Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: Zeus to the Rescue by John Dougherty , Georgien Overwater ", peer-reviewed by Miriam Riverlea and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/511. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

John Dougherty , Georgien Overwater

Zeus to the Rescue

United Kingdom (2007)

TAGS: Actaeon Artemis Danae Europa Leda Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Zeus to the Rescue
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2007
First Edition Details	John Dougherty, Georgien Overwater, *Zeus to the Rescue*. London: Young Corgi Books (a Division of Random House Children's Books), 2007, 104 pp.
ISBN	9780552553735
Genre	Fiction, Humor, Illustrated works, Mythological fiction, School story*
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

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.

Creators



John Dougherty , b. 1964
(Author)

John Dougherty was born in Larne, in Northern Ireland. He is a writer of children's books. In the 1990s and early 2000s he was a teacher at Hillbrook Primary School, in London. He has written a number of series of children's picture books and readers, usually with comic themes, and some with mythical or fairy-tale elements, including the *Bansi O'Hara* series about a girl with connections to faery folk; picture books on retellings of folktales, such as *Finn MacCool and the Giant's Causeway*, *Twice Upon a Time*, *The Story of Sir Dave* (drawing on Arthurian legend), and adaptations of Shakespeare plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest*. He has also written a trio of books about Zeus (*Zeus on the Loose* (2004), *Zeus to the Rescue* (2007), and *Zeus Sorts it Out* (2011)). He lives in Stroud, Gloucestershire.

Source:

Official website (accessed: October 1, 2018)

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

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Georgien Overwater , b. 1958
(Illustrator)

Georgien Overwater is a Belgian-Dutch illustrator of children's books. She was born in Gorichem, and from a child was interested in drawing. She trained at the Art Academy in Arnhem and has illustrated many children's books around the world, including animated films (with Paul Driessen, and Sesame Street), the children's series Floor, with Marjon Hoffman, the *Dr Procession* series by Jo Nesbo, and *Munkel Trough* by Jan Foxley. She illustrated the three *Zeus* books, the *Jack Slater Monster Investigator* and *Niteracy Hour* books, by John Dougherty. She lives in Amsterdam.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: October 1, 2018)

Profile at the leopold.nl (accessed: October 1, 2018)

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	*Zeus on the Loose* (London: Young Corgi, 2004); *Zeus Sorts It Out* (London: Young Corgi, 2011).

Summary

Zeus to the Rescue is the second in a trio of illustrated chapter books about the adventures of Zeus in a modern British playground. It follows from *Zeus on the Loose*. Alex, the protagonist of the book, has recovered from Zeus's first visit to the school. However, a pendant shaped like a lightning bolt, which Zeus has given him, starts to quiver. Could it be in response to a new girl, Diana, who seems to have an uncanny power over the girls in class, and their teacher, Miss Wise? Diana fosters division between the girls and boys, claiming that the boys are trying to see them changing, en route to their sports practice. When Diana turns on a boy, named Troy, threatening to turn him into a pig, Alex and his friend Charlie try to summon Zeus, using the cardboard temple they had made in the previous book. At first, Zeus pretends not to be available, and mimics an answering machine, but eventually is persuaded to come to help the boys. He arrives, wearing a towel, and dripping, because he had been in the bath. It emerges that Diana is the goddess Artemis, who has come to the school because Zeus has told them how much fun he had had on his previous visit. She is annoyed that her father is embarrassing her by showing up, and they decide to have a competition. If Zeus can persuade Miss Wise to kiss him, Diana will go home. Alex, Charlie and Zeus consult the class copy of the *Bumper Book of Greek Myth*s, and read about Artemis's powers. They are alarmed by the story of Actaeon, and rightly frightened by Diana. They also read about Zeus's different romantic exploits, which he then trials on Miss Wise, to small effect. When he tries to approach her in the form of a shower of golden rain (cf Danaë), Diana hastily gives her a magic umbrella that repels the drops. When he approaches her in the form of a bull (Europa), Miss Wise pulls him by the ring in his nose into the girls' bathroom. When he approaches her in the form of a dove (as swans seem unrealistic) (Leda), Diana whisks the classroom windows shut, denting his beak. Eventually he is successful, turning himself into a piglet: Miss Wise scoops him up and kisses him on his nose. Enraged, Diana turns Charlie into a pig, but Alex threatens to tell everyone that Diana has silver bows and arrows on her underpants, and she is

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	forced to change him back.
Analysis	This is an example of comic intrusion fantasy, in which the mythical elements intrude into the real life of modern characters. Zeus's traditional irascible nature, association with lightning, vengeance, and wilfulness are deployed to comic effect, in a story that provides a quick snapshot of well-known elements of Greek mythology. *Zeus to the Rescue* also provides a comic introduction to the story of Actaeon catching Artemis bathing, and to the attributes of Artemis as well. Diana/Artemis is appropriately haughty, and her girls-only policy is applied to the classroom scene. Some of the uncomfortable aspects of Zeus's different attempts at courtship are glossed over, given the age group of the target audience, but the general impression of the Greek gods being unruly, capricious, and vengeful is conveyed to comic effect in contrast with the mild boys, Charlie and Alex. Zeus's masculinity is sent up through his feminised attire (bath towel).
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Actaeon Artemis Danae Europa Leda Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Boys Girls Knowledge Learning Relationships School Sport

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