Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: Lumberjanes: To the Max Edition. Vol. 1 by Brooke Allen , Grace Ellis , Noelle Stevenson , Shannon Watters ", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1009. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Brooke Allen , Grace Ellis , Noelle Stevenson , Shannon Watters

Lumberjanes: To the Max Edition. Vol. 1

United States of America (2015)

TAGS: Apollo Artemis Minotaur Orpheus Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Lumberjanes: To the Max Edition. Vol. 1
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2015
First Edition Details	Noelle Stevenson, Grace Ellis, Shannon Watters, Brooke Allan, *Lumberjanes: To the Max Edition*, vol 1. Los Angeles, Boom! Box, 2015, 272 pp.
ISBN	9781608868094
Genre	Graphic novels
Target Audience	Children (8–12)
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
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Creators



Brooke Allen, uploaded by 5of7. Retrieved from flickr.com, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0 (accessed: January 10, 2022).

Brooke Allen , b. 1988
(Illustrator)

Brooke Allen (b. 1988) is a comics illustrator. She studied at the Savannah College of Art and Design and lives in Washington, D.C.

Sources:

washingtoncitypaper.com (accessed: March 20, 2020);

geekculture.co (accessed: March 20, 2020);

bleedingcool.com (accessed: March 20, 2020).

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

Grace Ellis , b. 1988
(Author)

Grace Ellis lives in Columbus, Ohio, and is a comics writer who developed the *Lumberjanes* series with Shannon Watters, and whose work spans topics such as a biography comic about writer Patricia Highsmith (forthcoming, Abrams Books), a Lois Lane graphic novel for DC Comics, and an adventure-romance, *Moonstruck*, about a werewolf barista.

Sources:

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ohheygraceellis.com (accessed: March 20, 2020);

ohheygraceellis.com(accessed: March 20, 2020).

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au



Noelle Stevenson by Jody Culkin, 2015. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 (accessed: January 10, 2022).

Noelle Stevenson , b. 1991
(Author, Producer)

Noelle Stevenson is an American cartoonist and producer of animated television and movies. She was born in Columbia, South Carolina, and studied at the Maryland Institute College of Art. She has written several comics, including *Nimona* (first published as a webcomic in 2012, then published as a graphic novel in 2015), and the *Lumberjanes* series.She is currently executive producer of the animated series. *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (Dreamworks Animation TV), currently screening on Netflix. She is married to comics writer and artist Molly Ostertag.

Sources:

wikipedia.org (accessed: March 20, 2020);

tvtropes.org (accessed: March 20, 2020).

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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Shannon Watters (Author)

Shannon Watters is senior editor at BOOM! Studios, and head of its YA imprint (BOOM! Box). She has edited comics such as the *Steven Universe* series, and developed *Lumberjanes* in collaboration with Grace Ellis.

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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Additional information

Adaptations

A movie adaptation of *Lumberjanes* is in development.

Summary

Lumberjanes: To the Max Edition (Vol. 1) is the first volume of the *Lumberjanes* comics, containing the first arc of the series. It contains seven 'chapters' featuring the adventures of the five *Lumberjanes*, friends April, Mai, Molly, Jo and Ripley. The girls are at Miss Qiunzella Thiskwis Penniquiqul Thistle Crumpet's Camp for Hardcore Lady-Types, located in the woods. Ignoring the commands of their camp counselor, Jen, the girls have a range of adventures, which begin in Chapter One *Up All Night Badge*, when they encounter a group of three-eyed foxes, who howl *Beware the Kitten Holy*, before departing. Jo finds a mysterious decorated metal object on the ground, and the girls return to camp, to be chastised by Jen, and taken to see the Camp Mother, Rosie, who listens to their stories, calls on them to give the Lumberjanes Pledge, and then advises them: "I'm not gonna lie to you girls, you're gonna see some stuff this summer. Stuff you might not understand. It'll be hard. But you're scouts, and you're made of tougher stuff. So remember that pledge you took, and stick together no matter what. You hear me? Stop by my table at breakfast so I can give you your Up All Night badges."

In Chapter Two, *Naval Gauging Badge (Because drowning is a scary way to go)*, the girls go canoeing on the river, overseen by Jen. They get caught in rapids, and Molly and Ripley are nearly destroyed by a large scaly, 3-eyed river monster, but April uses her hair-scrunchie as a weapon and rescues them by pinging it into its eyes. Recovering on the bank, they take out a bar of chocolate, which is promptly snatched by a three-eyed eagle. Ripley climbs a pine tree to snatch it back, but it flies away just as she grasps at the chocolate bar, and she tumbles out of the tree and into a hole in the ground. The other girls, who are watching, leap into the hole after Ripley, and zig-zag down a tunnel, landing in a cavern. Looking around them, they see they are surrounded by classical statues (Orpheus, the Minotaur, and Tiresias). Jo sighs: 'Okay, so there's just like NO chance of us having a normal summer, is there?

Chapter Three, *Everything Under the Sum Badge (Math leads to a basic understanding of life)*, takes place in the cavern. Using a

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glowing crystal as a light, April leads the Lumberjanes deeper into the cavern. They reach a door, in front of which a muscle-man statue challenges them "None may pass unless I allow it." He will only allow it, if they beat him in an arm-wrestling match. To the amazement of all, April promptly bests him ("Remember, it all comes down to LEVERAGE" she advises him). On the other side of the door they are attacked by another statue, this time one with a birds head, and wielding a scythe. Ripley launches herself at his head, knocks him down, and takes the jewel in his forehead and Mal uses it to open the next door. Running down a corridor of closing doors, the girls come to another cavern, and are faced with a floor of numbered pillars. If they step on the wrong pillar, it collapses. The girls work out that they must jump across according to the Fibonacci sequence. On the other side, faced with a sign that makes no sense, they realise that they must solve the sentences as anagrams, discover that "either tot utter" is "The truth is out there" (a reference to the X-Files TV series), and realise that "Beware the Kitten Holy" is an anagram for "In the Tower by the Lake". "Pee on Seams" is "Open Sesame", which releases a rope ladder, which they climb up, out into the forest, and back to camp.

Chapter Four, *Robyn Hood Badge* (*A sharp eye shows sharp wit*) takes the girls into the forest once more, this time on a hike, where they encounter a three-eyed yeti, and run away to Jen, who is threatening to take them back to camp when she is interrupted by a troop of clean-cut boy scouts, who invite them to their cabin for tea and cookies, at "Mr Theodor Tarquin Reginald Lancelot Herman Crumpet's Camp for Boys". Something is suspicious there, but the girls have no time to follow it up, because their camp counselor demands they leave. Back in the forest, the girls see a lighthouse tower, guarded by the yetis. Riley gives them the cookies she has taken from the boys' camp, and the girls climb the tower, where they find a golden bow and quiver of arrows. Meanwhile, back at the boy scout camp, Jen, who has remained behind them, is horrified when the boy scouts turn into zombies. The zombies chase the girls through the forest, but the girls cross a swing bridge, and Molly shoots its ties, leaving the zombie-scouts on the other side of the chasm. As Jen apologises to the Lumberjanes for not believing them, the scene cuts away to the boy scouts, who are being admonished by their leader "You have failed me! But don't worry lads. Next time, we'll be prepared."

In Chapter Five, *Friendship to the Craft Badge* (*I get by with a little help from my yarn*), the girls are making friendship bracelets, when a group of dinosaurs with glowing emblems on their chests, invade the

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camp. They discover that shooting the golden arrows into the emblems stop them, but Jen is still in danger, pinned against a tree while a dinosaur approaches. Suddenly, a bear rushes to the rescue, chasing it away, then turning into an old lady who believes Jo is up to mischief, but it is a case of mistaken identity, and Rosie moves her on.

Chapter Six, *Jail Break Badge* (*Run as fast as you can*) opens with the girls playing "capture the flag" while Jen and Rosie chat on the porch. A new girl, Diane, who has appeared at the end of the previous chapter, lures the Lumberjanes into the woods. There, she reveals that she is the goddess Artemis, that the Lumberjanes have Apollo's 'golden eye' (the golden device they found at the start of the story,) and that she wants her bow back.

Chapter Seven, *Friendship to the Max Badge* (*Together forever*), wraps up this story arc. A mysterious deer made of light leads the girls back to the cavern, where they discover that Apollo has been manipulating reality in the forest, and that he has the boy scouts in thrall. While the girls fight off Apollo's security system (including plagues of insects), Jo places a mysterious crystal into a pillar in the cavern, lighting it up with an image of the stars, but turning herself to stone in the process.

In Chapter Eight, *Space Jamboree Badge* (*This jam breaks the laws of physics*), the girls work out that to break the conflict between Apollo and Artemis (Diane), they need to return to the lighthouse. Banding together, they pull Jo's hand off the crystal, returning her to human form. At the lighthouse, Artemis and Apollo are fighting over control of the hemispheres. To split them apart, Ripley leaps from the roof, and is struck by lightning, gaining immortal power. She uses her power to wish "that Apollo and Artemis could never hurt anyone again". The boy scouts are zombies no more. She wishes everyone had a kitten, and that her power was gone for ever. Artemis and Apollo are about to punish her, when Rosie appears, saying she "called your dad". Zeus appears in the form of a bull, and takes his protesting children home. Everyone celebrates, and the Lumberjanes hug one another, saying "Friendship to the max".

Analysis

The Lumberjanes series is extremely popular and has reached its 50th issue. *Lumberjanes Friendship to the Max* gathers the first 8 issues of

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the series in one volume (making up one story arc). The volume is presented like a scouting manual, with each chapter introduced as contributing to a scout's skills and badge collection.

Lumberjanes: Friendship to the Max is an interesting blend of indie- and main-stream comic. The concept of a band of unlikely friends solving mysteries in a mysterious forest is mainstream, but the diverse make-up of the protagonists (especially in terms of race and gender), the story's strong themes of feminism, girl-power, ironic humour, and emphasis on puzzle-solving, intelligence, and friendship, make it unusual in children's comics. *Lumberjanes* has been well-received for its representation of gender diversity, including non-binary gender, romance between girls, and female empowerment. It contains many allusions and shout-outs to famous feminist thinkers and activists. For instance, Rosie the Camp 'mother' is the image of 'Rosie the Riveter', a cultural icon of World War II, an image of the women who worked in factories and shipyards producing munitions.

The trope of the forest as a liminal zone where mysterious and magical things can occur is not unusual, and the Lumberjanes' adventures are often written in ways that parody or re-enact famous storytelling tropes, such as the katabasis to the cavern of mysteries, the anabasis in the lighthouse. Puzzle-solving in the cavern is reminiscent of adventure films, such as *Indiana Jones*, or novels, such as H. Rider Haggard's *She* or *King Solomon's Mines*. What is significant is that the Lumberjanes have no 'alpha' figure, or chief protagonist – they solve things together and have compatible skills that assist this.

Apollo and Artemis's mischief-making in the forest is traditional in terms of the Olympian gods' propensity to meddle in the lives of humans. So too is their propensity to transform figures into animals or other beings. The appearance of Zeus as a kind of Deus ex Machina at the end, resolves the story arc amicably. Overall, *Lumberjanes* is a kind of mash-up between different mythological cultures and adventure story tropes, bringing together the yeti, zombies, dinosaurs, with Greek mythology, and the concept of the scout-camp and scouting manual.

Apollo Artemis Minotaur Orpheus Zeus

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs,

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Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Animals Diversity Femininity Friendship Gender Gender expectations/construction Gender, non-binary Girls Humour Knowledge Nature Queer Resilience
Further Reading	Alverson, Brigid, "Just another day in an LGBTQ comic: graphic novelists who won't draw straight", *School Library Journal* 63.5 (May 2017), 38ff. Diaz, Shelley M., "Girl power to the max: behind the scenes with the all-female producers of *Lumberjanes*", *School Library Journal* 61.3 (Mar. 2015), 22. Romero, Erika, "Graphic Novels for Children and Young Adults: A Collection of Critical Essays Ed. by Michelle Ann Abate and Gwen Athene Tarbox (review)", *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 43.2 (2018): 228–231. Web.

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