

Rebecca Gottlieb
DIRECTED STUDIES

Creative Writing Process

WRITING A NOVEL ABOUT GREEK MYTHOLOGY THAT TACKLES ISSUES OF MENTAL HEALTH

Worldbuilding

Setting

I had to plan three different worlds that were connected to each other, though still very different. I wanted them to each have their own atmosphere and feeling while still being entwined in motifs and tones with one another.

- Olympus was based on the light academia aesthetic but with a magical, heavenly element and a smaller emphasis on the academia element.
- The Underworld, on the other hand is the opposite: dark academia that feels more grounded (pun intended).
- The mortal realm is a cross between the aesthetics, since the mortal realm is between Olympus and Hades, and has a heavy design emphasis on nature.



Map of the Underworld and Orpheus's journey

Research

Greek Myths

In my research on Greek myths, I drew information from several myths for both of my books. At the very least, all of these myths are referenced in one aspect or another:

- The kidnapping of Persephone and the cycle of seasons and related myths
- The lead up to and the aftermath of the Titanomachy
- Sisyphus
- Orpheus and Eurydice
- Various myths associated with and worship for various gods including, Hecate, and Zeus
- Various tales regarding Nyx
- The origin of Zagreus and other reincarnation-related myths

Characterization

In one way or another, the characters' personalities are based on the characterization in the myths, though some aspects of the characters were added to or made more complex for the sake of the story. For instance, there is no explicit evidence in the Greek myths about Zeus's desire for control, but there are numerous myths where it is evident that Zeus does not want what happened to his father to happen to him (for example, Zeus eating Metis to prevent the birth of their child that could overthrow him).

Effects of Trauma

Each of my characters struggles with the effects of the war differently.

Zeus is in denial that he is struggling and feels the need to control situations, especially that of his family so that history doesn't repeat itself. Hades has a desperation to hold onto his relationships to prevent his family from further falling apart and PTSD and anxiety (diagnosed by Nyx, of course), which frequently presents itself in nightmares and panic attacks. He also avoids the Pit to Tartarus (where Kronos is held) as much as possible. Poseidon tries to emulate Zeus, his new role model, in an attempt to cope with the war and push down the trauma his father inflicted. Hestia has withdrawn herself from her family and tries to limit contact as frequently as possible; she might also have OCD. Hera has some anger issues that stem from both the mistreatment from Zeus and from the war. Demeter tries to shelter her daughter as much as possible to protect her, even though she is repeating the same type of relationship as that with her father.



Amazing art made by my friend Sam

Plotting

Major Themes

In the retelling of the Hades and Persephone story, I focus especially on themes of mental health, trauma, growth, love, hope, reincarnation, family, and trust. The Orpheus and Eurydice retelling, set in the same universe but much farther down the timeline, also explores themes of family and love while tackling themes of identity, hope, and the battle between fate and choice.

Romance as a "Fixer" to Mental Health Struggles in Modern Media

One of the things that bugs me in modern media is when the romance subplot resolves the main character's trauma, anxiety, depression, etc. Unfortunately, I keep seeing this used in many books' conclusions, which promotes the idea that if they just got a significant other, they would be Fine (TM). To combat this in my literature, while also promoting a healthy support system across different types of relationships, the main characters will still be very clearly struggling with their mental health, relationships, etc., while still in the relationship.