

## FOLLOW YOUR FATES, IF YOU DARE

Those of us who grew up in the late seventies and early eighties undoubtedly have fond memories of the popular *Choose Your Own Adventure* books, an interactive fiction series in which the reader becomes part of the storyline by taking on the role of the protagonist and making choices about the main character's actions that affect the outcome of the narrative. These books simulate a role-playing game experience in a structured, storybook format, and they lend themselves well to themes involving heroes on a quest. As the story progresses, the reader is asked to make multiple decisions that lead to number of different endings. There is usually one highly successful outcome, as well as a number of pretty good, okay, and not so good, even catastrophic, endings available, depending upon the choices made by the reader.

These books are often very appealing to reluctant readers because the plots are high interest and invite them to participate actively in the story-telling process. Students can read the books over and over, yet the plot may unfold differently each time as they select different responses to each situation. Interactive fiction also works well in a group, as students can either take turns deciding what the protagonist will do next or flip a coin when a consensus can't be reached or if an element of randomness is desired.

Ed DeHoratius, a Massachusetts-based Latin and Classics teacher, first saw the potential for adapting this format to the Greek and Roman epics when he was teaching a high school course on medieval literature to a group of seniors in 2003. One of his students wrote her final project on the Black Plague in this "gamebook" format, which was very well received by her classmates (despite the fact that everyone died a horrific death). Having been inspired by this highly creative student, Ed decided a few years later to review the *Iliad*, which he had read many times, by mapping out the story into an interactive format, which he eventually shared with his students. This experience was so successful, that he decided to pursue the genre further and the result is *Follow Your Fates*, a trilogy of interactive stories based upon the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*.

The *Follow Your Fates* series is written in accessible English prose, suitable for children from ages eight on up. The series currently includes three titles, *The Wrath of Achilles* (ISBN 978-0865167087), *The Journey of Odysseus* (ISBN 978-0865167100), and the forthcoming *Exile of Aeneas* (working title, no ISBN available yet). In each book, there are multiple choices leading to multiple endings, depending on the choices made by the reader. Each volume faithfully maintains the plot of the original for the "winning" ending, while the "less successful" and even "disastrous" endings will help students come to a better understanding of the values of the ancient world of the Greeks and Romans. By reading these books and reflecting upon the consequences of each decision, students will be able to learn more about the motivations that led each hero to make the choices he did. These retellings will have a unique appeal to Web 2.0 readers: *Follow Your Fates* invites adolescent readers become part of the action, rather than mere observers on the sideline. And while books shouldn't be judged merely on the basis of their covers, many young people definitely do select reading material based on cool artwork. All three books in the trilogy have a spectacular and visually stunning comic book-style cover designed by the award-winning Brian DeLandro Hardison as

well as five dramatic black and white line art illustrations in the text. (Brian won the 2008 Comics Contest sponsored by the American Philological Association. See more of his work at <http://mythology.bolchazy.com> and at his own portfolio site <http://www.altered-ego.com>.) Middle schoolers and their teachers will also appreciate the helpful glossary appended in each volume to help them keep all the unfamiliar and strange-sounding names straight.

To find out more about the *Follow Your Fate* series, visit its official website at <http://bolchazy.com/followyourfates/>. There you will find a promotional video and colorful digital wallpapers featuring the covers of the books, as well as a link to a YouTube interview with Ed DeHoratius. You may also request more information by contacting Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers Inc., 1570 Baskin Road, Mundelein, Illinois 60060, Tel. (800) 392-6453, Fax (847) 526-2867, or by sending an email to [info@bolchazy.com](mailto:info@bolchazy.com). Hopefully, Ed will continue writing and adding more books to this series as there are certainly an endless number of plots for him to adapt from mythology and ancient literature! Perhaps this series will even inspire some interactive fiction written in Latin?