Elżbieta Olechowska, "Entry on: The Gorgon's Gaze (The Companions Quartet, 2) by Julia Golding [Eve Edwards, Joss Stirling] ", 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/1114. Entry version as of November 07, 2026.

Julia Golding [Eve Edwards, Joss Stirling]

The Gorgon's Gaze (The Companions Quartet, 2)

United Kingdom (2006)

TAGS: Cassandra Gorgon(s) Pegasus





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

General information	
Title of the work	The Gorgon's Gaze (The Companions Quartet, 2)
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2006
First Edition Details	Julia Golding, *The Companions Quartet. Book Two: The Gorgon's Gaze*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 303 pp.
ISBN	9780761456537
Genre	Bildungsromans (Coming-of-age fiction), Fantasy fiction, Novels, School story*, Teen fiction*
Target Audience	Young adults
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Creators



Courtesy of the Author.

Julia Golding [Eve Edwards, Joss Stirling] , b. 1969 (Author)

Born in Ilford, Essex, in the vicinity of an area of ancient woodland called Epping Forest, she studied English literature at the University of Cambridge. Later, after working as a diplomat for the British Foreign Office in Poland, she resumed her studies at Oxford obtaining a PhD in English literature. She then worked for the international charitable organization Oxfam, as a lobbyist on the impact of conflicts. She now lives in Oxford and writes full time: from 2006, the date of her first novel, she has written over thirty books, among them *The Companions Quartet* (2006-2007), a cycle of novels with numerous references to Greek mythology. In 2011, she published a sequel to the *Quartet*, entitled *Water Thief*, labelled as *Universal Companions* 1; as of June 10, 2017, it remains the only volume of the new series.

Golding writes also historical romance for adolescents under the pseudonym Eve Edwards and romance novels for teens as Joss Stirling.

Literary Awards:

- 2006 – Waterstone's Children's Book Prize, Nestle Children's Book Prize,
- 2007 – Waterstone's one of the "Twenty-five authors for the future",
- 2008 – An honor book medal of the Green Earth Book Award for *The Secret of the Sirens (The Companions Quartet 1)*,
- 2012 – Beehive Book Award, Young Adult Division, awarded by the Children's Literature Association of Utah,
- 2015 – Romantic Novel of the Year (*Struck* by Joss Stirling).

She was also nominated or shortlisted for a number of the same and other awards.

Sources:

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Official website (accessed: May 29, 2018),

Profile at the literature.britishcouncil.org (accessed: July 3, 2018),

Profile at the www.goodreads.com (accessed: April 9, 2018).

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

Prequel:

Golding, Julia, *The Companions Quartet. Book One: Secret of the Sirens*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Sequels:

Golding, Julia, *The Companions Quartet. Book Three: The Mines of the Minotaur*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Golding, Julia, *The Companions Quartet. Book Four: The Chimera's Curse*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Summary

The universe created by the author – the same as our own but also containing unknown to us the so-called companions, people with special affinities to mythological creatures – is threatened by an evil, demonic entity, Kullervo, who, to achieve world domination and destruction of the human race, needs the power of reaching and communicating with all creatures possessed only by a universal companion, an exceptional human born so rarely to be considered a myth even among the companions. One being with such talents is currently alive and it happens to be a 12-year old girl, Connie Lionheart. After the first clash and victory over the evil and extremely powerful Kullervo, in book one, the universal knows that another assault will come and tries to prepare by learning as much as she can and developing her talents.

The plot resumes with the universal companion being introduced to a newborn golden dragonet, an extremely rare kind of dragon. The universal meets her through the companion of the dragonet's parents and becomes her special companion, as she can bond with any and all creatures. The ruthless oil refinery, known from the book one, now threatens Mallins Wood, an ancient, magical woodland, home to various mythological creatures but most importantly to the last surviving Gorgon whose companion is Connie's friend's, Col's mother Cassandra.

Connie's parents work as diplomats abroad and leave their daughter with the unconventional Aunt Evelyn. The family includes many

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companions who belongs to the Society of Protection of Mythological Creatures, but Connie's parents disapprove of the Society. After dangerous adventures of the previous year (see Book one) they ask Connie's great Aunt Godiva and Uncle to take her away from Evelyn's "bad" influence. Godiva is a strange and severe lady who takes her task seriously and intends to educate Connie at their family home. She wants Connie to break all contacts with the Society which she considers to be some form of crazy cult.

Connie's friends use various stratagems to free her from her aunt's control. At the same time, Col's mother takes him to see the Gorgon. As a result, the Gorgon also wants to meet Connie and her dragonet. The second meeting is organized, but Connie, locked up in her room by Godiva, is unable to go. It transpires that both Col's mother and her companion, the Gorgon, are working with Kullervo who in return promised them to save Mallins Wood from destruction. Also many other creatures believe in Kullervo's good will and join his forces. As Connie does not show up, Kullervo kidnaps Col, invades his mind and forces him to fight creatures that are Kullervo's own enemies. He wants to use Col as bait for attracting and abducting Connie. His plan works, Connie comes to save Col, succeeds in yanking him out of Kullervo's control, but gets caught herself. It is now Col's turn to organize Connie's rescue. The plan formed by Kullervo was to lure the Society members to a confrontation with people building the road through Mallins Woods, denounce them and their mythical companions to the public, and unite most mythological creatures to put an end to humanity.

Col manages to convince his mother and the Gorgon to join forces against Kullervo. Connie does not let herself be vanquished and controlled, with the additional help of other members of the Society, her Aunt Godiva who transformed into her supporter, and the wood sprite living in the so-called Merlin's oak. Connie's fight with the evil force would have ended in its total destruction if she had not stopped herself from killing Kullervo. She let him go because, during her captivity, she, as a universal companion, forged with him a certain bond precluding such violent actions. The wood and all its creatures are saved, and the refinery will have to choose a longer itinerary for their road. On the other hand, Cassandra and the Gorgon, who remain questionable allies, escape, and Kullervo is not destroyed and will certainly strike again. Connie returns to her Aunt Evelyn and her local school to enjoy a peaceful intermission with her friends… until Book three: *The Mines of the Minotaur*.

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Analysis

The strongly ecological message of Golding's tetralogy evolves from the fight against the polluting oil refinery destroying the habitat of the Sirens in Book one to protests against building a road through the last mythological habitat, Mallins Wood (a thousand years previously called Merlin's Wood), in Book two. The book shows the conflict between the mythological creatures protected by their companions and the human race influenced by greed and short-sighted indifference to the environment as a parallel, unseen side of the contemporary struggle to curb devastation of nature and protect it against short-term, profit oriented big business. The punishment for destroying environment is symbolized in the evil entity, Kullervo, bent on annihilation of the human race. He represents the threat of ecological disaster that the big business and its minions refuse to acknowledge.

Mythological creatures in *The Gorgon's Gaze,* when threatened by extinction, may align themselves with the evil side but they are not evil per se. They symbolize any endangered or extinct species but because companions can communicate with them, their fate takes on a poignancy of friends in dire need. The readers might know them from mythology and here they are, real, sentient beings with personalities, families. Anthropomorphic? Yes, but still threatened in their very existence.

The author selected for Book two another highly dangerous monster, to show again that each character may have different aspects and be driven by motivations other than malice. The Gorgon is the last of her kind, a representative of an ancient species and while highly dangerous, she basically fights for survival. The reader may conclude that Greek mythology is based on what exists in nature, a sort of reflection and explanation of natural phenomena and beings, providing a legendary narrative about the wealth and diversity of real life. The Gorgon is shown here as very beautiful hybrid, between a human being and snakes as a species, who has the power of turning living things into stone but no other apparent connections to the mythical daughter of Phorcys and Ceto, and to her fate at Perseus' hands. Julia Golding's Gorgon is willing to deceive and kill in self-defence. A natural killer par excellence, she seems to take satisfaction from her deeds and, although loyal to her companion, she has corrupted Cassandra's integrity. Cassandra serves as example of an

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	eco-warrior gone wrong; displaying fanatical and disturbed priorities making "the cause" a licence to harm others. She is named Cassandra possibly in reference to the Trojan princess whose prophecies nobody believed. Golding's Cassandra is also a tragic figure misunderstood and alienated from her community who breaks under psychological pressure and goes insane. The similarity with the Harry Potter saga continues (see entry *Secret of the Sirens*) – society at large is unaware of the existence of mythological creatures and their companions. The twelve-year old protagonist has a secret link to the master of evil but she vanquishes him again, fully aware that the next attack will come. Friends of the hero all help, the Society of Mythological Creatures serves as the community of caring and protective adults, a parallel to Hogwarts teachers. Some of the Society members and students may have links to Kullervo, as it was the case with Voldemort's supporters. On the other hand, the modern trend of presenting monsters as 'human', with complex personalities and feelings, misunderstood and redeemable creatures, remains one of the basic premises of the novel.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Cassandra Gorgon(s) Pegasus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Abandonment Environment Friendship Parents (and children) Values
Addenda	*Science Has The Best Stories* – Introduction from Julia Golding, 'Best Selling Author', June 13, 2018 (accessed: September 17, 2020).

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