

## A NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The illustrations for this volume are designed as emblems of each chapter, which transform into islands in the map of our *Odyssey*. They were designed by Steve K. Simons, who, with Dr Sonya Nevin, is part of the Panoply Vase Animation Project (see "V is for Visual Storytelling").

Who better than Steve to illustrate the *Alphabetical Odyssey*? We consulted with him and with Sonya about appropriate images that found a balance between classical and modern ideas and concepts – of myth and of childhood. As for style: we agreed on a slightly old-fashioned story-book look, to convey the idea of a wondrous adventure, common in children's stories.

"A is for Adaptation" is an image of transformation. Just as stories continually transform into new modes and styles, so do readers, as they read, and as they discover the treasures within a book. Here, a girl reading a book finds a tree growing out of it – is it a pop-up book, that form so loved by children? Is it a book finding its new form? Or is its original form (a tree) breaking through?

"B is for Beasts", with its irresistible alliteration of bear and butterfly, shows the delicacy and strength of creatures in the animal kingdom. Bears are familiar faces in Greek mythology, as well as being popular as modern cuddly toys. Butterflies are called "psyche" in Ancient Greek, meaning 'soul', and associated with the lovers Eros and Psyche.

"C is for Childhood" draws on ideas of real and imaginary play: the child pulling a life-sized toy horse, but one with wings, alluding to everyone's favourite flying horse, the magnificent Pegasus. Though the toy dwarfs the child, the child is in control, and his stance, with head down, shows how serious he is about his play.

"D is for Dealing with Difficult Subjects" presents the familiar figure of Sisyphus, pushing a giant D up a hill. Difficulties are continuous in life and striving to overcome them is a never-ending process. Accepting their presence is an important element of growing up and moving towards adulthood.

"E is for Emotions" shows children playing with oversized dramatic masks – one showing the face of tragedy; the other the face of comedy. These masks

have stood for generations as expressions of human emotions, and their performance in theatre – and here, in play, as children try out different ways of being and feeling.

“F is for First Encounters” shows a child looking through a window, and seeing Icarus looking back, to express the idea of an early encounter with the world of mythology and the imagination. Obvious echoes of well-known stories such as *Peter Pan* are visible here – the child touches the glass, becoming aware of new worlds outside. Icarus’ multicoloured wings suggest the feathers of different seabirds, scavenged by his father, Daedalus. A hint of danger is present in this image – it is tempting, but dangerous, to enter the world of adventure and mythology.

“G is for Girls and Boys” further explores the idea of play, this time with two children trying on the contents of a dress-up box. A girl dresses as a pirate brandishing an old sword; a boy is trying out a dress (an Elsa princess dress from the Disney film *Frozen*). In childhood, gender roles can be fluid, and contested. Play, dress-up, and costumes offer ways to explore identities. Other identities in the box can be seen – a Snow White dress, butterfly wings, a tiger costume, and a hobby horse.

“H is for How to Be Heroic” playfully domesticates the idea of heroism by depicting a heroic “to-do list”, alongside the accoutrements of the Theseus myth – a sword and a ball of thread, representing different approaches to overcoming challenges (fighting alone, problem-solving with help).

“I is for Being Informed” shows a child going straight to the source – using her magnifying glass to look closely at nature, in this case a flower and a honeybee.

“J is for Journeys” shows a trireme ready to go to sea – on board, tied to its mast, is Odysseus, his ears plugged against the beautiful music of the Sirens. Journeys can be in company; they can be solitary. They can be exciting, and they can be dangerous.

For “K is for Kidding Around”, we toyed with different pairs of well-known figures from the myths – Odysseus and the Cyclops, Theseus and the Minotaur, before ending up with Persephone and Cerberus. The first pairs have adversarial relations, and the image of Persephone and Cerberus playing hide-and-seek in the Underworld adds a happy note to the famous story. Who would win? After all, Cerberus has three pairs of eyes.

“L is for Labyrinth”. Perhaps this is Theseus, making his way into the dark of the famous underground maze. He carries a torch, and, we hope, he treads carefully.

"M is for Mythical and Magical Beings" presents childlike versions of Medusa and the Minotaur, playing marbles. Many children's versions of the myths soften the monstrous associations of these famous figures, as authors feel sorry for them, continually doomed in story after story. Are these figures frightening, or vulnerable, or something else? Repeated readings of the myths make us think about what it means to be monstrous, mythical, or magical.

"N is for Nature" nods to the Australian origins of this volume. A kangaroo and her joey stand in the outback, in front of a eucalyptus tree, and holding a wreath of eucalyptus leaves. The word "eucalyptus" comes from Ancient Greek, meaning 'beautiful' (*eu*) and 'hidden' (*calyptum*), referring to the cap-like lid of the eucalyptus flower that hides its beauty until maturity. Perhaps this connects to the often hidden beauties of nature, which come in so many forms, and from all around the world.

"O is for the Olympians" takes us to a tea party with some of the best-known gods of the Olympians. While Hermes pours some tea for Zeus, Athena hands him some grapes. Her famous owl slumbers, like the dormouse in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, in a bowl. These figures draw on real statues of the gods and connect with John Tenniel's illustrations of the Mad Hatter's tea party. Do the Olympians have time for an eternal tea break, much like the figures in Carroll's novel? Or are they gathering strength before going back to causing mischief among the mortals? Here, Athena's image is inspired by a trio of statues: the Piraeus Athena, fourth century BCE, by Kephisodotos or Euphranor, held at the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus in Athens; the Mattei Athena, a Roman copy from the first century BCE, held at the Louvre in Paris; and the statue of Athena located in front of the Parliament Building in Vienna, Austria. Zeus is inspired by the statue of Jupiter at the Campana Museum in Rome.

In "P is for Philosophical Approaches", a man with a long beard is reading in the shade of an olive tree. Near him is an apple – where it came from, we do not know, but it hints at the famous story of the scientist Newton, who supposedly discovered gravity when an apple fell on his head. It is an image of contemplation in nature, the value of reading and thinking, of discovery and peace.

"Q is for Quality". Here, the goddess Athena assesses two works of art in very different style (realistic and modernistic). Which is better? How do we evaluate? Again, the image of Athena is inspired by the trio of statues: the Piraeus Athena, the Mattei Athena, and the statue of Athena at the Parliament Building in Austria.

"R is for Relationships". What stronger image could there be for relationship than the handshake, which was used in Classical Antiquity as well as today? Greetings, sealing a business deal, finding comfort, and expressing friendship.

"S is for Speculation" shows a Cycladic "stargazer" statuette, staring up into the sky. It sees the Pleiades constellation – a constellation that is visible around the world (and known as the Seven Sisters in Australia, Matariki in New Zealand, and Subaru in Japan). Speculation involves looking far away to see new things – through science, through fantasy, through imagination, and through curiosity.

"T is for Time". Here, we have three ways of looking at time: a wagon wheel represents the idea of the wheel of time, which offers a circular view. The scythe represents mortality, and was also wielded by the Titan Cronus, to begin a new era. The stopwatch hanging from the scythe is a modern way of measuring time, in a linear way. It's all relative.

"U is for Underworld Adventures" uses the idea of the fun-fair ride to express the sense of adventure and fear that accompany a journey to the world below. A gondola sits by a jetty, ready to take the departed to the Underworld through a sinister carnival arch (inspired by the entrances to the Australian Luna Park fun fairs in Sydney and Melbourne). On the jetty is a kiosk selling honey cakes and wine, traditional offerings given by the Ancient Greeks to the dead. The jetty lamp has attracted *psychai*-like moths (*Psychidae*). They are the essence of the dead beginning their passage to the Underworld. The Ancient Greeks represented the dead in multiple ways: as life-size figures who would travel in the boat, and as butterfly-like versions of our human selves.

"V is for Visual Storytelling" uses the image of an ancient vase being painted before it is fired in a kiln. Ancient Greek vases, which were highly decorative, often represent important myths and legends and elements of ordinary life. Here, the image refers to the story of Hercules and the Erymanthian Boar. Hercules has captured the Boar and is delivering it to Eurystheus, the king of Tiryns, the man who set the famous Twelve Labours. The image is inspired by the vase held at the National Museum of Warsaw (no. 198042).

"W is for Weaving" presents the loom – important in several myths, notably in the story of Arachne, a mortal weaver who was punished by being turned into a spider when she beat Athena in a weaving competition and boasted of having superior skills.

"X Marks the Spot". This chapter explores the possibilities of mythic travel around the world and through many cultures. "X Marks the Spot" refers to the idea of the treasure map – digging at the spot marked X can lead one to find all sorts of valuables. Another X, formed by the directions on a signpost connects with the idea of the crossroads, and the idea of travel around the ancient world in search of different adventures. Colchis (the Golden Fleece), Ithaca (the home

of Odysseus), Knossos (the Minotaur's Labyrinth), and Troy (the site of the Trojan War).

"Y is for Young Adulthood". A skateboarder leaps with youthful strength and concentration. His not-very-ancient skateboard is decorated with a palmate, or Acanthus leaf, which appears on many Greek vases and images of Ancient Greek furniture.

"Z is for Zest". What could be more zesty than Zeus peeling an orange? (Again, Zeus is inspired by the Campana Zeus, in Rome.)