Michael Eagle , Emily Little

The Trojan Horse: How the Greeks Won the War

United States of America (1992)

TAGS: Agamemnon Athena Helen Menelaus Odysseus / Ulysses Priam Trojan Horse Trojan War

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

General information	
Title of the work	The Trojan Horse: How the Greeks Won the War
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1992
First Edition Details	Emily Little, *The Trojan Horse: How the Greeks Won the War*. New York: Random House, 1992, 48 pp.
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Genre	Historical fiction, Myths
Target Audience	Children (7–9 year olds)
Author of the Entry	Constantine Christoforou, University of Roehampton, christoc1@roehampton.ac.uk
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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Creators

Michael Eagle (Illustrator)

Eagle is an American illustrator who graduated *cum laude* from the Hartford Art School in 1965 with a BFA in Fine Arts and received the Regents' Honor Award for overall academic achievement. Along with illustrating *The Trojan Horse: How the Greeks won the War* Eagle also illustrated another classically themed children's book within the Step into Reading Series: *Pompeii Buried Alive*. Michael has also illustrated *The Clash of the Titans* for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

In this interview (accessed: August 24, 2020) Michael Eagle discusses his passion for art from a young age and comments on a series of works he has both written and illustrated.

Bio prepared by Constantine Christoforou, University of Roehampton, christoc1@roehampton.ac.uk

Emily Little (Author)

Emily Little writes adventure, fantasy and mythological books for young children. Along with *The Trojan Horse: How the Greeks Won the War* for the Step into Reading series Emily also wrote *David and the Giant* which is a retelling of the biblical story of David and Goliath.

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Additional information

Translation

Dutch: *Die Trojaanse perd : die verhaal van 'n vernuftige plan,* Pretoria: Leo Uitgewers, 1989.

French: *Le cheval de Troie : comment les Grecs ont gagné la guerre,* Saint-Lambert, Quebec: Les Éditions Héritage Inc., 1988.

Summary

This book is part of a series named *Step into Reading* which consists of five steps for children to build up their reading skills. The series spans from step one which is aimed at preschool and kindergarten children to step five which is aimed at children aged between 7 and 9. This book falls under the "Step 5" bracket.

The book consists of 6 small sections and a pronunciation guide. Section 1 titled "The Wall" introduces the kingdom of Troy and describes the Trojan wall letting the reader know about its height, thickness and impossibility to penetrate. The author describes how the bottom of the wall is made of limestone which makes it slippery and hard to climb and the top of the wall is guarded by archers. The author states that King Priam "rules the land and sea for miles around" (p. 10) and that the Trojans and Greeks are enemies. King Priam takes advantage of the fact that his kingdom is guarded by a great wall and whenever the Greek ships attempt to pass through the waters on the coast of Troy the Trojans intercept them and demand a toll. This the author states, makes the Greeks furious and could lead to war but King Priam is not afraid as he knows he is safe within Troy's walls.

Section 2 is titled "War". This section introduces Menelaus who is plotting his revenge as the Trojans have captured his wife Helen and she will now be forced to marry Paris. Agamemnon is happy to accompany Menelaus to Troy as "they have been pirating Greek ships for years" (p. 14). The kidnapping of Helen is referred to as the "final straw" (p. 14). Agamemnon "places" a giant bull at the feet of Athena's temple so that she will side with the Greeks in the war. Odysseus also agrees to travel to Troy with his men and he will be their "strong, shrewd leader". Priam is informed that the Greeks are coming so he places a ram at the temple of Athena so that she will side with the Trojans in the war. The Greeks make their way to troy but

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interestingly we are told of Menelaus, Agamemnon and Odysseus but there is no mention of Achilles or his men. Helen watches the Greek ships approach from the palace and we are told that there are bowmen, spearmen and the most skilled warriors who fight on chariots. King Priam leads his army out on the battlefield to meet the Greeks, again interestingly no mention of Hector. Many are wounded and killed as they fight but no one can make a breakthrough, Odysseus realises that the Greeks need to get inside the Trojan walls, he has a plan.

Section 3 titled "The Horse" states that ten long years go by and the war is still going on. Odysseus whilst looking out to sea comes up with an "extraordinary plan" (p. 24); he sends the Greeks to the nearby islands to collect wood and when they return they are to build a giant wooden frame in the shape of a horse. When the horse is finished, Odysseus and his men climb in the belly with their armour and weapons; the rest of the Greeks sail away except for one man- Sinon. The Trojans rejoice that the war is over and the Greeks have gone, they then discover the horse.

Section 4 titled "Doom is Near" explains how the Trojans debated what to do with the horse; they consider burning it or chopping it down or pushing it into the sea. Sinon appears and tells the Trojans that the horse was a gift for Athena for a safe journey home. This worries Priam as he does not want to upset Athena, so they welcome the horse inside the city. The horse is wheeled to the temple of Apollo and the people of Troy have a great festival and sing and dance. All except Cassandra who warns the people that "doom is near", (p. 37) We are told that "no one pays any attention" (p. 37).

Section 5 is titled "The Fall". When night falls, the Greeks climb out of the horse and the rest of the Greeks sail back to troy and the city is set ablaze and destroyed. The Trojan soldiers try to fight back but they are too full of wine and food. Menelaus takes Helen back to Sparta and the Greeks return home – all except Odysseus who is captured on his journey home and has to wait 10 years to see his wife and son again.

Section 6 is labelled "Discovery" and gives an overview of the work of Heinrich Schliemann. We are told that though many people laughed at him, he believed he would find Troy and he did, "the war that Homer wrote about was real" (p. 47). We are told that he finds treasure and bones but he does not find the wooden horse, though the story

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remains.

At the back of the book there is a pronunciation guide for the main characters, for example Odysseus- [oh-DIS-ee-us]. The book ends by saying no one knows the whole story of the Trojan War but that this tale was put together from the stories told by Homer, Virgil and modern historians.

Analysis

This book gives a general overview of the events of the Trojan War for young children. As it is only 48 pages in length, and each page contains a large illustration, it does not attempt to give in-depth detail of any particular event or character. The book revolves around Odysseus' clever plan to build the Trojan horse, hence the subtitle "How the Greeks Won the War". Though Helen is mentioned briefly as being captured and being forced to marry Paris, the author makes it clear to the reader that what makes the Greeks and Trojans enemies is the Trojan pirating of the Greek ships.

Why the author decided to do this is unclear, potentially as it portrays a trope that is simpler for young children to grasp (standing up to the big bad bully). The Trojans are very much portrayed as the "bullies". Regarding Helen, it is significant that we are told she would be "forced" to marry Paris, as too often with myth retellings this narrative is repackaged as "young lovers running away on a consensual journey together" (see TV adaptation *Helen of Troy* 2003 and film adaptation *Troy* 2004).

There are many exclusions from the story, which is understandable given the length of the book and its target audience, but most notably, there is no mention of Achilles. This may have been because the author wished to make this story about how the Greeks won the war, and build the narrative around the Trojan horse which would explain why Odysseus is seen as the hero of the story. It would take another book entirely to cover Achilles and themes of honour and shame and why he refuses to fight, this is maybe a band above the 7–9 range however.

There is also no mention of Hector; rather, Priam leads the army which feeds into him being a powerful leader. Priam is often depicted as old and frail though this would not have had the same effect here. There was also not much room to mention the significance of the Gods

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in the war. We are told that both sides give Athena animals so that she will be on their side, which is an introduction to Greek worship surrounding war. The animals are placed in the temple rather than sacrificed, though that may be a step too far to include for children of that age. There is also very little mention of violence for the same reason. We are told that men are wounded and die but there are no epic battles between heroes on the battlefield.

The discovery section might excite an audience of that age and even inspire them to want to learn more. It is framed as though one man against the odds went on a treasure hunt and found the treasure, which children will enjoy. However, the statement that "The Trojan war was real' is misleading and somewhat unnecessary when exploring myth with young children. In this respect, the author frames the validity of myth around what is 'real" rather than encouraging an appreciate of the stories for what they are: myths.

Each page of the book is beautifully illustrated with detailed depictions of the events as they unfold. Page 7 displays a bird's eye view of Troy showing the inhabitants going about their daily lives, filling up vases of water, washing clothes, pulling horses and tending to children. We also see archers and spearmen keeping watch in towers. These illustrations provide a nice insight into how daily life might have been conduction in the ancient world for young readers. The illustrations on page 13 and 14 depict Greece. There is a statue behind king Menelaus which looks to be based on a generic "kore" form (though the statue is not coloured). There is also a vase by the feet of Agamemnon which has a classical style depicting a generic war scene surrounded by patterns. The "star" illustration is of Trojan horse, which provides a striking front cover as well as a haunting depiction on page 35 as Troy burns and chaos ensues. Overall the illustrations compliment the story well and provide visual aids that will help transport a young audience to the ancient world.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Agamemnon Athena Helen Menelaus Odysseus / Ulysses Priam Trojan Horse Trojan War

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Conflict Death Good vs evil Heroism Intellect Journeys Judgement Masculinity Nation Revenge War

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