"Words like 'epic,' 'sweeping,' and 'romantic' might have been designed with Julie Berry's Lovely War in mind."
-Shelf Awareness, starred review

[A] triumphant piece of historically focused fiction...a moving, brutal, and, yes, lovely story of the ways in which people find hope in a world gone mad."
-Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

"Berry's evocative novel...gains steam as the stories flesh out. Along the way, it suggests that while war and its devastation cycles though history, the forces of art, and love remain steady, eternal, and life-sustaining."
-Publishers Weekly, starred review

"Scheherazade has nothing on Berry...An unforgettable romance so Olympian in scope, human at its core, and lyrical in its prose that it must be divinely inspired."
-Kirkus Reviews, starred review

"Poignant...will make readers, by turns, laugh, cry, and swoon."
-The Horn Book, starred review

"Proves again that Berry is one of our most ambitious writers. Happily for us, that ambition so often results in great success."
-Booklist, starred review
Glowing Praise from:

The New York Times
The Washington Post
COSMOPOLITAN
US WEEKLY
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY
Entertainment WEEKLY
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
Winner of the 2020 Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators Golden Kite Award

Winner of the 2019 Southern California Independent Booksellers Association Young Adult Award

Nominated for the 2019 Whitney Awards
In Lovely War, a jealous Hephaestus lays a trap for cheating wife Aphrodite and her lover—his brother, Aries—in a New York hotel room. The year is 1942, and against the backdrop of man-made devastation on a global scale, the God of Fire demands that Love and War stand trial for their crimes against him. In her defense, Aphrodite says she is incapable of true love herself and offers two tales of love as evidence: those of Hazel and James and Collette and Aubrey, two couples whose lives and relationships were defined by the Great War. The goddess turns over the authorial voice to other gods as they offer testimony about the parts of the story they influenced—Aries in war, Apollo in art, and Hades in death.

“There really was divine inspiration,” Berry says, referring to the pantheon of divine narrators she introduced into the narrative. “I realized I needed a nonhuman perspective.”

As the trial drags on and the gods weave their tale, an overarching question hangs above them all like the sword of Damocles. “This really is a story about whether true love can overcome brokenness,” Berry says, “about whether love is still even viable in this modern, nuclearized world. Personally, I don’t think I could begin to answer that question in anything other than a 400-page book.”

Interviewed by James Feder, December 3, 2018
“Berry’s evocative novel starts slow but gains steam as the stories flesh out. Along the way, it suggests that while war and its devastation cycles through history, the forces of art and love remain steady, eternal, and life-sustaining.”

Berry (The Passion of Dolssa) brings to life wartime horrors and passions with commentary from Olympian gods in this love story filled with vivid historical detail. To show her husband, Hephaestus, the real meaning of love and its connection to war and art, Aphrodite (with the help of Apollo, Hades, and Ares) tells the emotion-packed WWI saga of two besotted couples drawn together by music and war: British pianist Hazel and soldier James; African-American jazz musician Aubrey and Colette, a Belgian war orphan with a remarkable singing voice. After James reports to duty, Hazel follows, taking a wartime volunteer position in France. There, she meets Colette, who is still reeling from her wartime losses, and introduces her to Aubrey, who quickly steals Colette’s heart. James and Aubrey witness horrors on and off the battlefield, and Hazel and Colette cling to each other during the best of times, such as when Hazel has the opportunity for a brief reunion with James, and the worst, as when Aubrey goes missing. Ages 12-up.
In the middle of World War II, Hephaestus, Greek god of fires, lays a trap for his wife, Aphrodite, goddess of love, and her not-so-secret lover, Ares, god of war. Aphrodite negotiates a private trial in which she tells "judge, jury, and executioner" Hephaestus what "real love looks like," as illustrated by imperfect mortals. Aphrodite's narrative then shifts back and forth between the world wars.

"Words like "epic," "sweeping" and "romantic" might have been designed with Julie Berry's Lovely War in mind. In this romance for the ages, parallel story lines depict a mock trial between Greek gods and the love stories of two intertwined pairs of mortals."

In Lovely War, winner of the 2019 Southern California Independent Booksellers Association young adult fiction award, Printz Honoree Berry (The Passion of Dolssa; All the Truth That's in Me) weaves factual historical events and backdrops into an exquisitely crafted, funny and, yes, epic, novel. --Emilie Coulter, freelance writer and editor
"The bickering gods, romantic rendezvous and exploding shells, set against impeccably rendered Paris streets and sandbagged trenches, read like a divine mix of Kate Atkinson and Neil Gaiman. When the hurly-burly’s done, and the battle’s lost and won, does Love conquer War? The answer is never in doubt, but it’s a pleasure to have it confirmed by a celestially inspired storyteller."

The course of true love never did run smooth, especially through the twisting trenches of the Western Front. In Berry’s virtuoso historical fantasy, the Greek gods toy with the hearts of four young mortals caught up in a chaotic First World War romance. The story-within-a-story opens in an opulent Manhattan hotel room in 1942. Aphrodite confesses to her husband, Hephaestus, that she has been unfaithful, explaining that because her fate is to forever inspire love in others, she “will never know a true passion of my own.” In defense of her infidelity, Aphrodite shares the story of a model courtship she fashioned back in 1917.

While under Aphrodite’s influence, Hazel and James, two British teenagers, meet at a parish dance and stay true through James’s terrifying stint as a sniper at the front. We also meet Colette, a singer and stoic survivor of the infamous Rape of Belgium, who finds new hope when the goddess binds her destiny to a dashing African-American military musician, Aubrey. But after being blessed by Aphrodite, each of the young lovers must confront Ares. Their wartime trials movingly illuminate age-old mortal issues: racism, sexism and the devastating effects of PTSD.
When the Greek god of fire, Hephaestus, catches his wife Aphrodite, goddess of love, in 1942 Manhattan in a passionate affair with his brother Ares, god of war, Aphrodite defends her actions by showing the two gods what real love looks like. With pathos and wit, Aphrodite relates two intertwined love stories involving four mortals swept up in World War I. Eighteen-year-old Hazel Windicott meets nineteen-year-old James Alderidge when she’s playing piano at a parish dance in her London neighborhood a week before he’s set to report for military service in France. And it’s Hazel who introduces the other couple to each other: YMCA relief worker Colette Fournier, a Belgian orphan whose family was killed by the Germans, and ragtime/jazz musician Aubrey Edwards, an African American doughboy from Harlem. The four humans suffer great losses throughout the course of this saga, driving home Aphrodite’s eloquent point that everyone, human and god alike, is entitled to love and be loved, no matter his or her imperfections.

"Poignant...will make readers, by turns, laugh, cry, and swoon."

Berry showcases her masterful storytelling ability, weaving together a tale – in tight, short chapters that keep the pace moving – that spans years, continents, and multiple perspectives, with poetic descriptions painting a vivid picture for readers (candlelight bends back and forth “gracefully, like a flock of starlings in flight”). She doesn’t shrink from addressing heavy-hitting and still-pertinent topics: racism, the horrors of war, women’s subjugated role in society. This poignant novel will make readers, by turns, laugh, cry, and swoon, but what Aphrodite offers most is hope: “Let them start their dreadful wars, let destruction rain down, and let plague sweep through, but I will still be here, doing my work, holding humankind together with love like this.” Back matter includes a bibliography and extensive historical notes on WWI.

Written By: Cynthia K. Ritter, April 9, 2019
In hands less skilled than Berry’s, this multifaceted novel might easily have spun out of control. Mixing Greek gods (Hades and Apollo also join their fellow Olympians as the story unspools), the brutally described horrors of war, the tenderness of love, and the evils of racism, in both its blatant and insidious forms, seems more than one book can handle. Yet Berry is her own Scheherazade, mesmerizing us with intertwined tales that describe the depths of suffering and the sweetness of love with remarkable intensity and naturalness. This is one of those books in which readers will feel that they are in it together with all the story’s characters.

"Lovely War proves again that Berry is one of our most ambitious writers. Happily for us, that ambition so often results in great success."

In fact, it is one of Berry’s real triumphs that she manages to give nearly equal weight to a large cast of very different characters. James’ evolution from a lighthearted young man to a cruelly hardened soldier would seem to have much more depth to it than the story of Hazel, a shy musician. Similarly, Aubrey, spared death when white soldiers mistake his friend for being the Black soldier stepping out with Colette, and who endures both the hell of war and the injustice of having his accomplishments denigrated, is the kind of character who could easily dominate. And, yet, Berry’s portrait of the friendship forged between Hazel and Colette, as they spend the war in France as volunteers, waiting to learn the fates of their loves, though a quieter part of the tale, emerges every bit as forcefully and meaningfully as the more dramatic stories.

Written By: Ilene Cooper, March 1, 2019
“Julie Berry, a modern master of historical fiction for young readers, follows the epic love stories of four teens in Lovely War, set against the dramatic backdrop of World War I and narrated by the Greek gods of love, war, music and death.”

Brits Hazel and James meet at a parish dance, and thanks to gentle intervention from Aphrodite herself, sparks fly. But James is on his way to the fighting in France, so they continue their relationship via letters. Hazel, a talented pianist, puts her future on hold to volunteer as a YMCA relief aid in France. There, she befriends Colette, a Belgian teen who lost her whole family (and her beau) during the Battle of Dinant. Colette’s grief still consumes her four years later, but when she meets Aubrey, a black American soldier with a gift for ragtime, Colette has to admit that spending time with him—singing and making music like she’s never heard before—lessens the pain. The most brutal war the world has ever seen brought these four together, but will it also tear them apart forever?

While the device of using the gods as narrators could take away from the main characters for some, Berry’s superb research and attention to detail are perfectly suited to the layers of this story of love in wartime. The scenes revealing the complex web of trenches inhabited by the British soldiers, the effects of post traumatic stress disorder, and the racial injustice and brutality in the American barracks and camps are particularly excellent. Fans of Marcus Sedgwick, Lois Lowry and Elizabeth Wein will love this romantic yet unflinching look at teenagers coming of age during World War I.
Love. It is the backbone of many stories and it can turn the world on its head in a moment, and no one—human or divine—knows this better than the Greek goddess Aphrodite. In Berry’s triumphant piece of historically focused fiction, the goddess proves that while war, art, and death have their place in the world, she’s got enough tricks up her sleeve to best them all.

"This is a moving, brutal, and yes, lovely, story of the ways in which people find hope in a world gone mad, and why Love remains powerful, even when we mortals are at our worst."

When she is caught in the arms of Ares by her husband, Hephaestus, Aphrodite offers up a tale of four people brought together during World War I as a justification for her actions, proving with her story that true love is the realm of mortals, and gods and goddesses can make no claim to its power. She begins her story with young James’ meeting of Hazel in London, 1917, just a few days before his deployment; the two fall desperately in love, and Hazel joins the YMCA relief effort in Saint-Nazaire, France, if not to be close to James than to at least do her part in the war. The two exchange ardent letters and even rendezvous in Paris while James is on leave. Also in Saint-Nazaire is Aubrey, jazz pianist in the Army Band of the all Black 369th Infantry Regiment, who is falling for Colette, a singer orphaned when Germany invaded Belgium; she, in turn, is surprised to find herself opening up her heart in ways she thought she never could.
Pick an adjective — sweeping, sprawling, epic, Olympian — and yet none quite conveys the emotional width and depth of Julie Berry’s brilliant new novel, “Lovely War.” A heady mix of mythology, historical fiction and romance, Berry’s meticulously researched book spans two wars and two worlds. A significant part of the action revolves around four young people finding love and experiencing loss in World War I, but the overarching story actually is set during World War II and features a romantic triangle starring three Greek Gods: Aphrodite, the goddess of love; her husband, Hephaestus, the god of fire and forges; and Ares, the god of war and her paramour.

How the lives of these couples become intertwined through the war years and beyond makes for a compelling saga, as Berry tackles issues of racism, women’s roles in society and the far-reaching effect of World War I. Still, readers are always aware that it’s all a tale being told by Aphrodite, who is joined at intervals by Ares and other gods. These gods are constantly interrupting the story and also intervening in it (unbeknown to the humans) at crucial points. This encircling narrative produces a uniquely multilayered novel that readers will be reluctant to conclude. Though “Lovely War” is being marketed to teens, adults looking for a memorable, well-told tale should not be shy about delving in, too.
The story itself is intoxicating. Alongside the other gods she holds in thrall, Aphrodite enraptures the reader, the twists and turns of her lovers’ stories both unexpected and true to the sobering realities of so many who lived through the Great War.

"Whatever muse is singing in Berry to produce her lyrical writing, we’d like to lobby for their services."

The narrative framework and the themes Berry explores through these icons of mythology pack more of a punch than the individual details of these lovers’ lives. By using figures like the god of war and god of love, Berry personifies truths of the human experience, demonstrating how they are inextricably intertwined. War amplifies love, making it burn brighter, quicker, and more intensely – and though it threatens to swallow it participants whole, it is love, always, that transcends and endures.

The novel is a gripping wartime love story, but it’s also an original, breathtaking examination of how humanity’s ills, from violence to racism, are conquered by our better tendencies: friendship, passion, empathy, and deep, tender, true love. Whether you believe in God(s) or not, Lovely War is a compelling take on fate, loss, and hope – and how when everything else hangs in the balance, love resounds as the most complicated, mystifying, resilient force of all.
Some narrators are omniscient, some are unreliable and some, as we’re reminded in “Lovely War,” are divine. Julie Berry’s phenomenal novel opens in a stylish Manhattan hotel room in 1942, with a cuckolded man confronting his wife and her lover. It is a sordid if not unheard-of situation, perhaps, but in this case the love triangle has been formed on Mount Olympus. Though clad in the fashions of the time, the unfaithful wife is Aphrodite, the goddess of love; her handsome paramour is Ares, the god of war; and the outraged husband who has snared the cheating pair in a powerful golden mesh is crook-backed Hephaestus, god of the forge. It’s a clever, oddly touching beginning that leads to a reflective Aphrodite offering to talk of real love—to tell the story of some of her “finest work” on earth. And so we are swept back to 1917 and into the lives of four young people for whom, in time and in turn, our hearts will throb and ache.

“Leavened by wit and informed by history, “Lovely War” is a romantic and inventive story from its dramatic start to its laughter- and tear-spangled ending.”

As in Homer, the meddling gods here have their favorites, their quirks, their desires. Envying the magic of a young lover’s first kiss, the ancient and ageless Aphrodite marvels: “If I see it a trillion more times before this world spirals into the sun, I’ll still be an awed spectator, right to the last, drinking in its nectar in holy jealousy.” Leavened by wit and informed by history, “Lovely War” is a romantic and inventive story from its dramatic start to its laughter- and tear-spangled ending.
Lovely War follows four regular mortals in their quests for love throughout World Wars I and II. It's also a story told by the goddess Aphrodite, which is extremely badass. Also pretty BA? Aphrodite basically just runs everything in their lives because she’s the goddess of love.

Aphrodite and Ares are gossiping about your love life – or at least they are in Julie Berry's stunning YA book, Lovely War. In the book, the Olympian gods convene in a hotel room in Manhattan for a bit of a philosophical argument straight out of the Book of Job. They're debating whether love really exists. To prove her point, Aphrodite recalls the epic stories of two young couples that come together and separate during WWI, and tries to convince her war-hungry lover to adopt a more redemptive philosophy. Lovely War gives ordinary lives the sheen of the epic.
BEST OF YEAR LIST 2019

Wall Street Journal Best Children's Books of 2019
New York Public Library 2019 Best Books for Adults
Kirkus Best YA Romances of 2019
Booklist Editors' Choice Books for Youth 2019
Horn Book Fanfare Title 2019
BookPage Best Books of 2019 (#3 out of 10 books)
Shelf Awareness 2019 Best Children's & Teen Books of the Year
Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books 2019 Blue Ribbon for Fiction
Buzzfeed Best Young Adult Books of 2019 (#7 out of 31 books)
Young Folks Best Historical YA Fiction of 2019
2019 Goodreads Choice Awards Semifinalist
Chicago Public Library Best Teen Fiction of 2019
TAYSHAS Top Ten Book
For more information:

Olivia Russo
Penguin Random House
212-414-3467
orusso@penguinrandomhouse.com

Shirley Huang
Publicity Assistant
shirley@julieberrybooks.com

Gabriela De Anda
Publicity Assistant
gabriela@julieberrybooks.com

@JulieBerryBooks  @julieberrybooks  @julieberrybookspage