

Choose Your Own Adventure

“If you choose to indulge your anger and beat Melanthius for his insult, turn to page 79.”



Book reviewer, Jessica Lahey (above), enjoyed reading Choose-Your-Own-Adventure book titles as a child.

“If you choose to check your anger and swallow your pride, turn to page 53.”

The Journey of Odysseus

“If you choose to listen to Athena and spare Agamemnon, turn to page 38.”

“If you choose to ignore Athena and kill Agamemnon, turn to page 29.”

The Wrath of Achilles

Two recently released book titles from Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, *The Journey of Odysseus* and *The Wrath of Achilles*, capitalize on the second-person, reader-controlled narrative style popularized in the 1980s by R. A. Montgomery in his Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) series.

Readers are invited to choose outcomes at crucial moments in the narrative, thereby controlling the direction of the story.

Reviewer Jessica Lahey, a teacher at Crossroads Academy in Lyme, NH, adored the Montgomery books when she was young, so she was eager to share these titles with her students to assess how this new iteration of the CYOA genre would fare among a new generation of middle school students.

The author, Ed DeHoratius, a high school Latin and Classics teacher in Wayland, MA, found inspiration for *The Journey of Odysseus* and *The Wrath of Achilles* from the original CYOA series and a CYOA-inspired student project piloted at his institution, Wayland High School.

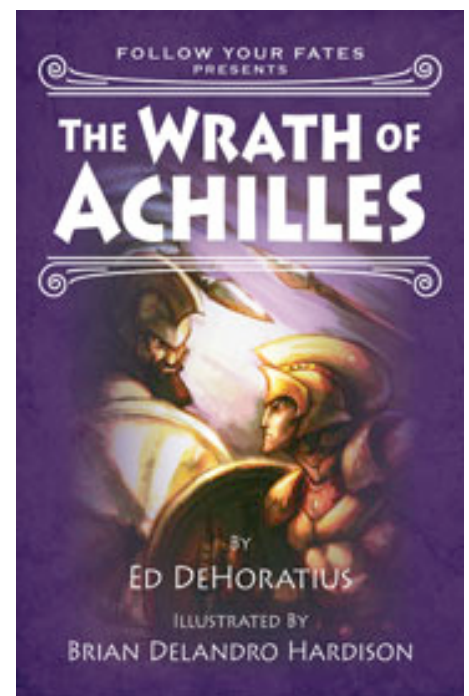
DeHoratius and his students so enjoyed the project that he embarked upon what he hopes to be a continuing series called “Follow Your Fates,” which will cull themes on the *Odyssey*, the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid*, and other tales from Greek and Roman mythology and adapt them for the CYOA template.

Lahey did find that in order to offer narrative choices to the reader, DeHoratius strayed from the narrative of the primary texts. Lahey, admittedly, was worried.

“It seemed heretical to deviate from the plot of these classic stories, but I found that these deviations make for great teaching moments, and DeHoratius’ fictional options adhere to the spirit of the original tales,” Lahey stated.

From the moment Lahey removed the books from their shipping envelope, her eager students clamored to read them.

Crossroads Academy is a core knowledge curriculum school, and as such, classical mythology plays a prominent role in Lahey’s curriculum.



Edward DeHoratius, author of *The Wrath of Achilles*, hopes to continue publishing Choose Your Own Adventures that explore other classical literature and Greek mythology.

DeHoratius' books are given an enthusiastic thumbs-up by Lahey's students; heartily recommended for readers ages 8-12

Lahey's students learn about mythology and classical civilizations from kindergarten through eighth grade.

They read *The Odyssey* in fifth grade, *The Iliad* and *The Aeneid* in sixth, and revisit these stories through their study of Latin and classical history, so these tales are familiar and much-loved territory.

"These books provided a chance for the students to travel well-worn paths in an unfamiliar and exciting new format, and as a whole, they gave DeHoratius' books an enthusiastic thumbs-up," Lahey chimed.

When Lahey queried students for feedback on the books, she expected them to balk at the fictional options offered up at each narrative intersection ("Mrs. Lahey! Achilles can't stay home from Troy!" "Mrs. Lahey! Odysseus can't just live with Circe, he has to go home to Penelope!"), but they believed DeHoratius' well-crafted fictional outcomes and eagerly read the stories over and over, exploring even the most implausible outcomes.

"Odysseus, Achilles and their heroic brethren faced personal crossroads, moments where they had to choose their destiny, and those choices were inevitably based on the cultural and personal circumstances of the classical world," Lahey noted.

Similarly, Lahey commented that readers must rely on their own cultural and personal assumptions in order to navigate the choices presented by the books.

In doing so, students are invited to walk a proverbial mile in the sandals of Odysseus and Achilles, an invitation that Lahey's middle school students found hard to resist.

Lahey noted that the two classically inspired books are recommended for ages 8 and up, but two of her students advised that they thought the books might be most appropriate for readers 8-12.

Lahey found the most telling example of the two books' addictive pull in her own experience with her son.

"In the end, my most enthusiastic reader was a fifth grader. My own fifth grader, actually," Lahey admitted.

Lahey relayed that he had been begging to read the books, so finally she voluntarily handed them over to him one night after dinner.

"At ten, my husband caught him reading under the covers by the light of a camping headlamp," Lahey continued.

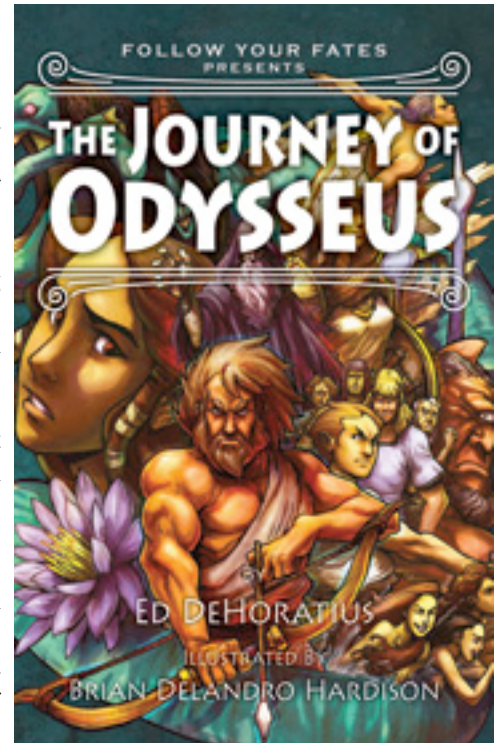
When Lahey later asked him at breakfast the next morning how he liked the books, he lifted his droopy, exhausted eyes to meet hers, and said that they were "addictive."

High praise, indeed.

Both titles can be purchased directly from the Bolchazy-Carducci website: <http://www.bolchazy.com>.

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