Summary: Anna Ślezińska, Analysis: Hanna Paulouskaya, "Entry on: A Day in the Museum, or Caius Probinus' Tale about Life in Ancient Rome [Dzień w muzeum, czyli opowieść Caiusa Probinusa o życiu w starożytnym Rzymie] by Monika Rekowska", peer-reviewed by Katarzyna Marciniak and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1535. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Monika Rekowska

A Day in the Museum, or Caius Probinus' Tale about Life in Ancient Rome [Dzień w muzeum, czyli opowieść Caiusa Probinusa o życiu w starożytnym Rzymie]

Poland (2011)

TAGS: Ancient Religious Practices Pottery / Vases Roman Baths Roman Education Roman Empire Roman Funerary Customs Roman Gods Roman History Roman Religion Roman Theatre



Courtesy of the publisher.



General information	
Title of the work	A Day in the Museum, or Caius Probinus' Tale about Life in Ancient Rome [Dzień w muzeum, czyli opowieść Caiusa Probinusa o życiu w starożytnym Rzymie]
Country of the First Edition	Poland
Country/countries of popularity	Poland
Original Language	Polish
First Edition Date	2011
First Edition Details	Monika Rekowska-Ruszkowska, *Dzień w muzeum, czyli opowieść Caiusa Probinusa o życiu w starożytnym Rzymie*, ill. Joanna Żero. Gdynia: Novae Res, 2011, 121 pp.
ISBN	9788377221860
Genre	Novellas
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Summary: Anna Ślezińska, University of Warsaw, annie_s@o2.pl Analysis: Hanna Paulouskaya, University of Warsaw, hannapa@al.uw.edu.pl

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.

Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Katarzyna Marciniak, University of Warsaw, kamar@al.uw.edu.pl Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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Creators



Photograph courtesy of the Author.

Monika Rekowska , b. 1967
(Author)

Classical archaeologist, researcher at the University of Warsaw. She gives lectures on archaeology of Ancient Rome and Greece. Her special interests focus on the history of archaeology, especially on collecting the ancient art. She conducts also archaeological research and excavations in Sicily (Akrai, since 2011), before that in France (Limoges), Switzerland (Orbe), Germany (Haus Bürgel) and Libya (Ptolemais). She has been awarded Andrew Mellon Fellowship (MSH Paris, 2002), grants from the French Government (1995), the Italian Government (1999), and the Lanckoroński Foundation (2007, 2010). She popularizes classical themes among children and youth by lecturing in archaeology and ancient history at many Warsaw schools (since 2000). As a lecturer at Children's University, Rekowska teaches classes that develop children's interest in the ancient world (seminar Master and Student *Per aspera ad astra*, lecture on *Do pots grow in the ground?*). Her daughters are the source of her everyday inspiration: the 16-year-old Zuzia and 13-year-old Julka prove that their mama's activities make sense.

Sources:

Bio based on the material kindly provided by the Author in 2013.

Bio prepared by Anna Ślezińska, University of Warsaw, annie_s@o2.pl

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Additional information

Summary

Based on: Katarzyna Marciniak, Elżbieta Olechowska, Joanna Kłos, Michał Kucharski (eds.), *Polish Literature for Children & Young Adults Inspired by Classical Antiquity: A Catalogue*, Faculty of "Artes Liberales", Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2013, 444 pp.

School children visit Park Arkadia in Nieborów. It is a historic, English style garden, with numerous themes recalling ancient architecture. A new guide, Monika, is a young archaeologist fascinated by the ancient world, especially Rome. When children reluctantly enter the park, she tries to convince them that a museum can be an interesting place, where the present meets the past. Monika starts to tell children about monuments situated in the park. Her story is very lively and children become quickly absorbed by it. Monika tells them about Roman funeral customs and shows them ancient urns. Zuzia, one of the school girls, hears a voice of a boy. When she closes her eyes, she can see a young Roman. His name is Caius Probinus, he is a 14-year-old Roman boy. Caius tells Zuzia about daily life in Rome, he describes his everyday activities and customs. His story portrays Ancient Rome: what did the typical household and school look like, what were the favorite games, what were women's duties, why did everybody go to bathe in the *thermae*, and what food was served during the feasts. He also talks about Roman religion and beliefs. When Caius talks to Zuzia, Monika continues her story: about vases, sarcophagi and Roman gods. All the children are listening captivated. At the end of the visit, Zuzia admits that the history of Rome is fascinating and maybe she would become an archaeologist.

The book contains also some additional information about Roman calendar and monetary system. There is also a board for the game *O tym, jak Rzym zakładano…* [About Foundation of Rome…] and a final test for the willing young readers.

Analysis

The book naturally links Polish history and culture with Roman culture, as the whole story takes place in Helena Radziwiłłowa's *Arkadia**, a park established in 1778 in Nieborów near Łowicz, 80 km from Warsaw. Curiously, when Zuzia meets Caius Probinus and is surprised by his appearance and clothes, the boy knows that he is not

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"from [her] times" and "was born far from here and a very, very long time ago"** (p. 16). This implies that Zuzia was not the first modern-day person Caius met, and he acts as a sort of guide, similar to Monika.

The stories of Monika and Caius interweave and connect, and from time to time, Zuzia, in a daze, returns to the group that she has left behind. Monika, a young archaeologist and guide, is praised in the book, especially in comparison to the teacher, who is openly criticized (cf. pp. 8, 86). This may be a nod to the teenage readers who often rebel against their teachers and resent their excessively didactic attitude.

As the characters are 13 and 14 years old, we may suppose that the book is addressed to an audience of a similar age. We meet Caius near a funeral urn containing his ashes, which might be a strong and controversial start, but it seems that the author – an archaeologist – has no irrational fear of death and funeral objects, even if they involve children. The book finishes with the story of the death of Caius Probinus, so this topic acts as a logical end of the story (pp. 91–93). Although as the boy is somehow alive, his story does not overshadow Zuzia's.

The book is written simply and in an attractive manner, easily catching the reader's interest. The inclusion of games and tasks after each chapter makes it even more pleasant for the reader and creates an opportunity to review information about ancient Rome. A short bibliography listing books on Roman history addressed to children is also provided (p. 115).

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* Accessed: September 16, 2022.

** "…ale ja nie jestem z twoich czasów. Urodziłem się daleko stąd i bardzo, bardzo dawno temu."

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and

Ancient Religious Practices Pottery / Vases Roman Baths Roman Education Roman Empire Roman Funerary Customs Roman Gods Roman History Roman Religion Roman Theatre

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Concepts

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture

Heritage Past Religious beliefs

Further Reading

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ed., *Ptolemais in Cyrenaica. Studies in Memory of Tomasz Mikocki [Ptolemais I],* Warsaw: Instytut Archeologii UW, 2012, 1–34.

Rekowska–Ruszkowska, Monika, *Polskie badania w Ptolemais*, http://www.archeolog.pl/pl33/teksty55/polskie_badania_w_ptolemais (accessed: February 14, 2013, no longer active).

Wykładowcy Uniwersytetu Dzieci, http://www.uniwersytetdzieci.pl/uds/ lecturers (accessed: February 15, 2013, no longer active).

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