Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Time's Up Tim! (Hopeless Heroes, 10) by Nick Roberts, Stella Tarakson ", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1304. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Nick Roberts , Stella Tarakson

Time's Up Tim! (Hopeless Heroes, 10)

United Kingdom (2020)

TAGS: Ares Hera Hercules Hermes Jason Odysseus / Ulysses Perseus Theseus Zeus





Courtesy of Sweet Cherry Publishing.

General information	
Title of the work	Time's Up Tim! (Hopeless Heroes, 10)
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2020
First Edition Details	Stella Tarakson, *Hopeless Heroes: Time's Up Tim!* Sweet Cherry Publishing, Leicester, 2020, 208 pp.
ISBN	9781782266440
Genre	Fantasy fiction
Target Audience	Children (6–10 years)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il Susan Deacy, Roehampton University, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk

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Creators



Nick Roberts (Illustrator)

Nick Roberts is an English illustrator. He likes cartoons, monsters, robots.

Source:

Official website (accessed: January 23, 2019)

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com



Stella Tarakson , b. 1968 (Author)

Stella Tarakson is an Australian author of Greek descent, who writes for children as well as adults; her work includes both fiction and non-fiction books. She began her career working at a law firm, but then decided to focus on writing. She won several awards for her books. In her blog, she writes that she has been interested in Greek mythology for a long time; she also writes: “Like many Greek Australians, I grew up on a steady diet of Greek mythology. Herakles and Theseus were as familiar to me as Cinderella and Snow White. That’s why I’m so excited to add my voice to the stories that have been told and retold over the millennia.”

Sources:

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Official website (accessed: January 23, 2019);

evelyneholingue.com (accessed: February 26, 2019).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Questionnaire

1. What drew you to writing the *Hopeless Heroes stories*? How did you develop your particular literary style / idiom / aesthetic for your works inspired by Classical Antiquity? (These are overlapping questions, so feel free to answer them as one)

Being the daughter of Greek migrants, I've grown up on a steady diet of Greek mythology. When I was very young, my father used to tell me many of the tales – I suppose he was continuing the great oral tradition of our ancestors! Books came next, and I'm lucky to still have most of them. My parents were very keen to pass their culture and identity on to their children, especially in a new country far from home. Now that my own children are growing, I also feel the need to "pass it on", keeping the link alive for future generations. I feel incredibly fortunate to be able to share these stories with a wider audience, and it's wonderful to have readers from all around the world enjoying my books! My literary style is not traditional, though. I've also grown up with a love of British comedy, which comes out quite strongly in the *Hopeless Heroes* series.

2. Why do you think classical / ancient myths, history, and literature continue to resonate with young audiences?

The myths continue to resonate with young audiences because we've never lost our fascination with monsters and heroes. Greek mythology is filled with passion and excitement, the characters are larger than life, and there are continuing parallels with our lives today. The human condition hasn't changed in thousands of years and I don't think it ever will.

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3. Do you have a background in classical education (Latin or Greek at school or classes at the University?) What sources are you using? Scholarly work? Wikipedia? Are there any books that made an impact on you in this respect?

I don't have a classical education – I have degrees in Economics and Law from the University of Sydney – but I've always been interested in the classics. Once I started writing *Hopeless Heroes*, I decided I wanted to learn more. I've re-enrolled at USyd part-time and I've been studying ancient history and classical archaeology. It's wonderful to be able to study something purely out of interest! My main source is Barry Powell's *Classical Myth* published by Pearson. I also like the website theoi.com (accessed: March 19, 2019).

4. Did you think about how aspects of Classical Antiquity (myth, history) would translate for young readers?

As you know, many Greek myths are rather Adult Only. I had to think very carefully about how to be age-appropriate, while staying as true to the myths as possible. I avoided the bloodier tales, and edged carefully around sexual issues. For instance, Hera hates Hercules (yes, I had to use the more familiar Roman name) because she's jealous of his beautiful mother. Which is true. However, I didn't come right out and say why! Even so, children learn a lot about Greek history and mythology from the books. Many teachers in the UK have been reading them to their classes as part of the class studies. I'm actually teaching by stealth!

5. How do you go about working with the comic / comedic aspects of classical antiquity?

I've incorporated comedy by accentuating the flaws of the Greek heroes and by placing them in unexpected situations. For example, Hercules is super-strong but not exactly super-smart. In book 1, which is set in the modern day, he insists on using skills he developed while performing the Twelve Labours. Sadly they don't work so well when it comes to tackling housework and school bullies.

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6. Are you planning any further forays into classical material?

Yes, I'm definitely planning further forays! I've already had a few plays published in the *Australian Readers Theatre*, (Blake Education), that combine the classics with Australian history. I've written *The Flying Finish*, where Pegasus and Bellerophon enter the Melbourne Cup; *The Gold Rush Touch*, where a goldfields prospector succumbs to the Midas Touch; and *Pandora's Ballot Box*, where a young girl encounters the suffragette movement. They bring the classics to life in a new way, and show that they are still very relevant and relatable today!

7. Anything else you think we should know?

The *Hopeless Heroes* books aren't just retelling of the myths – that's been done many times before. The stories begin when 10-year-old Tim Baker accidentally breaks an ancient amphora, and discovers that Hercules had been trapped inside it for thousands of years. Once repaired, the vase allows Tim to travel back to Ancient Greece. He befriends Hercules' daughter Zoe (an addition to the traditional myths), and together they encounter famous heroes, escape bizarre monsters, solve baffling puzzles, and even defy the gods themselves. I only hope they don't hold grudges …

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

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	Previous book: *Hopeless Heroes* (Series, Book 9): *Hades' Pet Hellhound*.

Summary

This is the final book (10) in the "Hopeless Heroes" series. This is a series of portal-fantasy adventures in which a timid boy travels to the world of ancient myth by means of a magic vase, and learns to be brave through adventures with classical heroes. At the end of the previous book, Tim Baker discovered that Hera escaped from the magical vase in which she was trapped. Furthermore, it appears that many public buildings in London have become Greek temples and are built in a Greek style. Even the prime minister who addresses the nation suddenly speaks ancient Greek and his suit is magically changed to a chiton.

Horrified, Tim returns to ancient Greece to seek help. He meets Zoe and she advises him to contact her grandfather, Zeus. The two thereupon use the magical vase to travel to Olympus and meet Zeus in his office. His office is described as a regular office with wooden desk, chair, a plant and tablets instead of papers. Zeus is extremely busy with the bureaucracy involved with ruling the world so he advises the children to ask Pandora for help.

Zoe and Tim arrive at Pandora's house and she asks them many questions. Finally she gives them her box and tells them that the box contains evils but also hope. Zoe and Tim are not sure how the box can help them but decide to take it with them and travel to Tim's modern world. In London, among the commotion, they also meet up with Leo who leads them to where Hera is. Hera is busy turning buildings to temples and creating Greek statues. She also makes the people of London wear Greek costumes and speak in ancient Greek. When the children confront her, she boasts that she caused Tim to release her while he was under her spell in his sleep. Then suddenly Hermes appears, carrying Ares with him. Hera is angry that Ares came to interfere with her plans and cause mayhem. Ares turns her statues into his army. It appears that he has a special power, bloodlust which affects the people around him. Hera and Ares fight among themselves and even the children are caught under Ares' spell. Yet Zoe manages to shake it off and Larry, Tim's teacher and his mother's

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boyfriend, also manages to rescue them from Ares.

Zoe, Tim and Leo escape with Pandora's box, sit around it and start hoping. When they open the box, they are delighted to discover that the ancient heroes step out of it: Hercules, Odysseus, Jason, Theseus and even the elderly Perseus. All of them came to their rescue. Hercules reassures Tim that he can save the day. And so Tim comes up with a plan (of which we are not told). At first it appears as if his plan has failed, but he soon recovers. He fetches his magical vase, although one of Hera's statues tries to steal it from him. Then Perseus brings Pandora's box to him. Next Tim tells Hera to stay away from the box and warns his friends to close their eyes. Hera does not listen to him and picks a mysterious object from the box; it was the head of the gorgo, Stheno, and Hera is immediately turned to stone.

Ares is glad that his mother cannot stop him, but suddenly a loud voice shouts and Zeus himself appears. He has come to stop Ares and take him back to Tartarus. Even Hermes is punished, by Zeus making him his new office boy. Zeus also changes the appearance of London back to its former self and takes Hera's statute with him. He is in no hurry to turn her back just yet. Everyone is delighted and the prime minister promises to build a statue in Tim's honour.

Analysis

This book is the culmination of Tim's adventures in the series. He advanced from saving himself to the unselfish acts of saving his friends and then his enemy (Leo) and in the end he saves London from Hera. His position as a hero grows yet he does not lose his natural charm and shyness. Tim shows himself a hero who uses his brains to help his friends.

The final confirmation of Tim's heroic status appears in the form of the statue erected to his honour in London. Zoe asks him to travel with the vase a hundred years into the future, and they go to the same park in future London. "Tim turned. His first thought was, 'Oh no, not another statue', but then he looked more carefully. The statue was of a curlyhaired boy, smiling shyly. The plaque at its base read: TIM BAKER In honour of the boy who saved the future With the help of his many friends It was exactly the inscription he would have hoped for." (p. 117). In this ending scene Tim (his statue) is a hero celebrated in the future London just as the mythological heroes are celebrated during Tim's own times. They all share a pedestal and a statue. Tim is

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a true eternal hero now. His deeds are commemorated by a monument but also by writing (the book series). Hercules calls Tim "A new hero for a new age." (p. 79). This series shows that each generation has its heroes and that they should all be celebrated. They are not the same nor should they. The definition of a hero changes over time and through cultures.

Regarding the ancient gods, Hera's plan manifests in London. She changes the present (and the future) to match the past so she can rule forever. When Hera confronts Ares, she tells him that he only wishes to destroy, while she aims to save the future. For her, saving the future is tantamount to the continuation of her worship. Hera does not realize that her time is up (a paraphrase on the book's title) and she insists on returning civilization to the past instead of guiding it into the future. The Greek gods had their regal time during the ancient past and now they should let humans choose their paths on their own. There are no replacement deities in this story, who took over from the Greek gods, but the humans of the present and future are making their own choices instead of following the decrees of the gods. The author even sends a small political nod. During the Prime Minister's speech in ancient Greek, he says that the Elgin Marbles are to be returned to Greece. (p. 36).

Zeus is depicted as loving father and even husband, yet very busy. He is easy going, kind and fair. Ares is similar to Leo. He is apparently acting like a divine bully since he does not feel loved by his parents. "'Zeus is too busy running the world to bother about me.' 'His work is very important!' 'Exactly. More important than me. Or you.'" (p. 47). Do Hera and Ares behave like this due to Zeus' negligence? Ares blames his parents but it is his decision and even joy, to encourage violence. One should take responsibility for his/her own actions and not blame others for it. Furthermore, Ares could have talked to his parents and explain his feelings instead of choosing to fight.

The story of Pandora is briefly told to connect to the main theme of this book, hope. Tim and Zoe discuss the meaning of the story which Pandora told them. "'I don't get it,' Tim shouted over the noise of the rushing wind. 'If hope stayed inside Pandora's Box when all the bad stuff escaped, doesn't it mean there's no hope in the world? That everything's hopeless? So why would we even be trying to fix it?' 'You've got it wrong,' Zoe shouted back, her ringlets flapping. 'It means humans still have hope, but everything else – war, disease, struggle – has flown out of our control. Hope is still there whenever

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	we need it.'" (p. 32). In the end, the message of the series is hope, self-confidence and self-belief. Tim, like the readers, finds his inner courage and hopes for the best even through dire times and this optimistic view helps him overcome his troubles.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Ares Hera Hercules Hermes Jason Odysseus / Ulysses Perseus Theseus Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Family Friendship Heroism Magic Sacrifice
Addenda	The review refers to the Kindle edition (9781782263548).

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