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Mythos Series (Mythos: The Greek Myths Reimagined, Heroes: The Greek Myths Reimagined, and Troy: The Greek Myths Reimagined) by Stephen Fry

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**Review for Stephen Fry's *Mythos Series*
done by Phillip Fitzsimmons in Mythprint
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Stephen Fry. *Mythos Series*
(*Mythos: The Greek Myths Reimagined*, 2019, 350pp. *Heroes: The Greek Myths Reimagined*, 2020, 368pp. *Troy: The Greek Myths Reimagined*, 2021, 288pp.). Chronicle Books. \$20.49. Reviewed by Phillip Fitzsimmons.

I harken back to the BBC production of *Jeeves and Wooster* (Season 3, Episode 3, 1992) in which there was a voice-over of Jeeves, played by Stephen Fry, while he composes *A Children's Book of American Birds* as part of a scheme to ingratiate Bertie Wooster's friend Corky's girlfriend to a wealthy uncle. I have often thought how nice it would be get to lis-ten to Jeeves read the entire book, or one like it. That wish is fulfilled in the audiobook re-

recording of Stephen Fry as the voice talent performing readings of the volumes of the *Mythos* trilogy, which he also authored.

This review is about both the audiobook and print versions of Fry's entire *Mythos* series, which is a trilogy that is an erudite but entertaining retelling, for our time, of the canon of ancient Greek Myths. The titles are *Mythos* (2019), *Heroes* (2020), and *Troy* (2021). The narrative focus of *Mythos* is to emphasize stories about the gods, while *Heroes*, naturally, concentrates upon the adventures of the heroes. *Troy* presents a complete retelling of the stories of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Fry presents the players, sets up the conflict, tells the story of the Trojan War, then continues on to the misadventures of Odysseus and his crew, and ends with him reclaiming his family and household.

The narrative voice for both the audio and print versions of the books is urbane, conversational, and witty. Yet, Fry comes across as authoritative about the content, literature, and culture from which the myths originate. He presents his groupings of the myths of each book as though they are parts of a preexisting unified story line for each volume. Each book presents the gods and heroes as fully developed characters. He gives them dialogue and shows their very contemporary motivations for why the gods, men, and women are loyal to or betray each other, why heroes set out on adventures, why villains commit their crimes. The result is an informative exploration of the world of the ancient Greeks through these entertaining retelling of the stories. I want to emphasize that these are not spoofs or fractured fairytales. Rather, they are serious, almost novelistic, retellings of the Greek myths that reveals their relevance to 21st Century readers and listeners.

The print books include useful introductions, afterwords, and notes throughout that outline the geography and history of the an-

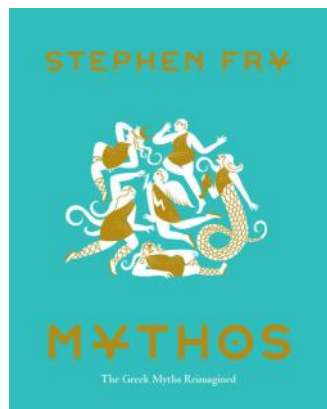
cient Greeks, as well as the genealogy of the gods. They also provide guidance on interpreting the myths and pronouncing the names of gods, heroes, and places. Another nice feature is the inclusion of a generous number of color illustrations that are reproductions of famous artists' depictions of the stories and photographs of museum pieces. The combination of these features create a set of books that are attractive, educational, and entertaining.

The audiobooks of the *Mythos* series are first-rate productions. Fry has provided excellent performances in every audiobook of other titles for which he has provided the narrative voice talent. A striking example is his reading of *Sherlock Holmes*, which is a complete collection of stories and included explanatory

matter also written by Fry. The text of the introductory matter and notes are included as part of the recordings in the audiobooks. His production of *Sherlock Holmes* was my favorite audiobook for a long time. With that said, Fry's recent reading of the *Mythos* series audiobooks is a perfect production. It should be no surprise that his style of performance complements the texts of the volumes.

The text of the introductory matter and notes are included in the audiobooks. The only thing from the print versions that are omitted in the audio versions are, of course, the illustrations. But their absence is amply made up for by the addition of the text being read in Fry's voice. I believe the books, in both formats, were a labor of love by Fry and his associates.

In closing, I highly recommend the three volumes of the *Mythos* series to practically all public libraries, public and private school libraries of all grades, and college or university libraries. I want to emphasize that readers do not have to be acquainted with Greek Myths to enjoy these books. In fact, they might provide a good introduction to teen or college



students who have little education in classics literature. I would rate them PG-13, adult but not crude. This set of books is of such a high quality and erudition that they could be used as a reference set on mythology for school and college collections. They will also always sit nicely in the literature or fiction sections of the main collections of any library. Personally, I recommend the books for both educational and pleasure reading and listening. I conclude by sharing how much pleasure I received while listening to the audio versions of the *Mythos* series as I imagined I was hearing Jeeves reading an educational book similar to *A Children's Book of American Birds*, but for all ages.