Summary: Magdalena Łokieć, Analysis: Marta Pszczolińska, "Entry on: Legendary Rome [Rzym legendarny] by Aleksander Wojciech Mikołajczak", peer-reviewed by Katarzyna Marciniak and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1226. Entry version as of November 19, 2026.

Aleksander Wojciech Mikołajczak

Legendary Rome [Rzym legendarny]

Poland (2002)

TAGS: Aeneas Castor Dioscuri Egeria Heracles Hercules Mars Pollux Remus Roman History Romulus Venus

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

General information	
Title of the work	Legendary Rome [Rzym legendarny]
Country of the First Edition	Poland
Country/countries of popularity	Poland
Original Language	Polish
First Edition Date	2002
First Edition Details	Aleksander Wojciech Mikołajczak, *Rzym legendarny*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2002, 48 pp.
ISBN	8370239005
Genre	Album
Target Audience	Crossover (Children, teenagers, young adults)
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Creators

Photograph retrieved from the website of Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa im. J.A. Komeńskiego in Leszno, kronika.pwsz.edu.pl (accessed: February 9, 2013, no longer active).

Aleksander Wojciech Mikołajczak , b. 1957
(Author)

Classical philologist, translator of Latin poetry into Polish, promoter of Antiquity: wrote on neo-Latin literature (16th –17th century); his texts demonstrate continuity of the European culture through usage of ancient motifs in modern art; he is the author of a book on the Latin language and its function in Polish culture *Łacina w kulturze polskie*j [Latin in Polish Culture], 1998; until 2009 scientific director of Collegium Europaeum Gnesnense (Institute of European Culture), since 2012 Deputy-Rector for Scholarship and Development of Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa im. J.A. Komeńskiego [J.A. Komeński State School of Higher Vocational Education] in Leszno (west-central Poland).

Sources:

Aleksander Mikołajczak (filolog) available at: Wikipedia.org (accessed: February 13, 2013).

Aleksander Wojciech Mikołajczak available at: lubimyczytać.pl (accessed: February 13, 2013).

Prorektor ds. Nauki i Rozwoju – dr hab. Aleksander Mikołajczak, prof. nadzw., available at: pwsz.edu.pl (accessed: March 20, 2013).

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

Aleksander Wojciech Mikołajczak, *Grecja bogów i herosów*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2000.

Summary

Based on: Katarzyna Marciniak, Elżbieta Olechowska, Joanna Kłos, Michał Kucharski (eds.), *Polish Literature for Children & Young Adults Inspired by Classical Antiquity: A Catalogue*, Faculty of "Artes Liberales", Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2013, 444 pp., section by Magdalena Łokieć, pp. 204–206.

In the oldest Roman legends, long before the city of Rome was founded, Hercules had adventures in the land on the Tiber. Evander, the lord of that land, took care of Aeneas when he came there after the defeat of Troy. Aeneas was looking for a new home for him, his companions, and Trojan gods. They stayed in Latium, king Latinus' country; Aeneas married Latinus' daughter Lavinia. After Etruscan wars, Aeneas' son, Ascanius, founded the city of Alba Longa. Several generations of kings and years of fights for the throne later, the power passed to Romulus and Remus, the twin sons of Mars and princess Rea Sylvia; they were nursed by a she-wolf. Their decision to found their own city met with gods' approval. Romulus established Rome, Remus died in a fight with his brother. To help populate the new city, Romans kidnapped and married young Sabine women. It became a *casus belli* with the Sabines. Romans fought also with Alba Longa and the Etruscans whose art and culture enriched the city on the Tiber. Finally, Rome became a republic and a scene of many other armed conflicts, including civil wars, wars within and outside of Italy. Each chapter is based on a different legend, the chapters are ordered chronologically.

Analysis

Rzym legendarny is part of a popular-science collection *Tego nie ma w podręczniku* [You Won't Find This in a Textbook]. In the form of an album, the author presents the young reader with 23 myths, tales and legends about the mythical origins of Rome and its early history. Every two pages, there is a short story adorned with rich iconography relevant to the tale, including works of art, archaeological objects, artifacts, maps or drawings, photographs of buildings, landscapes,

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important places, and archaeological sites or sculptures. A short supplementary text accompanies each illustration.

From the earliest adventure of Hercules to the invasion of Brennus' Gauls, the most popular legendary goings-on and characters are retold in the book. Legends slowly turn into factual history. Among the featured events are: Aeneas' arrival, origins of Rome, the abduction of Sabine women, Tarpeia's treason, duel of Horatii and Curiatii, the rape and suicide of Lucretia, the bravery of Mucius Scaevola, Coriolanus' treason, Cincinnatus' dictatorship, Camillus' fate and the Capitoline geese.

On the first page, Mikołajczak explains that ancient sources about the early history of Rome, such as Livy or Dionysius of Halicarnassus, were written about 700 years later but were based on earlier annalists. He also says ancient Romans did not consider the presented characters fictional, making traditional Roman lore a mixture of historical truth and fiction. The author does not tell stories but rather provides scientific information based on ancient sources and extended with archaeological and historical research. The use of fragments of ancient authors, such as Virgil, Livy, Ennius, Plutarch, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, enriches the legends and allows the readers to familiarise themselves with the original sources as closely as possible (unfortunately, the translators' names are not provided). The author uses iconography to illustrate and show the reception of several motifs of the Roman tradition in art. The illustrations are also a pretext to describe selected phaenomena of Roman culture, explain additional issues, or present secondary characters or legends; all this to engage the readers and encourage them to further research the topics on their own. For example, the chapter *Brutus, the wise fool* contains the story of Lucretia's death and the fall of Tarquinius Superbus illustrated by four pictures: a bronze bust of Brutus from Musei Capitolini, Titian's renaissance painting interpreting Lucrecia's rape, the ruins of the sanctuary in Delphi, where Brutus was sent to ask about the inheritance of power, and a picture of Forum Romanum, where the body of Lucretia was exposed and caused the revolt against the king. Similarly, the next chapter, *The Scaevola's Burnt Hand*, also contains the story and four illustrations. Scaevola's painting by Gaetano Callani is accompanied by a picture of Ianiculum/Gianicolo, where Porsenna had his camp, and two illustrations introducing secondary plots, such as the bravery of Clelia and Horatius Cocles' defence of the Sublician Bridge.

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The book achieves the series' goal, as Mikołajczak's thorough knowledge of Roman Antiquity allows him to select texts confirming the title of the collection *You Won't Find This in a Textbook*. He chose Roman legends and presented them against the background of ancient history and culture and did it in a way accessible and interesting to young readers.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aeneas Castor Dioscuri Egeria Heracles Hercules Mars Pollux Remus Roman History Romulus Venus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Abandonment Adversity Animals Authority Character traits Conflict Death Heritage Heroism Hierarchy Historical figures History Justice Morality Murder Past Punishment Rape Religious beliefs Sexual abuse Siblings Suicide Tradition Twins War

Further Reading

"Historia Rzymu", in Lidia Winniczuk, ed., *Słownik kultury antycznej*, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1991, 467–476.

"Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae*", in Karl Jacoby, ed., *Dionysii Halicarnasei Antiquitatum Romanarum quae supersunt*, vol. I–IV, Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1885, perseus.tufts.edu (accessed: June 16, 2021).

"Publius Vergilius Maro, *Aeneis*", in J. B. Greenough, ed., *Vergil. Bucolics, Aeneid, and Georgics Of Vergil*, Boston: Ginn & Co., 1900, perseus.tufts.edu (accessed: June 16, 2021).

"Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe condita libri*", perseus.tufts.edu (accessed: June 16, 2021).

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