Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: The Boy Who Ate the World (and the Girl Who Saved It) by Don Gillmor , Pierre Pratt ", peer-reviewed by Miriam Riverlea and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/494. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Don Gillmor , Pierre Pratt

The Boy Who Ate the World (and the Girl Who Saved It)

Canada (2008)

TAGS: Erysichthon





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

General information	
Title of the work	The Boy Who Ate the World (and the Girl Who Saved It)
Country of the First Edition	Canada
Country/countries of popularity	Canada
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2008
First Edition Details	Don Gillmor, Pierre Pratt, *The Boy Who Ate the World: and The Girl Who Saved It.* Toronto: North Winds Press (Scholastic), 2008, 32 pp.
ISBN	9780439947381
Genre	Fantasy fiction, Picture books
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com Daniel A. Nkemleke, Univerity of Yaounde, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Don Gillmor , b. 1958
(Author)

Don Gillmor is a Canadian novelist, picture book writer, journalist and historian. He grew up in Winnipeg, Manitoba, graduated in 1977 from the University of Calgary in 1997, with a Bachelor of Arts, and lives in Toronto with his wife and children. He has written several picture books, including *The Time Time Stopped* (2011), *Sophie and the Sea Monster* (2005), *Yuck, A Love Story* (2000), and three adult novels. His picture book *The Christmas Orange* (2002) was adapted into a movie of the same name (2003).

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



Pierre Pratt (Illustrator)

Pierre Pratt is a Montreal-based artist, illustrator and writer of children's books. He studied graphic design at Ahuntsic College in Montreal. Since 1990 he has illustrated and written over 50 children's books, and exhibited works in countries around the world. His illustrated works have won numerous awards in Canada.

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

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Additional information

Translation

French: *Le garçon qui avala le monde: (et la petite fille qui le sauva)*, trans. Louise Binette, Toronto: Éditions Scholastic, 2008.

Summary

This is picture book (illustrations composed in Acrylic) in which Herman Oof, a baby giant, eats all the available food, then turns his attention to cities, lands, and the entire world. ‘Scientists examined Herman and said, "If this keeps up, soon there won’t be anything left to eat in the whole world." (p. 6). Having eaten all the food, and lost any companions, Herman is lonely. "He was too tall to talk to anyone. He stared up at the sky and imagined that he was the moon and the stars were all his friends. And he was hungry. Very hungry." (pp. 10–11). He eats Africa and Greenland, and drinks the Atlantic Ocean. A girl named Sarah climbs up on him while he is sleeping and wakes him: "I hope you’re happy." (p. 15). Herman says he is not happy. "I ate everyone’s dog", Herman said sadly. "I couldn’t stop myself. I was just so hungry." (p. 17). "Herman was now the same shape as the earth, more or less. A huge, round thing with tiny legs and arms and a big moon face. Inside him, billions of people were wondering why it was so dark." Herman floats through space, like a planet. He tells Sarah that he is ‘stuffed,’ and if he ate another bite, he would burst. Sarah looks at Herman’s "giant unhappy moon face" then jumps into his open mouth (p. 22). Herman bursts, or at least disappears, and the world is restored, a little different than before. Reunited with her dog, Sarah "watched the moon come out, which looked like Herman’s face. It was smiling." (p. 28).

Analysis

The Boy Who Ate the World is a loose rendition of the myth of Erysichthon, in which a boy giant (Herman Oof) ‘eats the entire world.’While the myth is not directly referenced, *The Boy Who Ate the World* connects with the idea of overeating, and indiscriminate eating, both of which appeal to young children. Sarah, the heroine, could parallel Demeter, whose implacability causes Erysichthon to self-destruct: her act of jumping into Herman’s open mouth is analogous to a number of heroic mercy-killings, though Herman’s transformation into the face of the moon offers a softer ending than the original. Pratt’s illustrations are bright and painterly, and the text sometimes

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children’s and Young Adults’ Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of “Artes Liberales” of the University of Warsaw.

	wriggles along with Herman's emotions. The book offers insight into the psychology of overeating and obesity, friendship and loneliness.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Erysichthon
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits Friendship Isolation/loneliness Self
Further Reading	Don Gillmor at Wikipedia (accessed: April 26, 2018). Don Gillmor, official Website (accessed: April 26, 2018). Pierre Pratt, Website: www.pierrepratt.com/2015/bio-en/, (accessed: April 26, 2018). Talieh Mirsalehi, 'Pierre Pratt: Illustrator—Canada,' *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature* 54.2 (2016): 18.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.