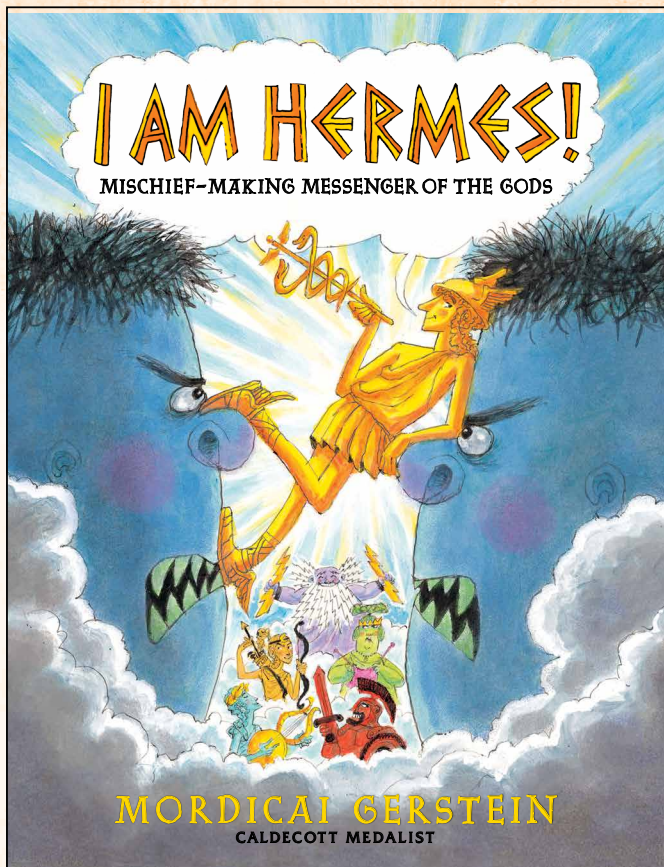


# HOLIDAY HOUSE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Grades  
3–7



HC: 978-0-8234-3942-3 · PB: 978-0-8234-4674-2 · E-book: 978-0-8234-4203-4

## I AM HERMES!

*Mischief-Making  
Messenger of the Gods*  
by Mordicai Gerstein

- ★ “Distinct art and side-splitting dialogue . . . stellar”—*School Library Journal*, Starred Review
- ★ “[A] winning comics-style look at Hermes.”—*Shelf Awareness*, Starred Review
- ★ “Bright, noisy, fast-moving stories . . . rich with interior monologue, gossip, and prevarication.”

—*The Horn Book*, Starred Review

### ABOUT THE BOOK

At birth, Hermes, son of Zeus and the nymph Maia, says his first word: “Gimme!” In this brilliant, hilarious graphic novel about the mischievous, fun-loving messenger of the gods, Caldecott Medalist Mordicai Gerstein transports classical mythology to the 21st century.

### PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Study the endpapers of the book. How do the illustrations of the Olympian gods clearly define who they are and what they represent? Discuss the word “messenger”. Then explain Hermes’ role. Write a paragraph that discusses how his job is the most important of all the gods.

### CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

**Character Introduction**—How does Gerstein use the title page to introduce Hermes?

**Setting**—How does the first double-page spread reveal the setting? Describe Mount Olympus. How does the cloud that surrounds it indicate the height of the mountain? What is the building at the top of Mount Olympus?



HolidayHouse.com



#IAmHermes!



**Tone**—How are the cartoon-style illustrations appropriate for a book about a mischievous god? What is Hermes' first act of mischief? How does this set the tone for the remainder of the book? Explain how he keeps up his mischievous ways throughout his life. How does Lynx have the same traits as her grandpa Hermes? There are some very humorous parts to Hermes' story. How do the illustrations and text work together to communicate humor? What is the most amusing of all of Hermes' tricks?

**Structure**—Explain the structure of the book. Why is it divided into two parts? Think about each chapter title. How does each chapter or section title describe what happens next in Hermes' story?

**Visual Interpretation**—Zeus, Hermes' father, is the king and the god of thunder. He is presented as a giant. How is his size appropriate for his title?

**Conflict**—Discuss how Hermes fools his parents. Apollo, Hermes' older brother, introduces the infant Hermes to various members of the family. Discuss the

gifts he receives from each of them. How does Hermes trick Apollo? At what point does Zeus recognize that his son Hermes is a liar and a thief? Why does he think it's time for his son to grow up? How does Pan, the son of Hermes, grow up as quickly as his father?

**Hyperbole**—In the author's note, Gerstein says that he has embellished some of the stories about Hermes. What parts are likely embellished? How might Hermes approve of such embellishments?

**Dialogue**—Point out dialogue that makes the story more contemporary. How does this demonstrate the timeless nature of the Greek gods?

**Movement and Change**—Hermes' story is presented as a graphic novel. How do the illustrations and dialogue balloons give the impression of movement? How does Gerstein use the spaces between the panels to indicate change? Discuss how the wordless frames, or panels, build upon the text.

## ACTIVITIES

- Read about the ancient Olympic games ([olympic.org/ancient-olympic-games](http://olympic.org/ancient-olympic-games)). Greece is always the first country in the parade of nations to march into the Olympic stadium. Write a one-page paper that explains the significance of this place of honor.
- Consider Hermes and his contribution to sports. Design a flag that pays tribute to Hermes that might be used in the Olympic games.
- Hermes knew all the gossip about the other gods. Research one of the gods featured on the endpapers. Then write some gossip that a contemporary Hermes might post on what could have been his newest invention, the Internet. Visit [HolidayHouse.com](http://HolidayHouse.com) to print a downloadable poster of the gods for easy reference.
- Learn about the characteristics of a fable. Hermes gives Aesop the gift of telling stories. Why are Aesop's stories categorized as fables? Read one of Aesop's fables in a library book or on the Internet. Then create a one-frame cartoon that best illustrates the fable. Write the moral of the story at the bottom of the cartoon.
- Create a family tree for Hermes, beginning with Zeus, the god of thunder, and the nymph Maia. One of the templates found at the following website may be helpful: [familytreetemplates.net/category/kids](http://familytreetemplates.net/category/kids)
- At the end of the book, the gods retire and find new careers. Select two of the gods and write a one-page paper that discusses their qualifications for their new lines of work.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Mordicai Gerstein (1935–2019)** is the author and illustrator of *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers*, winner of the Caldecott Medal. Four of his books have been named *New York Times* Best Illustrated Books of the Year. As a child, Gerstein was inspired by reproductions of fine art that his mother cut out of *Life* magazine and by children's books from the library: "I looked at Rembrandt and Superman, Matisse and Bugs Bunny, and began to make my own pictures." After attending Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, he was hired by an animated cartoon studio, where he designed characters and thought up ideas for TV commercials.

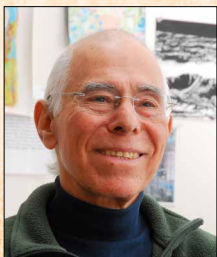


Photo Credit: Jerome Renault

