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 November 06, 2026.

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

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

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).

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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.

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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.

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Introduction to: *Affect, Emotion, and Children's Literature 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 vulnerabitliy is brining people together", *The Washington Post* [online], January 15, 2020 (accessed: June 9, 2020).

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