



***Heroes in Training: Zeus and the Thunderbolt of Doom***  
By Joan Holub and Suzanne Williams

**Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2015**  
**Grades 3-5**

*Submitted by Catherine A. Smith, Supervisor of Libraries,  
Caddo Parish Public Schools, Shreveport, LA*

**Title:** *Heroes in Training: Zeus and the Thunderbolt of Doom*

**Author:** Joan Holub and Suzanne Williams

**Publisher:** Simon & Schuster

**Pages:** 112

**SUMMARY**

What could be more exciting than reading about a young hero who is afraid of the things you fear, laughs at the things you find humorous, and detests the things that annoy you? Pulling a magical thunderbolt from a stone while evading the Cronies, ten-year-old Zeus goes on the adventure of a lifetime in this thrilling start to a brand-new series! The terrible Titans, merciless giants who enjoy snacking on humans, have dominated the earth and caused chaos in the world. Their rule is about to be put to the test as a group of young Olympians begin to discover their powers and prepare to righteously rule the universe. Zeus has many exciting adventures, filled with the antics and assistance from the often annoying Bolt and a talking stone amulet which speaks his own language. Join Zeus and his fellow "heroes in training" on the quest which unfolds before them.

**AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES**

**Joan Holub** graduated from college in Texas with a fine arts degree. She then did freelance work for eight years as an art director at a graphic design firm. She always wanted to do children's books so she moved to New York City and became associate art director in Scholastic trade books. There, she worked with editors and illustrators to design books for children. She published her first book in 1992 and soon began illustrating full time. Now she writes and has written and/or illustrated over 130 children's books. She truly loves creating books that entertain, inform, and interest herself and the children for whom she writes. She lives in North Carolina.

Biographical information found on the author's website at

<http://www.joanholub.com/aboutme.html>,

Accessed August 27, 2014.



**Suzanne Williams** doesn't remember ever wanting to be a writer when she grew up—she just liked to read! She grew up in Eugene, Oregon, and went to college at the University of Oregon, where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's in library science. She and her husband moved to Renton, Washington (near Seattle), just after finishing college. She became a librarian and didn't start writing children's books until after she'd been a librarian for ten years, and had children of her own. Her husband, Mark, is principal trombonist for the Pacific Northwest Ballet Orchestra. They have two grown children, and a toy fox terrier named Toby.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at <http://www.suzanne-williams.com/about.html>,  
Accessed August 27, 2014.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Suzanne Williams' website <http://www.suzanne-williams.com/>

Joan Holub's website <http://www.joanholub.com/>

Write to the authors: Suzanne Williams, Joan Holub  
c/o A. Heller  
Aladdin, Simon & Schuster – Heroes in Training  
1230 Ave of the Americas  
New York, NY 10020

### **OTHER TITLES BY THE AUTHORS**

Joan Holub:

*Ballet Stars* (2012)

*Groundhog Weather School* (2009)

*Wagons, Ho!* (2011)

*What Was the First Thanksgiving* (2013)

*What Was the Gold Rush* (2013)

*Who Was Babe Ruth* (2012)

*Zero the Hero* (2012)

Series: *Goddess Girls*, *Grimmtastic Girls*, *Heroes in Training*

Suzanne Williams:

*Library Lil* (2001)

*Mommy Doesn't Know My Name* (1990)

*My Dog Never Says Please* (1997)

*Ten Naughty Little Monkeys* (2007)

*The Witch Casts a Spell* (2002)

Series: *Fairy Blossoms*, *Goddess Girls*, *Grimtastic Girls*, *Heroes in Training*, *Marvelous Mind of Matthew Mcghee*, *Secret Pals*, *Third Grade Friends*

### **RELATED TITLES**

*Brush of the Gods* by Lenore Look

*Ordinary Magic* Caitlen Rubino-Bradway

*Rump: The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin* by Liesl Shurtliff

## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

### English Language Arts:

This book would be an excellent read aloud to introduce a unit on Greek Mythology. Many characters are in the story, and reference is made to many others. It would also be a great supplemental title to add to a list of suggested titles for students to read while doing a unit on Greek Mythology.

### Social Studies, Geography:

Reference is made of many locations in Greek Mythology. Students could find Greece on a world map and mark the other places mentioned in the story—Mount Olympus, Mediterranean Sea, Delphi, Crete, and research a little about the background of the places and the part each may have played in Greek Mythology.

### Science:

Several times Zeus mentions being “zapped” by the lightning bolt. Students could look up what a lightning bolt really is, what causes it, and the amount of voltage in a lightning strike.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Give a brief description of each of the following characters from Greek mythology. You may want to visit some of the websites listed below for the information you need.

Demeter

Cronus

Hades

Hestia

Hera

Minotaur

Poseidon

2. Who were Zeus' parents in this book?
3. Ask students to define and familiarize themselves with the following terms from the book.

Sinew

Iconic

Nymph

Urn

Childgods

Battalion

Demented

Dastardly plans

Oracle

4. Several sailing words were used. Check the meaning of: Helm, Deck, Tacking, and Ahoy
5. The following idioms or figures of speech were used in the story. What do they mean? There are many others in the story as well. Write them down when you run across them.

Icing on the cake (p.5)	You've got spunk (p.24)
Faster than a hummingbird (p.5)	Ring a bell (p.31)
Wouldn't hurt a fly (p.16)	Shaking in his sandals (p.33)
Hit the road (p.19)	Hightail it back (p.74)
Got your goat (p.23)	Hot on the trail (p.76)
You are toast (p.24)	Knees were knocking (p.78)
6. Who kept watch over Zeus when he was dropped off in a cave as an infant? What role did each play as he grew up?
7. The first time Zeus said “Back off Birds,” it came out as “Bick off birds. Why? (p.47)

8. Compare “chip” Latin and pig Latin (p.66). Write a message to your friends in pig Latin then chip Latin.
9. There were lots of nicknames in the book. Answer the following questions about nicknames.
  - a. Zeus names three characters in the book (these are the only names we know for them). What did he name them?
  - b. What name did they give him?
  - c. What did he call them that they didn’t like?
  - d. What did they prefer to be called?
  - e. What nickname did Hera give Zeus at the very end of the book? Did he like it?
  - f. What did Hera do at the beginning of the book that helped them escape at the end of the book?
  - g. What special traits did the stone have? What traits did the lightning bolt have?
  - h. Zeus saw Cronus with the salt shaker and mentioned putting salt on slugs. What happens when you pour salt on a slug?

## **RELATED WEBSITES**

### **The British Museum**

[http://www.ancientgreece.co.uk/gods/explore/exp\\_set.html](http://www.ancientgreece.co.uk/gods/explore/exp_set.html)

Information about twelve Greek gods and goddesses: their stories, symbols, festivals, sacred places, and objects in residence at the museum that relate to them.

### **Greek Mythology**

<http://messagenetcommresearch.com/myths/index.html>

A website intended for all ages that includes essays, a quiz, a dictionary of Greek mythology, and a list of gods and goddesses.

### **Contributions of the Greeks to Modern Day Society**

<http://www.greekforme.com/debt-to-greece.html>

The influence of Ancient Greece on today’s society.