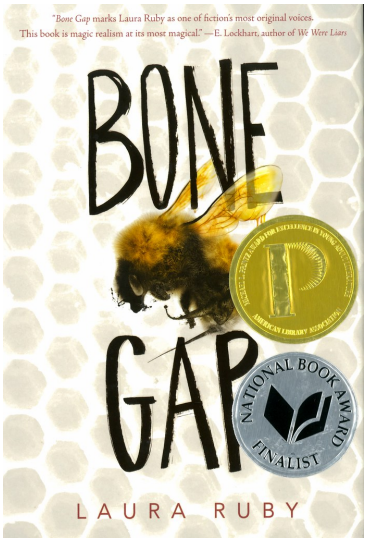
Emily Booth, "Entry on: Bone Gap by Laura Ruby ", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/608. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Laura Ruby

Bone Gap

United States (2015)

TAGS: Arion (Poet) Cerberus Cupid Demeter Elysian Fields / Elysium Eurydice Hades Hera Orpheus Persephone Psyche Styx Underworld Zeus



Retrieved from School Library profile at flickr.com, licensed under CC Y-NC-ND 2.0 (accessed: December 22, 2021).

General information	
Title of the work	Bone Gap
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2015
First Edition Details	Laura Ruby, *Bone Gap.* New York: Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins Children's, 2015, 345 pp.
ISBN	9780062317605
Awards	2015 – National Book Award Nominee for Young People's Literature; 2015 – Andre Norton Award Nominee; 2016 – Michael L. Printz Award; 2017 – Lincoln Award Nominee.
Genre	Fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Young adults
Author of the Entry	Emily Booth, University of Technology, Sydney, Emily.Booth@student.uts.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.

Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.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



Laura Ruby (Author)

Laura Ruby is the author of nine books for adults and children and has a degree in English Literature from Rutgers University. While her 4 children's novels from 2006 onwards have always combined fantasy and mystery, her 3 young adult novels during this time were more heavily rooted in the contemporary (i.e. realist) genre. Following the publication of *Bone Gap* to critical acclaim, she released another children's novel called *York*. She is on the faculty of Hamline University's Masters in Writing for Children Program in Minnesota. She grew up in New Jersey, and now lives in Chicago with her husband and cats.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: July 6, 2018);

Interview with author on mythological influences Hades and Persephone, Cupid and Psyche, Hermes (accessed: July 19, 2018), epicreads.com (accessed: July, 2018).

Author Links:

Author website (accessed: January 8, 2019);

Twitter (accessed: January 8, 2019);

Author blog (accessed: January 8, 2019);

Author Tumblr (accessed: January 8, 2019).

Bio prepared by Emily Booth, University of Technology, Sydney, Emily.Booth@student.uts.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.

Emily Booth, "Entry on: Bone Gap by Laura Ruby ", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/608. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

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

Adaptations

Audio CD
HarperCollins
3/3/2015
9781481533560

Digital Audio (Audible)
HarperAudio
3/3/2015
ASIN: B00S8QXHEY

Translation

Czech: *Včelí královna*, trans. Kryštof Herold, Fragment, 2016.

Hungarian: *Bone Gap*, trans. Judit Frei-Kovács, Gabo, 2016.

Polish: *Zapadła dziura Bone Gap*, trans. Maria Smulewska, Rebis, 2017.

Hebrew: □□□□□□□ □□□□, trans. 2018 ,□□□□ □□□□□ □□□ ,□□□□ □□□.

Summary

Bone Gap is set in the small American town of the same name in the 21st Century and follows two protagonists: Finn, a teenage boy who does not know that he has prosopagnosia (more colloquially known as “face-blindness”, a disability that prevents him from recognising faces), and Roza, a beautiful young Polish woman who mysteriously turns up in Finn’s barn. Finn is the only witness of her subsequent abduction, but nobody believes him. As Roza fights to escape from her captor, Finn must piece together what he recalls of her abduction to save her. The novel is written in alternating points of view, with a non-linear structure, in the genre of fabulism.

Prologue: The People of Bone Gap

Finn is considered the resident ‘nut’ of the town, though people pretend to like him out of politeness. The townspeople are aware that people sometimes disappear unexpectedly, but accept it as normal.

Part 1: May – Milk Moon

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.

Finn is beaten up by the Rude boys on his way home from school. He visits the eccentric Charlie Valentine, and when Finn's older brother Sean returns from his shift as a paramedic, he patches Finn up. Finn questions why Sean isn't searching for Roza, who lived with them until recently. Roza has been trapped in a beautiful house for weeks, where a mysterious older man asks her every day if she is in love with him yet. Finn does odd jobs for the townspeople, who dismiss or condemn Roza, including the police. Finn's best friend, Miguel, is frustrated when Finn only wants to speak to "ugly" Petey about her bees. Roza attempts to escape the house, but encounters a terrifying 'beast' outside. A few nights later, Finn hears a loud banging from inside their barn, where he discovers a gorgeous ownerless black mare. When he rides her, mare takes him to Petey, who is tending to her bees, and they discuss Roza's disappearance. Petey confesses the entire town believes Finn and Sean are in love with Roza, but Finn denies a romantic interest in Roza. A flashback reveals Roza's sudden appearance in their barn a year ago, with injuries indicating that she had escaped from captivity, and how Sean fell in love with her.

A flashback reveals that Roza's grandmother encouraged her to travel from Poland, and that Roza had had a string of admirers who all adored her for her beauty, but broke up with her when she wouldn't quit school to marry them. Roza was accepted for an exchange program at an American university. Back in the present, the strange man assaults her, insisting she "wants it," and Roza stops him by demanding to see "the beast." "The beast" is an enormous ugly "dog" whom she names Rus and soon befriends. She recalls a customs officer in America harassing her, and the roommate who mocked her interest in plants. Roza later defended herself from a male student who tried to assault her, but he then assaulted her roommate. Sean agrees to keep the mare and a goat (which Finn names Horse and Goat), and Charlie denies they were gifts from him. Finn looks for his missing cat with Petey on horseback. Suddenly, Horse begins to canter and leaps off a cliff – and after what seems like an endless flight, they land back in town.

Part 2: June – Strawberry Moon

Every night, Finn visits Petey, and they go riding, experiencing strange sensations when Horse canters. Petey refuses to go on a daytime date, so he visits her at home, where Finn discovers her and her mother treating one of their beehives, which had a sudden, unexplainable infestation of roaches. A colony without a queen cannot

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.

survive, and Finn spots the new queen bee first. As Finn walks to Charlies house, he is confronted with the man who took Roza (recognisable because of his stance), but he cannot recognise his face because of his prosopagnosia. Finn realises the man has been stalking him. The man drives away, and Finn chases, then reports the man to the police, but when Officer Jonas accompanies Finn to Charlie's place, Charlie says he was home the whole night and didn't hear anyone outside. Sean reminisces about abandoning his dream of being a doctor to care for Finn, though like the rest of the town, he isn't aware that Finn has a disability. Finn tries to tell Sean about seeing the man who took Roza, but Sean confronts Finn about sneaking out to see Petey, so Finn is late visiting Petey that night. Petey remembers a party where she fought off a boy who tried to assault her, only to have her reputation ruined by gossip the next day. Petey invites Finn into her room and they discuss Finn's confrontation with the man who took Roza. Petey believes him.

Roza remembers her kind American university professor who abducted her at the end of semester. As he drove her into a rural area, she escaped into the cornfields. She remembers that after she first escaped the professor, she stumbled into the house of the Cordero family, and ate their food. She spoke to the youngest brother while he was sleepwalking. She remembers falling in love with Sean, and how she made their garden grow. She lived in hiding with Sean and Finn, until the man found and captured her again. She stabs that man, but he is unharmed, and the next day he visits and gives her a black lamb.

As Petey and Finn are about to eat at a café, someone unties Horse, and she runs towards the highway. Finn startles Horse into stopping, but is trampled, and Sean arrives in the ambulance. Petey takes Horse back to Finn's place, goes through his things, and figures out that Finn has prosopagnosia. In hospital, the painkillers give Finn a series of strange nightmares about Roza. He wakes, and someone interrogates him about Sean and Roza's relationship. Finn meets Petey the night he is discharged, and she diagnoses him with prosopagnosia, saying he can only recognise her because of her "unusual" (ugly) face, and they break up. Roza remembers how the strange man arrived while she was with Finn, and threatened to poison Sean and Finn if she didn't leave with him. She still wants Sean to rescue her, and wonders whether she's actually in a coma. The strange man tells her the story of Orpheus and Eurydice (without their names) but claims that Orpheus looking back is proof that he didn't love Eurydice. The man says he has lived a long time and "collects"

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.

people, and that it makes no difference to him if Roza tries to kill herself.

Part 3: July – Thunder Moon

Charlie Valentine recalls his past. He can barely remember his wife's face, but he remembers Roza as they spoke Polish together. Finn confronts him about Roza being taken, and Charlie doesn't deny his involvement. Charlie shares everything he knows: that Bone Gap has no "physical" gaps, but holes in the world; that he calls the strange man Scare Crow; and that Scare Crow likes betting. Finn searches in vain for a "gap" in the town, until he realises he hasn't search the town cornfields. The talking corn guides him to a water channel that soon becomes a powerful river. As he crosses it, he briefly glimpses a boat with a skull-faced driver. He emerges on the other side, in a place that looks nearly identical to Bone Gap during the fair, which is due to start in August. The fairground slowly becomes more nightmarish as he searches for Roza, until Finn bets out loud that he can find Roza despite his prosopagnosia, and the Scare Crow appears and agrees to the wager: if Finn finds Roza in the fairground, the Scare Crow will let her go. The Scare Crow flips the earth so Finn must walk on the sky and clouds, while everyone at the fair is hanging from the ground upside-down. Finn has a broken shard from a fun-house mirror in his pocket.

The entire town finds out about Petey's recently-ended relationship with Finn, and treat her with pity. When she realises the town thinks Finn used her, she drives to his house, and discovers it's been trashed by the Rude boys. She accidentally reveals Finn's condition to Sean. Roza is frozen hanging upside down when Finn finds her. The Scare Crow appears and says Roza can leave, but Finn must stay, believing Roza will exchange herself for Finn again. Roza sees the mirror shard in Finn's pocket, and asks the Scare Crow why he wants her in Polish. He says she would never have been brought "here" if she wasn't the most beautiful woman, so Roza slices her face open with the mirror shard. The Scare Crow's magic can't heal the wound, and the other people in the fairground begin to move and transform into giant bugs. Roza's dog, Rus, defends them, and they escape through the cornfield. Roza and Sean reunite, and he sews her facial injury shut on her request. Petey and Finn get back together, and Rus and Roza stay with Finn and Sean.

Epilogue: August – Green Corn Moon

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.

The people of Bone Gap throw a masked costume party, having to recognise each other without their faces, in honour of Finn, whom they claim to have loved all along. Roza prepares to return to Poland and see her grandmother again.

Analysis

Bone Gap is a Young Adult novel in the genre of fabulism, where magical elements are blended into an everyday setting and characters do not question them. It draws from the myths of Orpheus and Eurydice, Hades and Persephone, and Cupid and Psyche. Only the first two figures are directly referenced in the novel; the remainder are indicated through subtextual connections. In addition to the mythological references, the novel touches on common YA themes of sexual assault, first love, and the failure of authority figures. *Bone Gap* brings together the complex plot of a 'genre' novel with the character driven prose of a 'Literary' novel, giving it a wide appeal among readers; and the retelling of multiple myths, allows it to sit alongside the influx of YA retellings. Readers who enjoy subtle references to classical myths are likely to enjoy Ruby's tale; however, the portrayal of disabled and immigrant characters/experiences may make some readers uncomfortable.

Orpheus and Eurydice is the most referenced myth, with the Scare Crow (Hades) telling Roza a shortened, manipulated version in which Orpheus looking back was proof that he didn't truly love Eurydice in chapter 20, "The Dead", to convince Roza to give up on being rescued. Finn's quest to rescue Roza parallels the myth: the population of Bone Gap sympathises with Finn after Roza's disappearance, mirroring how Orpheus' reaction to the loss of Eurydice affected the world around him. Finn makes his way to the Scare Crow's land through the river Styx, which manifests in the centre of a cornfield, and before he makes it to the other side of the river, he sees a skeletal figure on a boat, referencing Charon. Instead of Finn (Orpheus) charming Cerberus, Roza tames "the beast" and names it Rus. The Scare Crow gives Finn a task to win Roza's escape from the "underworld", akin to Orpheus' challenge of not looking back. Unlike Orpheus, Finn succeeds. The myth of Cupid and Psyche loosely informs Finn and Petey's relationship, as Ruby indicates in an interview with *Epic Reads* (see author bio section). Instead of being beautiful, Petey is known for her ugliness, prompting everyone's terrible predictions for her romantic future. However, because of Finn's prosopagnosia, he is

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.

drawn to unusual faces like hers. Despite some initial daylight exchanges, Finn and Petey's relationship predominately grows during the night; similarly, to how Cupid only visited Psyche under the cover of night so she could not see him.

The story of Hades and Persephone strongly influences the narrative, with the characters of Roza, the Scare Crow, Roza's grandmother, Finn, and Charlie Valentine representing Persephone, Hades, Demeter, Hermes, and Zeus respectively. Finn's role mirrors Hermes, who helped Persephone leave the Underworld by negotiating the terms of her release with Hades. Finn negotiates the terms for Roza's release (his success at the bet), and leads Roza out of the Gap. The supernatural leaps of Finn's black mare draw parallels with Hermes' ability to fly with his horse-drawn chariot. Roza's grandmother (Demeter) is known for maintaining a garden back in Poland, and sharing her love of plants with Roza, who studies horticulture in America. Roza's Professor (a.k.a. the Scare Crow) befriends her in her university's greenhouses, and he finds her again later at Bone Gap's Spring Festival, literally stealing her from the Spring as Hades stole Persephone. In the final chapter, Roza bakes cookies that come with a promise using her secret ingredient: pomegranate filling. She declares, "You eat cookie, you must visit me in Poland. Is rule." (p. 377) referencing the pomegranate seeds that dictate Persephone's return to the Underworld. Elderly Charlie Valentine acts as the figure of Zeus, who, in some versions, gave Hades permission to abduct Persephone. Charlie initially lies about Roza's abduction to the police and Finn. He describes his old wife as 'beautiful and wretched', referencing Hera, who was often portrayed as beautiful but cruel. The horse Charlie cared for in his youth was named Thunder, likely a reference to Zeus' control over thunder and lightening, and it is worth noting that Demeter was Zeus' partner prior to Hera, and that the cause of Roza's father's death was lightening. In chapter 20, "The Dead", the Scare Crow says Roza is the only one alive in the too-perfect world of the Gap, suggesting that Roza is in the Elysian Fields. While Roza is held captive, her garden at Finn's house dies, and a black mare appears in his barn. In some stories Demeter takes the form of a mare, and has a son named Arion (a black horse) after being raped by Poseidon in his horse form.

Classical, Mythological, Arion (Poet) Cerberus Cupid Demeter Elysian Fields / Elysium Eurydice Hades Hera Orpheus Persephone Psyche Styx Underworld

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.

Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Coming of age Disability
Addenda	Edition used for entry: Laura Ruby, Bone Gap, London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2016, 380 pp. E-book via American publisher: Harpercollins, accessed: August 3, 2018.

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.