Miriam Riverlea, "Entry on: Troy by Adèle Geras", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/408. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

Adèle Geras

Troy

United Kingdom (2000)

TAGS: Achilles Andromache Aphrodite Hector Helen Hermes Homer Iliad Priam Trojan War Troy



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

General information	
Title of the work	Troy
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2000
First Edition Details	Adèle Geras, *Troy*. London: Scholastic, 2000, 346 pp.
ISBN	9780439014090
Awards	2000 – Finalist for Whitbread Award, Children's Book category; 2001 – Shortlisted for Carnegie Medal; 2001 – Boston Globe-Horn Book Honour Book; ALA Best Book for Young Adults; Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year; Smithsonian Magazine Notable Book for Children; (Source here, accessed: March 11, 2019) Prepared by Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com and Robin Diver, University of Birmingham, RSD253@student.bham.ac.uk
Genre	Alternative histories (Fiction), Mythological fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Young adults

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Author of the Entry	Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

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Creators



Courtesy of the author.

Adèle Geras , b. 1944
(Author)

Adèle Geras was born in Jerusalem in 1944. Owing to the fact that her father was in the Colonial Service, she travelled a lot and lived in several countries (e.g. Cyprus, Tanzania, Nigeria etc.) when she was a child. She attended Roedean School in Brighton and later graduated from St. Hilda's College, Oxford, in 1966. She has been a full-time writer since 1976.

Adèle Geras is a prolific writer – she has penned more than ninety books for children, young adults and adults. *The Girls in the Velvet Frame* was her first full-length novel. She is best known for books such as *Troy*, *Ithaka*, *Happy Ever After*, *Silent Snow*, *Secret Snow* and *A Thousand Yards of Sea*. She has received prizes for poetry and two of her books: The Sydney Taylor Book Award for *My Grandmother's Stories* and the National Jewish Book Award for *Golden Windows.*

She lives in Great Shelford, near Cambridge. Her late husband, Norman Geras (1943–2013), was a Marxist political theorist based at the University of Manchester. One of her two daughters, Sophie Hannah, is also a published author, writing crime fiction and poetry.

Bio prepared by Agnieszka Maciejewska, Univesity of Warsaw, agnieszka.maciejewska@student.uw.edu.pl and Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com

Questionnaire

1. What drew you to writing about Classical Antiquity and what challenges did you face in selecting, representing, or adapting particular myths or stories?

I have always been interested in the Classics and knew the stories of Homer and the Greek myths from a very young age. I've written three novels set in Classical Antiquity: *Troy*, *Ithaka* and *Dido*.

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2. Why do you think classical / ancient myths, history, and literature continue to resonate with young audiences?

For one reason: they are amazingly exciting stories. About things that matter and emotions that we all still feel.

3. Do you have a background in classical education (Latin or Greek at school or classes at the University?) What sources are you using? Scholarly work? Wikipedia? Are there any books that made an impact on you in this respect?

I did Latin at school till age 16. But I grew up with translations of the myths and also later read Homer in translation. I don't use much research. I reread the *Iliad* for *Troy*, the *Odyssey* for *Ithaka* and Vergil's *Aeneid* Book four for *Dido*. For *Cleopatra* I had a research assistant appointed by the publisher called Alison Stanley and she was wonderful and provided me with all the relevant facts and she was also my editor on *Cleopatra*.

4. How concerned were you with "accuracy" or "fidelity" to the original?

I wanted it to be true to the spirit of Homer and I didn't knowingly alter things BUT invented my own characters and made up the story that they were involved in. Accuracy was sometimes not so good. I have cooks using LEMONS in *Ithaca*, to baste the meat they are cooking and it seems lemons were unknown in Classical Greece!

5. Are you planning any further forays into classical material?

I would love to do more but only if someone commissioned me to write such a novel. I am too old now to be writing novels which I'm not sure someone will want to publish.

Prepared by Agnieszka Maciejewska, Univesity of Warsaw, agnieszka.maciejewska@student.uw.edu.pl

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Additional information

Adaptations

Troy was adapted as an audiobook by Listening Library in 2002.

Translation

German: *Xanthe: eine Liebe in Troja*, trans. Brigitte Jakobeit, Hamburg: Carlsen, 2008.

Danish: *Troja*, København: Forum, 2001.

Greek: *Troia: mythistorēma*, Athens: Hellēnika Grammata, 2004.

Serbian: *Troja*, Beograd: Laguna, 2007.

Turkish: *Troya: roman* = *Troy*, trans. Aslı Biçen, Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yay., 2002.

Summary

Troy is a retelling of the final stages of the Trojan War, focalised through a group of young people living in the besieged city. Xanthe and Marpessa are sisters raised in Troy after being found as babies on the slopes of Mount Ida. Xanthe is nursemaid to Hector and Andromache's baby son Astyanax, but also tends to wounded soldiers in the hospital she calls the Blood Room. She falls in love with Alastor, a wealthy young Trojan with an overbearing mother, who has been recruited into a war that he has no desire to fight. Marpessa is an attendant in the house of Helen and Paris, and helps Helen to weave her intricate tapestries. She rarely speaks, and can see the gods who move freely about the city and often reveal their plans to her. Xanthe is sceptical about her sister's visions, and to punish her, Aphrodite arranges for Alastor to desire Marpessa. In the terrible hours after the death of Hector, they become lovers, and Marpessa falls pregnant with his child. When Xanthe learns of their affair the sisters quarrel terribly, and remain estranged as the Offering, the great wooden horse left behind by the Greeks, is brought into the city.

The sisters have other friends in Troy. Polyxena is the granddaughter and carer of Troy's Singer, the bard in the royal palace. She is in love with Iason, a stablehand who looks after Hector's horses, who in turn is in love with Xanthe. Polyxena and Iason accompany the elderly king Priam to the tent of Achilles to ransom Hector's body. When the

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Greeks sack the city, Polyxena and Iason manage to save some of the horses by concealing them in an underground chamber. Polyxena confesses her feelings to Iason, and the pair join with other survivors to bury the dead. Polyxena assumes the role of her dead grandfather, singing the stories of Troy so that they shall not be forgotten.

Analysis

Geras writes into the gaps in Homer's version of the story of Troy. The leading characters in *Troy* are all invented, and yet have plausible relationships with the traditional characters in the Trojan saga. Xanthe has a place within the royal house of Hector and Andromache, and her sister Marpessa works for Helen. Polyxena, the Singer's granddaughter and next bard of Troy, feels it is a "misfortune to be given the same name as Priam's youngest daughter." (p. 31) While we never meet the Princess Polyxena, the borrowing of her name highlights the playful way in which Geras engages with the established narrative of the Troy story. When Polyxena and Iason are instructed to accompany Priam to the tent of Achilles, Geras gives them a role within the famous events of the final book of Homer's *Iliad*.

The focus of the text is domestic rather than heroic, examining the experiences of ordinary people, women and children in particular, during wartime. The various romantic entanglements, both reciprocated and unrequited, convey the message that ordinary life goes on. But when the city finally falls to the Greeks, the brutality of conflict is powerfully revealed. Xanthe is so traumatised by witnessing the death of baby Astyanax that she loses the power to speak. The text records her feelings as a disturbing stream of consciousness without punctuation or formatting.

The text also examines the power of storytelling, self-consciously alluding to the enduring impact of the myth of the Trojan war through the suggestion that Polyxena will continue to tell the tale. As in *Troy's* companion volume, *Ithaka*, the act of weaving is employed as a storytelling device. Drawing upon Homer's references to Helen's weaving, Geras has her depicting episodes from the war on her loom, including the stories of the Judgment of Paris and Iphigenia's sacrifice. These episodes are distinguished from the main text using an italicised font, and begin with an account of the colours used for the major characters and elements in the tableau. In this way, the work is situated within the context of the mythic cycle, symbolically

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	woven in to the fabric of the story of the Trojan War.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Achilles Andromache Aphrodite Hector Helen Hermes Homer Iliad Priam Trojan War Troy
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Death Love Siblings Teenagers War
Further Reading	Blog Post, *Adele Geras: Troy*, The Trojan War Project, 10 January 2013, available at trojanwarproject.wordpress.com (accessed: July 12, 2018). Eccleshare, Julia, *Notes from an Accidental Career*. The Guardian, 13 January 2001, available at theguardian.com (accessed: July 12, 2018).

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