Anna Mik, "Entry on: The Sea Tiger by Victoria Turnbull", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/642. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Victoria Turnbull

The Sea Tiger

United Kingdom (2014)

TAGS: Sirens





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

General information	
Title of the work	The Sea Tiger
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom/USA
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2014
First Edition Details	Victoria Turnbull, *The Sea Tiger*. London: Templar Publishing, 2014, 41 pp.
ISBN	9781783700066 (hardback); 978783700070 (softback); 9781783706976 (ebook)
Official Website	victurnbull.com (accessed: February 5, 2019).
Awards	2017 – nominated for Bratislava Biennial of Illustration; 2015 – shortlisted for Waterstones Children's Book Prize; 2015 – shortlisted for Oscar's First Book Prize; 2015 – nominated for CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal; 2013 – winner of AOI New Talent Award, Children's Books, 2013.
Genre	Picture books
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Anna Mik, University of Warsaw, anna.m.mik@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.

Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk

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



Courtesy of the Author.

Victoria Turnbull , b. 1976
(Author, Illustrator)

Victoria Turnbull is a British author, mainly of picture books for children. She studied Children's Book Illustration at the Cambridge School of Art.

She published following works:

- *The Sea Tiger* (2014)
- *Kings of the Castle* (2016)
- *Pandora* (2016)

Contact (accessed: May 30, 2018).

Bio prepared by Anna Mik, University of Warsaw,
anna.m.mik@gmail.com

Questionnaire

1. When I was reading *Pandora*, I had a feeling that Your inspiration drawn from Greek Mythology was a subtle one, yet vividly present in the story. We encounter the world with no hope within and yet – it is still out there. What did draw You to write with Classical Antiquity in the background and what challenges did You face (if any) in adapting the Pandora's myth?

I didn't set out to adapt Pandora's myth. I was writing a story about regeneration and hope, the myth seemed to fit this idea. It's a Greek Myth that I recall well from my childhood and therefore came naturally to mind in connection with the story I was writing. So it was an influence rather than an adaptation.

2. In the "original" story Pandora was a woman that was a little

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.

bit too curious... Has Pandora from your story done something wrong? Is this her punishment?

No, the fox in my story has done nothing wrong. She has been forced to adjust to circumstances brought about by man. I think we, humankind, are all guilty of putting our own needs above the needs of the natural world.

3. The main character is a female AND an animal. Culturally both – women and animals, are still being excluded from the hegemonic discourse. Why did you choose a vixen? Was that a conscious choice?

Yes, it was a conscious decision. I wanted an intelligent and strong protagonist capable of existing in unthinkable conditions. I also considered the type of animal most likely to be able to survive such an environment and once I'd made the connection with the myth, Pandora seemed a fitting name.

4. The setting is a wasteland, with no life in it – no trees, grass, nature as we still know it. Was the contemporary world an inspiration to create this one?

Yes, I was considering the future of our world and the possible outcome if we continue along our current path – one where we have destroyed most of the natural world, including ourselves.

5. The second interpretation might be a little bit far-fetched but, please, just tell me what do you think about it. In the Greek Myth we read that Pandora was made from the same clay as her box. Thus, if we acknowledge the tradition of treating women as the source of all miseries, hope would be the only thing that is making women worth something – and that would be the ability to give birth to children. SO – if we read your story as a reinterpretation of the Greek story in such a manner, would the wasteland be an infertile womb of a contemporary woman that cannot have children? Hope that enters this world

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.

would be an anticipation of bringing back life to this world. What do you think about this kind of interpretation?

Certainly, I agree hope is an anticipation of bringing back life to this world and women are integral to that. I do not believe procreation is the only thing that gives women their worth, but I do think as a society that if often how women are regarded. So I find this interpretation very interesting.

6. Can we read the Pandora story as a metaphor of depression?

I was going through I difficult period of emotions whilst I was writing *Pandora* so my own experiences certainly played a part. I believe we are not always in control of everything but northing stays the same forever. We/the world are in a constant state of change. Therefore even when a situation seems impossible, there is always hope.

7. Are you planning any other myth-based rewritings?

Not at the moment but I think myths are an amazing source of inspiration. All my stories are a collection of ideas going around in my head and when connections form, a story begins to take shape.

8. Why do you think classical / ancient myths, history, and literature continue to resonate with young audiences?

I think because there is truth to them. You can tell the same story is many different ways, and every generation needs to try to understand the world they are living in.

9. Last but not least J I need some encyclopaedia-like information about you. I found a piece of it on your website, still, I need your birth date, place where you were born, and so on. Can you provide me with that?

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.

I was born in York on 18th October 1976.

Prepared by Anna Mik, University of Warsaw, anna.m.mik@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.

Additional information

Summary

One of the two main characters, and also the narrator of the story is the Sea Tiger. Even though he is drawn by Turnbull as a 'real' tiger that normally would not live in the sea, he does not seem to have any problems with breathing under water (real tigers are very good swimmers, but they would not survive under water for long). Sea Tiger is best friends with Oscar – a child merman. Oscar is depicted as a sensitive boy who loves to daydream and explore beautiful things hidden in the depths of the ocean. Sea Tiger encourages his friend to go seek adventures by saying: "…the world is our oyster!" (Turnbull, 2014: 11), implying that anything is possible. "Let's explore!" Sea Tiger says on the next page.

Sea Tiger and Oscar indeed go exploring wonderful places, observing beautiful underwater plants, animals, seabed formations and the play of lights. They go to the sea circus and carousel, and have a lot of fun. After a long day, they go to sleep right next to each other, and if needed, Sea Tiger scares away all the monsters bothering Oscar. Their friendship seems perfect, but then Sea Tiger starts to see a problem while looking at the other mer-children – he is Oscar's ONLY friend.

He knew from the beginning: "Where I lead, Oscar follows" (Turnbull, 2014: 28-29). It is also his task – as companion and guide – to encourage Oscar to make new friends. As they swim towards another adventure they both meet a new pair of friends – a Lion and a mer-child. The meeting takes place among a bale of singing turtles that witness bonding of the newly met companions: Sea Tiger and Sea Lion and the children, who take one of the singing turtles with them. Paired with new friends they go to find new challenges, 'flying' away in the underwater hot-air balloons made out of shells – towards new adventures.

Analysis

The Sea Tiger is the first picture book of Victoria Turnbull. As is the case now in all of her books, it features animal characters that she perceives to be inseparable companions of a growing-up child. Here the Sea Tiger might be interpreted as Oscar's imagined friend, as it is impossible for tigers to live underwater. Still, Oscar himself is not a 'real' child, but a merman. Both of the characters are constructed

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.

upon a fantasy idea of both – animals and children.

The main issue of the story is how to end a friendship for the sake of each other's happiness. The Sea Tiger, as an older, more experienced friend, makes the decision to separate for both of them, but only when he is sure that Oscar's new friend is really right for him. The picture book shows how to sacrifice something for a friend, even if it requires making a hard decision. It pretty much symbolizes how the real friendship should work.

The mythical inspiration for the story is also quite simple. The setting of the underwater world invites the presence of the underwater creatures – and mermaids and mermen would be one of the potential choices. Here of course we do not deal with the ruthless and dangerous sirens, but with their later descendants – beautiful and graceful mermaids. What remained from mythology is the music strongly associated with both – sirens and mermaids. As was mentioned in the summary, new friendships were born listening to the turtles' song, which surrounds with its melody all underwater creatures. It is almost as if the mythical song of the sea connects not only the ancient times with the present day, but also the concepts of friendship, drawn from antiquity (see: Marciniak, Olechowska, 2016), which very often were also connected to a great sacrifice.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Sirens
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Childhood Friendship Talking animals
Further Reading	See the website of the book: https://victurnbull.com/portfolio/pandora/ (accessed: October 15, 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.

Cianciolo, Patricia J., *Picture Books for Children*, Chicago & London: American Library Association, 1997, books.google.pl (accessed: October 15, 2018).

De amicitia: Transdisciplinary Studies in Friendship, Katarzyna Marciniak, Elżbieta Olechowska, eds. Warsaw: Faculty of "Artes Liberales", 2016.

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.