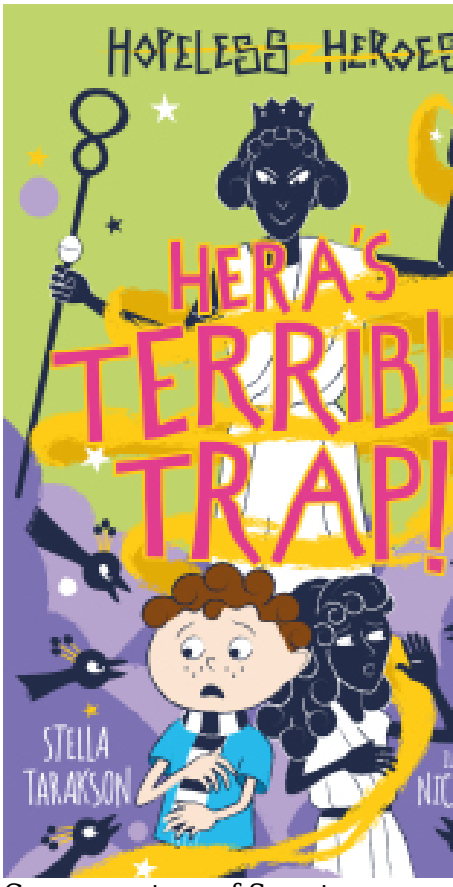
Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Hera’s Terrible Trap! (Hopeless Heroes, 2) by Nick Roberts, Stella Tarakson ", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/700. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Nick Roberts , Stella Tarakson

Hera’s Terrible Trap! (Hopeless Heroes, 2)

United Kingdom (2017)

TAGS: Hera Heracles Hercules Hermes Medusa Perseus Stheno Theseus



Cover courtesy of Sweet Cherry Publishing.

General information	
Title of the work	Hera’s Terrible Trap! (Hopeless Heroes, 2)
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2017
First Edition Details	Stella Tarakson, *Hopeless Heroes: Hera’s Terrible Trap!* Leicester: Sweet Cherry Publishing, 2017, 208 pp.
ISBN	9781782263463
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, Fantasy fiction, Fiction
Target Audience	Children (age 6–10)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@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	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il 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



Nick Roberts (Illustrator)

Nick Roberts is an English illustrator. He likes cartoons, monsters, robots.

Source:

Official website (accessed: January 23, 2019)

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com



Stella Tarakson , b. 1968
(Author)

Stella Tarakson is an Australian author of Greek descent, who writes for children as well as adults; her work includes both fiction and non-fiction books. She began her career working at a law firm, but then decided to focus on writing. She won several awards for her books. In her blog, she writes that she has been interested in Greek mythology for a long time; she also writes: “Like many Greek Australians, I grew up on a steady diet of Greek mythology. Herakles and Theseus were as familiar to me as Cinderella and Snow White. That’s why I’m so excited to add my voice to the stories that have been told and retold over the millennia.”

Sources:

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.

Official website (accessed: January 23, 2019);

evelyneholingue.com (accessed: February 26, 2019).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Questionnaire

1. What drew you to writing the *Hopeless Heroes stories*? How did you develop your particular literary style / idiom / aesthetic for your works inspired by Classical Antiquity? (These are overlapping questions, so feel free to answer them as one)

Being the daughter of Greek migrants, I've grown up on a steady diet of Greek mythology. When I was very young, my father used to tell me many of the tales – I suppose he was continuing the great oral tradition of our ancestors! Books came next, and I'm lucky to still have most of them. My parents were very keen to pass their culture and identity on to their children, especially in a new country far from home. Now that my own children are growing, I also feel the need to "pass it on", keeping the link alive for future generations. I feel incredibly fortunate to be able to share these stories with a wider audience, and it's wonderful to have readers from all around the world enjoying my books! My literary style is not traditional, though. I've also grown up with a love of British comedy, which comes out quite strongly in the *Hopeless Heroes* series.

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

The myths continue to resonate with young audiences because we've never lost our fascination with monsters and heroes. Greek mythology is filled with passion and excitement, the characters are larger than life, and there are continuing parallels with our lives today. The human condition hasn't changed in thousands of years and I don't think it ever will.

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.

3. Do you have a background in classical education (Latin or Greek at school or classes at the University?) What sources are you using? Scholarly work? Wikipedia? Are there any books that made an impact on you in this respect?

I don't have a classical education – I have degrees in Economics and Law from the University of Sydney – but I've always been interested in the classics. Once I started writing *Hopeless Heroes*, I decided I wanted to learn more. I've re-enrolled at USyd part-time and I've been studying ancient history and classical archaeology. It's wonderful to be able to study something purely out of interest! My main source is Barry Powell's *Classical Myth* published by Pearson. I also like the website theoi.com (accessed: March 19, 2019).

4. Did you think about how aspects of Classical Antiquity (myth, history) would translate for young readers?

As you know, many Greek myths are rather Adult Only. I had to think very carefully about how to be age-appropriate, while staying as true to the myths as possible. I avoided the bloodier tales, and edged carefully around sexual issues. For instance, Hera hates Hercules (yes, I had to use the more familiar Roman name) because she's jealous of his beautiful mother. Which is true. However, I didn't come right out and say why! Even so, children learn a lot about Greek history and mythology from the books. Many teachers in the UK have been reading them to their classes as part of the class studies. I'm actually teaching by stealth!

5. How do you go about working with the comic / comedic aspects of classical antiquity?

I've incorporated comedy by accentuating the flaws of the Greek heroes and by placing them in unexpected situations. For example, Hercules is super-strong but not exactly super-smart. In book 1, which is set in the modern day, he insists on using skills he developed while performing the Twelve Labours. Sadly they don't work so well when it comes to tackling housework and school bullies.

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.

6. Are you planning any further forays into classical material?

Yes, I'm definitely planning further forays! I've already had a few plays published in the *Australian Readers Theatre*, (Blake Education), that combine the classics with Australian history. I've written *The Flying Finish*, where Pegasus and Bellerophon enter the Melbourne Cup; *The Gold Rush Touch*, where a goldfields prospector succumbs to the Midas Touch; and *Pandora's Ballot Box*, where a young girl encounters the suffragette movement. They bring the classics to life in a new way, and show that they are still very relevant and relatable today!

7. Anything else you think we should know?

The *Hopeless Heroes* books aren't just retelling of the myths – that's been done many times before. The stories begin when 10-year-old Tim Baker accidentally breaks an ancient amphora, and discovers that Hercules had been trapped inside it for thousands of years. Once repaired, the vase allows Tim to travel back to Ancient Greece. He befriends Hercules' daughter Zoe (an addition to the traditional myths), and together they encounter famous heroes, escape bizarre monsters, solve baffling puzzles, and even defy the gods themselves. I only hope they don't hold grudges …

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

Summary

This is book 2 in the *Hopeless Heroes* series. This is series of portal-fantasy adventures in which a timid boy travels to the world of ancient myth by means of a magic vase, and learns to be brave through adventures with classical heroes. In the first book of the series, Tim Baker, our hero, discovered the mythological Hercules was trapped in an old vase Tim had at home. He also discovered that it was Hera, who locked Hercules there since she was jealous of his beautiful mother. In this book, Tim is still afraid that Hera or her helper, Hermes, might harm him.

One day he discovers Hermes in his room, trying to steal the vase. Tim quickly holds on to the vase and to Hermes and is magically transported to ancient Greece. Unfortunately, Tim lands in from of Hera's temple and her guardian peacocks soon surround him. Then Hera discovers him and tries to persuade him to help her trap Hercules in the vase again. While running from her, he encounters Hercules and his daughter Zoe. Tim tells Zoe about Hera's plan to recapture Hercules and they run back to her temple. Yet as soon as they touch the vase, Hera appears and traps them in a labyrinth.

In the maze they meet the heroic yet vain Theseus. When they manage to escape the maze, they arrive at a flower garden with strange-looking statues, which appear like distressed people. In the garden, they also encounter a frightening gorgon who tries to turn them into stone as well. When the children and Theseus hide in a cave from the gorgon Stheno, they also encounter Zoe's grandfather, Perseus. Working as a team, the children and the heroes manage to defeat and decapitate Stheno. Next Tim and Zoe retrieve the vase from Hera and manage to escape to Hercules' home. Tim learns he can command the vase to take him back home and that only minutes passed since he was transported to ancient Greece.

Analysis

This series explores the various types of heroes and what being a hero truly means. It also uses Tim's travels as a way for him to escape his everyday worries in a fantastic world. Tim declines' Hera's offer to become a god since he does not wish any harm for his friend Hercules. Friendship is an important motif in the story. Hercules is Tim's friend, yet Tim also see a father-figure in him. Tim's father died when he was

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.

young, and although his mother cares for him, he still spends long hours alone. Having a doting father figure such as Hercules who cares for him makes him feel better and Tim felt lonely after Hercules left in the first book. While Zoe complains about her father who believes that girls should stay home away from danger, and complains that he is too controlling and over-protective, Tim interprets this behaviour as worry and real care for of his daughter. Thus we see how children interpret the same situation in different way, depending on their situation and emotions. Zoe is of course acting rebelliously against her father and the ancient norms, which forbade equality between the sexes; in that sense her character may be anachronistic, yet more appealing to the modern readers.

Regarding the hero motif, Theseus, whom the children encounter in the labyrinth, is more interested in his appearance than in actually doing anything. It is ironic that they meet in a labyrinth, yet Theseus loses his way out and Tim finds it. There is no monster in the labyrinth; the monster is hiding outside in the garden. Another aged hero then emerges, Perseus. Yet while Perseus boasts that he is a hero and can still fight, he is more interested in gardening and falls asleep quickly. It is up to the younger generation, Tim and Zoe, to act heroically and save themselves (and the mythological heroes) from the gorgon. The message here is that anyone can be a hero, even young children – as long as they trust each other and use their brains. They do not need big muscles, just quick thinking. Being a hero is not about how one looks, but rather how one acts and more importantly in how one relates to his friends.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Hera Heracles Hercules Hermes Medusa Perseus Stheno Theseus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Family Friendship Heroism Magic

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.

Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Hera’s Terrible Trap! (Hopeless Heroes, 2) by Nick Roberts, Stella Tarakson ", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/700. Entry version as of November 06, 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.