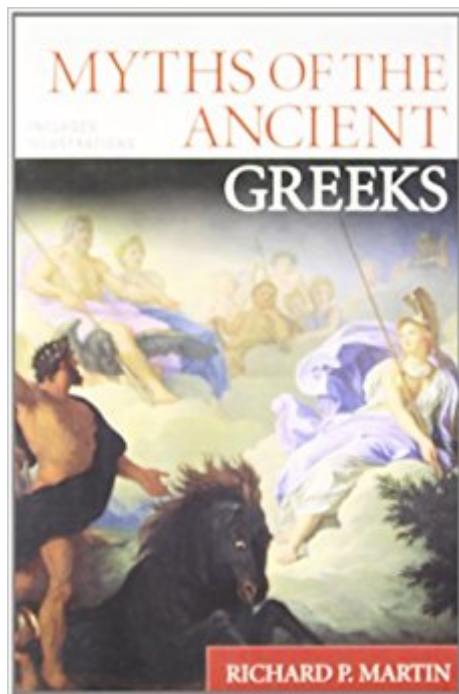


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# Myths Of The Ancient Greeks



## Synopsis

From one of today's foremost scholars, a lively retelling of the timeless tales. Here are the myths that have influenced so much of our cultural heritage. Such age-old stories as the tragic love of Orpheus and Eurydice or Demeter's loss of her daughter, Persephone, resonate strongly with readers even today. In this book the rousing adventures of the heroes Herakles, Theseus, and Perseus are intertwined with the tragedies of immortal Prometheus and mortal Oedipus, the amorous escapades of Zeus, the trickery of Hermes, and the ecstasy of Dionysus. In-depth introductions to each section deepen your understanding of the myths and heighten your reading pleasure. Presented in simple yet elegant prose, these tales emerge in brilliant new life. From the creation battle of the gods and Titans to Odysseus' return home from the Trojan War, this indispensable volume contains fifty-six legendary stories handed down from generations past that will continue to captivate readers for generations to come.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Professor Richard P. Martin teaches Greek and Latin literature at Stanford University. Martin's research focuses primarily on Homeric poetry and how it functioned as a performance art in ancient Greece. His research has involved fieldwork in modern Crete, interviewing those who still perform traditional oral epics. In addition, he has studied resemblances between ancient oral poetry and modern rap. He has worked on presenting Homer digitally, in a full-scale multimedia version of the *Odyssey* on CD, in connection with distance learning projects. Martin is also interested in the

performance of Greek lyric as represented in myth and art, and the analysis of Greek myth. Born and raised in Boston, he studied Classics as well as medieval and modern Irish language and literature at Harvard University, where he received his BA in Classics and Celtic literature and his MA and PhD in classical philology. Prior to his position at Stanford, Professor Martin taught Classics for 18 years at Princeton University. He was the chair of the Department of Classics at Stanford from 2002 through 2008.

Here are a few reasons why I think this book is indispensable for anyone studying Ancient Greek myths (and, unfortunately, this is also a list of where other books on history fall short):  
1. It has a great flow - while there is no single story, the book is organized in a such a way that there is no story out of place.  
2. No excess information. I've always said that if I only highlight one sentence on a page, the rest of the page shouldn't be there. I am happy to report that the majority of the book is worthy of highlighting, as there is not a single line wasted on description or only tenuously on-topic information. It's just what you need, and nothing you don't; the author does not waste your time.  
Yes, there is more depth in other books, but this is the only stuff you have even the slightest chance of remembering anyhow.  
3. Not just an information-dump. All the beauty, twists and drama of the original stories is preserved here. I could very easily recommend this book to somebody who wants to read purely for entertainment.  
4. The author always has the reader's back. Even if the information has been given before, it is subtly reiterated, so that if even if you've forgotten what so-and-so did or why he's important, you'll know exactly what's going on at all times, and you'll never get annoyed even if you do remember. All-in-all a great book that I am proud to have in my collection, with a writing-style that authors writing similar works should try to imitate as much as they possibly can.

When purchasing this book I read a lot of reviews to see whether I should buy it or not. I read some reviews that were disappointed with the book but said it was relatively good. I bought it and read it. Superbly explained in the introduction as to what this book is trying to accomplish should alleviate any doubt to the superior job done on this piece of work. Greek myths were not handed down to us as lets say a Harry Potter book will be handed down to later generations. Hundreds of Greek communities had developed stories in ancient Greece with the Greek characters we know as the Zeus, Hades, Poseidon and the rest. But in the oral community, before the writing was conceived in Greece, each community had different stories of all these characters. There would have been similarities in all communities but each would have had a different take on the stories, myths. When the state of Greece became more organized and defined, these myths would have come together in

a collective consciousness. But no single book or series of books would have collected all these stories. Instead, a multitude of fragments is left to the modern world and these fragments need to be put together in a unified story, or more accurately, stories. Dr. Martin has responsibly compiled the fragments and retold the myths for us to enjoy. Because of the lack of cultural knowledge for us modern readers, he has to from time to time add comments that inform what would have been readily known to the ancient Greeks. The Greek myths we think we know can be reexamined with a high degree of confidence of knowing we have a reliable accounting of said stories. This book is highly recommended. Please read the introduction before preceding to the rest. It will help you understand the work and its full intent.

This book keeps you glued to it, very hard to put down.

Have you ever wondered what the Greek perspective was on the beginnings of the earth (Gaia)? How did Zeus come to reign over Mount Olympos with Hera, his sister, by his side? What were, according to the ancient Greeks, the origins of humans? And what exactly is Pandora's box anyway? Richard Martin divulges all of this and more in this excellent, all-encompassing text on Greek myth. The introduction speaks of where Greek myth comes from, mentioning, of course, Hesiod's Theogony, Homer, and the like. The early chapters introduce us to Chaos (whether it be a mere entity or a personification), Gaia, Eros, Ouranos, and the Titans, before leading into the Olympians. There are also chapters on Greek heroes, such as Herakles, Theseus, Perseus, and Jason. Tales from Athens and Thebes are also covered quite extensively. The final chapter speaks of the war at Troy. The chronology this material is presented in flows quite well, making it easy to read straight through, though it can also be read in small scattered segments if need be. I bought this book as a supplemental study aid for a course I recently took in Greek and Roman mythology, ended up reading it cover to cover, and I found that I actually turned to it more often than the course textbook. I found it easier to read than the course textbook, even though it covered the same basic information (with very few minor exceptions). Each myth or legend reads more like a short story than a blasphemous academic diatribe, making the material much more easily digestible and interesting. Martin also adds in a little bit of background information that helps to put many of the myths and legends into context, which can be intriguing at times. Martin also includes a few maps and family trees, which are a great quick reference. Another plus is that this is much cheaper than a textbook! Overall this is a great reference for both the classics student or professor, as well as the casual reader with an interest in ancient myth. Highly recommended!

This is a good example of a modern introduction to Greek mythology. The introduction is useful, giving some idea of the way myths were once viewed and setting the scene for a retelling of some of the myths. It has the advantage of telling some stories that will not be familiar and presenting them in a reasonably adult way. There are many examples of stories that explain why things exist and why places are founded, but not much depth (which loses a lot but also avoids a good deal of traditional nonsense). A good first step. A good start for someone who wants to taste Greek mythology from a more modern point of view. Hopefully, it will inspire some readers to jump off into something fuller.

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