

Salvatore (Sal) Murdocca , Mary Pope Osborne

Magic Tree House (Series, Book 13): Vacation Under the Volcano

United States (1998)

TAGS: [Eruption of Vesuvius](#) [Everyday life](#) [Herculaneum](#) [Hercules Pompeii](#) [Prophecy](#) [Roman Daily Life](#) [Vulcan](#)



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General information	
<i>Title of the work</i>	Magic Tree House (Series, Book 13): Vacation Under the Volcano
<i>Country of the First Edition</i>	United States of America
<i>Original Language</i>	English
<i>First Edition Date</i>	1998
<i>First Edition Details</i>	Mary Pope Osborne, <i>Vacation Under the Volcano</i> , Magic Treehouse series # 13, illustrated by Sal Murdocca, New York: Random House, 1998. 76pp.
<i>ISBN</i>	978-0-679-89050-8
<i>Awards</i>	Osborne's awards for her works include: Ludington Memorial Award from the Educational Paperback Association, Lifetime Achievement Award from the Random House Sales Force, Heidelberger Leander Award (Germany, 2010), Minion Academy Global Literature Award (Japan, 2011), Books-Ago-Go Literacy Award (2015), Jupiter Award for Science Education (2015); Best Books of the Year Lists of <i>School Library Journal</i> , <i>Parents' Magazine</i> , <i>Publishers Weekly</i> , <i>the Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books</i> , and <i>Bank Street College</i> ; awards from the Parents Choice Foundation, the Children's Book Council, and the International Reading Association, the Boston Public Library, the Atlanta Public Library, the Carolina Alumni Association, the Virginia Library Association, and the Delaware Library Association; Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2013).

Babette Puetz, "Entry on: Magic Tree House (Series, Book 13): Vacation Under the Volcano by Salvatore (Sal) Murdocca, Mary Pope Osborne", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Elżbieta Olechowska. *Our Mythical Childhood Survey* (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/502>. Entry version as of October 20, 2021.

<i>Genre</i>	Action and adventure fiction, Didactic fiction, Fantasy fiction, Magic realist fiction, Time-Slip Fantasy*
<i>Target Audience</i>	Children (6-8 years old)
<i>Author of the Entry</i>	Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington, babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz
<i>Peer-reviewer of the Entry</i>	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com



Creators



Salvatore (Sal) Murdocca , b. 1943 (Illustrator)

Salvatore (Sal) Murdocca is an illustrator from New York, living in France. He has illustrated advertisements and picture books, including the Magic Tree House series.

[Profile](#) at magictreehouse.com (accessed: January 9, 2020)

Bio prepared by Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington, babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz



Mary Pope Osborne , b. 1949 (Author)

Mary Pope Osborne lives in Connecticut. She has written over 100 books for children and young adults: mysteries, novels, retellings of myths (including a six part series retelling of the Odyssey), biographies, picture books, a book of American Tall Tales, and a book for young readers about the major world religions. She is best known for her best-selling *Magic Tree House* series (the first volume of which was published in 1992).

More than 135 million copies of the Magic Tree House series have sold worldwide. The series has been translated into more than 30 languages. Osborne has also co-authored a companion series to the Magic Tree House books, together with her husband Will Osborne and her sister Natalie Pope Boyce and in 2012, Osborne created a Magic Tree House Classroom Adventures Program at [here](#) (online resources for teachers to promote literacy, accessed: October 1, 2018).

The Magic Tree House series was a #1 New York Times best seller. In 2006, the popularity of the series outdid that of *Harry Potter* as #1 on the New York Times Bestseller list (according to Cynthia Haven, Stanford University, see [here](#), accessed: October 1, 2018). The series has received awards from the National Council of Teachers of English and the American Booksellers Association.

Moreover, Osborne's awards for her works include: Ludington Memorial Award from the Educational Paperback Association, Lifetime Achievement Award from the Random House Sales Force, Heidelberger Leander Award (Germany, 2010), Minion Academy Global Literature Award (Japan, 2011), Books-Ago-Go Literacy Award (2015), Jupiter Award for Science Education (2015); Best Books of the Year Lists of *School Library Journal*, *Parents' Magazine*, *Publishers Weekly*, *the Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, and *Bank Street College*; awards from the Parents Choice Foundation, the Children's Book Council, and the International Reading Association, the Boston Public Library, the Atlanta Public Library, the Carolina Alumni Association, the Virginia Library Association, and the Delaware Library Association; Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2013).

Osborne is a passionate advocate of literacy and access to theatre for children. Several Magic Tree House books have been adapted for children's theatre productions, including musicals.

Other Classics related books by the author:

The Deadly Power of Medusa (Scholastic, 1988), Will and Mary Pope Osborne, illustrated by Steve Sullivan

Jason and the Argonauts (Scholastic, 1988), Will and Mary Pope Osborne, ill. Steve Sullivan

Favorite Greek Myths (Scholastic, 1989), retold by Osborne, ill.. Troy Howell

Tales from the Odyssey (Hyperion Books, 2002 to 2005), ill. Troy Howell — six children's novels adapted from *Odyssey*[3]

Tales from the Odyssey (Hyperion, 2010), a two-volume edition

[Website](#) of the series (accessed: October 1, 2018)

Bio prepared by Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington,



Babette Puetz, "Entry on: Magic Tree House (Series, Book 13): Vacation Under the Volcano by Salvatore (Sal) Murdocca, Mary Pope Osborne", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Elżbieta Olechowska. *Our Mythical Childhood Survey* (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/502>. Entry version as of October 20, 2021.

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Additional information

Adaptations

All of the Magic Tree House series books are available as Listening Library audio books, narrated by Mary Pope Osborne.

Magic tree house collection #4, Mary Pope Osborne, Audiobook on Cassette : Cassette recording,
Language: English, Publisher: Listening Library, 2002.

In 2011, a Japanese anime based on the Magic Tree House series (which was the number one children's book series in Japan) came out: Magic Tree House (魔法の樹の小屋) 2012, produced by TV Tokyo, Dentsu, TV Osaka, Media Factory, GAGA, Yahoo! Japan.
(<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2012/01/06/films/magic-tree-house-hits-the-big-screen-at-last-but-only-in-japan/#.WsQGqC-B2qk>,
https://myanimelist.net/anime/10690/Magic_Tree_House).

Translation

Im Schatten des Vulkans

by Mary Pope Osborne; Jutta Knipping; Sabine Rahn
Language: German
Publisher: Bindlach Loewe 2010

Panique à Pompéi

by Mary Pope Osborne; Marie-Hélène Delval; Philippe Masson
Language: French
Publisher: [Montrouge] : Bayard Jeunesse, 2017.

Una vacanza vulcanica a Pompei

by Mary Pope Osborne; Sal Murdocca; Elcograf,
Language: Italian
Publisher: Milano : Piemme, 2016.

Vacaciones Al Pie De Un Volcan

by Mary Pope Osborne; Sal Murdocca; Marcela Brovelli;
Language: Spanish
Publisher: Paw Prints, 2007.



Vacaciones en Pompeya

by Mary Pope Osborne; Sal Murdocca; Macarena Salas

Language: Spanish

Publisher: Madrid : SM, 2005.

I vulkanens skygge

by Mary Pope Osborne

Language: Danish

Publisher: Kbh. : Carlsen, 2008.

Wakacje pod wulkanem

by Mary Pope Osborne; Sal Murdocca; Irena Domańska-Kubiak;

Krzysztof Kubiak

Language: Polish

Publisher: Warszawa : Egmont, 2005.

Férias sob o vulcão

by Mary Pope Osborne; Sal Murdocca

Language: Portuguese

Publisher: São Paulo : Farol Literário, 2013.

ポムペイ /

Ponpei saigo no hi.

by Mary Pope Osborne; Masako Meshino;

Language: Japanese

Publisher: KADOKAWA, Kadokawa.

조선의 고령 /

P'omp'ei ch'oehu ūi nal

by Mary Pope Osborne; Sal Murdocca; Ūn-jōng No

Language: Korean

Publisher: 조선, Sōul-si : Piryongso, 2003.

假期 : [假期] = *Vacation under the volcano /*

Gu cheng mo ri : [Zhong ying shuang yu] = Vacation under the volcano



by 玛丽·波普·奥斯本 (Mary Pope Osborne); Baochun Lan; Chun Lan
Language: Chinese
Publisher: 湖北少年儿童出版社, Wuhan : Hu bei shao nian er tong chu ban she, 2011.

Madīnah taḥt al-rrumād
by Mary Pope Osborne; Philippe Masson
Language: Arabic
Publisher: Bayrūt : Hāshit 'Anṭuān, 2014.

Summary

In the *Magic Tree House* books, American siblings Jack and Annie (from Pennsylvania) are sent on missions in different times and places from a magic tree house by Morgan le Fay, a benevolent fairy who is a mother figure to the children. Their task is to recover a lost story in Latin, entitled: *Vir Fortissimus in Mundo*. This story used to be in a library in ancient Pompeii. Morgan le Fay also provides the siblings with a book called *Life in Roman Times*, which, throughout their adventure, they peruse frequently to find out facts and information about ancient Roman life.

The children are transported to an olive grove outside ancient Pompeii. They find themselves wearing tunics, sandals and leather-bags. They use their book to find out where they are and in which year (AD 79). They feel the ground shaking, but still set out for the city of Pompeii, crossing a dried-up stream.

On their way through Pompeii, trying to find the library, they see gladiators and a number of sites, such as the temple of Jupiter. A soothsayer warns them that the end is near, but also tells them the location of the library in the villa of Brutus. There, the children find the Latin scroll with the right title.

Jack learns from his book that Mount Vesuvius will erupt on the very day they are in Pompeii at noon. A sundial shows that it is almost that time. A terrible earthquake starts. Jack reads in his book that Pompeii will be covered in pumice, which they see falling down shortly after. They protect their heads with pillows and flee through the chaos of Pompeii, noticing the great damage to buildings. When they come to the dried-up stream, they see that the bridge they had used earlier has



caved in. When they try to cross it, they get stuck in the pumice. They remember Morgan's advice that the story they had to find will save them. Annie pulls the ancient scroll out of Jack's bag, holds it up to the sky and shouts: "Save us, story!" Suddenly, a larger-than-life gladiator appears and rescues the Annie and Jack. The children run to the Magic Tree House and are transported back home. There they find out from Morgan le Fay that the title of the story refers to Hercules, who was the one who rescued them.

Analysis

Much of this novel is set in ancient Pompeii. It is an introduction for young readers into ancient Roman life and, specifically the historical event of the eruption of Mt Vesuvius. Readers of this book learn many facts about ancient Pompeii and ancient Roman life, in general, mostly through dictionary-style entries from Morgan's book *Life in Roman Times*.

In this series a time-travel device, the magic tree house, is used to educate young readers in a number of basic facts about the ancient world. The narrative is structured around a quest which is the reason why Jack and Annie travel around Pompeii and experience a variety of aspects of Roman everyday life, as well as the eruption of Mt Vesuvius.

The aspects of everyday life shown are centered around topics which children can easily relate to by comparison to their own world, such as food, clothing and everyday life in a shopping street. We hear in some detail what a Roman villa looked like on the inside. Some famous buildings and sites are also mentioned, as well as some typical Roman professions, in particular gladiators. To add excitement to the story and set it in a particular historical context, it is told against the background of the eruption of Mt Vesuvius.

Several of the facts of Roman life mentioned are depicted in black and white illustrations. The novel itself is followed by two pages of facts about Pompeii and ancient Rome.

Classical, Mythological,
Traditional Motifs,

[Eruption of Vesuvius](#) [Everyday life](#) [Herculaneum](#) [Hercules](#) [Pompeii](#)
[Prophecy](#) [Roman Daily Life](#) [Vulcan](#)



Characters, and Concepts

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

[Adventure](#) [Adversity](#) [Character Traits](#) [Child, Children](#) [Child's view](#)
[Emotions](#) [Gaining Understanding](#) [Heritage](#) [History](#) [Intellect](#) [Journeys](#)
[Joy of reading](#) [Knowledge](#) [Learning](#) [Magic](#) [Nature](#) [Past](#)
[Prediction/Prophecy](#) [Siblings](#) [Tale vs reality](#) [Travel](#) [Treasure-hunting](#)

Further Reading

Pliny, *Letters* 6.16

Companion:

Mary Pope Osborne and Natalie Pope Boyce, illustr. Sal Murdocca, *Ancient Rome and Pompeii: A Nonfiction Companion to Magic Tree House # 13: Vacation Under the Volcano*, New York: Random House, 2006.

