Babette Puetz, "Entry on: Vacation Under the Volcano (Magic Tree House,13) by Salvatore (Sal) Murdocca, Mary Pope Osborne", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/502. Entry version as of October 31, 2026.

Salvatore (Sal) Murdocca , Mary Pope Osborne

Vacation Under the Volcano (Magic Tree House,13)

United States (1998)

TAGS: Eruption of Vesuvius Herculaneum Hercules Pompeii Prophecy Vulcan





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

General information	
Title of the work	Vacation Under the Volcano (Magic Tree House,13)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1998
First Edition Details	Mary Pope Osborne, *Vacation Under the Volcano*. Magic, Treehouse series # 13, illustrated by Sal Murdocca, New York: Random House, 1998, 76 pp.
ISBN	9780679890508
Awards	Osborne's awards for her works include: Ludington Memorial Award from the Educational Paperback Association, Lifetime Achievement Award from the Random House Sales Force, Heidelberger Leander Award (Germany, 2010), Minion Academy Global Literature Award (Japan, 2011), Books-Ago-Go Literacy Award (2015), Jupiter Award for Science Education (2015); Best Books of the Year Lists of *School Library Journal*, *Parents' Magazine*, *Publishers Weekly*, *the Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, and *Bank Street College*; awards from the Parents Choice Foundation, the Children's Book Council, and the International Reading Association, the Boston Public Library, the Atlanta Public Library, the Carolina Alumni Association, the Virginia Library Association, and the Delaware Library Association; Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2013).
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, Didactic fiction, Fantasy fiction, Magic realist fiction, Time-Slip Fantasy*

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.

Target Audience	Children (6–8 years old)
Author of the Entry	Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington, babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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Creators



Salvatore (Sal) Murdocca , b. 1943
(Illustrator)

Salvatore (Sal) Murdocca is an illustrator from New York, living in France. He has illustrated advertisements and picture books, including the Magic Tree House series.

Source:

Profile at magictreehouse.com (accessed: January 9, 2020)

Bio prepared by Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington, babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz



Mary Pope Osborne , b. 1949
(Author)

Mary Pope Osborne lives in Connecticut. She has written over 100 books for children and young adults: mysteries, novels, retellings of myths (including a six part series retelling of the Odyssey), biographies, picture books, a book of American Tall Tales, and a book for young readers about the major world religions. She is best known for her best-selling *Magic Tree House* series (the first volume of which was published in 1992).

More than 135 million copies of the Magic Tree House series have sold worldwide. The series has been translated into more than 30 languages. Osborne has also co-authored a companion series to the Magic Tree House books, together with her husband Will Osborne and her sister Natalie Pope Boyce and in 2012, Osborne created a Magic

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Tree House Classroom Adventures Program at here (online resources for teachers to promote literacy, accessed: October 1, 2018).

The Magic Tree House series was a #1 New York Times best seller. In 2006, the popularity of the series outdid that of *Harry Potter* as #1 on the New York Times Bestseller list (according to Cynthia Haven, Stanford University, see here, accessed: October 1, 2018). The series has received awards from the National Council of Teachers of English and the American Booksellers Association.

Moreover, Osborne's awards for her works include: Ludington Memorial Award from the Educational Paperback Association, Lifetime Achievement Award from the Random House Sales Force, Heidelberger Leander Award (Germany, 2010), Minion Academy Global Literature Award (Japan, 2011), Books-Ago-Go Literacy Award (2015), Jupiter Award for Science Education (2015); Best Books of the Year Lists of *School Library Journal*, *Parents' Magazine*, *Publishers Weekly*, *the Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, and *Bank Street College*; awards from the Parents Choice Foundation, the Children's Book Council, and the International Reading Association, the Boston Public Library, the Atlanta Public Library, the Carolina Alumni Association, the Virginia Library Association, and the Delaware Library Association; Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2013).

Osborne is a passionate advocate of literacy and access to theatre for children. Several Magic Tree House books have been adapted for children's theatre productions, including musicals.

Other Classics related books by the author:

- *The Deadly Power of Medusa* (Scholastic, 1988), Will and Mary Pope Osborne, illustrated by Steve Sullivan,
- *Jason and the Argonauts* (Scholastic, 1988), Will and Mary Pope Osborne, ill. Steve Sullivan,
- *Favorite Greek Myths* (Scholastic, 1989), retold by Osborne, ill.. Troy Howell,
- *Tales from the Odyssey* (Hyperion Books, 2002 to 2005), ill. Troy Howell — six children's novels adapted from Odyssey[3],
- *Tales from the Odyssey* (Hyperion, 2010), a two-volume edition.

Source:

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Website of the series (accessed: October 1, 2018)

Bio prepared by Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington, babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz

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Additional information

Adaptations

All of the Magic Tree House series books are available as Listening Library audio books, narrated by Mary Pope Osborne.

Magic tree house collection #4, Mary Pope Osborne, Audiobook on Cassette : Cassette recording, Language: English, Publisher: Listening Library, 2002.

In 2011, a Japanese anime based on the Magic Tree House series (which was the number one children's book series in Japan) came out: Magic Tree House (□□□□□□□□□□□) 2012, produced by TV Tokyo, Dentsu, TV Osaka, Media Factory, GAGA, Yahoo! Japan. (https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2012/01/06/films/magic-tree-house-hits-the-big-screen-at-last-but-only-in-japan/#.WsQGqC-B2qk, https://myanimelist.net/anime/10690/Magic_Tree_House).

Translation

Arabic: *Madīnah taḥt al-rrumād*, trans. Philippe Masson, Bayrūt : Hāshit 'Anṭuān, 2014.

Chinese: □□□□[Zhong ying shuang yu], trans. Baochun Lan; Chun Lan, Wuhan: Hubei Children's Publishing House, 2011.

Danish: *I vulkanens skygge*, København: Carlsen, 2008.

French: *Panique à Pompéi*, trans. Marie-Hélène Delval; Philippe Masson, [Montrouge] : Bayard Jeunesse, 2017.

German: *Im Schatten des Vulkans*, trans. Jutta Knipping; Sabine Rahn, Bindlach Loewe, 2010.

Italian: *Una vacanza vulcanica a Pompei*, trans. Elcograf, Milano : Piemme, 2016.

Japanese: □□□□□□□□ [Ponpei saigo no hi], trans. Masako Meshino, KADOKAWA, Kadokawa.

Korean: □□□ □□□ □ [P'omp'ei ch'oehu ŭi nal], trans. Ŭn-jŏng No, □□□, Sŏul-si: Piryongso, 2003.

Polish: *Wakacje pod wulkanem*, trans. Irena Domańska-Kubiak;

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Krzysztof Kubiak, Warszawa : Egmont, 2005.

Portuguese: *Férias sob o vulcão,* São Paulo : Farol Literário, 2013.

Spanish: *Vacaciones Al Pie De Un Volcan*, trans. Marcela Brovelli, Paw Prints, 2007.

Spanish: *Vacaciones en Pompeya*, trans. Macarena Salas, Madrid: SM, 2005.

Summary

In the *Magic Tree House* books, American siblings Jack and Annie (from Pennsylvania) are sent on missions in different times and places from a magic tree house by Morgan le Fay, a benevolent fairy who is a mother figure to the children. Their task is to recover a lost story in Latin, entitled: *Vir Fortissimus in Mundo*. This story used to be in a library in ancient Pompeii. Morgan le Fay also provides the siblings with a book called *Life in Roman Times*, which, throughout their adventure, they peruse frequently to find out facts and information about ancient Roman life.

The children are transported to an olive grove outside ancient Pompeii. They find themselves wearing tunics, sandals and leather-bags. They use their book to find out where they are and in which year (AD 79). They feel the ground shaking, but still set out for the city of Pompeii, crossing a dried-up stream.

On their way through Pompeii, trying to find the library, they see gladiators and a number of sites, such as the temple of Jupiter. A soothsayer warns them that the end is near, but also tells them the location of the library in the villa of Brutus. There, the children find the Latin scroll with the right title.

Jack learns from his book that Mount Vesuvius will erupt on the very day they are in Pompeii at noon. A sundial shows that it is almost that time. A terrible earthquake starts. Jack reads in his book that Pompeii will be covered in pumice, which they see falling down shortly after. They protect their heads with pillows and flee through the chaos of Pompeii, noticing the great damage to buildings. When they come to the dried-up stream, they see that the bridge they had used earlier has caved in. When they try to cross it, they get stuck in the pumice. They remember Morgan’s advice that the story they had to find will save

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them. Annie pulls the ancient scroll out of Jack's bag, holds it up to the sky and shouts: "*Save us, story*!" Suddenly, a larger-than-life gladiator appears and rescues the Annie and Jack. The children run to the Magic Tree House and are transported back home. There they find out from Morgan le Fay that the title of the story refers to Hercules, who was the one who rescued them.

Analysis

Much of this novel is set in ancient Pompeii. It is an introduction for young readers into ancient Roman life and, specifically the historical event of the eruption of Mt Vesuvius. Readers of this book learn many facts about ancient Pompeii and ancient Roman life, in general, mostly through dictionary-style entries from Morgan's book *Life in Roman Times*.

In this series a time-travel device, the magic tree house, is used to educate young readers in a number of basic facts about the ancient world. The narrative is structured around a quest which is the reason why Jack and Annie travel around Pompeii and experience a variety of aspects of Roman everyday life, as well as the eruption of Mt Vesuvius.

The aspects of everyday life shown are centered around topics which children can easily relate to by comparison to their own world, such as food, clothing and everyday life in a shopping street. We hear in some detail what a Roman villa looked like on the inside. Some famous buildings and sites are also mentioned, as well as some typical Roman professions, in particular gladiators. To add excitement to the story and set it in a particular historical context, it is told against the background of the eruption of Mt Vesuvius.

Several of the facts of Roman life mentioned are depicted in black and white illustrations. The novel itself is followed by two pages of facts about Pompeii and ancient Rome.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Eruption of Vesuvius Herculaneum Hercules Pompeii Prophecy Vulcan

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Adversity Character traits Child, children Child's view Emotions Gaining understanding Heritage History Intellect Journeys Joy of reading Knowledge Learning Magic Nature Past Prediction/prophecy Siblings Tale vs reality Travel Treasure-hunting
Further Reading	Pliny, *Letters* 6.16 Companion: Mary Pope Osborne and Natalie Pope Boyce, illustr. Sal Murdocca, *Ancient Rome and Pompeii: A Nonfiction Companion to Magic Tree House # 13: Vacation Under the Volcana*, New York: Random House, 2006.

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