Anna Mik, "Entry on: In the Woods by Thereza Rowe", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/930. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Thereza Rowe

In the Woods

United Kingdom (2017)

TAGS: Icarus Pegasus Unicorn (hippos monokeras)





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

General information	
Title of the work	In the Woods
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2017
First Edition Details	Thereza Rowe, *In the Woods*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2017, 41 pp.
ISBN	9780500651056
Genre	Picture books
Target Audience	Children
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Creators



Thereza Rowe (Author, Illustrator)

Thereza Rowe is a Brazilian graphic designer and illustrator based in London, UK. She received a BA Hons Graphic Information Design from University of Westminster in London and from Kingston University London, a master degree in Communication Design. Rowe wrote and illustrated many books for children, inter alia: *Hearts* (Toon Books, 2014), *Mister Pip* (Tate Publishing, 2016) and *Stay, Benson!* (Thames & Hudson, 2019).

Source:

Official website (accessed: January 7, 2020)

Twitter (accessed: January 7, 2020)

Instagram (accessed: January 7, 2020)

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Additional information

Summary

In the Woods is, as the back cover says, "a collection of tales about a group of friends who use creativity and kindness to help each other through life's adventures." However, from the narrative point of view, it is actually one tale divided into three chapters: *Olly's Wings*, *Lionel's Mane*, and *Red's Wedding*. Even though the mythological content is to be found only in the first story (which is summarized here in greater detail), the summary covers all three parts.

The woods in the title are inhabited by various creatures, most of which it is unusual to find in a forest (penguins—list them). *Olly's Wings* begins with penguins' preparations for their friend Red's (the fox) wedding. After they are ready with the decorations, they set off to get some sardine ice cream. However, on their way penguins meet another friend of theirs – Olly, the horse. They see him "staring up to the sky" (p. 6), looking sad. On the illustration the reader can see Pegasi with horns (or unicorns with wings) flying above the trees. When asked about the reason for his sadness, Olly responds: "It's not fair! All my friends have flown away. They've already grown into unicorns and I'm still just a horse" (p. 7). Advised by his mother, he takes a nap, hoping that he will wake up with a pair of wings and a horn. Meanwhile, creative penguins, with help of Lionel, the Lion, make wings and a horn from branches, leaves and a cone. When Olly wakes up, he is already dressed up by his friends. As he flies higher and higher – he becomes "a true unicorn" (pp. 15–16).

In the next chapter: *Lionel's Mane*, the penguins want to continue preparations for Red's wedding. However, another problem appears: Lionel's mane is gone. All animals from the forest start looking for it, but with no luck. The birds come to the rescue by creating a new mane out of flowers, which Ollycorn (not just "Olly" anymore), puts on Lionel's head.

The last chapter: *Red's Wedding* concludes the story – however, not right away. When animals arrive to Red's den, she cries: the wolf has stolen the wedding cake. That again does not seem to be a problem to the resourceful woodland creatures, as they use the forest's treasures (honey, strawberries, acorns) to make a new cake. This way the wedding proceeds and all friends celebrate happily.

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Analysis

In the Woods appears to be a classic form of picture book, as it is an integrated narrative, consisting evenly of texts and illustrations*. It tells a story about friendship and shows how kindness and creativity can solve any, even the most difficult situation. Each chapter has its own animal character as the main hero, yet, as it is mentioned in the summary, only one hero is the subject of this analysis – Olly, the unicorn.

Firstly, it is arguable if Olly is in fact a unicorn or maybe – a Pegasus. Either way, both of those creatures can be found in classical texts. Unicorn appears inter alia in Philostratus': *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 3.2 and Pegasus is one of the heroes of Hesiod's *Theogony* 280. He is also the hero of Rowe's story, about a horse and its dream to fly.

Secondly, it is not only a clear reference to classical mythology and fantastic horses. The story about dreaming to fly also reminds us of the myth about Icarus and his wish to reach the sun. Olly's wings, just like those used by Daedalus' son, were artificial. When the horse flies "higher and higher," he becomes his true self, which might correspond to Icarus' path to self-fulfilment. Although Olly's story is not as tragic as Icarus', they have many common points; additionally, the yellow color of the page on which Olly becomes Ollycorn, might potentially be interpreted as an allusion to Icarus' sun.

Rowe inserts mythology into the woodland tale in a subtle, yet vivid way. Ancient stories become part of the forest-lore (consisting of classical Arcadia, as well as woodlands from children's literature, like the one from *The Winds in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame), as they enrich the imagination of children, who follow the adventures of Ollycorn and his friends.

* Patricia J. Cianciolo, *Picture Books for Children*, Chicago, London: American Library Association, 1997, p. 1.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and

Icarus Pegasus Unicorn (hippos monokeras)

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Concepts

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Friendship Nature Values

Further Reading

Cianciolo, Patricia J., *Picture Books for Children*, Chicago, London: American Library Association, 1997.

Clay, Jenny Strauss, "The Generation of Monsters in Hesiod", *Classical Philology* 88.2 (Apr., 1993), 105–116.

Mills, Claudia, ed., *Ethics and Children's Literature*, London, New York: Routledge, 2016.

Ratelle, Amy, *Animality and Children's Literature and Film*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

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