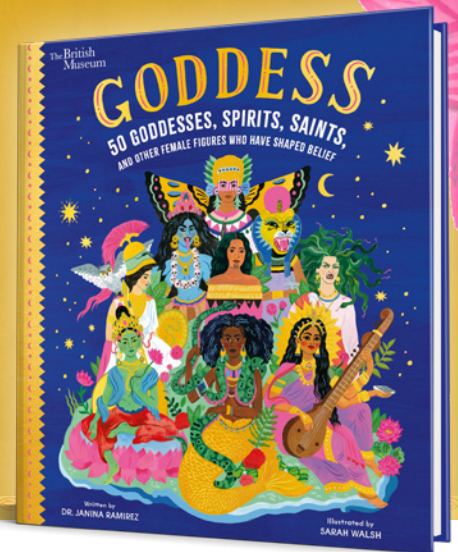


GODDESS

50 GODDESSES, SPIRITS, SAINTS, AND OTHER
FEMALE FIGURES WHO HAVE SHAPED BELIEF

Written by
DR. JANINA RAMIREZ

Illustrated by
SARAH WALSH



PRE-READING

Have note-taking materials on hand as you read this book. You will need to use some of your notes for creative and writing projects after you've finished the book.

- Record any unfamiliar words, including names and place names. Look at the book's glossary and if the word is not there, find the meaning through other books or internet sources, and record the definition.
- While reading, take notes about common themes, elements, or traits that different goddesses share. *For example, many goddesses are connected with snakes or serpents: Inanna, Athena, Mama Wata, Eve, Medusa. Other examples of commonalities might be water, shape-shifting, or creation.*
- Record 5 to 10 goddesses whose stories resonated with you and why. *For example, perhaps you admire Freyja because she is a warrior, or you'd like to have Guanyin's ability to change into any shape.*

POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note to educator: These questions can be used in a class discussion if the entire class has read the book. If a student is working independently, they can choose one or more of these questions to answer in an essay or to incorporate into a book report.

1. What or who do you think of when you hear the word goddess? How does the word's current use differ from what it has meant in the past? Name some human characteristics displayed by the goddesses in these stories. Then name some of the magical or enhanced powers they have. Which traits, human or magical, do you feel more directly influences the devout inspiration of their followers?

POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONT'D)

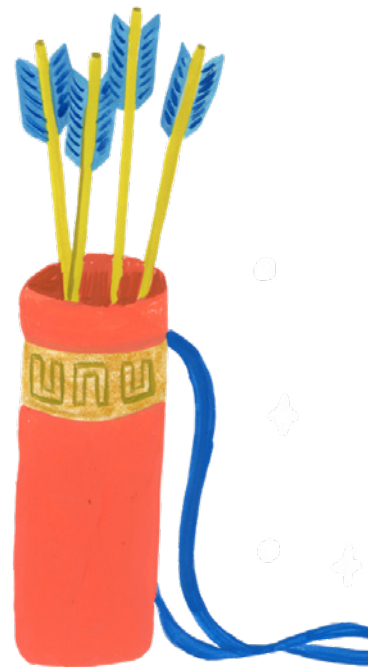
2. Did you recognize any of the female figures in this book from your own culture or religion, or from other stories you've heard or read? Even if they were not familiar to you, which goddesses did you most like, admire, or relate to? Were you more interested in rulers, warriors, or creators? If you had to choose just one goddess to build a temple for, who would it be? Why?
3. What goddess power would you like to have? Medusa's gaze that can turn someone to stone? Itzpapalotl's ability to change her appearance?
4. Goddesses are often described as protecting certain humans in particular. After your reading, who do you think would be the best patron goddess for writers? Mothers? Travelers? Artists? Nurses? Teachers? Farmers?
5. Every figure featured in this book has a fascinating story. People all over the world believe these stories to be true, and they also believe that these figures are deities who will protect or punish them. How do these stories connect with what you believe?
6. Some of these stories are very old and have endured for many years. Why do you think these stories have endured so long? What makes us keep passing on these stories?
7. Why do you think so many goddesses are described as having two dimensions: both loving and cruel? Name some examples of this duality from the book. Why is it that in many different cultures and religions, goddesses can reward you and help you, but they can also punish you?
8. Can you name some of the goddesses who seem to be mostly sinister or evil? What are their motivations? Can you understand why people would believe in, for example, a goddess of death or destruction? Would you rather be inspired by, or be fearful of, a deity?
9. Husbands, father, and sons: many goddess stories portray complicated relationships with men. Can you think of any goddesses who ruled without men at all? If you were a goddess, why would you have to take orders from anyone?



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10. Many goddesses have—or preside over—traits that reflect things that, historically, humans associated with women, such as birth, caregiving, and craftwork like spinning or weaving. Can you name a few specific examples from the book? Do you think that because human women were thought of as fitting in these roles, humans told stories about goddesses that mirrored them? Or did the goddess stories influence the behavior of human women?
11. Think of what you know about religion and religious leaders. Does it surprise you that so many cultures revere female deities? Why do you think this doesn't translate into more respect for human women? Why aren't there more women in powerful human positions in world religions?
12. From the stories in this book, it is clear that the many religions worldwide share common beliefs and overlapping elements. Using your notes if needed, give examples of common threads that cross cultures, beliefs, and time. Can you suggest some reasons for this?
13. Believers from different religions also have many things in common. What are some ways they worship their goddesses? Why do they express their devotion in these ways? How do they incorporate their worship into their daily lives? Into their yearly lives?
14. Can you suggest some reasons why humans associate goddesses with animals, nature, the sky, the earth, and celestial bodies? What are some natural events that humans might have wanted to create explanations for? Name a few of the animals and birds depicted in the book, which goddess they are associated with, and what they might symbolize.
15. Many goddess tales involve visiting the Underworld, sometimes to rescue a loved one who has died. Why do you think that's a common story theme in many cultures and religions? What are some other examples of great mysteries that goddess behavior might help humans to understand?



ACTIVITIES

WRITING

Celebrity Podcast

Imagine that you are a podcast creator who has invited a famous goddess to be interviewed on your show. Write a script for the podcast with your questions for her, and then write out your guess for her answers.

Temple Time

Choose a goddess from the book where a festival or temple is not mentioned as a way that she is worshipped, and write up a detailed proposal to give her one, suggesting what her festival and temple could be like. Art extension: make a drawing of the temple and festival.

Common Ground

Choose one of the common themes from your note-taking.

Compare or contrast three of the goddesses associated with that. What conclusions can you draw about their culture or religion from the way the theme is expressed in their story?

Lights, Camera, Action

Write the outline for a script, movie, or play with some goddesses as characters. It can be any genre or time period you'd like. How do the goddesses interact with one another? Extension: create a video trailer for your movie or play.

Gamer Goddess

Write the specs for a goddess video game. If you're studying programming, go ahead and make it! Art extension: design and create a goddess board game.

Contestants Ready?

Write questions for a Jeopardy-style game show. Use your list of common themes; choose 5 categories and then create 5 questions (and answers!) for each category.



ACTIVITIES (CONT'D)

ART

Fashion Week

Choose your favorite goddesses and sketch their garments, headwear, and other adornments. Or you could put on an actual fashion show for your class using human models!

A Bird in the Hand . . .

Design and create a poster or chart depicting some of the animals and/or birds featured in the stories. Parameters you might want to show: which goddess the animal is associated with, what they represent, or the geography of the goddess or the animal.

In the Cards

Choose a dozen or more goddesses and design trading cards for them. You can include their image, their traits, their associates, their families, what they are known for, and more.

On the Map

Use a world map, or create one, and place the 50 goddesses from the book where they belong on the map. You can draw a depiction of the goddesses, use symbols associated with them, or create your own icons. Hang the map in the classroom so everyone can visualize how widespread these female figures are!

RESEARCH AND REPORT

Choose one of the following, complete research, and write a report:

- **Her-Story:** do in-depth research on one goddess featured in the book and write her full story.
- **Into architecture?** Explore the history of a real temple that exists today (or a past temple that we have records for).
- **All in the family:** pick a parent, sibling, or child of one of the goddesses and find out more about their story.
- **It's symbolic:** choose three or more of the common symbols from the book and complete research to learn more about their cultural or religious meaning. *For example, a lotus flower, a snake, or a musical instrument.*

DISCUSSION GUIDE WRITTEN BY BOBBIE COMBS

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QUIZ

How much have you learned about these goddesses? Use the book to help you.



ATHENA

1. What are Athena's sacred symbols?
Answer:
2. Who is Athena's father?
Answer :
3. What did Athena gift to the Greek people?
Answer:

SARASVATI

7. What is Sarasvati the physical form of?
Answer:
8. Sarasvati is connected to a powerful ancient...
Answer :
9. What does Sarasvati inspire Hindus to do?
Answer:

PATTINI

4. Who was Pattini married to?
Answer:
5. What did Pattini give to her husband to sell?
Answer :
6. What is Pattini celebrated for in Sri Lanka?
Answer:

PELE

10. Where does Pele live?
Answer:
11. How did Pele arrive in Hawai'i?
Answer :
12. What type of dance is used to honor Pele?
Answer:



Answers: 1. Owl and snake, 2. Zeus, 3. Olive tree, 4. Kovalan, 5. Anklet, 6. Bravery and loyalty, 7. Knowledge, 8. River, 9. Create, think, and write, 10. Crater of volcano, 11. Fire battle, 12. Hula

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