the Myth-O-Mania books will inevitably find and learn the “real” myths on their own. For these reasons, I believe that our teacher should be encouraging us to read these books, rather than disparaging them.

Name _____ **Literary Non-fiction**

1. What is the author's position? _____

2. In the opening paragraph, the author claims that the teacher is doing them a disservice by disallowing them to read Myth-O-Mania books for schoolwork. Does the author provide reasons and evidence to support this claim? If so, list the reasons and evidence.

3. The author claims the books are highly entertaining. Does the author support this claim? If so, list reasons and evidence.

4. The author claims that there are many things about the Myth-O-Mania books that are accurate. Does the author support this claim? If so, list reasons and evidence.

5. Do you think that the author's claims make this argument effective? Why or why not?
