Miriam Riverlea, "Entry on: Destroy Troy (Battle Boy, 3) by Charlie Carter [Pen-name of John Heffernan] ", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/975. Entry version as of November 04, 2026.

Charlie Carter [Pen-name of John Heffernan]

Destroy Troy (Battle Boy, 3)

Australia (2009)

TAGS: Aeneid Antenor Cassandra Odysseus / Ulysses Polyxena Priam Trojan Horse Trojan War Troy





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

General information	
Title of the work	Destroy Troy (Battle Boy, 3)
Country of the First Edition	Australia
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2009
First Edition Details	Charlie Carter, *Battle Boy: Destroy Troy*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2009, 96 pp.
ISBN	9781741987812
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, Science fiction, War fiction
Target Audience	Children (aged 7–9)
Author of the Entry	Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com
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Creators



Charlie Carter [Pen-name of John Heffernan] , b. 1949 (Author)

Charlie Carter, the author of the sixteen books in the *Battle Boy* series, is the pen name of John Heffernan, a well-known Australian children's writer. In a rare acknowledgement of their association, Heffernan describes Charlie Carter as a character he has invented, an alternative identity who enables him to write different stories to those he publishes under his own name. He says he is "the side of me that loves digging up the past and solving the mysteries of history – a kind of Indiana Jones character."

Using his own name, Heffernan's prolific body of work spans the genres of realism and fantasy, and he writes for young children as well as for young adults. Recent works have explored the experiences of children living in warzones and surviving natural disasters. Born in Sydney, Heffernan studied at the University of New England in Armidale and continues to live on a rural property in the New England area. His books have received numerous awards and nominations, including from the Children's Book Council of Australia.

Sources:

Profile at biography.jrank.org (accessed: March 12, 2020).

Profile at laterallearning.com.au (accessed: March 12, 2020).

Bio prepared by Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com

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Additional information

Summary

Destroy Troy is the third book in Carter's *Battle Boy* series, which aims to engage reluctant readers (particularly boys) with an exciting adventure told in simple, easy to read language. Battle Boy Agent 005 (BB005) is the secret identity of 11-year old Napoleon Augustus Smythe. His mission is to spy on the past, travelling back in time to witness major historical conflicts. Napoleon reports to Professor Juanita Perdu, who furnishes him with high tech gadgets, such as the SimulSkin, a set of sophisticated, talking, skin-coloured body armour. Armed with the SimulSkin, his Battle Watch, and the Helping Hand, Napoleon is able to communicate with those he meets, even when they speak another language, and collect their DNA through direct physical contact.

Napoleon travels back in time via the Battle Books. In this installment, he journeys much further back in time than in his previous adventures, to the city of Troy in 1185 BC. It is the night before the Greeks leave the Trojan Horse at the city gates. His mission is "to get proof that the Trojan Horse actually existed, and collect King Priam's DNA" (p. 7). Arriving on the battlefield, he is aggressively challenged by Ulysses, the leading hero of the Greeks. His prominence in the story, as well as the use of the Latin version of his name, is a bit surprising, but is probably on account of the familiarity of the intended readers with other books and media in which he figures. It appears that Virgil's *Aeneid* is a more dominant source than Homer's *Iliad*.

Napoleon zaps Ulysses with his taser, amazing the crowd of gathered soldiers, who think he is a demon.

Slipping inside Troy, Napoleon is hailed as a hero by King Priam, and befriends Princess Polyxena. After the victory feast, Napoleon is imprisoned by the evil Antenor, who will betray the Trojans to the Greeks. The next morning, Polyxena helps him to escape and Napoleon watches on as the Trojans discover the wooden horse amid the ruins of the abandoned Greek camp. He has successfully completed his mission, but as the city is overrun by the Greeks, he feels unable to leave Polyxena to what he knows will be a tragic fate. Ignoring the warnings of his SimulSkin and Professor Perdu not to interfere with history, he leads the Princess through the fighting to the portal, hoping to bring her back with him. But Polyxena is lost in

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the crowd, and as his powers wane, Napoleon makes it out of Troy just in time. After being admonished by the Professor, Napoleon gets on his bike and rides home.

Analysis

Destroy Troy is a book for boys. In addition to the focus on high tech gadgets, time travel, secret missions, and warfare, the textual formatting (action words are represented in BIG LETTERS) and the crude style of the graphics signify this target audience. Interestingly, in the opening chapters Carter plays with the reader's gender expectations. New readers of the series may assume that Professor Perdu is a man until it is revealed that she has spiky blonde hair and that her name is Juanita (p. 4). And when he receives his costume for this mission, Napoleon objects "I'm not wearing that!...It's a dress" (p. 6). After the Professor reassures him that a tunic is historically appropriate attire for boys and young men, Napoleon gets dressed, relieved that his bullying older brothers, the incongruously named Monty and Caesar, won't see him. Heffernan's decision to name characters after war heroes of the ancient and more recent past (Monty potentially references Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery, who fought in both the First and Second World Wars) contextualises the story within western military history, even if readers may not be conscious of this agenda.

As in Jon Scieszka's *Time Warp Trio* books, another series seeking to target unwilling readers, it is interesting that books themselves are the means through which Napoleon travels back in time. Housed in the alliterative Tome Tower, the Battle Books are portals that, when activated, transport him to the scene of famous conflicts. He opens the cover and leaps straight into their pages, a physical act that literalizes the notion that the act of reading can transport us to other places.

Carter also engages with the issues around the inviolability of history. Napoleon's mission is to spy on the past and collect data (what the Professor will do with Priam's DNA is not made clear), but his relationship with Polyxena leads him to become problematically invested. As he attempts to save her, the Professor coolly reminds him "This has nothing to do with right or wrong. It's history. This has happened already. You cannot change that." (p. 52). Strangely, Napoleon's other interventions, such as tasering the nasty Ulysses and frightening Antenor with the hologram of a monster, do not have the same impact, perhaps because they are explained away as the acts of

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	the gods. While this simple book does not require the reader to have prior knowledge of the myth of the Trojan war, it does draw upon the narrative tradition, particularly Virgil's version in *Aeneid* 2. Napoleon's loss of Polyxena in the mayhem contains an echo of Aeneas' separation from his wife Creusa. And as his time in Troy is running out, Napoleon loses the ability to communicate in Trojan and becomes a Cassandra like figure, his English warnings about the danger unintelligible to those around him.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aeneid Antenor Cassandra Odysseus / Ulysses Polyxena Priam Trojan Horse Trojan War Troy
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Boys Conflict Desires Future Gender History Invention Joy of reading Learning Past Travel War

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