

The Game Study Guide

The Game by Diana Wynne Jones

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Plot Summary

The Game is a fantasy novella by award-winning author Diana Wynne Jones. The protagonist, Hayley Foss, is a young orphan girl who lives on the outskirts of London with her grandparents. Her grandmother is very strict and formal. Hayley has no memory of her parents or their deaths and her only link to them is an old wedding photograph her grandmother gave her. Hayley lives a very sheltered life and is homeschooled. She is not allowed to play with other children her own age. She cannot leave the property unless she is escorting one of the maids to the nearby town to make purchases.

During one of these excursions to town, Hayley meets two male musicians who are twins that she nicknames Flute and Fiddle. Hayley mistakes the term "musician" for "magician" and talks to each man briefly about magic. Later, Flute appears in her backyard and takes her on her first journey to the "mythosphere."

When Hayley's grandmother discovers that she is talking to the musicians and that she has traveled to the mythosphere, she accuses Hayley of "romancing" and attempting to destroy her grandfather's work. She arranges for Hayley to travel to Scotland to live with one of her aunts. Hayley is escorted by her older, cousin, Mercer, and is taken to the family guesthouse in Ireland where she meets several of her aunts and many of her young cousins. The cousins play a game of sorts that allows them to travel along strands of fables and fairytales into the mystical world of the mythosphere. Hayley is continuously warned that Uncle Jolyon cannot find out that they are playing this game or he will be very angry. Playing the game leads Hayley to the realization that her family members are actually gods and demigods.

Tollie eventually tells Uncle Mercer about the game. Mercer tells Jolyon and he comes to Ireland to punish the children for disobeying. Hayley is informed that a prophecy says that she is the only person who can stop Jolyon's iron-handed ruling of the other family members. Jolyon chases the children through the mythosphere where Hayley discovers her parents have been imprisoned by Jolyon for marrying. She helps them escape and they are reunited as a family.

With the help of her parents, Flute and Fiddle, a powerful Russian witch (who was once her grandmother's maid), and several of the cousins, Hayley stops Jolyon by turning him into the planet Jupiter and pinning him to the sky.

Once Jolyon is out of the picture, the group starts making plans. Merope and Cyrus consider going back to Greece where Cyrus was formerly King. Troy wants to go back in time and redesign the city of Troy. Harmony will continue to freely travel through the mythosphere. Aunt Aster and the giant Highlander walk down the main street in view of all of the neighbors and Troy tells Hayley that they can all do whatever they want from now on.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Hayley Foss arrives at a large family estate in Ireland. She is accompanied by her adult male cousin Mercer. Once inside the house, Hayley sees many children running around the house and several older women whom she assumes are her aunts. The children are wearing jeans and bright colored tops while Hayley is wearing a floral dress and patent leather shoes. She feels out of place, but wishes she could dress like they do.

She is introduced to all of her the cousins but the three that stand out are Tollie, an impetuous little boy who taunts her and calls her names, Troy, an older, quieter boy and Harmony, Troy's older (nearly adult) sister who Hayley initially mistook for an aunt.

After a grand dinner, most of the children want to start a game that they always play but Harmony doesn't allow it because it is dark outside and the game has to be played outdoors. The children quickly decide on a game of hide-and-seek. Hayley's Aunt May takes her to her room and helps her unpack her clothes. Aunt May asks why Hayley's grandmother had become so angry with her and Hayley admits that she really doesn't know, but that her grandmother had accused her of "romancing" and "bringing the strands here and destroying all Grandpa's work." Aunt May isn't surprised or bewildered by this information. She tells Hayley to go back downstairs and play with the other children.

Hayley goes back into the drawing room, but because she is unfamiliar with the rules of a game that can be played by more than one person, she sits on the couch and watches the others play. Tollie is the only child who is willing to speak to her and he taunts her again.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The first chapter introduces Hayley Foss, the main character and her cousins and aunts. Hayley arrives at a home in Ireland where she doesn't know anyone. She is astounded by the number of people in the house and the level of noise and confusion the children are making. This hints to the reader that Hayley has lived a more subdued lifestyle and hasn't been around a lot of people. Her clothing is also different and more formal than the other children, making her an outsider.

It is mentioned twice in the first chapter that Hayley is in disgrace, but only alludes to the fact that her grandmother has shipped her off to live with an aunt because of some obscure but unacceptable behavior. The reader is left to wonder what Hayley has done. Hayley's unfamiliarity with a common children's game further suggests that she does not belong.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Hayley is an orphan who was living with her grandparents on the outskirts of London. She is homeschooled by her very strict grandmother who demands perfection unrealized in young Hayley in virtually every aspect of her life.

Hayley's grandfather is not strict, and often allowed Hayley to "sneak" into his work rooms. Her grandfather often gives her books far beyond her years and attempts to educate her on many things that she has not learned from her grandmother's homeschooling. He shows her the mythosphere on his computer once while he was trying to determine why some of the strands (especially those relating to the golden apples) were acting differently. He answers several of her questions about the mythosphere until her grandmother storms into the room and forbids her to even think about it anymore.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Chapter two deals with Hayley's history before arriving in Ireland. The reader learns why Hayley is shy and unsure of herself. She is under the strict control of her grandmother.

Hayley is introduced to the mythosphere and the reader gets a hint of things to come when Hayley's grandfather discovers that golden apples are appearing in places that they should not be. Hayley's grandmother forbids her from having anything to do with the mythosphere and references how angry her uncle Jolyon would be if he found out.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Hayley thinks about the mythosphere constantly and it starts to take hold of her.

The newest maid, Martya, speaks very little English so Hayley accompanies her to town to get some groceries. On one such trip, Hayley and Martya see a street performer standing in the shade, playing a violin outside a bar called The Star. Martya tells Hayley that he is a musician but her thick Russian accent makes it sound like "magician." Hayley becomes fascinated by his potential magic powers.

On a later trip to town, Hayley hears the violin music from a shop where Martya is attempting to decipher the grocery list. Hayley kicks an ice cream machine and a coin falls out of it. She picks up the coin and runs out of the shop. She stops in front of the violin player and puts the coin in his open violin case. She asks the man if he is a magician and his answer is vague. He tells her he has a brother who can tell her more. His brother will be on the sunny side of the street. Martya finds Hayley and takes her back to the shop.

A few days later, Hayley's grandmother sends them to buy Hayley a new pair of shoes. Hayley gets excited because the shoe store is on the sunny side of the street and she hopes to meet the violin player's brother. While Martya is looking at shoes, Hayley leaves the store and goes around the corner to find the other musician (magician). When she finds him, she asks his name and he tells her it is whatever she wants it to be. Because he was playing a flute when she arrived, she decides to call him Flute. He uses that reference and suggests that his brother should be called Fiddle.

Martya discovers Hayley is missing and runs out of the shoe store with the wrong pair of shoes. She takes Hayley home and when Hayley's grandmother discovers that she has purchased fancy boots for herself and not sensible shoes for Hayley, Martya is fired.

Hayley begins to build "mythosphere things" in the garden in the backyard. While building one, she sees Flute standing in their garden looking at their house. She asks him if he climbed over the wall and he tells her that he did not, but will show her how he got in if she follows him. He takes her on her first journey into the mythosphere.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Because of Martya's thick accent and mispronunciation of the word "musician," Hayley becomes fascinated with two street-performers. She calls them Flute and Fiddle because of the instruments they play. They turn out to possess magical powers of sorts so Hayley asks one of them (Flute) to show her the mythosphere. He reluctantly agrees to show her a small part of it, but it is enough to firmly anchor her fascination with it.



Because Flute is in Hayley's backyard and tells her he was just wondering about the people who live in her house, the reader gets some foreshadowing of the powers that Hayley and her family possess.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Flute and Hayley play in the beginning of the mythosphere until Flute hears someone coming. They watch a young hunter approach. Hayley thinks he is handsome like an actor. Flute tells her he is Orion. Orion stalks a group of ladies as Flute and Hayley travel farther into the mythosphere. They encounter a woman who turns herself into a beautiful swan. Another hunter appears and shoots and kills the lady/swam with an arrow. Flute tells Hayley that not everything inside the mythosphere is good.

They switch to another path and encounter a young hunter training a group of puppies. Within a few minutes, an older version of the hunter and his dogs runs by them in a panic. Flute tells Hayley that he has offended a goddess.

Flute leads Hayley back to the edge of the mythosphere and tells her he must leave. She finds her way back home where she tells her grandmother about Flute and her thoughts about his magical abilities. Her grandmother gets very upset. She tells Hayley to tidy up for a meeting with Uncle Jolyon.

Hayley's grandfather and Uncle Jolyon appear to be arguing when she comes into the room but stop when they see her. The adults ignore her as she sits quietly and studies Uncle Jolyon. At the end of the meeting, she brashly accuses him of being dishonest. Uncle Jolyon left and Hayley's grandmother sent her to her room for being insolent. A little while later, her grandmother came into her room as Hayley daydreamed about the young hunter and his dogs. The boy and the dogs were actually in Hayley's room and disappeared as she was startled out of the daydream.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Hayley discovers that the mythosphere can be wondrous and dangerous at the same time. She also learns that time has no meaning there as she encountered the young hunter and his puppies and his older self with grown dogs just minutes apart.

The reader is introduced to Hayley's ability to bring a portion of the mythosphere to where she was instead of having to go where it was.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

While in the drawing room, Hayley thought back to her grandmother's abrupt overreaction. Without an explanation, her grandmother packed her suitcase, called her cousin to come and get her and locked her in her room until he arrived. As she was thinking about this, she noticed that the ceiling was leaking water. When she went to tell someone, she saw the water cascading down the staircase. There was a lot of commotion upstairs as people ran back and forth with buckets.

When Hayley goes upstairs, she is ushered into the bathroom and asked to lean out through the window and attempt to unclog the drain in one of the gutters. Hayley reluctantly agrees and is handed a flashlight (torch) and pushed through the small window. The storm is intense and the wind and rain pelts Hayley mercilessly, but she manages to crawl farther out of the window and eventually find a raw pork chop that is stuck in the bottom of the drain. Once she pulls it out, the water quickly begins to recede.

Hayley is pulled back inside and everyone regards her as a hero. Everyone, except Tollie, who looks both guilty and suspicious. The family takes her downstairs into the warm kitchen. They continue to praise and compliment her bravery.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Hayley is labeled a hero by her extended family for her bravery in the face of the dangerous storm. Her actions saved the house from much more costly damage than it already received. Hayley enjoys being the center of attention for the first time in her life.

While Hayley suspects that Tollie is the cause of the flood, she keeps his secret and does not contradict the others who have decided that a bird probably dropped the pork chop there. Her actions do not soften Tollie up to her, because she suspects that he clogged the drain so that he could unclog it and get the recognition she was awarded.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

The following day, Hayley is given some clothes that are similar to what the other children are wearing, clothes her grandmother would not have approved of. She simply brushes her hair instead of spending time being it just perfect as her grandmother would have done. At breakfast, she chooses a chocolate flavored cereal and several fried items over the porridge she was accustomed to eating every morning.

As cousin Mercer attends to the wet carpets and the water-stained ceilings, the children decide to play the game. Harmony is in charge of the game and sets up a different tag where each child will start and passes out cards that tell the children what they are to do. Since Hayley has not played before, she is paired with Troy. Harmony starts a timer and the game begins. Hayley and Troy's card tells them to bring back a scale from the dragon circling the Zodiac. They enter the mythosphere and Troy tells her that the entire family is able to do this.

Hayley and Troy follow several strands until they find the dragon. Troy grabs one of the stars that the dragon is made of and they hurry back to the house with it. They arrive just ahead of the other children and they are declared the winner of the game. Because Hayley is new,, she is awarded the price of a golden apple.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Hayley is allowed to make choices for herself. She makes several decisions that her grandmother would not like. She is starting to show her independence while at the same time, being accepted into the family.

The reader learns that all of the members of Hayley's family have the ability to enter the mythosphere at will. Where they enter determines what strand they will be on, but Tollie can jump onto other people's strands, so each of the others should possess similar abilities.

A golden apple is awarded to Hayley for winning the game. Troy tells her that he has won the game a hundred times suggesting that there are at least a hundred golden apples outside of their original strand. These apples were a cause for Hayley's grandfather's concern when she first discovered the mythosphere.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Hayley starts to have fun with the family. The other children teach her the rules to several indoor games and they even attempt to teach her how to swim during a trip to the ocean. They also travel to the mythosphere practically every morning and Hayley begins to learn more and more about it. It's discovered the Tollie told Mercer about the game, so the children decide to do it one last time before stopping. Each child is allowed to set their own starting point for the final game. Hayley and Troy draw a card that tells them to bring back a golden apple from the Orchard of Hesperides. Troy comments that he has never seen that particular card before.

While in the mythosphere, Hayley and Troy get separated. She walks on alone and sees a man on a tractor attempting to climb a hill. Each time he nears the crest, the tractor slid back down forcing him to start again. She continues her journey through mountains and valleys and green pastures. She sees a huge woman made of stone who looks exactly like her grandmother and runs away from her. Hayley eventually encounters her grandfather and his "other family" that her grandmother referred to when he was traveling. Her grandfather is actually Atlas and his other family was made up his seven daughters, the Pleiades (Seven Stars), five of whom are in the garden with him. Hayley's mother, Merope, was also one of the Seven Stars and she had married a mortal man. Hayley tells him that she has to pick a golden apple from the garden and he sends her off with two of his daughters. They take her to the edge of the garden and advise her to go to the edge of the mythosphere is anything goes wrong.

Hayley goes into the garden and attempts to pick an apple. The dragon guardian is wrapped around the tree that she is nearest until he reveals himself to her.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Hayley is constantly warned that Uncle Jolyon won't like it if he discovers that they are playing a game inside of the mythosphere. Tollie tells his father, Mercer, who will be obligated to tell his father, Jolyon. The reader is left to wonder what type of punishment Jolyon will give to the children for disobeying the rules. Whatever the punishment will be, it does not deter them from going into the mythosphere one more time.

The card that Troy and Hayley draw is as old and used as the other cards, but Troy has never seen it before. This, added to the fact that Harmony gives out golden apples as prizes, suggest that she has been using the card when she enters the mythosphere and has been collecting the apples herself.

Hayley encounters a man on a tractor, her grandmother's image in stone and her grandfather and five of her aunts. She learns that her family, including her mother, is actually Greek gods and demigods.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

The dragon tells Hayley that she is not allowed to take a golden apple. He moves closer to her and suddenly recognizes her from when she and Troy took one of his scales in an earlier game. She feels threatened and wills her body to the edge of the mythosphere. She finds herself in another orchard and is able to pick a golden apple, but the dragon hears her and starts toward her. Hayley turns herself into a comet and whizzes through the constellations and past the planets until she reaches earth again.

The sun's gravity pulls Hayley toward it. While attempting to escape a burning death, she encounters Flute. Flute scolds her for taking one of his golden apples. He knows that she also carries the golden apple that she won as a prize during her first game. Flute tells her that the apples aren't free and for payment, he demands a star from Orion's bow. She agrees to get one for him. Flute sends her back to earth where she (her comet-self) melts and she turns back into a human girl.

She is lost in the dark when Fiddle appears and tells her which strand to take to get home. He tells her that he and Flute are twins and they take turn standing in the sun.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Hayley is able to obtain another golden apple and adds it to the one she already has. Flute confirms that Harmony has been taking apples and hints to their power to allow a person to be everywhere at once. She agrees to obtain a star from Orion's bow in exchange for the second golden apple.

She discovers her ability to will herself to different parts of the mythosphere. She gets stronger inside of the mythosphere and physically changes herself into a comet



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Hayley learns that her uncle Jolyon is having people tortured inside of the mythosphere who offend him. She encounters a man pushing a boulder up a hill. When he gets the boulder almost to the top, he loses control of it and it rolls all the way back down where he must start again. Hayley asks Fiddle if anything can be done to stop Jolyon and he tells her that a seer prophesized that someone could stop him, they just didn't know who yet. Fiddle leaves and Hayley continues walking out of the mythosphere. She walks through a prison and into a large office where a man is working frantically to edit and copy papers from his massive in-box. Each time he nears the bottom of the in-ox, a woman brings him an equally large pile. She recognizes the man from the wedding photograph of her parents and asks his name. He tells her it is Cyrus Foss and she introduces herself as his daughter. He tells her that her mother is also alive but on a different strand.

Unable to help him, Hayley takes another strand and arrives back home. She sees Tollie about to win the game, so she rushes to Harmony and shows her the golden apple, beating Tollie. Troy appears and tells Hayley that he got lost so he came home and heard Uncle Mercer talking on the phone to Uncle Jolyon about the children playing the game. Uncle Jolyon didn't know Hayley was there and was very angry and was coming to punish her. The family quickly gets her things packed and tries to get her to Scotland, her original destination. Just before they can leave, Uncle Jolyon arrives.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Hayley meets her father who is undergoing a punishment of a lifetime of repetition. Hayley has seen him before in the mythosphere, although at different time periods. He is also the man on the tractor attempting to climb the hill and the man trying to push the boulder up the hill. He is being punished by Jolyon for marrying Merope. Uncle Jolyon's control and punishment of anyone who offends him is made clear to Hayley. She is afraid of what he will do to her so she agrees to run away.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The children decide to escape by using a science-fiction strand in the mythosphere. They find a time machine and get transported two days into the future when Hayley can catch a plane to Scotland. They hope that Jolyon will look for them for two days and then give up. They board the plane without incident. Hayley asks Troy why she is supposed to stay with her grandparents. He tells her that a seer prophesized that if your father and mother were to marry, their child would have the power to strip all of Uncle Jolyon's powers away. Because of this, he ordered that none of the family be allowed to enter the mythosphere again and we were to live like normal people. He imprisoned Hayley's parents and took her to live with her grandparents.

When they land, they go to their Aunt Ellie's house and discover that another aunt, Aster, has been having an affair with the ghost of a Highlander named Ryan. The family tries to keep them apart, but the Highlander shows up and takes Aunt Aster away. Hayley discovers that Ryan is really Orion and she is able to steal one of the stars from his bow. Soon after, Uncle Jolyon arrives. He is so focused on keeping Aster and Orion apart that he ignores the children allowing them to escape.

Chapter 10 Analysis

In this chapter, Hayley learns that she is the one that can strip Uncle Jolyon of his powers. Once in Scotland, Hayley meets Orion and is able to secure one of the stars from his bow as payment to Flute for the golden apple.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Hayley, Harmony and Troy follow the strands of the mythosphere to a group of trees. They find a group of Maenads, crazed women who kill men. The women are covered in wine and blood and were screaming and singing at the same time. The children hide in the trees, but the women smell Troy and they capture him. Martya, the maid who was instrumental in Hayley meeting Flute and Fiddle, arrives and tells Hayley that her mother is one of the Maenads. She also tells Hayley that the only thing that will distract the Maenads from killing Troy is golden apples. Hayley throws her golden apples at them and Troy escapes. Martya takes Hayley to her mother, but Merope does not recognize Hayley at first. Hayley tells her mother that her father is still alive and only she can save him. Fiddle and Flute show up just as Uncle Jolyon's taxi arrives.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Hayley discovers that her mother's punishment for marrying a mortal man was to become a Maenad, a crazy woman who kills mortal men. Hayley wakes her mother out of her insanity by telling her that they can save Cyrus. This suggests that love conquers all.

The reader is reintroduced to Martya in the mythosphere, but it is unclear what Martya's powers are. Flute, Fiddle, Martya, Hayley, Harmony, and Merope all band together save Cyrus.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

When Uncle Jolyon's taxi arrives, Martya helps Hayley, Troy, Harmony, Fiddle, and Merope escape. She commands her hut to grow legs and carry them away. The hut travels through the mythosphere, through forests, deserts, across roads and through industrial complexes. It eventually crashes through a wall in a building. Flute, Hayley and Merope leave the hut and enter the building in search of Hayley's father Cyrus. When they find him, his guard, a woman continuously feeding him piles of paper to work on, won't allow him to leave. Merope admits to being the daughter of Atlas and commands that all of the unjustly held prisoners be released. During the ensuing chaos, the group escapes back to the hut with Cyrus in tow.

Martya commands the hut to leave, but it is blocked by Uncle Jolyon's taxi. He tells them that they will all be punished for disobeying him. Flute signals to Hayley to retrieve the star from Orion's bow that she has hidden in her pocket. After Uncle Jolyon threatened everyone with pain and punishment, he demanded Hayley come forth. Flute and Fiddle raised her up to him and she Hayley pushed the star into his chest. He made a strange noise and began to spread out becoming larger and larger. He turned into a spinning globe and became the planet Jupiter.

The group returned to the forest in Martya's hut. Flute and Fiddle told Hayley that a new strand had been created in the mythosphere and they had to switch places with each other and leave. Each of the group makes plans for how they will live their lives now that Uncle Jolyon is no longer in charge.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Hayley finally fulfills her prophesy of stopping Jolyon. She releases her family from his cruel bounds while rescuing her parents and reuniting her own family. Hayley has found acceptance in this world and within the mythosphere and in doing so has grown as both a human and a demigod.

The last line, "We can all do what we want to do. At last!" gives the reader the hint that perhaps the demigods of today will be as self-destructive as they were in mythology.



Characters

Hayley Foss

Hayley is a young girl who has lived a very sheltered life under the rule of her strict grandmother. Hayley is the daughter of Merope (one of the astronomical seven sisters) and Sisyphus (Cyrus Foss) a former king of ancient Greece. It is prophesized that she has the power to stop her cruel, power-hungry uncle Jolyon from his dictatorship over the rest of the family. She turns him into the planet Jupiter and frees the family from his tyranny. Hayley's name is a reference to Halley's Comet.

Harmony

Harmony is Hayley's cousin and Troy's sister. She is college-aged and initially Hayley mistook her for one of the aunts. Harmony is in charge of the game and is the most skilled of the cousins at traversing the mythosphere. In Greek mythology Harmonia (Harmony) is the daughter of Jupiter (Uncle Jolyon) and Electra.

Troy

Troy is Hayley's eldest male cousin. He is level headed and commands the respect of the other children. Troy is paired with Hayley on her initial journeys into the mythosphere. In Greek mythology Troy is the son of Jupiter (Uncle Jolyon) and Electra. He builds the city of Troy and becomes its first king.

Tollie

Tollie is Hayley's youngest male cousin and closest to her own age. He is temperamental and mischievous. He takes an immediate disliking to Hayley when she arrives in Ireland. Troy often cheats at the game and threatens to tell Uncle Jolyon about the game if he doesn't get his own way. In Greek mythology, Autolycus (Tollie) is the son of Mercury (Mercer). He is a trickster and thief and quite ill-tempered.

Flute and Fiddle

Flute and Fiddle are twin brothers who take turns standing in the sunlight. Flute gives Hayley her initial taste of the mythosphere and is the indirect cause for Hayley's abrupt departure to Ireland.



Uncle Jolyon

Uncle Jolyon is the patriarch of the family, most of whom are afraid of him and his potential punishments for disobedience. Because it is prophesized that Hayley will have the power to stop him, he imprisons her parents and sends her to live with her grandmother who is under strict orders to keep her away from magic and the mythosphere. In Greek mythology Jupiter (Uncle Joylon) is the chief God. He is also known as Zeus.

Cousin Mercer

Cousin Mercer is the only male (uncle) from his generation in the novella. He is Uncle Jolyon's son. In Greek mythology Mercury is the son of Jupiter (Uncle Joylon) and Maia. He is the messenger of the gods.

Grandpa

Hayley's grandfather is not as strict as her grandmother. He is a kind old man who busies himself with world affairs and disappears from time to time for extended periods. Hayley's grandmother says he is visiting "his other family." Hayley later discovers that he is Atlas and is destined to carry the weight of the world on his shoulders. In Greek mythology Atlas marries Hespera (Hayley's grandmother) and they have five daughters (some of the aunts in the Ireland homestead).

Grandma

Hayley's grandmother is a very strict and uptight old woman. She is Hayley's guardian and becomes quite upset when she learns that Hayley is "romancing" or telling stories about the mythosphere. To save herself from Uncle Joylon's wrath, Hayley's grandmother sends her to Scotland (by way of Ireland) to live with an aunt (one of the grandmother's five daughters). In Greek mythology Hayley's grandmother represents Hespera, the wife of Atlas.

Cyrus Foss

Cyrus Foss is Hayley's mortal father. He was the King of ancient Greece (he was called Sisyphus at this point) and married Merope, one of the seven sisters. In Greek mythology Sisyphus is punished by having to push a boulder up a hill only to have it roll back down to the bottom each time he neared the peak.

Merope

Merope is Hayley's mother. She married a mortal man (Cyrus). Merope is a Pleiade, one of the seven sister stars near the Great Bear constellation.



Objects/Places

MYTHOSPHERE

The mythosphere is a magical realm made up of strands that are created from myths, fables, legends, and stories. Anything is possible in the mythosphere if you travel along the correct strand. The mythosphere can also be very dangerous. The game that the children play to enter this magical realm is never played at night.

STARS / CONSTELLATIONS / PLANETS

This novella is filled with references to stars, constellations, planets and astronomical bodies. Orion, the Seven Sisters, Jupiter, comets and the constellations representing the signs of the zodiac all play major roles in the story.

GENERATIONS

There are at least three generations of gods and demigods within the story. Grandfather, grandmother, and Uncle Jolyon belong to one, the aunts belong to the next and the cousins and Hayley belong to the last.

GREEK MYTHOLOGY

This novella is mired in veiled references to Greek mythology. The characters are gods or demigods trying to live normal human lives.

GOLDEN APPLE

Golden Apples are appearing in places that they aren't meant to be. Hayley's grandfather notices this but is unable to explain why. He is unaware of the game that the youngest generation is playing and their role in stealing the apples.



Themes

Self Discovery

Hayley Foss is a timid little girl who has been sheltered away from the real world for centuries. She is shy and often unsure of herself. Her grandmother makes her believe that she is incapable of doing anything other than watch an occasional cartoon on television and try desperately to paint inside of the lines. Even her grandfather unwittingly adds to Hayley's feelings of inadequacy by giving her books to read that are far beyond her mortal years.

Hayley angers her grandmother in a way that she doesn't even understand and is forced to leave England and live with relatives (although still strangers) in Ireland. She considers herself in "disgrace." Becoming accepted by her older cousins and championed by most of the family (with the exception of Tollie) for unclogging the drain gives Hayley confidence and self-assurance that centuries of living under the control of her strict grandmother had stripped from her.

Hayley's destruction of Uncle Jolyon and her role in reuniting her parents is the ultimate self-discovery for who she is and what she can do in the future.

Belonging / Acceptance

Hayley initially feels like an outsider when she meets her extended family. She helps unclog a roof drain during a major rain storm and is immediately accepted into the family because she saved the old house (castle) from major water damage. Each trip into the mythosphere brings her closer to the members of her inner circle and they begin to trust her power and intuition. While younger than everyone else in the group, Hayley quickly becomes their savior and rescues them from the tyrannical Uncle Jolyon.

By the end of the novella, Hayley feels that she belongs in her reunited immediate family and her extended family and that she belongs in (and to) the mythosphere. The strand that Flute and Fiddle refer to at the end is one that Hayley created.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the third-person limited point of view of Hayley Foss. The point of view of this novel allows the reader to connect closely with Hayley through both exposition and her actual thoughts. The reader cares what happens to her.

Setting

The novella is set primarily in the modern times at a family estate in Ireland. The secondary setting is a series of fictional worlds known as the mythosphere. There are two groups of characters. The main characters are a group of children made up of Hayley and her cousins. The supporting group is made up of great aunts and uncles and grandparents. The timeframe is not specifically dated, but references to television programs such as Tom & Jerry, automobiles, and commercial airlines lend it to modern times.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. The supernatural existence of the mythosphere and veiled references to the mythology of ancient Greece leave the reader wondering if the gods and demigods of today will be as self-destructive as they were in ancient mythology.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novella is easy to understand and is appropriate to the plot because it is accurate to the age of the main characters in the novel and to the fantasy setting. Although there are many implied references to Greek Mythology, they do not complicate the plot with unfamiliar or unexplained terminology.

Structure

The novel is divided into twelve chapters of varying lengths. The chapters tell the story both in exposition and dialogue.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows the group of children as they explore the mythosphere. One subplot follows Uncle Jolyon's anger and attempted retribution for the family's disobedience and another subplot follows Hayley's discovery of her parents, still alive, in the mythosphere and her attempts to save them.



Quotes

"[Hayley] wanted to leap on Tollie and pull pieces of him—ears, fingers, hair, she scarcely cared which, so long as they came away with lots of blood—but, luckily, at that moment a large lady bustled up and enfolded Hayley against her big soft bosom hung with many hard strings of beads" (Chapter 1, p. 5).

"Grandma disapproved of running and shouting and laughing and singing as well as painting outside the line" (Chapter 2, p. 17).

"Being ordered to forget about the mythosphere was like being ordered not to think of a blue elephant" (Chapter 3, p. 26).

"'He managed to be really offensive to a goddess,' Flute told her. 'Things like this happen on every strand, you know. The mythosphere is not an entirely happy place'" (Chapter 4, p. 47).

"[H]er fingers were clamped round a pork chop. It was large. It was raw, and whitish with waterlogging, and sort of triangular, but there was no doubt what it was. It was almost exactly the right size and shape to block a drain" (Chapter 5, p. 65).

"Our family belongs to the mythosphere, didn't you know" (" (Chapter 6, p. 77).

"Hayley was just below it when the clouds suddenly smoked away from the rocky nose, for a moment unveiling piercing eyes and a stern mouth. Hayley nearly screamed. It looked exactly like Grandma's face made of stone" (Chapter 7, p. 94).

"Hayley discovered that being a comet was more fun than she had ever had in her life. She zoomed along, laughing" (Chapter 8, p. 105).

"This was the way the mythosphere worked. Things got harsher and stranger the farther out you were in it" (Chapter 9, p. 117).

"'Ryan!' Hayley thought. 'That's it!' 'Not Ryan,' she said. 'His name's Orion'" (Chapter 10, p. 148" (Chapter

"It was screaming, but it was singing too - very bad, discordant singing, as if a large

choir of ladies had each decided to sing a different song as loudly as they could."
(Chapter 11, p. 154).

"See that, Hayley?" Troy said. "This is what happens now you've pinned Uncle Jolyon to the sky. We can all do what we want to do. At last" (Chapter 12, p. 176).



Topics for Discussion

What is the mythosphere? What do the strands that make it up represent?

Discuss the importance of the relationship Hayley develops with members of her extended family. Why is it important that Hayley was the one who unclogged the drain?

Discuss how Hayley begins to change once she reaches Ireland (in appearance and in attitude). Why are these changes important to the theme?

What significance does Martya have in Hayley's introduction to the mythosphere?

Name the constellations that are referenced during Hayley's trips through the mythosphere.

What names does Hayley give the two musicians/magicians she meets in town? What is their relationship to each other? How do they differ?

What are the rules of the game? How does someone cheat in the game? What is the significance of the starting markers?

What significance does the boy and his puppies and later the older (same) boy and his (same) dogs have in the mythosphere?

What is Hayley told about Uncle Jolyon's wishes for the mythosphere? What does she discover happens to those who offend or disobey him?

What powers does Martya possess?

Why do Flute and Fiddle change places at the end? What strand has been created?

What conclusions can you make about the way the members of Hayley's extended family will behave and the choices that they are predisposed to make?