Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: The Gorgon in the Gully by Melina Marchetta", peer-reviewed by Miriam Riverlea and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/121. Entry version as of October 31, 2026.

Melina Marchetta

The Gorgon in the Gully

Australia (2010)

TAGS: Katabasis Medusa Perseus





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

General information	
Title of the work	The Gorgon in the Gully
Country of the First Edition	Australia
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2010
First Edition Details	Melina Marchetta, *The Gorgon in the Gully*. Sydney: Penguin Publishers Pocket Money Puffins, 2010, 69 pp.
ISBN	9781742531373
Genre	Didactic fiction, Novels, School story*
Target Audience	Children (9–11 years old)
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
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Creators



Melina Marchetta , b. 1965
(Author)

Melina Marchetta was born in Sydney. She is of Italian descent. Her first novel, *Looking for Alibrandi* (1992) was enormously popular. It was set on the Australian High School Curriculum, for its themes of coming of age and multiculturalism. It was dubbed "the most stolen library book" in Australia, owing to its popularity. She worked as a teacher for some years, and has published several further books, both realist (*Saving Francesca*, 2003; *On the Jellicoe Road* (2006) and fantasy (*Finnikin of the Rock*, 2008).

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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Additional information

Summary

In *The Gorgon in the Gully*, Danny Griggs is a timid boy who is scared of bullies, and of what other people think of him. When he accidentally kicks the school's lucky football into the gully at the edge of his school, he is afraid to go and get it. A Gorgon lives in that gully, or so school lore has it. At home, Danny researches the Gorgon and discovers the terrors it represents. His mother advises him to "look at whatever you're scared of from a different angle. Look at it up really close." As Danny faces his fears, including becoming friends with the school bully, Simmo, a boy who teases Danny for being a "gutless wonder," he becomes a braver person and eventually does go into the gully to retrieve the ball. There, he discovers that the Gorgon is a figment of school legend. Instead, a shy old man named Harold is wondering when the children will come to retrieve the many many balls that have landed in his garden. Danny is now the school hero. He does not kick the winning goal, but he gains a reputation for being a fear-buster and is invited to other schools to dispatch their imaginary monsters.

Analysis

Of most interest is the depiction of the Gorgon as a figment of the imagination, and a symbol of the nature of fear itself. When Danny gains the strength to face his fears directly (unlike Perseus, one might note, who uses the mirror-like shield as a deflecting device), the Gorgon gives way. *The Gorgon in the Gully* incorporates classical monsters into a contemporary Australian schoolyard, interweaving them into a generalised, multicultural ambience. Monsters from other schools are Catholic, Indian, and others. *The Gorgon in the Gully* appears to be deliberately multicultural, reflecting the make-up of middle-class Sydney suburbs.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Katabasis Medusa Perseus

Character traits Peers School Violence

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

Further Reading

Hale, Elizabeth, "Friday essay: Feminist Medusas and outback Minotaurs – why myth is big in children's books", *The Conversation*, June 3 (2016), available at theconversation.com (accessed: August 2, 2018).

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