Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: Zeus Sorts It Out by John Dougherty , Georgien Overwater ", peer-reviewed by Miriam Riverlea. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/510. Entry version as of November 07, 2026.

John Dougherty , Georgien Overwater

Zeus Sorts It Out

United Kingdom (2011)

TAGS: Heracles Hercules Prometheus Sisyphus Tantalus Twelve Labours of Heracles Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Zeus Sorts It Out
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2011
First Edition Details	John Dougherty, Georgien Overwater, *Zeus Sorts It Out*. London: Young Corgi Books (a Division of Random House Children's Books), 2011, 104 pp.
ISBN	9780552558075
Genre	Fantasy fiction, Fiction, Humor, Illustrated works, Mythological fiction, School story*
Target Audience	Children (Middle-Grade)
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
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Creators



John Dougherty , b. 1964
(Author)

John Dougherty was born in Larne, in Northern Ireland. He is a writer of children's books. In the 1990s and early 2000s he was a teacher at Hillbrook Primary School, in London. He has written a number of series of children's picture books and readers, usually with comic themes, and some with mythical or fairy-tale elements, including the *Bansi O'Hara* series about a girl with connections to faery folk; picture books on retellings of folktales, such as *Finn MacCool and the Giant's Causeway*, *Twice Upon a Time*, *The Story of Sir Dave* (drawing on Arthurian legend), and adaptations of Shakespeare plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest*. He has also written a trio of books about Zeus (*Zeus on the Loose* (2004), *Zeus to the Rescue* (2007), and *Zeus Sorts it Out* (2011)). He lives in Stroud, Gloucestershire.

Source:

Official website (accessed: October 1, 2018)

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

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Georgien Overwater , b. 1958
(Illustrator)

Georgien Overwater is a Belgian-Dutch illustrator of children's books. She was born in Gorichem, and from a child was interested in drawing. She trained at the Art Academy in Arnhem and has illustrated many children's books around the world, including animated films (with Paul Driessen, and Sesame Street), the children's series Floor, with Marjon Hoffman, the *Dr Procession* series by Jo Nesbo, and *Munkel Trough* by Jan Foxley. She illustrated the three *Zeus* books, the *Jack Slater Monster Investigator* and *Niteracy Hour* books, by John Dougherty. She lives in Amsterdam.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: October 1, 2018)

Profile at the leopold.nl (accessed: October 1, 2018)

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

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

Zeus on the Loose (London: Young Corgi, 2004);

Zeus to the Rescue (London: Young Corgi, 2007).

Summary

Zeus Sorts It Out is a chapter-book with illustrations, the third in a series of stories about a boy named Alex who has accidentally summoned Zeus, king of the gods, into his life, through a classroom project. In *Zeus Sorts It Out*, Alex and his friend Charlie are being bullied by Eric Lees. When Eric puts Charlie's head in the toilet, Charlie calls for help from Zeus. Zeus commandeers the boys' toilets as his temple, demanding veneration and sacrifices from the boys, who try to persuade him to exact revenge. They discuss different mythical figures who have been subjected to Zeus's punishment (Sisyphus, Tantalus, Prometheus). When Zeus (dressed as a teacher) encounters Eric, discovers his full name is Eric Lees (a homophone for "Herakles") that he has defiled his temple by putting Charlie's head in the toilet, he gives him twelve labours to carry out, but struggles to find sufficient modern schoolyard parallels. The janitor's cat is substituted for the Nemean Lion; Eric is made to steal leftover cupcakes from the dinner ladies (substitutes for dragons), and to fetch a bucket of worms (substitutes for the Hydra). Eventually Eric has performed all but one of the labours, whereupon Zeus commands him to clean the boys' toilets, which "smell of wee," and offer a parallel to Herakles' cleaning of the Augean Stables. When Eric diverts the water to spray on Zeus, Alex and Charlie, a group of unfortunate Naiads, who live in the pipes, spring forth and use him as a giant scrubbing brush, cleaning the smell away entirely. Eric runs away, threatening vengeance, and the next day returns with his mother, who accuses the school of bullying. Miss Wise, the boys' teacher, points out how ridiculous her accusations sound, and Mrs Lees leaves with Eric, vowing to take him to what she says is a more suitable school. Everyone cheers. Alex and Charlie promise to leave sacrifices for Zeus in the boys' toilets, which he has taken over as his temple.

Analysis

This is an example of comic intrusion fantasy, in which the mythical elements intrude into the real life of modern characters. Zeus's

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	traditional irascible nature, association with lightning, vengeance, and wilfulness are deployed to comic effect, in a story that provides a quick snapshot of well-known elements of Greek mythology. Summaries of the punishments of Hades, the Labours of Herakles, different mythological beings, such as Naiads and other gods, such as Artemis, feature, with the emphasis on slapstick, punning, and gross-out humour designed to appeal to children. Of interest are the witty encapsulations of different figures from Greek mythology, which generally break the laws of the modern classroom, and threaten Alex's stable life. Representations of the mythological figures generally flatten them out, reducing them to a few traits, which may seem negative, but are intended as comic. The gods are not always just, for example: Zeus acts out of outrage at defilement of his temple; Herakles (Eric Lees) is a brutish bully, not the victim of the gods. This approach comes from an emphasis on the comedy, and a representation of the gods as anarchic, in contrast to the law-abiding Alex.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Heracles Hercules Prometheus Sisyphus Tantalus Twelve Labours of Heracles Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Family Friendship School Violence

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