Beauty’s Daughter: The Story of Hermione and Helen of Troy

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Building on ancient Greek myth, Carolyn Meyer recounts the story of King Menelaus and Queen Helen of Sparta, the most beautiful woman in the world. Hermione, their daughter, describes the pain of the desertion and abandonment of her mother, when Helen sails to Troy with her new lover, Prince Paris, and takes her other child, Pleisthenes, and all her husband’s gold with her. Hermione stows away on one of her father’s ships, not imagining that it would take ten years of horrific battles for Menelaus and his allies to reclaim Helen from Troy. Woven throughout the book are Greek gods and goddesses doing their best to help or thwart the lives of mere mortals. After the war, Hermione is not permitted to be with Orestes, the man that she loves. When she hears of his difficulties, however, she undertakes a dangerous journey to find him that will tempt the gods.

Carolyn Meyer is an experienced, successful historical fiction author of books for children and youth. In this book, she successfully depicts life in ancient Greece and attempts to tie events and mythological characters together in this imaginative tale. However, the title of the book Beauty’s Daughter: The Story of Hermione and Helen of Troy, is misleading as the book has little to do with Helen. The depiction of her daughter, though the most developed character in the book, is not fully three dimensional either. Between books one and two, ten years of Hermione’s important teen age years elapse. Instead of taking this opportunity to fully create this character, the book jumps ahead to a grown up Hermione that the reader may not recognize. However, the cover of the book is beautifully done and the book may be of interest to those who have an interest in the stories of ancient Greece and its gods.

*Contains violence, abuse, and sexual content including prostitution and rape.