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Gary Northfield

Julius Zebra: Bundle with the Britons!

United Kingdom (2016)

TAGS: Boudicca Circus Maximus Colosseum Gladiator Games Gladiators Hadrian Ostia Roman Britain Roman Empire Rome Spartacus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Julius Zebra: Bundle with the Britons!
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom, worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2016
First Edition Details	Gary Northfield, *Julius Zebra: Bundle with the Britons!* London: Walker Books, 2016, 288 pp.
ISBN	9781406373721
Genre	Chapter book*, Graphic novels, Humorous fiction
Target Audience	Children (10–14)
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
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Creators



Gary Northfield , b. 1969
(Author, Illustrator)

Gary Northfield is a British comics writer, illustrator and publisher. He studied illustration at Harrow College, University of Westminster. Since graduation (in 1992), he has been part of the British comics industry, with roles such as in-house illustrator for the *Horrible Histories* series (2002–2007), and contributing to well-known magazines such as *The Beano*, *The Dandy*, *National Geographic Kids*, and *The Phoenix*. His works include *Derek the Sheep* (2008) and *The Terrible Tales of the Teenytinysaurs* (2013). With his partner, Nicky Evans, in 2017 he founded Bog-Eyed Books, a publisher of graphic novels for children.

Source:

Wikipedia (accessed: July 29. 2022).

Bog-eyed-books (accessed: July 29, 2022).

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

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Additional information

Translation	Dutch: *Julius Zebra. Bonje met de Britten*, trans. Edward van de Vendel, Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Luitingh-Sijthoff, 2016. French: *Julius Zèbre: Bagarre avec les Bretons!*, trans. Patricia Guekjian, Varennes, QC: aDa éditions, 2016. German: *Julius Zebra: Boxen mit den Briten!*, trans. Friedrich Pflüger, München: Cbt, 2016.
Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	There are currently five Julius Zebra books: four adventure stories, and one joke book. Gary Northfield, *Julius Zebra: Rumble with the Romans!*, London: Walker Books, 2015. Gary Northfield, *Julius Zebra: Bundle with the Britons!*, London: Walker Books, 2016. Gary Northfield, *Julius Zebra: Entangled with the Egyptians!*, London: Walker Books, 2017. Gary Northfield, *Julius Zebra: Grapple with the Greeks!*, London: Walker Books, 2018. Gary Northfield, *Julius Zebra Joke Book Jamboree!*, London: Walker Books, 2019.
Summary	*Julius Zebra: Bundle with the Britons!* is the second of the *Julius Zebra* series of comic novels. Told through a combination of images and text, they feature the adventures of Julius, a kind-hearted but dim-witted zebra, who is taken from Africa to Rome, and becomes a gladiator. The story follows on from the action in *Julius Zebra: Rumble with the Romans!*. Having defeated the champion gladiators at a circus to celebrate Emperor Hadrian's birthday, Julius is now famous throughout Rome and is hopeful that Hadrian will grant him and his friends their freedom. But instead, Hadrian sends Julius and his animal friends Lucia (a crocodile), Cornelius (a warthog), Felix (an

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antelope), Rufus (a giraffe) and Milus (a lion) to Britannia, to fight the gladiators of Britain, telling them they are going on a holiday.

They set sail, under the watchful eye of Hadrian's loyalist, Septimus, who forces the friends to clean the boat. Lucia, finding some chainmail in the hold, proposes that the animals disguise themselves as fish and escape the boat by swimming away. The heavy chainmail, however, means that they sink instead of swimming, and have to be rescued by Septimus. On reaching Britannia, they discuss what they know about the local inhabitants, including that they wear the skins of animals and have images tattooed on their bodies, before being taken to the amphitheatre at Londinium, where Septimus sends them on a training run in the rain.

The first contest, "BRITONS GOT TALENT" pits Britons against Romans: Cornelius the warthog competes with Pericles the Pig; Felix the antelope is pitted against Douglas, a fierce sheep, and Julius faces Berta, a hairy cow from Scotland. The Britons win, and Septimus puts Julius and friends through a brutal training regime. But while they are running through the marshes, they come upon a small hut, and knock on the door. An old lady welcomes them in and gives them broth, explaining that Hadrian is afraid of the growing might of the Britons, who are fierce but disorganised, and need a leader. The old lady explains about the fierceness of Boudicca, who had almost defeated the Romans sixty years previously, and allows Lucia to try on Boudicca's cloak (which happens to be hanging in the old lady's cottage). She also uses blue dye from the woad plant (otherwise known as 'woad') to paint a fearsome image (of a spider) on Julius's chest, and advises them that the British gladiatorial fighters (Berta, Pericles, Douglas) are slaves of Rome too. "Be the CHAMPIONS that everyone says you are!" she advises – and urges them to help rid Britannia of the Roman scourge.

Back at the amphitheatre, Julius and his friends win over the British fighters, persuading them that they are all on the same team. At that moment, Hadrian appears, and locks Julius up for treason, telling him he has to fight a new champion, who he has secretly been training. They travel north, to Hadrian's wall, where the new fight will be held. There, Julius discovers that the new champion is also a zebra – his own brother, Brutus. When Julius's explanation of Hadrian's wickedness fails to turn his brother to his side, Julius is forced to knock his brother out. A furious Hadrian has Julius captured once more, and thrown into the river in a sack containing snakes.

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Luckily for Julius, the snakes turn out to be fans of the champion gladiator; furthermore, a remorseful Brutus manages to pull the sack from the river and release them all. They are picked up by Julius's friends, in a chariot, and lead a horde of Britons to drive away Hadrian and the Romans. Liberated, Julius celebrates with Brutus – and they decide to travel back to Rome to free the other animals from around the empire and take on Rome itself.

The story concludes with some pages of "Gary's Facts" – a brief list of things that the Romans brought to Britain – including apples, baths, calendars, carrots, cats, cement, central heating, language, law and order, paved streets, peas, rabbits, stinging nettles, straight roads, turnips, and wine. Each item contains a humorous explanation.

The final page features "Felix's awesome rock collection." Throughout the book, Felix the antelope has been collecting rocks (beginning at Brighton, which has a famously stony beach).

Analysis

Like its predecessor, *Julius Zebra: Rumble with the Romans!*, *Julius Zebra: Bundle with the Britons!* offers a comedic approach to the ancient world, using words and images, slapstick, puns, and gross-out humour. Themes of friendship and comradeship pervade the story – Julius and his animal friends band together to help each other and to save the day, and the book as a whole plays with popular ideas about life in Roman Britain. The story of Boudicca (or Boadicea, as the Romans called her), who led a British uprising against the Romans in AD 60/61, is influential in this story: recounted by an elderly woman (who may be Boudicca herself). Julius Zebra, who functions as a kind of comedy Spartacus, takes on the mantle of both Boudicca and Spartacus, in his actions which help liberate the Britons, and lead him to carry on into new realms in later volumes.

Northfield's fictional world involves animal and human characters, with the humans largely functioning as the ruling/free classes, and the animals as the enslaved. Though mainly exploited for comic effect, this depiction offers a stark critique of slavery, and also of the treatment of animals. For the most part, animals side with one another to overcome the wickedness and folly of humans (or Romans).

Boudicca Circus Maximus Colosseum Gladiator Games Gladiators

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Hadrian Ostia Roman Britain Roman Empire Rome Spartacus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adversity Animals Friendship Sport

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.

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Späth, Thomas and Margrit Tröhler, “Muscles and Morals: Spartacus, Ancient Hero of Modern Times” in Almut-Barbara Renger and Jon Solomon, eds., *Ancient Worlds in Film and Television: Gender and Politics*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012, 41–63.

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