Miriam Riverlea, "Entry on: Voices of the Trojan War by Leonid Gore, Kate Hovey", 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/1101. Entry version as of November 07, 2026.

Leonid Gore , Kate Hovey

Voices of the Trojan War

United States of America (2004)

TAGS: Achilles Aeneas Agamemnon Andromache Aphrodite Athena Cassandra Diomedes (Son of Tydeus) Epeius Hector Hecuba Helen Menelaus Odysseus / Ulysses Palladium Paris (Trojan Prince) Patroclus Philoctetes Poseidon Priam Thetis Trojan Horse Trojan War Troy Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Voices of the Trojan War
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2004
First Edition Details	Kate Hovey, *Voices of the Trojan War*. Illustrated by Leonid Gore, New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2004, 117 pp.
ISBN	9780689857683
Genre	Novels in verse
Target Audience	Children (recommended for ages 9–12)
Author of the Entry	Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

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Creators



Leonid Gore (Illustrator)

Born and raised in Belarus, Gore studied at the Academy of Arts in Minsk. In 1990 he immigrated to the United States. He has illustrated over thirty children's books, and written five of his own. Two of the books Gore has illustrated have classical themes – Laura Geringer's *Pomegranate Seed* (1995), a picture book retelling of the myth of Persephone, and Kate Hovey's verse novel *Voices of the Trojan War* (2004). He has also created book cover designs for Phillip Pullman's *Clockwork* (1998) and a number of children's classics including Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mt Hyde and Other Stories* and Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess*. His paintings have been exhibited at New York's Society of Illustrators. He lives in Oakland, New Jersey with his wife and daughter.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: September 14, 2020).

Profile at scholastic.com (accessed: September 14, 2020).

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

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Kate Hovey (Author)

Born in Flint, Michigan, as a child Kate Hovey loved ancient myth and fairy tales. She studied classics at college and poetry and writing at Northwestern University and UCLA. Inspired by visits to the antiquities collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, she began to write poetic versions of classical myths from the first-person perspective of the gods, goddesses and other characters. These poems formed the basis for her three books that retell ancient myth for young readers: *Arachne Speaks* (2001), *Voices of the Trojan War* (2004), and *Ancient Voices* (2004). In addition to her writing, she has worked as a metalsmith, mask maker and costume designer. She has made oversized copper masks for university productions of classical plays, and visits schools throughout the United States, combining storytelling, poetry and masked performances to teach students about the ancient world. She lives in Ventura, California.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: September 14, 2020).

Profile at biography.jrank.org (accessed: September 14, 2020).

Profile at pw.org (accessed: September 14, 2020).

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Additional information

Summary

Voices of the Trojan War recounts the saga of Troy in verse. The book is a collection of 53 short poems, bookended by an invocation and epilogue. Most of the poems are in the form ABAB, but a few feature other patterns of rhyme and rhythm. Each one has a title, and is preceded by a classical epigraph. Excerpts from Homer's *Iliad* and book two of Virgil's *Aeneid* feature numerous times, but there are also references to *The Odyssey*, the plays of Euripides, Ovid, and Lucian.

The book begins with a discourse between an unnamed Poet and the Muse. The opening line, "Tell us, muse, of Troy's dark days" (p. 3) echoes the opening line of Homer's *Iliad*, but it is Hector and Cassandra, not Achilles, who are named first. As the poet takes up the story, the Muse acknowledges the renown of a myth that has been retold countless times:

"MUSE:Words repeated many times-

what is left to tell?

Let the heroes speak themselves;

Ask the gods as well." (p.4)

Hovey offers the characters – both mortal and immortal, famous and unknown – a chance to speak for themselves. In a series of poems called *The Apple of Discord I–IV*, the three goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite each present their case for Paris to award them the golden apple, and Aphrodite gloats when she wins the prize. Some poems take the form of conversations between characters – Achilles and his mother, Agamemnon speaking to his servant, Hector admonishing Paris – while others are monologues of grief and triumph. There are chants, entreaties, and laments.

The Wooden Horse looms large within the story. Epeios, the builder, recounts how Odysseus dreams up its complicated design and how his unique skills "mathematical precision, | a discerning eye, artistic intuition" help him to construct it (p. 57). His poem is followed by two companion pieces, *Trojan Voices Overheard at the Wall* and *Greek Voices Overheard Outside the Camp*, which repeat the refrain "What are they building? | What is that thing?" (pp. 58, 60). Their shared confusion unites the warring enemies in their unease about 'that dog'

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Odysseus and his schemes.

The book has an unexpected conclusion which complicates the veracity of the myth. Helen speaks for the final time, claiming that she was "nothing more | than a pawn in the goddesses' game" (p. 103). She insists "I set no foot in Troy, I swear. | Tell the world. | I wasn't there." (p. 104). The final poem, in which the Muse reveals "the truth behind the fable" (p. 106) is followed by an excerpt from Herodotus detailing the alterative tradition in which Helen never spent time in Troy, but was instead spirited away to Egypt. The reader is left uncertain about the veracity of what they have just read, and conscious of the multiplicity of myth. Hovey's book concludes with an extensive appendix featuring key characters and locations as well as a pronunciation guide.

Analysis

Right from the outset, Cassandra becomes a prominent figure in the narrative. Like the other characters, she is given the chance to speak her feelings and describe what she sees, but her visions go unheeded. Gore's first illustration is of Cassandra, a tormented figure with her hand on her heart standing in front of the burning towers of a city. Rendered in charcoal and simple black and white etchings, Gore's understated illustrations introduce the main characters in the story, both mortal and immortal. It is clear that they are influenced by ancient iconography, both vase painting and sculpture.

Cassandra's tragic storyline culminates in one of the last poems in the collection, entitled *Cassandra's Freedom Chant*. It begins "My body's a flame rippling the air" and the printed text takes the shape of a burning flame, shifting irregularly down the page. This example of concrete poetry is the most experimental moment within Hovey's work. Very few children's writers have attempted to use poetry in their retellings of ancient myth. Alongside Hovey's books, Marilyn Singer's collection *Echo Echo* (2016) and David Eliott's verse novel *Bull* (2017) are rare examples.

The subjectivity and agency of female characters is given prominence within the book. The goddesses lament the limitations of their power over Zeus, while Andromache implores Hector to return to the safety of the city walls, mindful that Achilles will not rest until he has avenged Patroclus' death. One of the most disturbing poems is when Aeneas addresses Helen as the city is falling. Based on the moment in

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Aeneid 2, he says to her "Woman, look around you. | Before you taste my blade, | drink your fill of bloody scenes. | This wicked game you've played" (p. 91). In the next poem Aphrodite persuades him to hurry away, but the reader is left to reflect on Helen's responsibility for the bloodshed.

Any retelling of the myth of the Trojan war must manage the many paradoxes and inconsistences within the different parts and versions of the story, but the city's downfall is always certain. Early in *Voices of the Trojan War*, the messenger goddess Iris visits Poseidon at Zeus' behest to ask him to quit the fight. The seagod's reply demonstrates that Troy's fall is already determined and cannot be changed. He says of his brother:

"His meddling only delays

what the Fates have already decreed –

or doesn't he know the story?

His Trojans are marked for defeat;

These Greeks, for eternal glory." (p. 35)

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Achilles Aeneas Agamemnon Andromache Aphrodite Athena Cassandra Diomedes (Son of Tydeus) Epeius Hector Hecuba Helen Menelaus Odysseus / Ulysses Palladium Paris (Trojan Prince) Patroclus Philoctetes Poseidon Priam Thetis Trojan Horse Trojan War Troy Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Communication Conflict Death Femininity Gender Heroism Identity Intellect Invention Judgement Life Loss Love Masculinity Prediction/prophecy Storytelling Subjectivity Survival Truth and lies Violence War
Further Reading	Review at kirkusreviews.com (accessed: September 14, 2020). Review at historicalnovelsociety.org (accessed: September 14, 2020).

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