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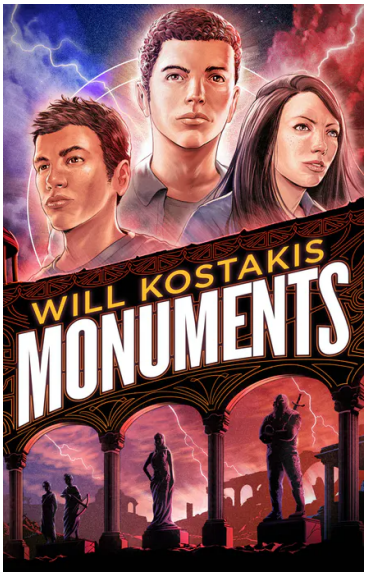
Will Kostakis

# Monuments (Monuments, 1)

*Australia (2019)*

TAGS: Ancient Warfare Gods Immortality Magic Sculpture






Cover used with permission from Monuments by Will Kostakis, Hachette Australia, 2019.

| General information | |
|---|---|
| *Title of the work* | Monuments (Monuments, 1) |
| *Country of the First Edition* | Australia |
| *Country/countries of popularity* | Australia |
| *Original Language* | English |
| *First Edition Date* | 2019 |
| *First Edition Details* | Will Kostakis, *Monuments*. Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2019, 280 pp. |
| *ISBN* | 9780734419224 |
| *Awards* | 2020 – Indie Book Awards, Young Adult Shortlist;<br>2020 – CBCA Book of the Year Awards, Older Readers Notable Book. |
| *Genre* | Fantasy fiction, Urban fiction |
| *Target Audience* | Young adults |
| *Author of the Entry* | Emily Booth, University of Technology, Sydney, Emily.Booth@uts.edu.au |



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## Creators



Will Kostakis by Pru.mitchell, 2017. Retrieved from Wikipedia, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 (accessed: February 7, 2022).

**Will Kostakis , b. 1989**
**(Author)**

Will Kostakis is an Australian children's and young adult fiction author of Greek heritage. His first book, *Loathing Lola* (2008), was published when he was only 19. His second novel, *The First Third* (2013), won the 2014 Gold Inky Award, and his third novel, *The Sidekicks* (2016) was his first book published in America. Kostakis was awarded the 2020 Maurice Saxby Award by the School Library Association of New South Wales for his services to Australian children's and young adult literature. He predominantly writes realistic fiction, however he has since branched out with his 2015 science fiction short story in *Begin, End, Begin: A #LoveOzYA Anthology*, and urban fantasy duology, *Monuments* (2019) and *Rebel Gods* (2020).

Sources:

Author's website (accessed: August 3, 2021).

Interview with the author (accessed: August 3, 2021).

Blog post (accessed: August 3, 2021).

Author's Twitter (accessed: August 3, 2021).

Author's Goodreads (accessed: August 3, 2021).

Author's Facebook (accessed: August 3, 2021).

Author's Instagram (accessed: August 3, 2021).

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## Additional information

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|---|---|
| Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs | Next book: *Monuments* (Series, Book 2): *Rebel Gods*. |

Summary

Monuments is the first in an urban fantasy young adult fiction duology inspired by adventure video games such as *The Legend of Zelda*.

Connor Giannopoulos stumbles upon a secret room beneath his school, sealed shut by a puzzle. A girl named Sally is also there, trying to solve the puzzle. The secret cavern contains a "Monument" named Darroch: an ancient god that helped to shape the world. Sally claims she is Darroch's Guardian, entrusted to protect him from the Hounds; descendants of corrupted former Guardians who wish to kill the Monuments for their powers. However, Connor soon discovers Sally is not Darroch's Guardian. Rather, Sally is seeking the Monument Jivanta who controls life to resurrect her recently-deceased mother and Connor agrees to help her.

Jivanta is believed to be hidden on the grounds of an elite private girls' school. When Connor and Sally sneak into a party at the school to find Jivanta, the pair meet Locky, a Wiradjuri (First Nations) boy who Connor immediately develops a crush on. The pair discover Jivanta sealed beneath the girls' school and awaken her, but are pursued by a Hound who crashes his car into Darroch, mortally wounding him. Darroch begs Connor to kill him with his own ancient sword so his powers will transfer to Connor rather than the Hound. Connor obliges reluctantly.

Connor visits his dying grandfather in his nursing home, regretting having not visited him throughout the years. Jivanta follows him and explains he will need to leave his old life as he is a god now – he will never age, has super strength, and is in some ways immortal, despite also now being vulnerable to the Hounds. However, Connor doesn't want to leave his family and friends. He proposes using the other Monuments to draw out the Hound and defeat him, so the gods can live without danger. Connor goes undercover as a Guardian to locate the remaining Monuments, and meets Larissa Pung, the Guardian for ice god Finn. Using her phone, Connor finds Finn's location beneath yet another Sydney school. Together with Locky, Connor discovers



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that what Larissa believed was Finn's location was actually the hiding place of his twin, Aiden, the fire god. Aiden is furious upon discovering that Finn is missing from his nearby sanctuary, however Jivanta and Sally arrive before Aiden causes any destruction.

Jivanta confesses there is an additional danger beyond the Hounds. In the past, Jivanta had created three goddesses who could influence emotions to care for humanity. When they caused war and harm rather than peace, one was killed and the remaining two were sealed in another realm. Should the original Monuments all die, the two realms will collide, freeing these rebel gods. As they all eat that night – Connor, Sally, Locky, Jivanta, and Aiden – Sally confronts Jivanta about bringing her mother back to life. When Jivanta refuses, Sally shoots her with a crossbow and flees, intending to take Jivanta's powers for herself. Jivanta ensures Locky ends her life instead, transferring her magic to him and expressing her wish that they find her "son". Aiden attacks Connor and Locky, who escape, and once they are safe, Connor and Locky kiss.

The next day, Connor and Locky break into yet another school and meet Alek, the immortal, time-travelling son of Jivanta. Alek's helps by creating a portal to the past, they return to the previous night and consult Jivanta for advice before her death. She suggests finding Finn who can calm Aidan's anger, and Connor and Locky travel back to Sydney in 1938 to find Finn in his original sanctuary. Connor and Locky find and awaken Finn, inadvertently causing the disappearance that will frustrate them in the future. They also inadvertently injure the grandfather of the Hound hunting them in the present day, creating the justification for his hunting them. Using the time travel portal Alek created, they return to the previous night, and Connor informs Alek that he and Locky will continue to live as normal teenagers for as long as they can rather than go into hiding. They introduce Finn to Aidan, expecting him to calm down. However, Aiden kills Finn and Alek to steal their powers, and pursues Connor through a portal Alek made into the past 6 years ago, where Aiden is finally killed by a woman named Grace. Connor is now trapped 6 years in the past.

Connor lives through the 6 years it takes for him to "catch up" to his present day self, working as a carer for his grandfather at the nursing home. When the night of Jivanta's death arrives again, Connor waits outside to intervene, and befriends the Hound (Pete) in the process. When Sally flees after killing Jivanta, Connor pursues her. Sally



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reveals Grace was her mother – and Sally herself inherited Aiden's powers through her several months prior to her meeting Connor, when she died. The pair visit the sanctuary of the final Monument, Nuo, at another school. They awaken Nuo, but she is mortally wounded by a student in a freak accident. Sally reluctantly strikes the final blow and inherits Nuo's powers. Connor, Sally, and Locky watch the sun rise and know the wall between the two realms is no more – the rebel gods are free.

Analysis

While Kostakis is of Greek heritage, as is his protagonist, this duology is not specifically about Greek mythology. Rather, he created his own creator gods who formed the crucial elements of the world, such as earth, fire, water, gravity, life, and time. Kostakis deliberately created a global pantheon of gods, choosing names and physical features from around the world to further distinguish the Monuments as a multicultural group (Kostakis, interview). The Monuments were inspired by different ancient statues from around the world, and retain their stone-like appearances; the protagonists often compare their appearances to statues. Nonetheless, the Monuments share some character traits with the Gods from Greek mythology. In particular, the choosing of young heroes to take on their burdens and their own love/hate relationships with each other. Additionally, the silhouetted Monuments on the front cover are framed by illustrations of columns and ruins of a stone structure reminiscent of the Parthenon.

Much of *Monuments* sees Connor alternately embracing and rejecting his newfound responsibilities as a god on what Kostakis describes as a "Capital-Q Quest". While Connor wants to save those he loves from danger, he is unwilling to sacrifice his relationships with his family and friends. Connor therefore undertakes a series of human trials alongside his godly ones, such as being good to his mother and caring for his grandfather. The climax of the novel foregrounds these human challenges; particularly, his confrontation with the Hound, Pete, who has been hunting Connor and his friends throughout the book. Instead of defeating this sworn final enemy he had originally promised to destroy, as Heracles did Cerberus, Connor befriends Pete, who asks if he can "switch sides" (p. 255) and become Connor's ally instead. Connor's story outlines an alternate hero's journey, in which the greatest feat of strength and character one can show is forgiveness.



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| | Kostakis wrote the *Monuments* duology in part as a rejection of the "issue books", which he felt his previous two novels veered towards. In a 2019 blog post published one month after the release of *Monuments*, Kostakis described his thinking behind the duology as: "Why is there always a 'Greek tragedy waiting to happen'? Why must the gay kid in fiction struggle to come to terms with himself? Why can't the gay Greek kid just save the world?" (Kostakis, blog post).<br><br>*Monuments* challenges the idea that marginalised identity is something characters should struggle with, and features a highly diverse cast of comfortably "out" queer characters, culturally diverse characters, and complex, independent girls and women. However, none of these characters face struggles related to these identities. While their individual characteristics influence the flow of the story, characters' problems stem from the universal sources like grief and family, to the genre-specific hardships of battling a rogue fire-god. *Monuments* presents a contemporary Greek hero on a 21st Century quest in Sydney, Australia. |
| Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts | Ancient Warfare Gods Immortality Magic Sculpture |
| Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture | Coming of age Death Diversity Divorce Family Friendship Heroism Identity LGBTQI Magic powers Multiculturalism Queer |
| Further Reading | Waller, Alison, *Constructing Adolescence in Fantastic Realism*, London: Taylor & Francis, 2009. |
| Addenda | Entry based on the first edition. |



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