

GREEK MYTHOLOGY IN J.K. ROWLING'S HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to identify and explain the Greek mythological references in the novel, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by Joanne K. Rowling, the British novelist. In order to reach the mentioned goal, a source text which has most of the main mythological stories, and some other valid sources by some known scholars, who have studied the matter at hand and analyzed every myth carefully were selected. The mythological categories and references that have been identified and compared to their equivalents in Greek mythology are, immortality, curiosity, mythical creatures, transformation, characters who symbolize Greek figures, and heroism. The reason for choosing these categories as employed by the writer, on the one hand, is to illustrate the link between the text and Greek mythology and on the other to show the subsequent universalizing effect on the selected literary text. These two facts have always created a ground for a deeper understanding of the text and an everlasting appeal to human nature, whether of children or adults, to develop interest in stories of and in all times and places.

Keywords: immortality, curiosity, Greek mythology, mythical creatures, heroism

Introduction

Despite the fact that Joanne K. Rowling's works are mostly read and enjoyed by children and as escape literature, new research examines the possibility to read and reach beyond the fictional and touch the historical and mythological in her works. Such a new approach to her texts creates other potential dimensions that make one delve into meaningful angles and enhance understanding and insight. This approach is a departure from earlier approaches to Rowling's works that mostly concentrated on action and supernatural events (Kilsgard and Jeanette 2011: 2).

To get a better understanding of what mythology is, it is important to start off with the etymology of the word. Mythology is formed from two Greek words: *mythos* - a story that is passed on by word of mouth - and *logos* - a rational account. Today myth (*mythos*) means something that is either false or between true and false. Whereas *logos* (-ology) is expression plus reasoning, which means, it is always true, right and told for a purpose. So mythology is the study of a bunch of stories, mostly supernatural, that people told each other to shock, amuse, entertain and inform one another. In mythology we deal with our intellectual ancestry. Stories about your great grandparents or your grandparents that were passed on from one to the other are considered myths whether you believe them or not. Myths are traditional stories which are transmitted from one person or generation to another orally and reflect cultural beliefs

and traditions through symbolism. These myths are tales from the distant past that involve non-human or heroic characters. These tales of ancient people were told for various reasons like to teach you a lesson, but they told them in the first place for entertainment and not to explain their religious beliefs, social practices, or their ideas about good and bad literature. From these stories we can expand our knowledge about who these ancient people were, and we can find out about their social values, religious beliefs, gender roles, like women's roles in those times. These ancient people had strange ideas and were curious about how the world worked, how it was created and the way people had to live their lives. For instance, they had a strange idea about the appearance of the seasons which involves the three Olympian gods, Zeus, Hades and Demeter plus Demeter's daughter Persephone.

Every culture has its own myths or mythology, but the earliest ones were the Greek myths. Then the Greeks influenced the Romans. In fact, the Romans made the Greek gods and myths their own too. They only changed the names. For example, Zeus which is a Greek name became Jupiter that is a Roman name. These ancient Greek and Roman people influenced other people and cultures of later eras. Even today some traces of the ancient beliefs and civilization exist in some places of the world, especially in Greece and Rome. For example, some people who still have these beliefs declare that they are the continuation of the people from the Roman Empire. The mythology of both Greeks and Romans together is called Classical Mythology or Greco-Roman Mythology. Classics mean ancient, mostly ancient Greek, Roman and Latin. So Classical Mythology deals with the study of when these tales were passed from one generation to another. Most of them remained unchanged. But some of them were changed, or different versions were created of them. For example, they had three different accounts of how humankind was created. That is why when you know an account of a story, and you hear it from someone else or read it somewhere, the ending or some parts or even the whole plot will be completely different from what you already know.

As mentioned before, the Greek myths were the main source that influenced other myths. And also some Greek and Roman poets and writers like Homer and Virgil whose works were mainly based on these myths influenced and inspired other eras' poets and writers. One of these writers who has been inspired by these Greek myths was Joanne K. Rowling (pen name: J.K. Rowling), a British writer and novelist. She has written some great works and the most famous among them all are the *Harry Potter* series. The *Harry Potter* series is fantasy, fiction novels that revolve around the life of a young wizard Harry Potter and his friends at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and their struggle against evil. This series has been very influential on their readers, adults as well as children who enjoyed it more than adults, in various ways. It suggests the folklores, traditions, and the myths of ancients symbolically.

As it is obvious, Rowling was so interested in these ancient myths, that she used them in all of the *Harry Potter* books. Although all of the *Harry Potter* books contain these myths, this article examines only one of them, the first book which is *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. This work was her first novel, published in 1997 in the U.K. In this novel there are numerous references to ancient Greek mythological stories, events, creatures, heroic or non-heroic characters, the struggle between good and evil and so on. This article attempts to identify the events, characters, creatures and the mythological significance in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by comparing the novel's references with their mythological equivalents in Greek mythology. This shows the reader a better path to a deeper insight into the text. Consequently, such a reading will uncover unknown dimensions of the novel to both realize that it lends itself to a wide spectrum of approaches through this richness and it exerts a better appeal to mature readers.

Discussion

In order to reach the purpose of exploring the Greek myths in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, one must have a source text to refer to. Of course, this study will also provide some further information about myths from important writers that have written about mythology, like Homer, Sophocles and Ovid. It will also examine the works of other scholars that have explored the same subject or a subject close to the one under study.

The source text that will be used for achieving the specified end is the book, *Mythology* written by Edith Hamilton (1969). The reason for this choice is that the book mentioned is a comprehensive material on mythology that covers many accounts of the myths and stories of Greek mythology. In Hamilton's own words: 'a book on mythology must draw from widely different sources' (1969: vii). This shows that even Hamilton believes, in order to be able to understand mythological stories, you should consider a wide amount of texts about the matter; and she herself has provided a source for the reader of mythology by taking most of the stories from the mentioned texts into account, which is one of the main reasons that this particular book has been chosen for the cause of study. Although Hamilton's *Mythology* was written decades ago it still narrates Greek myths better than other similar sources to serve our purpose.

Of course, other sources have also been consulted which are more recent. The analysis of Greek myths in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is discussed in this article beginning with the concept of immortality.

The first element of the novel that is similar to a concept in Greek mythology is immortality, which is apparent in the title of the book: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. The Sorcerer's Stone gives eternal life to the one who possesses it as you can see in this passage: 'The ancient study of alchemy is concerned with making the Sorcerer's Stone, a legendary substance with astonishing powers. The Stone will transform any metal into pure gold. It also produces the Elixir of Life, which will make the drinker immortal' (Rowling 1998: 220). In this novel it was made and possessed by an alchemist called Nicholas Flamel who is 666 years old before he dies in the novel. There are similarities between the novel's stone and the ancient Greek equivalent in their concept and effect, but they are different in their form. As in the novel: 'Harry looks into the Mirror of Erised, he sees his reflection smiles and pulls out a blood-red stone from its pocket, puts it back and as it did so, Harry felt something heavy drop into his real pocket. Somehow..... incredibly..... he'd gotten the stone' (1998: 292). So in the novel it has the shape of a stone. But in ancient Greek myths it is most often an elixir under many names like Nectar of Deathlessness as mentioned by Campbell in his *Hero with a Thousand Faces* and Elixir of Immortality. As the story goes: 'Or once again: when psyche had accomplished all of the difficult tasks, Jupiter himself gave to her a draft of the elixir of immortality; so that she is now and forever united with Cupid, her beloved, in the paradise of perfected form' (Campbell 2004: 110).

As Hamilton brings in her *Mythology*: 'Then he called a full assembly of the gods, and announced to all, including Venus, that Cupid and Psyche were formally married, and that he proposed to bestow immortality upon the bride. Mercury brought Psyche into the palace of the gods, and Jupiter himself gave her the ambrosia to taste which made her immortal' (Hamilton 1969: 133). According to this passage, ambrosia is the same as the elixir of immortality. In others words, according to Daly: 'Finally Eros pleaded with Zeus to put an end to her suffering. Zeus consented and conferred immortality on Psyche. The wedding of Psyche and Eros was celebrated on Olympus, and Aphrodite. It is said, joined in the festivities' (2009:53). In Eliade's *Myth and Reality*, he states another name for immortality: 'The ideal of the Taoists - that is, obtaining the bliss of youth and longevity ("immortality") - had, then, a cosmological model: the state of primordial unity' (Eliade 1963: 84).

The second element of the novel that is closely related to ancient Greek mythology is the concept of curiosity. Curiosity is an important element in Greek mythology, and it has been the cause of destruction of many mortals and immortals in most of the mythological stories and events. In the novel, this mythological concept appears when Harry and other pupils go to the Great Hall of Hogwarts, and then Professor Dumbledore, tells them about the rules and that they are not to go to the third-floor corridor on the right-hand side, if they do not want to have a painful death (Rowling 1998: 127). Professor Dumbledore's saying awakens the students' curiosity that they want to know what is hidden in the third-floor corridor. Well, the most curious of all are Harry and his friends, Ron and Hermione. They fall into lots of troubles; like facing the three-headed dog Fluffy, sneaking into the forbidden library at night and playing the wizardry chess, just to satisfy their curiosity.

As in Hamilton's *Mythology*, Psyche's curiosity costed her bad for she was not allowed to open Proserpine's box, but could not resist the temptation and did so. After that she fell into a heavy sleep (Hamilton 1969: 133). In another story that belongs to the creation of the world and humankind, there is the case of Pandora's Box, which is the most famous myth that highlights curiosity in women and its consequences. Pandora was given a box by gods and was forbidden to ever open it, 'For Pandora, like all women, was possessed of a lively curiosity. She *had* to know what was in the box. One day she lifted the lid - and out flew plagues innumerable, sorrow and mischief for mankind' (1969: 88). In another important and very famous epic story poem by Homer, the hero Ulysses receives a gift from King Aeolus that leads them home. The gift is a leather sack full of west winds that shouldn't be opened until they reach their island. But his crews think that this sack is full of food or gold, so their curiosity arouses and when they were near their country,

So near we drew; and yet even then fell I,
Being overwatch'd, into a fatal sleep,
For I would suffer no man else to keep
The foot that ruled my vessel's course, to lead
The faster home. My friends then envy fed
About the bag I hung up, and suppos'd
That gold and silver I had there enclos'd,
They op'd the bag, and out the vapours brake,

When instant tempest did our vessel take,
That bore us back to sea, to mourn anew our absent country. (Chapman 2000,602)

Curiosity actually existed in ancient Greeks' nature, and that was the element that developed their myths. As mentioned before, they were curious about the creation of the world and humankind. 'The Greeks had a clear-eyed curiosity about themselves and all the creation'. The playwright Sophocles (496-406 B.C.) said, 'Wonders are many and none is more wonderful than man' (Daly 2009: viii). Sophocles actually praises man's curiosity.

The most recognizable mythological references that can be seen in this novel of *Harry Potter* series are mythical creatures like centaurs, trolls and the three headed dog, which are very important creatures that existed in most of the mythological stories and events. These creatures are going to be discussed one by one beginning with the three-headed dog, Fluffy.

In the novel, the three-headed dog Fluffy, guards the underground of Hogwarts which contains the Sorcerer's Stone. There are two evidences that prove Fluffy is a mythical creature. First, Hagrid states that it belongs to him, and that he 'bought him off a Greek chappie in the pub' (Rowling 1998: 192). 'Greek chappie' is one clue that directs the reader to Greek mythology. Second evidence is that the three-headed dog Fluffy, in the novel is equal to the three-headed dog Cerberus, in Greek mythology that guards the gates to Hades or the Underworld. But they have some differences. As said in Hamilton's *Mythology*: 'On guard before the gate sits Cerberus, the three-headed, dragon tailed dog, who permits all spirits to enter, but none to return' (1969: 43). Cerberus has a dragon's tail whereas Fluffy has a dog's tail, and they both have three heads.

According to Kathleen N. Daly in her *Mythology A-Z*: 'The hound of Hades, guardian of the Underworld' (2009: 33), 'He was a fearsome creature, but music and offerings of food calmed him' (Daly 2009: 33). Both Fluffy and Cerberus guard the Underground/Underworld. And just like Cerberus, Fluffy too falls to sleep by music. According to what Hagrid said: 'Fluffy's a piece o' cake if yeh know how to calm him down, jus' play him a bit o' music an' he'll go straight off ter sleep' (Rowling 1998: 266). In Greek myths, except for music, Cerberus becomes calm when he receives cakes or bread from those who want to enter the Realm of Hades. Like when Psyche wanted to enter Proserpine's palace in the Underworld, she gave Cerberus a cake so that he becomes nice to her and let her pass (Hamilton 1969: 132). There is another myth in Greek mythology about Orpheus's attempt to rescue his wife, Eurydice, from the Underworld. According to Sherman: 'So Orpheus traveled down to the Underworld. His song moved all who heard it, and even Cerberus, the terrible three-headed dog-guardian, whined and crouched down to let Orpheus pass' (Sherman 2008: 623). Harry is like Orpheus in that, they both used music to get past Fluffy/Cerberus. The only difference is that Harry used Hagrid's flute, but Orpheus used his lyre. It is obvious that, unlike Fluffy, Cerberus produces some kind of deadly and poisonous venom. This venom exists in the wolfs bane herbs which Professor Snape tells the students about these herbs' deadliness, and how they are used as forbidden potions. So these herbs symbolize the ones with the same name in Greek mythology. Just as Daly brings: 'When he was captured by Hercules, the monstrous dog dripped venom from his fangs and thus infected certain Herbs, including aconite, called wolfs bane. Evil magicians then used these herbs to prepare poisonous brews' (2009: 33-34).

The next creature is the centaur, which is half-human and half-horse. In the novel, the centaur that saves Harry Potter from Voldemort is called Firenze. Firenze reminds the reader of the most famous centaur in Greek mythology, Chiron. 'In Greek mythology, Chiron is a centaur, a half-horse, half-human creature. Chiron was the only one of these beings that was truly civilized, kind, intelligent, and highly learned' (Sherman 2008: 93). 'A centaur of great wisdom and kindness, friend of both humans and gods' (Daly 2009: 35). According to these two quotations from Daly and Sherman, Firenze is so much like Chiron in many aspects. They both are kind, intelligent and friends of humans unlike other centaurs who hate human beings and do not have anything to do with them. These characteristics are shown obviously in the novel when Firenze saves Harry from the Dark Lord and shows his kindness and friendliness to him while other centaurs condemn him for saving Harry. Another characteristic of Chiron that also exists in Firenze is that, they both have a very close connection to heroes. Chiron raised and trained two of the great Greek heroes, Jason and Achilles, and had sacrificed himself for the hero who is the savior of men, Prometheus. As the story goes: 'Centaur, Chiron was willing to die for him and that he was allowed to do so. ...

Look for no ending to this agony
Until a god will freely suffer for you,
Will take on him your pain, and in your stead
Descend to where the sun is turned to darkness,
The black depths of death'. (Hamilton 1969: 92)

In the novel, Firenze feels the same connection towards Harry Potter who is the hero of the story.

The next creatures are trolls. Trolls are like Cyclopes in Greek mythology; with one difference, and that is, unlike trolls, Cyclopes have only one big eye in the middle of their forehead. They are even alike in their simplicity and stupidity. One myth, the adventures of Odysseus, proves that they are simple and stupid. 'What followed were many wild adventures, such as a narrow escape from the cyclops, a one-eyed giant that clever Odysseus blinded then tricked into claiming that "nobody"- the name Odysseus had said was his own- had harmed him' (Sherman 2008: 345).

The next element that is discussed here is the transformation of wizards that are seen frequently among gods in Greek mythology. Great gods like Zeus or Poseidon changed forms in order to mate with mortal women and make them pregnant with their children. 'To make a conquest, Zeus sometimes assumed a different shape. He became a cuckoo for Hera, a swan for Leda, a bull for Europa, and a quail for Leto' (Daly 2009: 153). There are such transformations in the novel, like Professor McGonagall's to a cat. The only difference here is the purpose of transforming. As mentioned above, gods like Zeus or Poseidon transform mostly with the aim of making beautiful women bear their children, and also for joy. When they get tired or bored, they seek new entertainment. While wizards' motives are not anything like that. They have strict rules in Hogwarts, that they should not use this kind of transformation magic in certain places.

Gods, are not only able to change their own forms, but also could transform others to different animals or creatures mostly to punish them. Wizards have this ability too. They can change others' shapes by using spells or even potions, but as said before, they are forbidden to do it except for urgent situations. There are lots of stories on transformation in Greek mythology. One of them which was told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is the story of Arachne who Challenges Athena, the goddess, in weaving, and when Athena finds no fault in her work and cleverness, her jealousy and anger flow. Arachne cannot bear Athena's anger, so when she wants to hang herself, Athena does not let her do that. She wants her to live forever in another shape as a punishment. So she sprays Arachne with the juice of Hecate's herb and leaves her. After that, 'Arachne's hair fell out. With it went her nose and ears, her head shrank to the smallest size, and her whole body became tiny. Her slender fingers stuck to her sides as legs, the rest is belly, from which she still spins a thread, and, as a spider, weaves her ancient web' (Kline 2000: 160). So it is obvious that, in this story, the aim of change of form is punishment. And as said before, wizards do not use this magic as a punishment or anything else except when it is essential.

There are three characters in the novel that are worth talking about because they symbolize three important figures in Greek mythology. The first one is Hermione Granger, Harry's genius friend. As the whole novel shows, Hermione is the cleverest friend that Harry has. 'The name Hermione is the feminine form of Hermes, son of the Greek god Zeus, in Greek mythology' (Colbert 2001, 135). As Tullia Linders brings in her *Who is Who in Ancient Greece and in the Roman Empire*: 'Hermes is the messenger of the gods and god of eloquence. Hermione is also quite eloquent and a 'messenger' of the good aspects of the art of witchcraft, which is why she is here compared with Hermes in Greek mythology' (qtd. in Kilsgard and Jeanette 2011: 17). She helped them a lot using her cleverness. For example, she saves them from the Devil's Snare using her mind and the attention she paid during her classes. As the story suggests: 'she whipped out her wand, waved it, muttered something, and sent a jet of the same bluebell flames she had used on Snape at the plant. In a matter of seconds, the two boys felt it loosening its grip as it cringed away from the light and warmth. Wriggling and flailing, it unraveled itself from their bodies, and they were able to pull free' (Rowling 1998: 278). The next character is Argus Filch, the careful guardian and watchman of Hogwarts. He symbolizes the hundred-eyed giant, Argus that Hera sends to guard heifer and Zeus turned for help from Hermes to kill Argus because he wanted to set lo free from Hera's jealousy (Sherman 2008: 221). As in Hamilton: 'She gave her into the charge of Argus, an excellent arrangement for Hera's purpose, since Argus has a hundred eyes. Before such a watchman, who could sleep with some of the eyes and keep on guard with the rest, Zeus seemed helpless' (Hamilton 1969: 98). And the last character that symbolizes a very important figure in Greek mythology is Professor Minerva McGonagall, master of transfiguration. Minerva is the Roman name for Athena, the goddess of wisdom and protection. Professor McGonagall is the wisest witch at Hogwarts that knows what is best for all. As Spencer states about Athena: 'The name which the Greeks gave to the goddess Athena, appears to be an appropriate description of her protecting nature. She is, of course, associated with the city of Athens as its protector and defender' (2015: 37). Minerva McGonagall is also the protector of Harry Potter and Hogwarts, and does anything to protect them from evil forces. Therefore, not only their names, but also their nature and role in the novel and Greek mythology are similar to each other.

The last element which is going to be talked about is heroism. 'Heroism is an approachable topic that appears to influence individuals and groups in extraordinary ways' (Allison and Kramer 2017). 'Heroism represents the pinnacle of human behavior. The most noble act that a human being can perform is a heroic act, and the most distinguished life that a human being can lead is a heroic life' (Allison and Kramer 2017:1). Heroism was and is a very important

element among people around the world. This concept existed in olden times between people who sat around fire and created imaginary heroes in their myths; heroes like Perseus, Achilles, Hercules and Jason, who could save the day. Heroes are either the gods' children or their grandchildren. They are demi-gods or humans who have gods' will within them. 'Powerful as some of the divine myths are, it is the hero myths that constitute the most prominent and varied side of Greek traditional tales as a whole' (Kirk 1974: 145). 'The hero of the tale is generally a young man of humble birth, who interposes in the princess's behalf, slays the monster, and receives the hand of the princess as his reward' (Frazer 1922: 133).

Harry Potter is the hero of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. 'As the main character in this novel, Harry is endowed with numerous and varied types of association with classical characters, culture and mythology than any other. He also 'appears to be characterized by two types of heroes. First, he is depicted as a clever hero of folktale, a hero on a quest (in the tradition of Odysseus). Second, he is presented as a savior figure (reminiscent of Heracles, Achilles, Theseus, Oedipus, and Aeneas)' (Spencer 2015: 19). These two characteristics of Harry as a hero will be explored deeply during the later parts of this article.

Harry Potter is a young man that lost his parents, who were a wizard and a human just like some Greek heroes whose parents are a god and a mortal woman, when he was a little child. They were murdered by the dark lord, Voldemort. Well, this reminds the reader of one famous hero in Greek mythology, Jason, whose uncle, Pelias, kills his own brother who is Jason's father, in order to get his throne for himself. When this happens, they send Jason who is a little child away in order not to be killed by Pelias. Harry too is sent away to the Dursleys after his parents are killed, and is raised by them. Years pass, and the heroes' fates change their lives, that after all these years, they return to where they belong, Jason to his kingdom in order to reclaim his throne, and Harry to Hogwarts, the kingdom of wizards, in order to continue his father's path to be a great wizard. Harry's birth and life story is generally like Jason's, but he also symbolizes other mythological heroes like Odysseus, Theseus, and Oedipus.

The *Harry Potter* stories belong to the type of traditional material known as folktales, stories about the adventures of a person who represents common people, but whose ingenuity and daring in the face of extraordinary trials – often involving fantastic beasts or enormous odds – make his stories worthy to be passed along to teach others about bravery, character and intellect. More specifically, the *Potter* stories are folktales of the quest type. These are tales about a person who goes in search of his rightful place or true home. (Spencer 2015: 20)

The characteristic Harry has, according to what Spencer states in the above paragraph, is that he is a seeker, which means; he undergoes many dangerous trials to reach what he aims for, that is stopping the evil from laying a hand on the Sorcerer's Stone. In the aspect of being a seeker, he symbolizes two great Greek heroes, Jason and Odysseus. Just like Jason who gets past many trials to reach the Golden Fleece and reclaim his throne, Harry too undergoes many perils to reach his goal which is preventing the evil Voldemort from getting the Sorcerer's Stone. The other important hero which Harry symbolizes is Odysseus, who is the greatest adventurer who goes on a great quest, which is his punishment because he angered the gods, and is able to get through all of the dangers due to his shrewdness. One quality of all heroes is their cleverness, which is seen in Harry as well as Odysseus. 'The strongest personal link between these two heroes is their ingenuity. Harry is ahead of others in his skill at putting things together, getting the big picture, knowing how to succeed, drawing conclusions which elude everyone else' (Spencer 2015: 26).

The other characteristic that Harry as a hero has is that, he is considered a savior of his own people, friends and the whole magical world, like Greek heroes who are saviors of their own people, friends and kingdom. In this aspect, Harry is compared to the hero, Theseus who does many heroic acts, like fighting the Minotaur to save his people who were stuck with the beast, and freeing the world from the creature. Theseus also gets past many perils and fights all the things which threaten his kingdom and people. Harry too gets past all the trials on his path to prevent the evil from having the Sorcerer's Stone, and in this way, he does many heroic deeds to save his people.

Last point about heroism is the identity by physical markings. As Spencer states: 'Oedipus is another hero who comes to mind, in thinking about Harry and his quest. Three items suggest themselves: the heroes both are identified by physical markings which came from brushes with death; both lived under the inescapable decrees of fate, of which they are not fully aware; and both have a common deadly run-in with a murderous mythical being' (Spencer 2015, 51). According to this, just like Oedipus received a scar due to his father who wanted to kill him, Harry also got one by the evil Voldemort who killed his parents, and wanted to kill him too, and they both were saved and lived their inescapable life.

Conclusion

After identifying and explaining the similarities of concepts, characters, creatures and events of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* with their mythological equivalents in Greek mythology, this fact has been proven that Greek myths have more presence in this work of literature than any other myths do. Actually, by reading the stories which the Greeks made for entertainment, one can come to an understanding of their cultures and beliefs about every aspect of life, which influence today's readers of literature as they get moral lessons out of these Greek myths and apply them in their everyday life. In other words, the Greeks showed their beliefs in forms of myths or folktale stories. In fact, the Greek myths influenced world literature and art widely since ancient times. These also had an impact on many ancient writers like Ovid, Sophocles and Homer, who gathered, analyzed and wrote many literary works about these myths and in turn inspired many other modern writers like J.K. Rowling.

Reading Rowling's texts against the backdrop of Greek mythology has enhanced their meaning and significance both in detail and in general. Moreover, new dimensions of the text have been uncovered and illuminated. Identifying categories in the text with their corresponding references in Greek mythology familiarizes the reader with the culture of other societies and therefore, universalizes the text. Most selected categories appeal both to ancient and modern readers: immortality, curiosity and heroism. Rowling has also modernized the categories where necessary and through transformation of creatures, made them work for a modern readership. All these contribute to the international appeal to Rowling's texts which goes beyond age, time and place.

Endnotes

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