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Gary Northfield

# Julius Zebra: Entangled with the Egyptians!

*United Kingdom (2017)*

TAGS: Cleopatra VII Egypt Hadrian Mark Antony Roman Egypt Roman Empire






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

| General information | |
|---|---|
| *Title of the work* | Julius Zebra: Entangled with the Egyptians! |
| *Country of the First Edition* | United Kingdom |
| *Country/countries of popularity* | United Kingdom, worldwide |
| *Original Language* | English |
| *First Edition Date* | 2017 |
| *First Edition Details* | Gary Northfield, Julius Zebra: *Entangled with the Egyptians!* London: Walker Books, 2017. |
| *ISBN* | 9781406371802 |
| *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 |
| *Peer-reviewer of the Entry* | Hanna Paulouskaya, University of Warsaw, hannapa@al.uw.edu.pl<br>Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington, babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz |



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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

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|---|---|
| Translation | French: *Julius Zèbre: Escarmouche avec les Égyptiens!*, trans. Patricia Guekjian, Varennes, QC: aDa éditions, 2017.<br><br>German: *Julius Zebra: Ärger met den Ägyptern!*, trans. Friedrich Pflüger, München: cbt, 2017.<br><br>Dutch: *Julius Zebra. Ellende met de Egyptenaren!*, trans. Edward van de Vendel, Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Luitingh-Sijthoff, 2018.<br><br>Italian: *Julius Zebra: Un faraone a Strisce!,* trans. Giovanna Pecoraro, Milano: il Castoro, 2018. |
| Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs | There are currently five Julius Zebra books: four adventure stories, and one joke book.<br><br>Gary Northfield, *Julius Zebra: Rumble with the Romans!*, London: Walker Books, 2015.<br><br>Gary Northfield, *Julius Zebra: Bundle with the Britons!*, London: Walker Books, 2016.<br><br>Gary Northfield, *Julius Zebra: Entangled with the Egyptians!*, London: Walker Books, 2017.<br><br>Gary Northfield, J*ulius Zebra: Grapple with the Greeks!*, London: Walker Books, 2018.<br><br>Gary Northfield, *Julius Zebra Joke Book Jamboree!*, London: Walker Books, 2019. |
| Summary | *Julius Zebra: Entangled with the Egyptians!* is the third in the series of the *Julius Zebra* comic novels. It follows on from *Julius Zebra: Bundle with the Britons!*. Julius Zebra and his animal friends have travelled across Europe, freeing enslaved animals from the amphitheatres of the Roman Empire, and pursuing their old trainer, Septimus, across the Mediterranean, when suddenly they are blown off-course by a huge storm, and are tossed up on an Egyptian beach. Celebrating |



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their return to Africa, the animals are surprised to be captured by a Egyptian soldiers. Grabbing two sticks, Julius stands his ground, and says 'You'd be wise to stand back, soldier, for I am Julius Zebra, champion of Rome, saviour of Britannia and liberator of enslaved beasts!' (42). The awestruck guards seeing the sticks he holds to be the symbols of the ancient Pharaohs, and witnessing him commanding crocodiles (who have made friends with Julius's crocodile side-kick, Lucia), believe him to be a god, confirmed by a sudden downpour of rain. Mistaking him for a horse, they begin worshipping him as 'The Chosen One' (48), or 'Heter,' the horse god. They are taken to the temple at Alexandria, where the Oracle confirms Julius as a god ('Oh, goodness, yes, by all means, be our pharaoh. You can't do much worse than the rotters who run the place at the moment!' (95)

Julius announces his new role to a cheering crowd (all bar an angry priest named Imhotep, and Titus Flavius, the Roman prefect to Egypt, who heads off to send word to Hadrian), then sets about wallowing in luxury – bathing in milk, and dressing up in Pharaoh's clothes. Cornelius, who is worried about the Romans' presence, suggests they visit the great library of Alexandria, where the friends enjoy looking through some of the scrolls held there. Imhotep the priest takes Julius to Memphis, where he is purified and crowned as a god, prior to a year of feasting. En route, Julius realises that the longer he stays in Egypt, the more likely he is to be recognised by old friends from the stinky lake where he grew up. During the feasting, Julius's friends explore the pyramids, discovering the treasures in the tombs, and finding the burial site of Cleopatra and Mark Antony, before Imhotep drags Julius back to the ceremony, and the people demand that he bring rain to their parched lands. When he tells them he cannot do so, Imhotep accuses him of being an imposter (and also not a horse). To convince the Egyptians that Julius is a horse, Lucia attaches him to a chariot, and they run a race with a Roman charioteer. But Julius cuts himself when the chariots crash, and his blood reveals that he is not a god. Julius and Brutus, his brother, then grab the chariot again and run away, to the Nile – where they are met by a fleet of Hadrian's boats. Disguising themselves as mummies, the animals flee into the pyramids, and into a tomb, where they are trapped by Imhotep, who has followed the bandages they have dropped. But a friendly dung beetle named Khepi helps them escape, and when they are (inevitably) captured again by Imhotep and Hadrian, Julius's godhood is confirmed, as it is believed no human could exit the pyramid. But Hadrian has one final trick up his sleeve: he has captured Julius and



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Brutus's mother, and chained her up in the boat. They are rescued by Lucia and her army of crocodiles. Though Hadrian unleashes an army of lions, the crocodiles rout them, and Julius rescues his mother. Imhotep offers Julius the crown once more, but he refuses it. Hadrian offers him a generalship in the Roman army, which he also refuses, and the animals begin heading home to the stinky lake.

An epilogue, however, reveals that their adventures are not over. As the animals walk along, they are met by Heracles, the hero of Greek legends, who calls on them for help: 'I am Heracles, son of Zeus. I seek the champion, Julius, and his band of adventurers. And I need them all in one piece. . .' (308)

Explanatory sections at the end of the book provide information on how Roman numerals work (310–311), how to write your name in hieroglyphics (313–314), and the art of mummification (315–316). "Gary's Glossary" (317–320) provides information about aspects of ancient Egypt, including information about dress, animals, writing, historical figures, food, and rituals.

## Analysis

*Julius Zebra: Entangled with the Egyptians!* presents the continuing adventures of Julius Zebra, using a combination of text and images. This fast-paced story, in which Julius is mistaken for a rain-god, employs a range of comic tropes: including mistaken identity, slapstick, puns, and toilet humour, to present an irreverent version of Egyptian life during the rule of Hadrian (117–138 CE). Well-known images of Egypt appear: including the emphasis on drought, the importance of the Nile as a water source and transport route, famous Egyptian constructions such as the Library of Alexandria, the Pyramids, and the Sphinx, and the tomb of Cleopatra and Mark Antony (or Mark Anchovy, as Julius mistakenly calls him), and figures from Egyptian history (Imhotep). As with previous novels in the series, the treatment of animals connects with a critique of slavery in the ancient world. Julius's rise from gladiator to god is treated humorously, as are different aspects of life in Egypt and the Roman Empire. The chariot race, for instance, in which Julius and Brutus are hitched to chariots, only to crash ignominiously, is played for laughs, but also allows them a way to escape, and is drawn from the real life chariot races that were popular in the empire. Similarly, Heter, the name of the fictional rain god that is applied to Julius, comes from the word Htr, the image of a horse pulling a chariot. The battle between



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Hadrian's lions and the crocodiles led by Lucia is also reminiscent of the battles between wild animals staged in the gladiatorial arena (as indeed are the gladiatorial combats expected of Julius in the first two volumes in this series).

Non-classical influences can be seen in the emphasis on punning and wordplay, and the use of popular images of the ancient world: the depiction of Hadrian has much in common with Goscinny and Uderzo's presentation of Julius Caesar, while the adventures and chase scenes are reminiscent of archaeological adventure series, such as H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* or *She,* or the *Indiana Jones* adventures.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Cleopatra VII Egypt Hadrian Mark Antony Roman Egypt Roman Empire

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture

Adventure 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.

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, 5 (2005): 81–94.

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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