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Felice Arena

Farticus Maximus and Other Stories that Stink! (Farticus Maximus, 1)

Australia (2008)

TAGS: Architecture Colosseum Gladiator Games Gladiators Latin (Language) Roman Empire Rome Spartacus



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

General information	
Title of the work	Farticus Maximus and Other Stories that Stink! (Farticus Maximus, 1)
Country of the First Edition	Australia
Country/countries of popularity	Australia
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2008
First Edition Details	Felice Arena, *Farticus Maximus and Other Stories that Stink!* Sydney: Scholastic, 2008, pp. 183.
ISBN	9781741692167
Genre	Short stories
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Charlotte Farrell, University of New England, charlottefarrell@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaounde 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

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Creators



Felice Arena , b. 1968
(Author)

Felice Arena is an Australian children's author born in Kyabram, Victoria. He has written best-selling and award-winning books including the "Andy Roid" series, *Sporty Kids and the Besties*, and the "Specky Magee" series (co-authored with Garry Lyon). In the 1990s he was a school teacher before working professionally as an actor: first on the Australian television show, *Neighbours*, and then in West End musicals in the UK.

Arena has been the recipient of six Australian Children Choice Book Awards, and his Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) Notable Books include *The Boy and the Spy*, *Fearless Frederic*, and *A Great Escape*. In 2013 he received the Koala Legend of the Year at the Kids Own Australian Literature Awards and the YABBA Graham Davey Citation Award for his contribution and impact on Australian children's literature.

Source:

Author's website (accessed: August 30, 2021).

Bio prepared by Charlotte Farrell, University of New England, charlottefarrell@gmail.com

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

Felice Arena, *Farticus Maximus: Stink-Off Battle of the Century and More Stories that Reek!*, Scholastic, 2009.

Felice Arena, *Farticus Maximus: Bottomus Burps of Britannia*, Scholastic, 2010.

Summary

This collection of short stories begins and ends with the tale of Farticus Maximus, the greatest Gladiator of Ancient Rome. In *Farticus Maximus*, the written story is accompanied by sketches with speech bubbles, where the reader is introduced to the Sandals family. Baby Farticus – originally named Barticus who was renamed because of his flatulence – had a disruptive impact on the Sandals family. So much so, that his father, Petercus suggests they get rid of him. His mother adamantly rejects this suggestion, and moves away with Farticus to an isolated farm house where they are occasionally visited by Roman soldiers.

One day near the farm, Farticus crosses paths with an old man, Sinus Blocus and his daughter, Rhina. Farticus is delighted to discover that both Sinus and Rhina cannot smell. Farticus and Rhina immediately fall in love. Sinus suggests that Farticus train to be a gladiator, renaming him "Farticus Maximus". Sinus trains Farticus to be a powerful gladiator, ensuring that he does not simply rely on the power of his farts to knock out his opponents. All of this rigorous training builds towards a widely-publicised fight between Farticus and the formidable "Black Dog" Brutus staged for the emperor at the Colosseum. Farticus triumphantly defeats his opponent with a gigantic fart, giving him the title, "the people's gladiator".

Farticus becomes the most successful Gladiator in the land; his primary weapon being his farts. During the (supposed) last fight of his career before retirement, Farticus' intestines are dramatically punctured by a lion, rendering him unable to fart. However, he summons the strength to break wind because of his wife Rhina's encouragement, where she repeats to him, "Find the wind within!". Farticus kills the lion and becomes a living legend.

The other short stories in the book – "Better Out than In", "Mrs Deadly Gas", "Pull My Finger", "Fartoons", "Flatulance Star" and "My Dad,

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the Fart Doctor" – are all on the topic of farting from the perspective of a young male protagonist. In returning to Farticus Maximus at the conclusion of the book, Black Dog Brutus' twin brother, Gassius (previously named Cassius, but renamed because of his stench) descends upon the town seeking revenge against Farticus. Gassius' desire for revenge is only intensified when he discovers that Rhina – who was his girlfriend before they had become estranged – is now Farticus' wife. The gladiators begin preparations for their fight, priming the reader for the next installment in the "Farticus Maximus" series, *Farticus Maximus: Stink-Off Battle of the Century*.

Analysis

Farticus clearly plays on the name and figure of Roman gladiator and military leader, Spartacus. Throughout the Farticus Maximus stories, the author latinises everyday words by making them end in "us": for example, "bottomus", "snotus", and "poopus". Reference to the Colosseum, including a sketch on page 4, as well as reference to the emperor situates the action in Ancient Rome.

There are other aspects of Ancient Roman history that are playfully recast in *Farticus Maximus*. For example, the figures of Cassius and Brutus who were senators during Julius Caesar's reign are Farticus' opponents in the book. The lion attack of Farticus also points to the ancient Roman practice of *bestiarii*, where gladiators went into combat with ferocious animals.

The use of toilet humor in the context of retelling Ancient Roman history may make the material appealing to the young reader, though some prior knowledge of the history would help contextualise these aspects. In terms of the violence in the book, the author says in the introduction that the word "kill" will be replaced with "butterfly kiss", and "stab" replaced with "hug", making the violent scenes less gory for the young reader. Arena writes, "I don't want to get in trouble with your olds and be the one responsible for you having nightmares tonight" (p. 2). This modification brings an additional comic element: the lion is "hugged" to death by Farticus, and he "butterfly kisses" Black Dog Brutus to his ultimate demise.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs,

Architecture Colosseum Gladiator Games Gladiators Latin (Language) Roman Empire Rome Spartacus

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Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Adversity Animals Boys Conflict Death Heroism Historical figures Humour Journeys Revenge Siblings Violence
Further Reading	Blank, Trevor J., "Cheeky Behavior: The Meaning and Function of "Fartlore" in Childhood and Adolescence", *Children's Folklore Review* 32 (2010): 61–86. Curry, Ann, "Bums, Poops, and Pees: A Scholarly Examination of Why Children Love and Adults Censor the Scatological in Children's Books", *Proceedings of the Annual Conference of CAIS / Actes Du congrès Annuel De l'ACSI*, 2013, https://doi.org/10.29173/cais633. McKenzie, John, "Bums, Poos and Wees: Carnivalesque Spaces in the Picture Books of Early Childhood. Or, Has Literature Gone to the Dogs?", *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* 4.1 (2005): 81–94.

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