

Chris Riddell

Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse

United Kingdom (2013)

TAGS: [Eurydice](#) [Harpies](#) [Minotaur](#) [Odyssey](#) [Orpheus](#) [Pegasus](#) [Persephone](#) [Sirens](#) [Zeus](#)



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General information	
<i>Title of the work</i>	Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse
<i>Country of the First Edition</i>	United Kingdom
<i>Country/countries of popularity</i>	United Kingdom, Spain
<i>Original Language</i>	English
<i>First Edition Date</i>	2013
<i>First Edition Details</i>	Chris Riddell, <i>Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse</i> . Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013, 224 pp.
<i>ISBN</i>	9780230759800
<i>Official Website</i>	chrisriddellblog.tumblr.com (accessed: August 10, 2020).
<i>Awards</i>	2013 - <i>Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse</i> won the Costa Children's Book Award
<i>Genre</i>	Action and adventure fiction, Fiction, Illustrated works, Picture books
<i>Target Audience</i>	Children (aged 5-9)
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Creators



Chris Riddell by [Hpschaefer](#). Retrieved from [Wikimedia Commons](#), licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#) (accessed: January 11, 2022).

Chris Riddell , b. 1962 (Author)

British illustrator, children's book writer and political cartoonist. Chris Riddell was born in Cape Town, South Africa and moved to the UK at the age of one. He studied illustration at Brighton Polytechnic and has worked as a political cartoonist for *The Economist* and *The Observer*. On 9 June 2015 he was appointed the UK Children's Laureate. His books have won a number of prizes, including the 2001, 2004 and 2016 CILIP Kate Greenaway Medals. *Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse* won the Costa Children's Book Award 2013. He has collaborated as an illustrator with authors such as Paul Stewart on *The Edge Chronicles* and Neil Gaiman on *The Graveyard Book* (2008), *The Sleeper and the Spindle* (2013), and *Fortunately, the Milk...* (2013).

Sources:

[edgechronicles.co.uk](#) (accessed: September 5, 2019);

[goodreads.com](#) (accessed: September 5, 2019);

[edgechronicles.co.uk](#) (accessed: September 5, 2019);

[goodreads.com](#) (accessed: September 5, 2019).

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Additional information

Translation Spanish: *Ada Goth y el fantasma de ratón*, trans. Elena Gallo Krahe, Zaragoza: Editorial Luis Vives (Edelvives), 2014.

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs *Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse* (2013);
Goth Girl and the Fete Worse than Death (2014);
Goth Girl and the Wuthering Fright (2015);
Goth Girl and the Pirate Queen (2015 World Book Day edition);
Goth Girl and the Sinister Symphony (2017).

Summary *Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse* is the first in a series of Goth Girl books by Chris Riddell which uses intertextual play with Gothic writers and literary conventions as well as other literary characters and mythology.

Ada Goth is the only child of Lord Goth. The two live together in Ghastly-Gorm Hall. Ada is a lonely child, her father believing that children should be heard and not seen, therefore making her wear a pair of heavy boots so he can always hear her coming. A series of unsuccessful governesses including Jane Ear and Hebe Poppins result in Ada being a lonely, motherless child. Her mother, Parthenope, was a tight-rope walker from Thessalonika who died when Ada was small.

Ada is befriended by a ghostly mouse called Ishmael, and William and Emily Cabbage come to stay at Ghastly-Gorm Hall. The three children discover a plot by Maltravers, the indoor gamekeeper, who is collecting a range of mythological creatures to be used in the indoor hunt which follows the metaphorical bicycle race. Ada works with her new friends to defeat Maltravers and save the creatures from the hunt.

Analysis *Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse* is an illustrated adventure story grounded in intertextual reference across history and literature. The



text is a witty homage to Gothic literature, with Lord Goth a version of Lord Byron, 'Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Gnomes' and includes other Gothic literary characters including Mary Shellfish and Jane Ear among a wealth of other literary references throughout, such as to the fairy tale Hansel and Gretel. : "As a result, the humour is aimed at both the young reader and, through the literary wit, for adults reading the text alongside them."

Goth Girl is the first of Chris Riddell's own writing but his subsequent books such as those in *The Cloud Horse* Trilogy similarly play with intertextuality of fairy tales and classical allusions.

The mythological references capture the Gothic and Romantic fascination with the classical period demonstrated by poetry such as Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Ozymandias* or John Keats' *Ode to a Grecian Urn*. The references to Greek mythology come in the form of locations and possessions such as The Bathroom of Zeus and Lord Goth's favourite hobby horse, used for the indoor hunt: Pegasus, named after the winged-horse fathered by Poseidon and mothered by Medusa.

The climax of the story is an indoor hunt including mythical creatures: one group of which are Siren Sesta (alluding to the mythic Sirens of Ancient Greece which feature in the *Odyssey*) and the Harpies: Eurydice, Orpheus and Persephone who are part of The Ithica Open air Opera's Production of the *Odyssey*. The Harpies allude to the tragic love story of Eurydice and Orpheus recorded by Virgil in *Georgics Book IV* and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in Book X and Persephone, Goddess of Spring and Nature and then of the Underworld, Persephone is mentioned in classical texts including Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* ((book 10, card 473) and Virgil's *Aeneid* (IV.696-699).

Outside of Greek mythology, the architectural features of the house make mention of the Byzantine era which spans from 330 CE, when Constantine the Great moved the Roman capital to Byzantium, which became Constantinople, until the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453. Specifically, the repeated mention of the Byzantine windows connects the Gothic preoccupation with the classical period carried through to their architectural style. Rather than include the stained-glass windows and gothic architectural features of the house, the mention of the Byzantine windows connote the influence of Byzantine architectural style on the Gothic style such as the sinuous lines and naturalistic forms which were adopted hinting at the extent to which we can trace our literary and art traditions to ancient times.



The classical references and literary allusions help to build young readers literary competence, as Maria Nikolevja (2010) observes that recognising parodic play is one of the key indicators of literary competence in novice readers. For the young reader able to understand some but not all of the allusions and names, the enjoyment of the text remains; the names and items instead perhaps appear silly alongside the illustration. There may be a limit to the sense of frustration if a novice reader does not identify the allusion as a result, however as the text can be read alongside an experienced, adult reader, they are more likely to be able to explain the intertextual references. Alternatively, the novice reader can enjoy the story without understanding the intertextual reference and the parodic play instead appeals to the experienced, adult reader.

As an illustrated novel the classical allusions are supported by Riddell's illustrations which help novice readers to recognise the allusions, for example the illustration of the Harpies helps to contextualise the potentially unfamiliar noun for the novice reader.

Classical, Mythological,
Traditional Motifs,
Characters, and
Concepts

[Eurydice](#) [Harpies](#) [Minotaur](#) [Odyssey](#) [Orpheus](#) [Pegasus](#) [Persephone](#)
[Sirens](#) [Zeus](#)

Other Motifs, Figures,
and Concepts Relevant
for Children and Youth
Culture

[Adventure](#) [Animals](#) [Child's view](#) [Conflict](#) [Fairy tale references](#) [Family](#)
[Friendship](#) [Ghosts](#) [Good vs evil](#) [Heroism](#) [Historical figures](#) [Humour](#)
[Intertextuality](#) [Isolation/loneliness](#) [Other literary figures, texts and](#)
[writers](#) [Parents \(and children\)](#) [Talking animals](#)

Further Reading

Nikolajeva, Maria, "Literacy, competence and meaning-making: a human sciences approach", *Cambridge Journal of Education* 40.2 (2010): 145-159.

