Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Arachne Golden Gloves (Hopeless Heroes, 3) by Nick Roberts, Stella Tarakson ", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/676. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Nick Roberts , Stella Tarakson

Arachne Golden Gloves (Hopeless Heroes, 3)

United Kingdom (2017)

TAGS: Arachne Athena Hera Hercules Hermes Jason Perseus





Cover courtesy of Sweet Cherry Publishing.

General information	
Title of the work	Arachne Golden Gloves (Hopeless Heroes, 3)
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2017
First Edition Details	Stella Tarakson, *Hopeless Heroes: Arachne Golden Gloves.* Leicester: Sweet Cherry Publishing, 2017, 207 pp.
ISBN	9781782263470
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, Fantasy fiction, Fiction
Target Audience	Children (age 6–10)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

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Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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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,
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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

Summary

This is book 3 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. Tim Baker, the school-child hero of the book is doing the housework since his mother is busy with her jobs. He catches a spider, and is very interested in it. Yet his mother is afraid of it. Tim decides not to kill the animal but rather set it free outside. He even uses it to scare the class bully, Leo. In addition, he is embarrassed since his mother gave him two old scratchy gloves to wear to school (she did not have time to buy him a new pair).

When Tim sees that Leo's hands have chilblains, he offers him his glove. While Leo takes them, although he does not stop taunting Tim or regret his former attitude towards him, it is a first sign of understanding between the two classmates. Tim is sad since on his previous visit to ancient Greece he saw a garden filled with statues made by the gorgons, who turned people to stone. He wants to free them but does not know how. Tim decides to use his ancient magic vase and return to ancient Greece.

When he arrives there he meets the god Hermes, who takes the vase from him, allegedly to keep it safe. Without the vase Tim will not be able to return home. Tim and his friend from ancient Greek, Zoe, who is also the daughter of Hercules, decide to ask the old hero Perseus for advice on how to free the captured people. Perseus is spending his time as a gardener in this garden of statues and doesn't care about being a hero anymore or going on heroic quests. Perseus tells them about the Golden Fleece which is rumoured to have healing powers. He tells them to ask Jason about it. (All the gods and heroes live in proximity to each other and the children simply walk from one location to another). Jason tells the children he gave the fleece to his girlfriend, Arachne. This is how the children get to meet the maiden-turned spider. While trying to get Tim's vase back form Hera's temple, Hera shrinks Tim and he gets trapped inside his vase. Zoe then asks Arachne for help and Arachne manages to pull him out.

In the end, apparently Arachne makes special gloves out of the fleece. When Tim touches the statues with these golden gloves the people trapped inside return to life. This adventure is also an opportunity for Zoe to test her own strength. Yet Hercules is over-protective with her

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and thinks she should sit at home all day so she will be out of harm's way. Hercules is furious at Tim for involving Zoe with Hera's malicious plans and he forbids Tim from coming back to ancient Greece.

Back in London, the book ends when Tim's mother reveals her secret – she has a new boyfriend, and he is one of Tim's teachers, Larry Green. We do not know much of Larry at this point, only that Tim is surprised by his mother's news.

Analysis

In this portal-fantasy chapter book for young readers, Tim Baker's adventures in ancient Greece compensate for the difficulties he faces at home. Tim is having quite a hard time at home. Since his mother works two jobs, he returns home from school to an empty house. His time-traveling to ancient Greece to Hercules' house provides him with the sense of warmth and family he is lacking at home (although his mother is doing the best she can). When Tim releases the spider, he feels as if the spider was thanking him. "It was staring up at him as if he were a hero. A lump formed in Tim's throat. He didn't feel like a hero…" (p. 23). Tim regrets not helping the victims who turns to stone. The modern school boy however, is acting more like a hero than the mythical heroes he encounters, like Perseus and Jason. Being a hero, Tarakson indicates, is caring for others, and the ancient heroes seem to care more about themselves than helping Medusa's victims return to life. This shows that even small children can be heroes if their heart is in the right place. This theme will continue in the next books in the series and is part of the didacticism aimed at the young readers. Most of the mythological heroes Tim meets during his adventures in ancient Greece are vain, silly or self-obsessed (Hercules being the exception) thus the story poses an important message regarding what and who constitutes a real hero.

When Tim saves the people in the gorgon's garden, he becomes their hero. Heroism is a returning motif in this volume. Zoe tells Tim that Hera cast an invisibility curse on Hercules so no one would know him and that would make him stop being a hero. Tim thought that Hercules could also have been a celebrity hero in the modern world, saving people; he then thinks "she obviously had no concerns about Tim ever becoming a famous hero, so she hadn't bothered to make him invisible". (p. 144). Tim's self-esteem is quite low, he does not think he could match these famous heroes. He does not realize that he

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	is already a hero, just be caring for others (for example the bully Leo). The novel develops Tim's reflections on his grief for his dead father, and his relationship with Zoe, the girl from ancient Greece. Through this adventure, Tim and Zoe begin to know each other better; he even tells her about his family and that his father passed away. Tim does not like to talk about it, yet he decides to tell Zoe, "waiting for the awkward outpouring of sympathy that was the usual reaction when he told people. But all Zoe did was hold his hand and squeeze it." (pp. 88–89). Tim does not like to tell people about his father since their reactions seem unnatural and awkward to him; the author here refers to people's dealing with death, especially in relation to young children, indicating that sometimes they just need a hug or an encouraging touch, rather than empty words. The story is meant to encourage empathy and understanding of different emotions.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Arachne Athena Hera Hercules Hermes Jason Perseus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Death Family Friendship Heroism Magic

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