



Iris, Messenger

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Dreamer Iris Greenwold doesn't care much for the real world. It's generally pretty disappointing: divorced parents, unsympathetic peers, and a middle school that is hell. But then, on her twelfth birthday, Iris mysteriously receives a copy of *Bulfinch's Mythology* and discovers that the entire pantheon of gods are living in the greater Philadelphia area. Poseidon's running a clam shack, Aphrodite's doing makeovers, Apollo's playing tenor sax. . . .

Suddenly the day-to-day life Iris found so humdrum is rich with new meaning and excitement, and all her dreams are not quite what they seemed.

Includes an author's note and a key to the gods and goddesses.

Iris, Messenger Details

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Author : Sarah Deming

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From Reader Review Iris, Messenger for online ebook

Melanie says

Very disappointing. This book is another in the growing list of children's literature surrounding mythology. My main problem with this book is that there is no real description of a problem, and therefore no strong plot. I was having a really hard time following the story because I couldn't figure out why the main character, Iris, was wandering New Jersey looking for these different gods and goddesses. Oh, and did any one else find it a little strange that Iris didn't express any shock at finding that these mythical beings actually existed (in her world)? And there was no real connection between the stories and what was happening to Iris. Her mother lost her job and she was having a hard time at school. The synopsis of the book makes a big deal how Iris doesn't get along with people at school and that she's an oddball, but this idea never translates into the storyline. And then we get to the end of the book and find out that Zeus is her father...this just doesn't tie in anywhere.

Heather says

Iris learns that the ancient Greek gods and goddesses are all alive and living normal lives in Pennsylvania. Iris visits them, hears their stories and tries to heal Poseidon's broken heart.

This would be a fun book to accompany a unit on mythology, but unless you are a big fan of myths, you can pass on it.

Joseph says

Kids will have fun reading this goofy story because they won't be as picky as an adult that does know all the factual errors that are in it. This book tends to Disneyfie the Greek myths, dumbing them down to make them readable for elementary school readers. I think this is unfortunate because it's not necessary for the author to rewrite what she did about the Greek myths and the deities. A bit more proper educating about the Greek gods and goddesses could have been done while still entertaining the reader. Another aspect of this book that bothers me is the stereotyping of Iris's Jewish father. Again, this was not necessary and a chance to do some more educating about Judaism along with Greek Paganism could have been done. A disappointing read in the end.

Shel says

Deming, S. (2007). Iris, Messenger. New York: Harcourt, Inc.

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199 pages (plus an appendix)

Appetizer: About-to-be-12-year-old Iris is a dreamer, much to the annoyance of the Erebus Middle School teachers. For her birthday, she is sent a book of Greek Mythology with strange hand-written notes in the margins that encourage Iris to question if the Greek gods are alive and hiding in the U.S.A. One note even hints that Poseidon may be nearby. So, the imaginative Iris goes in search.

Yet another attack of the female Percy Jackson story! Kinda. Iris, Messenger is different in that, while the figures of Greek myth are alive and kinda-well and living and working around New England, in place of Iris having to go on a quest to save the world or herself (although she is still dealing with worries over her mother losing her job), the focus on myth here is on retelling some of the most recognizable Greek myths. As Iris meets the various gods, Poseidon, Psyche and others pause to tell a story about themselves or about humans who encountered the gods.

While I thought the stories-within-a-story technique was a nice way to share some myths. The retellings often went on too long (we're talking 15 to 20 pages). And I felt like there should have been more interruptions of the myths. For example, Iris travels to a hair salon owned by Aphrodite (don't even get me started on the lack of jump there in the goddess's modern setting) in which Psyche works as the shampoo girl. Psyche tells Iris the story of how she met Eros.

Fine, but in the story, she describes Aphrodite as cruel several times. She's referring to the same Aphrodite that is doing Iris's hair as she's telling the story. And Aphrodite wouldn't interrupt that?

Meh.

Iris, Messenger felt a little too quick for me. By page 21, Iris has encountered her first Greek god, Poseidon, and he seems more than a little pathetic. Although that was Deming's desired effect, Poseidon has always been one of my favorite Greek gods (Have I mentioned that I very happily live beside a river? I'm a fan of the waters.). So, seeing him so pathetic (as opposed to the tanned beach bum of the Percy Jackson series) was a little too sad for my tastes. Oh, Poseidon, send me a horsey! We'll chat!

The ending also felt rushed. Instead of a real conclusion to some of Iris's biggest concerns, the reader is only left with an appendix, a mix of various documents that the reader has to piece together to realize the ending.

Now, having sounded pretty critical, I do have to say, I think kids could really like Iris as a character. She discovers new freedom when she is given *ahem* the power to travel by rainbow. She stays out all night, gets her hair did and sings the blues in a night club.

There's also quite a bit of silly humor (my personal favorite there is the biology teacher who believes aliens built and control the world).

Dinner Conversation:

"The main difference between school and prison is that prisons release you early for good behavior. School lasts about thirteen years no matter how good you are. Also, prison has better food" (p. 1).

"There were magical things waiting to happen to Iris Greenwold. They had been waiting ever since she was born, and they were getting impatient" (pp. 5-6).

"Certainly if someone wanted to hid away from the world, Middleville, Pennsylvania, would be a good place

to do it, since nothing very exciting ever happened there. What if the Greek gods were alive and well and living in her town?" (p. 13).

"Whenever your parents let you go off on your own to look for mythological figures, you should always agree upon a meeting place beforehand. Don't pick something that might move, like a sand dune or bookmobile. Pick something large and permanent, like a lighthouse" (p. 19).

"But why me? Of all the people Athena could choose to watch over, why would it be me?...There's something special about me. There are dozens of kids at her school who were more likely heroines. They got better grades, or were cute or rick or good at sports, or winners of violin prizes or spelling bees. Iris was none of these things.

But secretly she did feel special. She always had. She was just special in a way that school couldn't measure, but maybe Athena could" (p. 160).

"This kind of corporation usually has more skeletons in its closet than Zeus has girlfriends" (p. 162).

Tasty Rating: !!!

Sps says

It's possible that I just like anything involving an Iris. This is laced with Greek gods in modern times a la Percy & the Olympians series, but with dramatic retellings of the myths interspersed throughout when a god or hero decides Iris needs to hear a particular story. Also, lots of soybeans. Unfortunately in this book they play the role of "totally dull thing that fascinates eccentric but lovable parent" instead of their true nature, "delicious nutritional powerhouse sadly grown in monoculture and fed to animals instead of people."

Bowman2point0 says

I feel that it was fairly well written, but it seemed as if the plot was to scrambled. It was all over the place. Deming must have been staining to find a way to include all of the Olympians within the story line. Plus, the end was just so sudden and ridiculous. I mean. Come on.

Jennifer Heise says

This is a fun take on the kids-mixed-up-with-Greek-gods genre. Less serious than the usual saving the world version, it is actually a series of frame tales, in which our heroine gets to hear various classic myths retold by the Gods and Goddesses she runs into. She gets advice and a little help from these retired deities (now living, apparently, around Philadelphia), and learns some things about herself, also. I liked the myth retellings though some were softened by the author from the classical versions, usually to get around certain bits that don't make much sense to us (actually, I preferred her version). The central character, Iris, is a relatively steady-minded but adventurous middle-schooler, and her parents are... well, ok, a bit daffy, but not irresponsible or impossibly blind. (No more blind than most middle schoolers see their parents as!)

My favorite quote was probably "Whenever your parents let you go off on your own to look for mythological figures, you should always agree on a meeting place beforehand. Don't pick something that might move, like a sand dune or a bookmobile. Pick something large and permanent, like a lighthouse."

Holly says

Iris lives in suburban East Coast America. Finds herself filling the role of Classical Iris, as messenger of the gods. Who the gods have become after several thousand years of neglect, however, is sometimes unpleasant. Iris learns to negotiate her role deftly, using her friendship with Artemis, for instance, to manage her difficult relationship with Hera and Zeus. Iris learns, matures, and emerges victorious.

Kit says

I can't believe I'm saying this, but this is even better than the Percy Jackson books. The gods and goddesses don't behave exactly the same way - and they're much less powerful in the modern world - but Iris, Messenger has the same premise as Riordan's books with (dare I say it?) better writing.

The only weird note is Iris' dad's religion being the butt of jokes. It's not clear whether he's Jewish or Christian or some kind of individual hybrid of the two, but either way, whatever Dessen was trying to do seems unnecessary (and didn't work).

The Library Lady says

I groaned when I saw yet the 10 millionth book about Greco Roman gods in 21st century America. But this one is clever and funny and fun!

Addy says

I love this book I've read it as a class I and would love too read it again

Gracie says

Bad! It was random, didn't have a real plot, confusing, poorly written! I hated it. If you want a GREAT mythology read-try the Percy Jackson books! Waaaay better. I was so disappointed in these books-i was expecting them to be as good as the PJ books and they weren't nearly that good. And it had a HORRIBLE ending! The worst one I've read in years!

Miriam says

Iris has a sucky life. She lives in a tiny apartment with a health-obsessed mother who only cooks tofu. Her teachers despise her for being a dreamer and her classmates make fun of her. Then, on her 12th birthday she receives a mysterious copy of Bulfinch's Mythology...

Emy says

Enjoyed it as an adult. It had the Greek gods stuck in a modern-day world, doing things in their faded glory like being detectives, owning beauty salons. That was really creative. Didn't like the 12-year old girl doing adultish things like trying coffee and wine, getting her hair dyed and highlighted. The character just seemed too young!

Lesley says

I read this as part of a quest to find Percy Jackson read-alikes (which I welcome help with!) and, as you can see from the other reviews, this one comes pretty close. The biggest similarities are the way the modern-day versions of Greek myth characters are reimagined in creative ways: Hades is a middle school principal because middle school was the closest thing he could find to hell on earth, etc. I enjoyed the writing style (very funny at times) and Iris is an appealing character. Where it differs from the Percy Jackson books is the lack of action: the stakes are lower (the fate of the entire world doesn't hang in balance) and the only real danger is that Iris's mother has lost her job. But the biggest difference is that every other chapter is a straightforward retelling of an actual myth: there are some enjoyable embellishments and Iris Learns Valuable Lessons from them, but they're basically the same stories you could read in any compilation of Greek myths. Fans of anything Greek-myth-related will be pleased to get another taste, but those who dove into Percy Jackson books for the intense emotions and threat of monsters lurking around every corner will not do much more than wade around here.
