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Shirin Yim Bridges , Albert Nguyen

Artemisia of Caria

United States of America (2010)

TAGS: Architecture Artemisia of Caria Athens Graeco-Persian Wars Greek Art Greek History





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

General information	
Title of the work	Artemisia of Caria
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America, United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2010
First Edition Details	Shirin Yim Bridges, *Artemisia of Caria*, The Thinking Girl's Treasury of Real Princesses. Foster City, CA: Goosebottom Books, 2010, 19 pp.
ISBN	9780984509812
Genre	Biographies, Illustrated works, Instructional and educational works
Target Audience	Children (9–13)
Author of the Entry	Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk 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.

Creators



Shirin Yim Bridges (Author)

Shirin Yim Bridges is a children's author based in the USA. Other works include *Ruby's Wish* (2002, Chronicle), based on her grandmother's efforts to gain an education in mid-twentieth century China; *The Umbrella Queen* (2008, Greenwillow Books) about a girl who defies convention to create beautiful art, and the other titles in *The Thinking Girl's Treasury of Real Princesses* series. Bridges' work for young readers emphasises inspirational and empowering stories about women and girls. At the time *The Thinking Girl's Treasury* was developed, Bridges was the owner of its publishing house, Goosebottom Books and she provided reference materials and art direction to the *Treasury* illustrator.

Bio prepared by Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk



Albert Nguyen , b. 1982 (Illustrator)

Albert Nguyen is an illustrator and painter based in California, USA. In 2004 he graduated from an undergraduate degree at the University of Minnesota with a major in Marketing and a minor in Fine Art. He then went on to complete a graduate programme in Illustration at the Academy of Art, University San Francisco. Much of Nguyen's illustration work is done in comic book style, with emphasis on superheroes and *Star Wars* characters.

Source:

Official website (accessed: June 13, 2019)

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Additional information

Summary

This is an illustrated history book for young readers which tells the story of the Persian Wars with focus on the role of Artemisia of Caria and the social history of her life and times. *Artemisia* opens with sixteen names in a pronunciation guide and an invitation to try saying them aloud, before moving on to an introduction.

The introduction begins with an account of the traditional superstition that it is bad luck to have women, or at least upper class women, on board ship, and the general expectation in the ancient Greek world that respectable women should not go outside much. This is established in order to emphasise how extraordinary it was that Artemisia of Caria became a successful admiral. *Where She Lived* (p. 3) then shows a map of the lands surrounding the Aegean Sea. It explains that the Greeks were scattered across this area, which was not united in the way modern Greece is. A timeline below the map demonstrates where Artemisia's life falls in relation to those of the other princesses in the series (for which see the Analysis section). The opening of the main narrative, Artemisia's story (*Her Stor*y p. 4), then reiterates with more detail the various constraints placed on women in classical antiquity. It stresses that Artemisia learned three key things growing up: how to sail, how to lead a fighting fleet, and how to "respect her own opinion". It is noted that while the ancient Greeks celebrated some mythical queens (Dido and Hippolyta are illustrated as examples), historical reigning queens were rare.

The next sub-section, *What She Ate* (p. 7) contains information about what Artemisia might have eaten, based on the main foods available in the region during that period. There are images of bread, wine casks, olives, and fish, and references to how important the olive was in Greek culture. The following section explains that when Artemisia ruled Caria, that region had been drawn into the Persian Empire and the same empire was looking to conquer the Greek mainland.

An account of Xerxes' invasion follows. The text on the first page of this section is accompanied by an illustration of Artemisia on the prow of her ship and another of a group of Spartan soldiers. The text describes the Battle of Thermopylae and the destruction of much of the Persian fleet in a storm. The Battle of Artemisium is referred to not by name but briefly as a "sea battle". It is noted that Xerxes was "a big head" and a "sore loser"; he had burned Athens but that did not

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make up for the loss of ships. There is a sub-section outlining the Battle of Thermopylae (p. 12).

The next section (pp. 13–18) provides a narrative of the Battle of Salamis. It presents the Persian force's leadership on the beach the night before the battle. Direct speech is used for the first time. The male commanders encourage Xerxes to carry on as planned, telling him what he wants to hear. Artemisia surprises them by speaking up and telling Xerxes that he should consolidate what he has and not risk that in an avoidable sea battle. This section is illustrated by a full-page image of Artemisia standing by a camp-fire lending her words to the council meeting. The facing page features a photograph of a marble frieze depicting carpenters working on a ship and close-up photos of some tools. This complements the text's reference to last minute preparations for naval warfare. Xerxes thanks Artemisia for her counsel but carries on as planned. He watches the battle from a cliff top and sees disaster unfold. When Artemisia rams another ship, Xerxes exclaims, famously, "My men have become women, and my women men!". After the battle, Xerxes now seeks Artemisia's advice. She advises him to take most of his force home and to leave a competent general in charge of the rest to finish off. Xerxes follows her advice and places her in charge of escorting the royal children home. He gives her a gift – a calcite jar bearing his name, which is now housed in the British Museum.

There are sub-sections within the narrative of the campaign. *What She Wore* (p. 11) demonstrates how a chiton worked, and how the girdle could be used to shorten clothing to allow more movement. Artemisia holds a bow and arrow in both illustrations. *Where She Fought* (p. 16) includes a map of the Persian Empire and Greece and a close-up map of the Salamis straits.

The final section of the book is *The Not So Nice Part of Her Story* (p. 19). This section relates an event from the Battle of Salamis, when Artemisia ordered her crew to ram a ship from their own side in order to effect their escape. The text notes that it would have been dangerous for her to try and turn the ship in those circumstances (rather than ploughing ahead), but adds that the people on the rammed ship would all have drowned. The book closes by asking whether the reader considers it an “honest and brave” or “cowardly” thing to do, before adding that “it's difficult and rare to be completely praiseworthy”, although Qutlugh Terkan Khatun of Kirman, one of the other princesses in the series, did manage it.

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Analysis

With the so-called “princess culture” experiencing a marketing-driven boom in popularity amongst young people, this series is a well-timed attempt to include the lives of real princesses in the literary landscape, notably princesses who achieve things by their own exertions in public life. In this sense the series favours traditionally masculine accomplishments of political and military success, yet it frames these in a more gender-neutral way, as accomplishments that women may succeed in when enabled to circumvent the sex-based restrictions typically placed on women and girls in the cultures in which these women lived. Traditionally feminine accomplishments for women in these cultural contexts, such as skill with textiles, household management, and faithfulness in marriage are not celebrated in this series, yet the active achievements of the princesses are combined with depictions of them as traditionally beautiful and charming, and in that sense there is an underlying message for young readers that princesses (for which read "young women" more broadly) can achieve in the public sphere without being deemed ugly or unfeminine.

Living as we still do in cultures in which more kudos accrues to achievements in the public realm and in which girls and young women are bombarded with messages which denigrate their capacity to compete in that arena, this series provides a welcome example of the achievements of several historical women, thereby normalising the figure of the active rather than passive princess and providing models of female achievement. It is implied if not stated that the princesses in the series have good qualities that modern children (especially girls) may benefit from emulating. The other princesses in the series are: Hatshepsut of Egypt, Sorghaghtani of Mongolia, Qutlugh Terkan Khatun of Kirman, Isabella of Castille, and Nur Jahan of India.

The story of Artemisia of Caria is told with close reference to Herodotus' *Histories*, the main source for traditions relating to her life and involvement in the Persian Wars. There is no mention of Herodotus, however, so the young or adult non-specialist reader would not know what the source of much of the information in the book is or what to read to develop their knowledge further. Xerxes is characterised much as he is in Herodotus; as an arrogant narcissist with no respect for others and an insatiable greed for conquest. He is explicitly called a “big head” and an illustration is provided of him having the Hellespont whipped – a famous detail from the *Histories*.

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With the Persian expansion presented as a product of Xerxes' bad character, Artemisia is then found on the 'wrong' side of the war. For the most part this is balanced out by continued adherence to the Herodotean tradition. Artemisia becomes a “wise advisor” figure; providing the king with honest advice despite the risk to herself, thus demonstrating that she is a morally good and brave subject, even if her king is less than perfect. In the *Histories*, this tradition plays out as much to denigrate the male nobles around Xerxes as much as it is intended to raise our impression of Artemisia, but as the focus of this work is on Artemisia herself, it reads more as evidence of Artemisia's boldness and ability.

An interesting challenge to the image of Artemisia's excellence is included in the section, *The Not-So-Nice Part of Her Story*. This section also draws on Herodotus and details the account of Artemisia ramming a ship on her side in order to extricate her ship from the unfolding disaster. The reader is invited to evaluate this action morally with reference to the difficult circumstances. Was she a coward to hurt others, or was she brave to protect her own crew? When this anecdote is told within the main body of the text it is included with a direct quote from Herodotus of Xerxes exclaiming, "My men have become women, and my women men!" (Herodotus, *Histories*, 8.88). This is intended to disparage the male commanders and to praise Artemisia, and it implies a positive interpretation of her actions (although the king has failed to grasp exactly what she has done). By *The Not-So-Nice Part of Her Story*, the evaluation is left open, yet it is noted that it is certainly “rare to be completely praiseworthy”, implying criticism of Artemisia's actions, and then contrasting her with the “completely praiseworthy” Qutlugh Terkan Khatun of Kirman.

Several of the features in the book imply value for the everyday features of life and for the work of non-elite figures. This can be seen in the sections providing information about clothing and diet and in the images relating to the work of carpenters and shipwrights and so on. There are also many maps which help readers to orientate themselves within the area. Religious life, so important in antiquity, plays a very minor role in this work. This is evident in the absence of separate sections for religion and/or worship, and in the arguably curious decision not to explore the meaning of Artemisia's name or the coincidence of Artemisia's involvement in the Battle of Artemisium. The detail of Artemisia's name, based on a Greek goddess, also touches on another element that is perhaps underexplored, that of

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ethnicity. Despite being referred to as “Artemisia of Caria”, the work consistently discusses her in terms of Greek culture and refers to her as a Greek. It is noted that Greeks occupied much of the coast of what is now Turkey (Asia Minor), but it is not noted that Caria was not Greek, and thus Artemisia was not Greek either, she was Carian. Her possession of a Greek name indicates the hellenisation of Caria, but does not make her Greek. This appears to be an error on the part of the author, and while it subverts the ethnic binary of the Persian Wars (which was not simply Greeks versus Persians) in a potentially helpful way, it is nonetheless a misleading representation of Artemisia's background and a missed opportunity to explore the ethnic complexity of ancient Asia Minor. It might also be noted that from the illustration given, one might be forgiven for thinking that she was neither Greek nor Carian. Artemisia is depicted with pale skin and very blonde hair bound in side plaits, more like a Viking than a young royal from the Mediterranean. The illustrations of Artemisia are nonetheless appealing; throughout she has a bold, bright, intelligent mien and she is dressed in clothes that convey accurate period details. The many images in the book make it more accessible while the inclusion of photo-images of items such as food stuffs and shipwrights' tools (selected and laid out by graphic designer Jay Mladjenovic) reinforces the historical reality of the events and the period described. Altogether the inclusion of social history details such as diet, clothing, and education help to express the lived reality of antiquity and the broad scope that the history of the subject can take. The text is written in the style of a factual history book, but it gets livelier and almost novelistic as it reaches the crisis of the story, an approach to history-writing that is likely to be engaging for young readers.

The account of the Battle of Thermopylae is drawn from Herodotus' *Histories* much as the rest of the work is. The influence of the 2006 film *300* can be seen in the images of Spartan soldiers, however, who are depicted with bare chests and small kilts. There is no indication of a similar influence from the sequel to *300*, *300 Rise of an Empire* (2014). In the latter film, Artemisia is depicted as a tragic revenge-crazed harridan out of control with lust and desire for bloodshed. That Artemisia has no place in *Artemisia of Caria,* where Artemisia remains the lone wise figure in a crowd of sycophants as per Herodotus. This Artemisia is an admirable figure who is presented as having good sense and bravery that any modern child might do well to emulate.

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Architecture Artemisia of Caria Athens Graeco-Persian Wars Greek Art Greek History
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Authority Character traits Conflict Gender Gender expectations/construction Girls Historical figures History Integrity Knowledge Morality Princes and princesses War

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