Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: The Eyes of Kid Midas by Neal Shusterman ", 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/129. Entry version as of November 01, 2026.

Neal Shusterman

The Eyes of Kid Midas

United States (1992)

TAGS: Midas





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

General information	
Title of the work	The Eyes of Kid Midas
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1992
First Edition Details	Neal Shusterman, *The Eyes of Kid Midas*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1992, 182 pp.
ISBN	9781416997504
Genre	Magic realist fiction, Novels, Teen fiction*
Target Audience	Young adults
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Creators



Neal Shusterman by Hillel Steinberg. Retrieved from flickr.com, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic (accessed: December 15, 2021). Copyright: (c) 2019 Hillel Steinberg.

Neal Shusterman , b. 1962

Neal Shusterman was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1962 to a working class family. He began writing in ninth grade, on the encouragement of a teacher. He studied at the University of California, Irvine, before working as an editor. He lives in California, and has four children. His first novel was published soon after his graduation, and he has written numerous novels, film and television scripts. Shusterman's work can broadly be described as philosophically-inclined magic realism, fantasy, or science fiction for young readers, often with an interest in morality, individuality, socialization at school or in families.

Sources:

successstory.com (accessed: June 24, 2018);

Author website (accessed: July 6, 2018);

Author Tumblr (accessed: July 6, 2018);

Author Goodreads (accessed: July 6, 2018).

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Additional information

Summary

The Eyes of Kid Midas is a novel for middle-grade readers. Kevin Midas, aged 13, is an eighth-grader who has been bullied his whole life and is seriously depressed. He is small, weedy, and wears glasses. When he goes on a school camping trip near a mountain called The Divine Watch, he is drawn to climb the mountain, after hearing his teacher Mr Fitzpatrick's campfire stories speculating about the mountain's power. He climbs the mountain with his friend Josh; they are pursued by two bullies, Bertram and Hal. Kevin reaches the peak first. There he sees a pair of sunglasses. When he puts them on, he gradually discovers that he can make his wishes come true. He makes the bully Bertram "go jump in the lake"; he creates a feast for himself and Josh. More disturbingly, he makes it rain, creating a permanent weather event on the mountain.

On return to school, Kevin continues to make wishes. But when he accidentally sends Bertram to hell, and shrinks Nicole, the girl he likes, to only six inches high, he begins to realise that he is not merely making his wishes come true, but changing the fabric of the universe. If he keeps going, the laws of the universe will collapse. With his sister, Teri, and Josh, Kevin tries to gain control of the glasses, but only succeeds in causing more chaos.

Underlying the chaos is Kevin's desperate need for power, a side-effect of his years of being bullied. When he separates himself from the glasses, he is aware of a voracious need that draws him back to them. Josh, trying to help, ends up ceasing to exist. Eventually, Kevin, who has now lost his family, his friends, and himself, is visited by a future self, a six-foot-tall young man named Brian (Kevin's middle name), who reassures him that he has a future. Kevin goes back to the place where he found the glasses, the Divine Watch, and returns them to the plateau at the peak. This action results in a miniature explosion, catapulting him down the mountain, with Josh, Bertram, and Hal, who have reappeared, as the world has restored itself to its former state. Kevin, reassured by his vision of his future self, breaks his leg, but as he waits for Bertram and Hal to get help (a sign that he is now able to trust them), he smiles. The act of restoring the glasses to their rightful place has healed Kevin – the act of giving up power means he now has the self-confidence he lacked before.

The Eyes of King Kid Midas makes an obvious connection to the myth

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of King Midas, the man who wishes to be able to turn everything he touches to gold, but who lost the ability to connect with people on a true basis. For Kevin, gold is power, popularity, and self-confidence, all of which he lacks, and which are damaging him and contributing to a deep-seated mental imbalance.

Analysis

The King Midas myth, with its emphasis on the way that greed for things destroys relationships and love, is applied here in a cautionary tale for young readers about the desire for power vs the need for self-confidence. *The Eyes of Kid Midas* is an example of a "fractured" myth, whereby the base concept of the original myth of King Midas is used in a new way. Here, the gold of King Midas is recast as Kevin Midas's desire for power, love, and popularity. A classic example of a cautionary '"be careful what you wish for" tale, *The Eyes of Kid Midas* casts the greed of the original character in a contemporary American junior high school setting. This setting is common in literature for, and about, young Americans: the school story genre, with its emphasis on socialisation, fitting in, development of identity, talent, and individuality, is a core genre of American children's literature. The magic realism of the concept is explained by the camp-fire ghost-story frame of the story, in which the teacher, Mr Fitzpatrick, tells a story about the Divine Watch, and its magical powers at midnight on the equinox (the night Kevin finds the glasses). Shusterman combines classical cautionary myth with a magic-realist shaggy dog story and a school story format. The focus on Kevin's masculinity and mental health sets the novel firmly in the context of late 20th- and early 21st-century children's and young adult literature, whose concerns frequently centre around these issues. Mental health issues and emotional empowerment are recurring concerns in Shusterman's novels for young readers.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Midas

Character traits Coming of age Journeys Masculinity Self Socialisation

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Violence
Addenda	Book's description: www.simonandschuster.com (accessed: August 3, 2018).

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