Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess by Shari Green ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/900. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Shari Green

Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess

Canada (2017)

TAGS: Hera Iris Olympians Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess
Country of the First Edition	Canada
Country/countries of popularity	Canada, Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2017
First Edition Details	Shari Green, *Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess.* Toronto: Pajama Press, 2017, 239 pp.
ISBN	9781772780178
Genre	Novels
Target Audience	Children (Older children: 8–12)
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
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Creators



Shari Green , b. 1963
(Author)

Shari Green is a Canadian author of children's novels written in verse. She was born as one of four siblings, children of a Presbyterian minister and an elementary school teacher. She has four grown-up children and lives in Campbell River, British Columbia. She is a Licensed Practical Nurse. She began writing through the NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) writers challenge program in 2015, and has published three novels, including *Missing Mike* (2018) and *Root Beer Candy and Other Miracles* (2016). Her novel *Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess* (2018) won the 2018 American Library Association Schneider Family Book Award in the Middle School Books Section, and has been shortlisted for fifteen other awards in North America.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: September 2, 2019).

Profile at Pajama Press (accessed: September 2, 2019).

Interviev with Shari Green (accessed: September 2, 2019).

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

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Additional information

Summary

In this Canadian verse novel for older children, Macy McMillan is eleven years old and profoundly deaf. She lives with her single mother, and has recently changed schools. Her mother is remarrying, to a man with twin six-year old daughters, and they will all move in together after the wedding. Macy is unhappy about being uprooted, and struggling with feelings of being misunderstood by her mother, and isolated at school.

Macy's mother sends her next door to help their frail elderly neighbour, Iris, who is packing her home prior to selling it and moving into a retirement community. As Macy helps Iris pack her books, they talk about memories, reading, and the things they love. Macy shares that she loves gardening, and growing flowers. Iris shares her favourite book (*Anne of Green Gables*) with Macy, and learns to communicate with her by finger-spelling. She communicates that she was not named after the flower, but after the Goddess of the Rainbows (p. 42): "a rainbow goddess/ a messenger for the gods/ traveling/ by rainbow" (p. 43). Macy asks Iris what sort of messages from the gods she sends: "I keep a straight face/ waiting for her answer/ even though the idea of Iris/ riding a rainbow/ passing notes from Zeus or Hera/ makes a giggle rise up/ inside me" (p. 44). Iris responds that she used to send messages: "Important ones./I sent them through cookies" (p. 45).

Iris's messages, through cookies, are messages of love, support, kindness, and resilience. Macy discovers that she too has the capacity to give such messages – through the flowers she loves growing. As the novel progresses, Macy learns from her friendship with Iris, and comes to terms with her mother's decision to remarry, learning to appreciate her new stepfather Alan, and her new stepsisters. At the end of the novel, Macy visits Iris, who is now settled into her new rest home. Macy has talked with one of the care workers about making sure she has access to cooking, but Iris assures Macy "you know, dear one/ the gods' messages can be sent even without cookies/ —messages of courage, hope, laughter, support,/ . . . Hearts are waiting worrying, hurting/ –-in need of a message/ you can send." (p. 226). Macy, now empowered with a sense of new understanding and confidence, happily moves into her new house, welcomed by her stepfather and new sisters.

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Analysis	Verse novels for young readers are rare, and possess a particular intensity of reflection, through their structure and shape, and *Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess* is a case in point. This novel for 10–12 year old readers, is a meditative work in which Macy, an eleven-year old deaf girl, copes with challenges in her life, and reaches a point of new maturity and understanding. The motif of a child learning about the world from an elderly friend, is quite common in children's literature, which often shows the values of intergenerational friendships. A major theme in the novel is that of communication, and as such, the goddess Iris, who appears in the form of Macy's elderly neighbour, acts as a metaphor for this core concept. Macy's journey towards self-knowledge and understanding involves learning how to communicate. Her deafness isolates her at school (she has transitioned from a special school only for deaf children, to an integrated school with an assistant teacher), especially when she falls out with her other deaf friend, Olivia. Communication with her mother is fraught, as Macy resents her mother's new relationship, and her stepfather clumsily learns to communicate with her through signing. But as Iris points out, there are many ways to communicate – through cookies, writing, sharing, and acts of love and understanding. While *Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess* does not foreground a Classical approach to childhood, in appropriating the figure of Iris, the Greek goddess of rainbow and a messenger of gods, to explore ideas of communication and friendship, it shows the reach and power of myth.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Hera Iris Olympians Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant	Adversity Conflict Disability Emotions Family Gaining understanding Life Memory Morality Peers

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