

Hamilton to Homer: A Mythoholic's Journey to Becoming a Classicist

At summer camp when I was eight, I picked up *D'Aulaire's Book of Greek Myths*, opened to the first page, and was instantly hooked. After obtaining my own copy, the classic children's book became my only reference for mythology until two years later, when I discovered Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* at my school library. Once I realized there was a realm of gods and heroes and monsters waiting to be explored, like after opening Pandora's box, my world was never the same again. Every time I went to the bookstore, I picked out a new book about mythology—and then I discovered mythology *novels*, like Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* series. As a long-time writer, I thought, Why can't I write one myself? So I began to delve into translations of the original epics, forming my own opinions of demigods and villains.

In my sophomore year of college, I took my first ever Classics course, and I opened my eyes to a world beyond satyrs and gorgons: seas deep with history, mountain peaks of philosophy, rivers murmuring with ancient languages, and valleys echoing laws that we still hear today. I obtained some of my books through classes, but I retained many of them—rather than renting and returning, reselling, or donating them—because I believed they would continue to be of future use and enjoyment. As I write novels with mythological elements or taking place in Ancient Rome, books about Ovid and history have proven invaluable to my ability to enrich my created worlds. When I find myself in need of comfort reading, my favorite mythology books find themselves in my hands. If I'm in a particularly philosophical or thoughtful mood, Joseph Campbell's studies on comparative mythology help stimulate my mind.

Every book in this collection represents an increase of knowledge, a step in my journey as I transformed from a child who enjoyed mythology to someone who confidently declares

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herself to be a classicist today. From D'Aulaire to Campbell, from Hamilton to Homer, this collection is the embodiment of the part of me that dwells in Athens, Rome, and Olympus.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Bertman, Stephen. *The Eight Pillars of Greek Wisdom: What You Can Learn From Classical Myth and History*. New York: Fall River Press, 2007.
 - Bertman used select myths as sources of timeless life lessons. To this day I still find myself thinking about his interpretation of the Orpheus myth—that the gods never intended for the bard to succeed in rescuing his wife—and several of his points have helped shape my own way of thinking and my writing.
2. Boatwright, Mary, Gargola, Daniel J. & Talbert, Richard J.A. *The Romans: From Village to Empire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. Print.
 - This was the staple of my Ancient City course when I studied abroad in Rome last spring. Although physically being in the city and at the sites and museums was an educational experience beyond any other course I have ever taken, as someone who learns best from reading, this book was the foundation to my success in the class. It also serves as a handy reference for people and events in Roman history, crucial to the development of my novel set at the end of the Roman Republic.
3. Cabot, Meg. *Abandon*. New York: Point, 2011. Print.
 - This novel is a modern retelling of the story of Hades and Persephone, one of my long-time favorite myths. *Abandon* is neither among my favorite retellings of said myth nor among my favorite books, but I included it in this collection because—arrogant though it may sound—it helps represent my “competition” for the novel about mythology that I am working on. I need to know what currently exists in the market into which I wish to enter in order to be successful myself, and this book is in a part of that market.
4. Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. Novato: New World Library, 2008. Print.
 - I had already been familiar with the idea of the hero’s journey when I learned that Joseph Campbell was essentially responsible for framing the timeless character arc. This was the first of Campbell’s books that I purchased, and the first that I read. It was eye-opening to learn that story arcs and character archetypes that exist in many cultures throughout the world, and it has helped shape my academic and my personal writing.
5. Chaline, Eric. *Ancient Greece As It Was: Exploring the City of Athens in 415 BC*. Guilford: Lyons Press, 2011. Print.
 - This book essentially acts as if the reader is an ancient tourist in Classical Athens. It is a different take than the typical history book, focusing on aspects of the city that a foreigner with limited time would be interested in. And the modern reader is exactly that kind of person: foreign to the culture, economics, and geography of Athens, and with only so much reading time to lose him/herself in another world. The book is a relatively light-hearted read that enriches my understanding of Classical Athens beyond what the usual textbook allows.
6. Colum, Padraic. *The Children’s Homer: The Adventures of Odysseus and the Tale of Troy*. New York: Aladdin, 1918. Print.
 - For many years, I was very confident that I had read Homer’s famous epics at a young age. Then I looked at the book I was referencing and realized that a children’s edition is far from a full, unadulterated translation. Regardless, this

- book exposed me as a child to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in far greater detail than in a compendium like D'Aulaire's or Hamilton's books, so this text was an important part of my Classics education before I realized what Classics was.
7. Cornell, Tim & Matthews, John. *Atlas of the Roman World*. New York: Facts on File, 1982. Print.
 - This is a visual-heavy tome that I obtained in anticipation of my semester abroad studying Classics. I had not had much previous experience with Roman history, so I did preparatory independent studying to start out on level ground with my future classmates. This is the only atlas I own, for Rome or otherwise, and it helps balance out the rest of my extremely text-heavy collection.
 8. Cotterell, Arthur & Storm, Rachel. *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of World Mythology: A Comprehensive A-Z of the Myths and Legends of Greece, Rome, Egypt, Persia, India, China, and the Norse and Celtic Lands*. New York: Metro Books, 2014.
 - Greek mythology has always been and will always be my first love. However, after reading works like Joseph Campbell's and pondering how parallels could be drawn between Greek and Roman lore and that of other cultures, I wanted to learn more about legends from places beyond the Mediterranean. Reading how pantheons and mythical figures in other cultures sometimes predated that of the Greeks, and how myths from different corners of the Earth could share so many similarities, really put my understanding of the Greek legends into perspective.
 9. Crawford, Michael. *The Roman Republic*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978. Print.
 - A Classics professor recommended this book if I wanted to develop a background in Roman history, however shallow, before my semester abroad. Reading this book made me realize just how little I knew about Roman history, despite having been a Classics major for a year and a self-proclaimed Classics fanatic for many years before that. As a then-novice to Roman history, the book was difficult for me to get through, and it reminds me to be humble about my knowledge even now, after a semester of intensive Classics studies.
 10. D'Aulaire, Ingri & Edgar Parin. *Book of Greek Myths*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1962. Print.
 - This was the book that started it all. Being a children's book, the stories within are very sanitized versions of the original mythology. However, they were the first incarnations of the myths that I encountered, textually and visually. Thus, D'Aulaire's has a place of pride in my collection.
 11. Durband, Alan. *Shakespeare Made Easy: Julius Caesar*. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1985. Print.
 - Besides mythology, I have also nursed an affection for Shakespeare for many years. Of course, Shakespeare's plays that take place in Classical times or have Classical elements are a delight. Knowing how the events surrounding Caesar's assassination really went down, according to the historical record, Shakespeare's version is obviously dramatized and a little fantastical. But it is still a masterpiece and dear to my heart, and I occasionally find myself spouting things like "Et tu, Brute?" and "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars."
 12. Feeney, D.C. *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. Print.

- During my aborted attempt at a senior thesis about Hera/Juno in Classical literature, I bought this book at the recommendation of my then-advisor. Hera/Juno is one of my favorite deities, and Feeney does her great justice, in this book and in other writings. I still occasionally use this book as a reference when I work on my novel starring Hera.
13. Ferry, Luc & Cuffe, Theo (translator). *The Wisdom of the Myths: How Greek Mythology Can Change Your Life*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2014. Print.
- Contrary to what one would expect from the title, this book was not as life-changing as I thought. But it certainly brought up interesting, stimulating points, and it treated the myths as sources of life lessons rather than of entertainment, which was a pleasant change from the usual books I read. This was one of my purchases from early in my career as a Classics major, when I decided to try becoming more serious about and changing up my usual fangirling over myths.
14. Graves, Robert. *The Greek Myths*. London: Penguin Books, 1992. Print.
- This was not one of my favorite compendiums of Greek mythology. The writing was dry and I found myself bored—considering how much I love mythology, this was quite extraordinary—as I churned through the book. It wasn't until much later that I found out the author is somewhat a big name in the Classics world, and I later read writings of his that I did enjoy. But I never changed my critical opinion of this particular book, and I keep this title in my collection to remind myself that as much as I love mythology, I won't always love every book about it, and I won't necessarily like the writings of even the best classicists.
15. Graziosi, Barbara. *The Gods of Olympus: A History*. New York: Picador, 2014. Print.
- It had been a while since I purchased a book about Greek mythology. However, I decided to buy this book recently because it isn't your usual compendium of myths. Rather, the author traces depictions of the Olympian gods in Western culture over the past 2000+ years. It read a bit like a genealogical history of the Olympian family, and it has quickly become a book I would recommend.
16. Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology*. New York: Back Bay Books, 1942. Print.
- In hindsight, Hamilton's text is more introductory than scholarly, but after D'Aulaire's, it was the first book that made me realize there was far, far more to Classical mythology than was evident in a children's book. It was also my acquisition of this book in ninth grade that relit my love of mythology and started my journey to discovering mythology novels and writing my own.
17. Hathaway, Nancy. *The Friendly Guide to Mythology: A Mortal's Companion to the Fantastical Realm of Gods, Goddesses, Monsters, and Heroes*. New York: Penguin Books, 2001. Print.
- This is among the more light-hearted and introductory compendiums of mythology that I have acquired. When I bought this book in high school, I had reached the point where I no longer needed introductory texts to mythology, since I myself could happily retell dozens of myths by then. This was also when I began to actively disagree with some authors' opinions and interpretations, as I did with Hathaway's take on certain characters. I keep this book to remind myself that, though I hold strong opinions about mythology, they are only my own, and the opinions of others are equally valid.

18. Hesiod, Nelson, Stephanie (translator) & Caldwell, Richard (translator). *Theogony & Works and Days*. Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 2009. Print.
 - In recent years, I have been making the effort to move away from relying on secondhand accounts of mythology—via compendiums and such—and move toward reading the original epics and accounts. *Theogony* is a frequently cited ancient work that my professors sometimes expected me, as a Classics major, to already be familiar with, so I decided to make that a reality. *Works and Days* is often lumped together with *Theogony*, as they're both by Hesiod and fairly short.
19. Homer & Butler, Samuel (translator). *The Iliad & The Odyssey*. New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1999. Print.
 - This is one of the thick, leather-bound, gold-edged collectors' editions that Barnes and Noble likes to put out. Admittedly, the text is quite small, the pages are very thin and fragile, and I have encountered better translations, like below. Honestly, I love this book mainly because it's so aesthetically pleasing on the outside, and I wish more of my books looked like this.
20. Homer & Lattimore, Richmond (translator). *The Iliad of Homer*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951. Print.
 - I purchased multiple books for my last ever Classics class as an undergrad: my capstone course. I spent the previous semester combing through a borrowed copy of this exact translation of the *Iliad* for my attempted thesis, so when I began reading it again this spring for class, the text felt very familiar. I felt and feel at home in this book, as I do in the Duke Classics Department and in the broader world of Classics. I might never take another Classics course after graduation, but I am certain to reread this book many times in the future.
21. Homer & Lattimore, Richmond (translator). *The Odyssey of Homer*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1965. Print.
 - The last time I read the *Odyssey* was in high school English class. Whereas reading the *Iliad* for my capstone course felt like going home at the end of the day, reading this Homeric epic felt like opening a scrapbook of memories. It was in tenth grade that I first openly confessed my love of Greek mythology, to my classmates, and I became the classroom's resident walking, talking encyclopedia of myths. This is a different translation of the *Odyssey* than I used six years ago, but the story remains the same.
22. Kerényi, C. *The Gods of the Greeks*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2008. Print.
 - I purchased many compendiums of mythology in high school. They all tended to recount most of the same stories, but each had its own interpretation. The ones by renowned classicists, like Kerényi, were especially scholarly and sophisticated, and they sometimes made me feel out of my depth. But it was books like these that were my first exposure to scholarly accounts of Classical mythology.
23. MacDowell, Douglas M. *The Law in Classical Athens*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978. Print.
 - I obtained this book for the first Classics course that I ever took, Athenian Law. This class made me determined to major in Classics and established my relationship with one of my favorite professors. Besides being an excellent reference when I need to describe some aspect of Athenian law, this book also

reminds me to not be afraid to try new classes, or new experiences in general, because they could very well change my life.

24. Matyszak, Philip. *The Greek and Roman Myths: A Guide to the Classical Stories*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2010. Print.
 - Of the many compendiums of Classical mythology that I have obtained over the years, this is one of my favorites. The writer's humor is spot on, and overall the book is a wonderful read. I sometimes find myself thinking about Matyszak's closing line—that 753 BC, when Rome was founded, is when mythology ended and history began—and I hope that one day, I will be able to write something that makes as long-lasting an impression on my readers.
25. O'Connor, George. *Olympians*, book series. New York: First Second, 2010-. Print.
 - I nearly threw a fit of excitement in the bookstore when I first discovered this then-new series of graphic novels about the Olympian gods. The only other graphic novel series about mythology that I have come across was self-published, so it was an immense delight when I found the first two books of the series by O'Connor, who by all accounts seems just as huge a mythology nerd as me. I continue to purchase this series' new installments as their published, and I once wrote a very long fan email to O'Connor, who happily responded. He also read the first chapter of a mythology novel that I wrote in high school and helped me realize that I needed to improve my storytelling.
26. Ovid & Anderson, William S. (editor). *Metamorphoses: Books 1-5*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997. Print.
 - After my semester abroad, when I read unabridged Latin prose for the first time, I decided to change things up and take a Latin poetry class at Duke. Although I have not been learning Latin for very long, I felt extremely comfortable with the text of the *Metamorphoses*. It was this class that made me realize that I am indeed good at Latin—perhaps better than any of the other foreign languages I know, despite having learned them for longer—and that I actively *love* Latin, and that I have earned the mantle of classicist, and perhaps soon Latinist. In this text I have found quotes that speak to me far more deeply than any translation would, and through this text I began to truly appreciate the art of Latin epic.
27. Ovid & Anderson, William S. (editor). *Metamorphoses: Books 6-10*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972. Print.
 - See above.
28. Riordan, Rick. *Percy Jackson & The Olympians*, book series. New York: Miramax Books, 2005-2009. Print.
 - Riordan's series was my first exposure to novels based on Greek mythology. Before *Percy Jackson*, I'd only ever encountered reference books that simply retold the myths. Once I read Riordan's original tale of gods and heroes in the modern world, I began to stew over my own ideas about urban mythology.
29. Riordan, Rick. *Percy Jackson's Greek Gods*. New York: Hyperion Books, 2014. Print.
 - Riordan is a hilarious writer, and I knew that I had to get his illustrated book about his—or rather, Percy Jackson's—take on the Olympians. This version of the gods is far from canonically accurate, but that isn't the point of the book. Rather, the book is a tie-in to the rest of the *Percy Jackson* universe, so it serves more as entertainment than for education. It's great for a laugh every so often.

30. Riordan, Rick. *The Heroes of Olympus*, book series. New York: Hyperion Books, 2010-2014. Print.
 - Riordan's sequel series to *Percy Jackson* brings the Roman pantheon and lore into the limelight. I originally considered myself more of a Hellenic than a Roman classicist, so I was not as familiar or impressed with Riordan's Roman characters. However, after a semester in Rome studying Rome, I developed a keen appreciation for the Roman side of Classical Studies, and my opinion of the *Heroes of Olympus* series has significantly risen.
31. Riordan, Rick. *The Trials of Apollo: The Hidden Oracle*. New York: Hyperion Books, 2016. Print.
 - This is the first of Riordan's latest sequel series to *Percy Jackson*, starring the Greco-Roman god Apollo. Some critics accuse Riordan of beating a dead horse with these series upon series; I disagree, but even if he were, I believe he should continue doing so. Apollo, the newest protagonist, is openly bisexual, which is expected from the Apollo of Classical mythology but infrequently seen in children's literature. Although it can be exhausting trying to keep up with all of Riordan's books, I find his LGBT representation admirable and something to which I aspire in my own writing.
32. Rodgers, Nigel. *The Complete Illustrated History of Ancient Greece*. London: Hermes House, 2013. Print.
 - As fun as it is to read just the myths, context is important to get the full experience. I tend to enjoy the installments in the *Complete Illustrated History* books, so I decided to obtain one focusing on Greece in order to have a useful reference for the history, culture, and so forth.
33. Seton-Williams, M.V. *Greek Legends and Stories*. New York: Fall River Press, 2000. Print.
 - It isn't one of the best compendiums of mythology that I have come across. However, it recounts most of the important/renowned stories and straddles introductory and scholarly fairly well.
34. Sophocles, Fitts, Dudley (translator) & Fitzgerald, Robert (translator). *The Oedipus Cycle*. Orlando: Harvest Book, 1977. Print.
 - For a class, Shakespeare and the Financial Markets, the final assignment was to write an essay. In mine, I decided to compare *Oedipus Rex* and Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. Although translations for many Classical works are available online, I wanted my own copy of Sophocles's trilogy.
35. Spinner, Stephanie. *Quicksilver*. New York: Laurel-Leaf, 2005. Print.
 - I can no longer remember the source, but I was once referred to Spinner's novel about the Greek god Hermes. It is a light-hearted but sophisticated book that follows Hermes's adventures in famous mythological tales, some of which he is in canonically, some of which Spinner incorporates him into. Although Hermes is not among my most favorite Greek deities, I greatly enjoyed this novel and take it out for the occasional rereading.
36. Suter, Ann. *The Narcissus and the Pomegranate: An Archaeology of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005. Print.
 - The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* is essentially about the kidnapping of Persephone by Hades. As mentioned earlier, this has always been one of my favorite myths. I

once read a fanfiction retelling Hades and Persephone, whose author cited this book is one of her major sources. It is a very scholarly text that is at times difficult to get through, but it has nevertheless expanded my knowledge on the tale.

37. Tacitus, Martin, R.H. (editor) & Woodman, A.J. (editor). *Annals: Book IV*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Print.
 - I had only been learning Latin for three semesters, and the last Latin text from which I had been translating was *Wheelock's Latin Reader*, when I dove right into pure, unabridged Tacitus while I was abroad. Among classmates who had been learning Latin for significantly longer, I felt out of my depth and was tempted to move into the lower level Latin class. But I stuck it out, and although Tacitus was and is difficult, I ended up mastering the text and gained a new, increased self-confidence in my Latin abilities. This book represents one of many experiences that made me realize I deserve to call myself a classicist.
38. Thucydides & Woodruff, Paul (editor, translator). *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature: Selections from The History of the Peloponnesian War*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993. Print.
 - One of my Classics classes, Democracy: Ancient and Modern, required this book. Previous to my semester abroad, my background in history had never been particularly strong. Besides mentions of the Peloponnesian War in high school history, I had no formal education regarding the event. This book, in conjunction with the course, helped to greatly augment my knowledge of Classical history.
39. Virgil & Mandelbaum, Allen (translator). *The Aeneid of Virgil*. New York: Bantam Classic, 1971. Print.
 - No Classics book collection is complete without at least one translation of the quintessential Augustan epic. I had intended to get a copy of my own for a while before my Classics capstone this semester gave me the excuse to do so. During my semester abroad, I rather fell in love with the Augustan Era, and I read the *Aeneid* for the first time while in Rome. I was bound to have acquired a copy sooner or later.
40. Wells, Colin. *The Roman Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984. Print.
 - This was another book that a Classics professor recommended for me to prepare for my semester abroad, given my lack of a Roman history background. While *The Roman Republic* was a difficult read and made me nervous about how prepared I really was for the semester ahead, I enjoyed *The Roman Empire* and became excited to fill in the many gaps in my knowledge.

Wish List

1. Cicero & Dyck, Andrew R. (editor). *Catilinarians*. Cambridge University Press, 2008. Print.
 - When I studied abroad in Rome last spring, one of my regrets was that I could not take two Latin classes at the same time. My class read Tacitus, while another read the *Catilinarian*, and I was immensely envious of my friends' jokes and retellings of Cicero's sarcasm and insults. From what I gather, Cicero is considered a must-read among classicists, long-winded though he may be. Not only is the *Catilinarian* the text that my former classmates read, it is also one of his more famous works, so I strongly desire to acquire it for my collection—in the original Latin, of course.
2. Lloyd, G.E.R. *Magic, Reason and Experience: Studies in the Origins and Development of Greek Science*. Hackett Publishing Company, 1999. Print.
 - Every once in a while, one might hear the saying that magic is simply science that we don't understand yet. I have always wanted to learn more about "magic" in Ancient Greece, but it's a very niche topic so I have been unsuccessful so far. Greek science and technology are also among my weaker areas of knowledge, and I would like to rectify that, through reading and other means.
3. Pharr, Clyde. *Vergil's Aeneid*. Bolchazy-Carducci, 1999. Print.
 - Now that I have fallen in love with this Roman epic, I must read it in the original Latin. My Latin is at the level where I feel fairly confident in my ability to tackle the *Aeneid* on my own. Perhaps one day I might even write my own translation.
4. Southern, Patricia. *Augustus*. New York: Routledge, 2014. Print.
 - I first came upon this biography of Augustus, the first Roman Emperor, at my study abroad program in Rome, but only managed to read the first few chapters. When I returned to Duke, I sought it out at the library and finished reading it. I love Southern's balance of what the literary and historical evidence says versus her own interpretation of events. I am usually not one for biographies, but I greatly enjoyed this one and would happily reread it again if I owned it.
5. Suetonius & Graves, Robert. *The Twelve Caesars*. London: Penguin Group, 2007. Print.
 - These are the biographies of Julius Caesar and the first Roman Emperors, Suetonius's most well-known work. I was able to read some snippets about Augustus while I was abroad, and I discovered interesting tidbits, such as the fact that the first Roman Emperor was afraid of thunder storms, and he hated waking up early and was constantly snacking. I want to finish reading the entire collection, and given that Graves is a renowned classicist, I am confident in the accuracy and quality of his translation.