Olivia Marsh, "Entry on: Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse by Chris Riddell ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1054. Entry version as of September 14, 2026.

Chris Riddell

Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse

United Kingdom (2013)

TAGS: Eurydice Harpies Minotaur Odyssey Orpheus Pegasus Persephone Sirens Zeus

We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom, Spain
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2013
First Edition Details	Chris Riddell, *Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013, 224 pp.
ISBN	9780230759800
Official Website	chrisriddellblog.tumblr.com (accessed: August 10, 2020).
Awards	2013 – *Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse* won the Costa Children's Book Award
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, Fiction, Illustrated works, Picture books
Target Audience	Children (aged 5–9)
Author of the Entry	Olivia Marsh, University of Cambridge, Olivia.marsh2012@hotmail.co.uk
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators

Chris Riddell by Hpschaefer. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, licensed underCC 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).

Bio prepared by Olivia Marsh, University of Cambridge, Olivia.marsh2012@hotmail.co.uk

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

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

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

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

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

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.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Olivia Marsh, "Entry on: Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse by Chris Riddell ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1054. Entry version as of September 14, 2026.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.