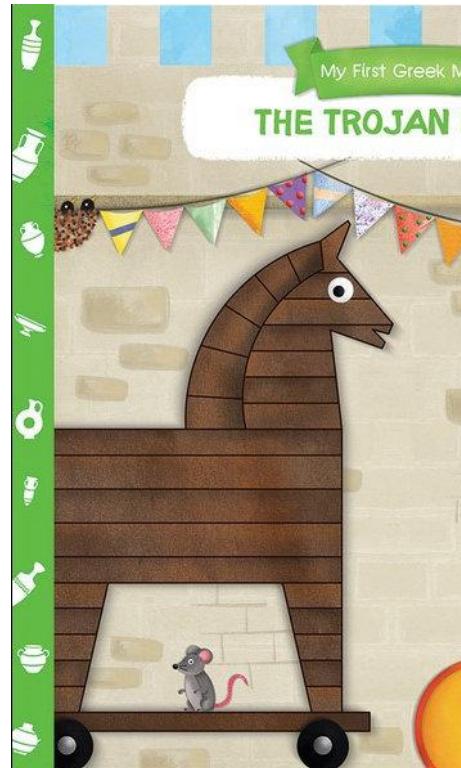Anna Gkoutzouri

The Trojan Horse [Ο Δούρειος Ἵππος (O Doúreios Íppos)]

Greece (2019)

TAGS: Achilles Hector Helen Iphigenia / Iphigeneia Odysseus / Ulysses Trojan Horse Trojan War

Courtesy of the publisher.

General information	
Title of the work	The Trojan Horse [Ο Δούρειος Ἵππος (O Doúreios Íppos)]
Country of the First Edition	Greece
Country/countries of popularity	worldwide
Original Language	Greek
First Edition Date	2019
First Edition Details	Anna Gkoutzouri, *Ο Δούρειος Ἵππος* [O Doúreios Íppos], My First Greek Myths [Η μικρή μου μυθολογία (Ī mikrī́ mou mythología)]. Athens: Papadopoulos Publishing, 2019, 10 pp.
ISBN	9781913060046
Genre	Pop-up books
Target Audience	Children
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Creators

The author with her dog Lola. Courtesy of the Author.

Anna Gkoutzouri (Author)

Anna Gkoutzouri is a children's book illustrator, author, designer, and architect based in Greece. She received a Bachelor degree in 2003 in Civil Engineering at the Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, and a Diploma in Architecture at Aristotle University in 2009. Her background in architecture informs the pop-up elements of her books, as well as her particular interest in how paper engineering can aid and inform young readers' engagement with complex issues. In addition to the "My First Greek Myths" series, Gkoutzouri also published *My First Aesop Fables* with Faros Books. Both series were originally published in Greek by Papadopoulos Publishing.

Sources:

farosbooks.co.uk (accessed: April 8, 2021),

gr.linkedin.com (accessed: April 8, 2021).

Bio prepared by Charlotte Farrell, University of New England, charlottefarrell@gmail.com

Additional information

Translation	English: *The Trojan Horse*, Faros Books, 2021, 10 pp.

| Summary | *The Trojan Horse* is part of the "My First Greek Myths" series of babies' board books, by Anna Gkoutzouri. The cover image depicts the Trojan Horse and contains a surprise for readers. Sliding the middle panel upwards as a small arrow directs, reveals several pairs of eyes inside the belly of the horse. Two guards also pop up in the turrets of the castle. At the same time, bars slide across on the right-hand side of the page and the beautiful Helen is revealed at her windowsill, smiling upon the scene. All of the characters are dressed in what appears to be Ancient Greek-inspired clothing.

The story opens with young adult companions Helen and Paris smiling and fleeing in a boat. A spinning feature alternates a rainbow or sunlit sky over their heads. The page also illustrates a delightfully warm, Mediterranean scene, with cats wandering about the castle grounds, soldiers smiling, and pot plants flowering in the sun. The following page pictures numerous ships, implying the Greek fleet of Aulis gathering in preparation for the Trojan War.

The book shows that the gods would not let the ships sail, and princess Iphigenia had to subsequently "step in". Ashore, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra farewell their daughter with a wave. Iphigenia is neatly dressed and carries a suitcase. With the pull of a small lever, however, Iphigenia disappears. Artemis takes her place, flanked with bows and an arrow, and is accompanied by a deer.

The story then speaks of the ten long years that the war raged on. Achilles' defeat of Hector is captured by a playful spinning feature that a baby reader can touch. Achilles stands smiling, his helmet in his hand and a butterfly fluttering next to his head. He holds an upright spear, while a tumbling Hector spins up and down, falling on Achilles' weapon.

Then, the wooden horse made by Odysseus is warmly welcomed by a guard into Troy. The reader can move a lever which reveals soldiers inside the belly of the wooden creature. The story ends before the gory battle that follows in the original myth, though Troy's defeat is referred to in the book's concluding sentence. |
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Analysis

Due to the level of detail that make up the events that led to the invasion of the Trojan Horse, this baby's board book selects key moments that also make for charming illustrations and interactive spinning features. All of the scenes are sunny and verdant, with numerous animals and creatures inhabiting the scenes. The topic is extremely difficult for the readership of this age group due to its violence and horror. While the book does not eclipse those aspects, it is successful in using the violent aspects to make for playful, interactive images and curious talking points. For example, the battle scene between Achilles and Hector is playfully captured and yet does not completely eclipse the violence, showing the way in which Gkoutzouri so deftly handles complex subject matter for the baby reader.

Iphigenia's appearance in the book is among the more thought-provoking aspects. The author's presentation of her character would be disturbing to those with more knowledge of Greek mythology. In the myth, Agamemnon kills a sacred deer that enrages Artemis during preparations for the war and as a result is commanded to sacrifice his daughter so that Artemis will alter the course of winds and allow the Greek fleet to set sail to Troy. In Gkoutzouri's *The Trojan Horse*, the author captures this mythological detail by picturing Artemis with a deer, while also seeming to have her quite literally blow Iphigenia away with her own breath. A small puff of wind emerges from her mouth in Iphigenia's direction. The fact that Iphigenia has a suitcase packed to embark on the journey towards her sacrifice adds to the amusement for the adult reader, while sanitizing the brutality of the myth for the young reader.

There is a toy-like appeal to the image of the wooden horse in this book. It appears similar to a child's rocking horse. In both the front cover and in the final image, a little mouse sits near the bottom of the horse, accentuating its considerable size. The horse's toy-like appeal creates a recognizable point of reference for babies, potential engaging them in one of the most famous events in Greek mythology in an accessible and playful way. Other books cast the Trojan Horse in a toy-like fashion such as Odysseus and the Wooden Horse by Savoiur Pirotta with illustrations by Jan Lewis. What distinguishes Gkoutzouri's version of the myth is its tactile, hands-on dimension, particularly through the horse's movable elements, providing an opportunity to develop children's kinesthetic learning abilities.

Another notable aspect of the book is that the Gods – except for Athena – are excised from this retelling. While the Judgement of Paris is what originally led to the Trojan War, Gkoutzouri omits these events. This background, coupled with the other events surrounding the Trojan War, predominately concern conflict. Instead, the book is more focused on the human characters and as a result is more appropriate for the baby reader.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Achilles Hector Helen Iphigenia / Iphigeneia Odysseus / Ulysses Trojan Horse Trojan War
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Play* War
Further Reading	Weinlich, Barbara, "The Metanarrative of Picture Books: 'Reading' Greek Myth for (and to) Children)", in Lisa Maurice, ed., *The Reception of Ancient Greece and Rome in Children's Literature: Heroes and Eagles,* Leiden: Brill, 2015, 85–104. Weinstein, Amy, *Once Upon a Time: Illustrations from Fairytales, Fables, Primers, Pop-ups and Other Children's Book*, Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005.
Addenda	This entry is based on the English edition (2020).