

Charlie Mackesy

The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse

United Kingdom (2019)

TAGS: [Pegasus](#)



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

General information	
<i>Title of the work</i>	The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse
<i>Country of the First Edition</i>	United Kingdom
<i>Country/countries of popularity</i>	worldwide
<i>Original Language</i>	English
<i>First Edition Date</i>	2019
<i>First Edition Details</i>	Charlie Mackesy, <i>The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse</i> . London: Ebury Publishing, 2018, 128 pp.
<i>ISBN</i>	9781529105100
<i>Official Website</i>	charliemackesy.com (accessed: June 9, 2020)
<i>Awards</i>	2019 - Waterstones Book of the Year
<i>Genre</i>	A collection of aphorisms*
<i>Target Audience</i>	Crossover
<i>Author of the Entry</i>	Anna Mik, University of Warsaw, anna.m.mik@gmail.com
<i>Peer-reviewer of the Entry</i>	Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

Creators



Charlie Mackesy , b. 1962 (Author, Illustrator)

Mackesy was born in Northumberland, a county in North East England, near the border with Scotland. He is not a graduate of an art school and considers himself a self-taught artist. He started drawing in the 1980s, in London. Mackesy worked as a cartoonist for *The Spectator* and Oxford University Press. His first art exhibition was in The Park Walk Gallery in London. Currently, his art is recognized worldwide.

Mackesy is best known for his illustration posted on his Instagram account. It represents a boy talking to either a mole, a fox or a horse about vital things in life. The illustrations became vastly popular after being put on the walls of various public institutions, like schools, churches, prisons, etc. The book discussed in this entry is based on those illustrations which are considered therapeutic.

Source:

Official [website](#) (accessed: June 9, 2020).

Bio prepared by Anna Mik, University of Warsaw,
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Additional information

Translation Multiple translations

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs Originally posted on the Author's [Instagram](#) (accessed: June 9, 2020).

Summary *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* is not a traditional book but rather a collection of illustrated aphorisms concerning the titled boy's dreams, fears, thoughts, plans. The first interlocutor of the child is the mole, who is very wise and loves cakes. He teaches the boy the importance of loving oneself, as well as others, and especially, of friends who will help the boy whenever he needs them. The fox they meet later is a rather silent companion; however, he rescues the mole from the pond he fell into. The horse is the last animal the boy, the mole and the fox meet. He helps the pack to travel and thanks to him, the boy experiences the thrill of speed and exploration of new lands. The horse explains to the boy that it is okay to be scared sometimes and that the tears are proof of one's strength, not weakness.

At one point, the horse confesses that he can fly, but he gave it up because other horses were jealous. The boy and the mole explain that they love him, whether he can fly or not. At that moment the horse grows wings (maybe just reveals them?) and turns into a Pegasus. Together with the boy and the mole, they fly off to the sky to have one more exciting trip. When they come back, the wings are gone and the pack return to their usual profound conversations.

Analysis According to Greek mythology, Pegasus was the son of Medusa and Poseidon – he was born from blood pounding from the Gorgon's neck after Perseus cut off her head (Ovid, *Metamorphosis* IV, 786). A winged horse, he later fought alongside Bellerophon (Hesiod, *Theogony* 325), and eventually ended up on Olympus serving Zeus (Hesiod, *Theogony* 280). As an immortal being, he became a part of a star constellation.

In children's culture, the most popular Pegasus is probably the one



from [Hercules](#) (dir. Musker, Clements, 1997). In the animation, he is the helper and best friend of the protagonist. Other famous Pegasi come from the franchise [My Little Pony](#), where friendship is valued above all other things. It might be claimed that Pegasus appearing in children's culture has mainly positive connotations and often comes to the aid of the young characters. *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* is no exception. Although the horse reveals his true identity only once, we may assume he was a Pegasus all along – he just did not risk showing his mythological ability because of previous bad experiences. The factor that "triggers" his revelation is the assurance of love and support from the rest of the group. Supposedly, that is the only thing needed to enable someone to spread wings and fly to the sky. Pegasus proves to be a loyal and kind creature; he carries the boy on his back whenever required and comforts him when he has a bad day. Classical mythology serves not only the book's esthetics (Pegasus' story is shown mostly through pictures), but it enriches the story and provides a deeper meaning to the boy's struggles.

Classical, Mythological,
Traditional Motifs,
Characters, and
Concepts

[Pegasus](#)

Other Motifs, Figures,
and Concepts Relevant
for Children and Youth
Culture

[Adventure Animals](#) [Boys Childhood](#) [Depression](#) [Emotions](#) [Freedom](#)
[Identity](#) [Morality](#) [Tale vs reality](#)

Further Reading

Hesiod, *Theogony*, 280, trans. Glenn W. Most, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book IV, 786, trans. Frank Justus Miller, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.

Introduction to: *Affect, Emotion, and Children's Literature*



Anna Mik, "Entry on: The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse by Charlie Mackesy", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Lisa Maurice. *Our Mythical Childhood Survey* (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1028>. Entry version as of March 13, 2026.

Representation and Socialisation in Texts for Children and Young Adults, ed. Kristine Moruzi, Michelle J. Smith, and Elizabeth Bullen, London, New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.

Review: Flood, Alison, "[A boy, a mole, a fox and a horse: the recipe for a Christmas bestseller](#)", *The Guardian* [online], November 9, 2019, (accessed: June 9, 2020).

Review: Krug, Nora, "[How a surprise bestseller about kindness and vulnerability is bringing people together](#)", *The Washington Post* [online], January 15, 2020 (accessed: June 9, 2020).

