Daniel de Latour , Michał Rusinek

The Book of Monsters [Księga Potworów]

Poland (2016)

TAGS: Centaur(s) Cerberus Harpies Monsters Sirens





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

General information	
Title of the work	The Book of Monsters [Księga Potworów]
Country of the First Edition	Poland
Country/countries of popularity	Poland
Original Language	Polish
First Edition Date	2016
First Edition Details	Michał Rusinek, ill. Daniel de Latour, *Księga Potworów* [The Book of Monsters]. Warszawa: Zwierciadło, 2016, 120 pp.
ISBN	9788365456298
Awards	The book was nominated for the Book of the Year by "Lubimyczytać.pl" website in 2016.
Genre	Bestiary*, Illustrated works, Instructional and educational works, Poetry
Target Audience	Crossover (Children and Young adults)
Author of the Entry	Hanna Zarzycka, University of Warsaw, hanna.zarzycka@student.uw.edu.pl
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

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Creators



Daniel de Latour , b. 1971
(Illustrator)

Daniel de Latour was born in 1971. He is an illustrator, mostly for children and young adults' books and magazines. He has worked for many popular Polish children's magazines, such as *Miś* and *Świerszczyk*, he has also illustrated many columns for *Wysokie Obcasy*, the Sunday supplement to *Gazeta Wyborcza*. He is best known for his drawings of dragons, dwarfs, astronauts and animals. The books that contain his work have been nominated for many prizes such as the Book of the Year by IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People); in 2009 for the book by Henryk Bardijewski *Wyprawa do kraju księcia Marginała* [Expedition of Prince Marginal] as well as for the prize Przecinek i Kropka for the best book for children for *Atlas świata. Ameryka Południowa* by Kinga Preibisz-Wala. He has won the second prize in the contest for the best comic book organized by the Warsaw Uprising Museum (see here, accessed: July 3, 2018).

Bio prepared by Hanna Zarzycka, University of Warsaw, hanna.zarzycka@student.uw.edu.pl



Michał Rusinek , b. 1972
(Author)

Michał Rusinek was born on January 31, 1972 in Krakow. He is a Polish literary scholar, translator and author, as well as Wisława Szymborska's former secretary (after her she received the Nobel's prize and until her death in 2012, see here, accessed: June 25, 2018); he now manages Wisława Szymborska's Foundation. Rusinek graduated in Polish studies at the Jagiellonian University in 1996; in 2002 he received his PhD on classical and post-modern rhetorics; in 2013 he was granted the next academic degree based on the book

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Retoryka Obrazu. Przyczynek do percepcyjnej teorii figury [Rhetoric of Image. Contribution to the Perceptive Theory of Rhetorical Figures] He is also an associate professor at the Faculty of Polish Studies of the Jagiellonian University specializing in literary theory.

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Additional information

Summary

This bestiary is full of diverse creatures. Each page displays its own monster drawn on the entire available space, with a small reference poem about the creature. Every beast is presented as having some kind of vice which makes it look more interesting for the young reader but it also shows the monsters as rather adorable than frightening. There are monsters from Greek mythology, like Chimera, Cerberus, sirens, harpies but also see some other creatures, such as dragons or ogres. The author plays with the language by using rhyme and amusing Anglicisms. However, he still uses perfect Polish grammar and shares with the readers his view on the culture of language, as well as on the creative use of words. He also connects the monster to its best known version, for example when writing about Cerberus, he reminds the reader of the variety found in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Illustrations flawlessly complement the text. The book ends with an "Alphabetical list of monsters," which explains the origin of all beasts described in the poems and their occurrence in literature and in pop culture.

Analysis

Księga Potworów is a great example of reception of antiquity for children. It shows monsters in a new way, as more likeable than ever. It re-interprets the creatures by giving them a more approachable look and gentler behaviour while preserving the mythical foundation. It is an ingenious way to introduce children to ancient mythology: through modern use of language and interesting illustrations. It makes each monster more accessible because of the analogies to its well-known modern varieties, such as Fluffy (Cerberus). The book shows monsters flawed in various ways, but this is not scary for the child, but rather achieves the opposite, for the young reader is even more intrigued by the mythical character. The best way to tame fear it is to face it and make fun of it. When given human characteristics (especially weaknesses), monsters are seen in a completely different, non-threatening perspective. The way the author presents a beast makes it approachable and almost friendly. Also, the short poems are funny and relatable, showing the child how to joke wisely but also with tact.

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Humanity Individuality Intellect Knowledge Love Science Subjectivity
Further Reading	Review at the zaczytanadosamegorana1.blogspot.com (accessed: May 22, 2018). Information at the lubimyczytac.pl (accessed: May 22, 2018). Information at the taniaksiazka.pl (accessed: July 6, 2018).

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