

Dimokritos Tsoukapas

# Sky Tales

exploring the stars  
and the universe

Illustration  
*Nikos Polychronopoulos*



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Illustration: Nikos Polychronopoulos

Translation: Sofia Lazoura

Editing: Janet Birdsall

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**ZITI PUBLICATIONS - Π. ΖΗΤΗ & ΣΙΑ ΙΚΕ**

18th km Thessaloniki-Peraia

P.O. Box 4171 • Peraia-Thessaloniki 570 19, Greece

Tel.: +30 2392.072.222 - Fax: +30 2392.072.229 • e-mail: info@ziti.gr



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**F**or thousands of years, ancient Greek children have listened to tales from the Sky.

Beyond the mystery and fantasy that these stories held, they were also full of countless truths.

Through the stories of Perseus, Andromeda, Cassiopeia, the Little Bear and the Big Dipper, children learnt about the sky and its stars, the planets, the star signs, the galaxy and the comets...

Greek mythology has a wealth of ancient stories from a magical world that take us back to the enchanting beginning of the universe.

Stories of gods, heroes and mythical beings, all surrounded with the infinite light of the stars.

It's time for us to discover the tales of the ancient Greeks, to learn about distant galaxies, red giants, black holes and the billions of stars that grace our dreams every night.





# The Gods of Olympus



*Hera and Zeus*



**M**any years ago, high up among the peaks of Mount Olympus, lived the **twelve gods**.

The **king** of the gods was **Zeus**, who held a lightning bolt in his hand! His wife was **Hera**, who was very jealous of him because he was full of mischief!

Zeus had two brothers, Poseidon and Pluto. When the three of them drew lots to share the power of the world, **Poseidon's** prize was to become the **God of the sea**. He always held a trident (a three-prong spear) in his hand.

*Poseidon*





## Selene (The Moon)

*Selene meets Endymion*

**S**elene was believed to be the **Goddess of the night** and she was Helios's daughter (Helios was the personification of the Sun). One night she saw a young man sleeping in a cave on Mount Latmos. She approached him and fell in love with him immediately. This young man's name was Endymion and he was a mortal. Selene, who was passionately in love with him, begged Zeus to make him immortal so she could see him every night. Zeus agreed on condition that Endymion slept eternally so that he could stay young forever. Selene and Endymion had fifty children who nowadays we believe represent the fifty **lunar months** that intervene between two Olympiads.

**The Moon orbits the Earth** in about 28 days and is our planet's **natural satellite**. Depending on the position it has in relation to the Sun, sometimes it shines less and other times it shines more. That is why sometimes it looks like a small finger nail, and other times it is a half moon or even a full round moon. When the moon is exactly opposite the Sun we have what we call a **full moon**.







## The Galaxy (The Milky Way)

**If, on a summer's night,** we happen to be somewhere where there are not many lights and we look at the night sky, apart from the thousands of stars we will be able to discern a faint and **bright river** (the well-known Milky Way) that runs through the vault of heaven. This bright river is part of our **galaxy** and derives from the light of millions of stars that are faraway and are not visible to the naked eye.

The night sky we see is mostly empty of stars. This is because the stars are not scattered all over the universe, but clustered in areas. These areas are what we call '**galaxies**'. Just as we have big and small countries on Earth, in a similar way there are big and small galaxies in the universe. Each and every galaxy consists of millions of stars and all the universe contains billions of such galaxies.

## A few words about the author and the illustrator

**Dimokritos Tsoukapas** was born in Serres and has three daughters. He studied Economics in the school of Higher Industrial Studies of Thessaloniki (nowadays known as The University of Macedonia).

He has been an author for fifteen years.

In addition to writing historical and satirical novels, he is also involved in the theatre. In 2012 he received the first Panhellenic prize for theatrical work with his satirical drama 'Yunan' that was successfully performed by the experimental team of the Municipal District Theatre of the Northern Aegean. He has written the one-act plays 'The Elderly Women', 'The Handcuffs', 'The Jellyfish' and 'The Coquette' as well as the satirical drama 'Karyon' that was performed by an amateur cast. He adapted two works; Molière's 'Doctor in Spite of Himself' and Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet'. His book 'Forty Essays and One Letter' has been published by Ziti publications.

A keen devotee of the starry sky, he has contributed articles to various astronomy journals and papers.

His work 'Sky Tales' is his first experience of writing children's literature.

He lives permanently in Perea, Thessaloniki.

### *Contact the author:*

**E-mail:** dimokritos14@yahoo.gr

**Facebook:** el-gr.facebook.com/pages/Δημόκριτος-Τσουκάπας/296373717072828

'I was born in Piraeus on the 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1992. The world accepted me generously... I accepted the world in turn... in this way I really came into the world'.

**Nikos Polychronopoulos** attended the 1<sup>st</sup> Vocational School of Piraeus. Now he is a fourth-year university student in the Department of Visual and Applied Arts at Florina, a beautiful, colourful town in Northern Greece.

In addition to drawing, he is also involved in the creation of comics and the writing of their content as well as graphic art and three-dimensional computer graphics.

### *Contact the illustrator:*

**E-mail:** nikolaos-p@hotmail.com