

Furthermore, Freeman focuses on the brilliant insights within the imperfections like ‘What are your Characters like?’ The Ancient Greek on the opposite side of the page may be of some use to a person versed in the language. But for me it gives the book that wonderful allure of looking like being from the Loeb Classical Series published by Harvard University. These usually expensive volumes are many times the envy of scholars around the world. Thus, we must congratulate the Princeton University Press for their marketing genius in formatting these works not only in layout but also in size the same as Harvard’s Loeb editions. It certainly makes for an attractive purchase, not only a useful one!

The lessons contained in the book for any aspiring writer – such as a story should have a beginning, middle and end or that the plot of your story is far more important than your characters – are the very basics that are taught in novel writing. But these even very simple lessons have been the focus of very heated debates by many of the world’s most famous writers. Freeman in this little book doesn’t delve into any modern arguments on these basic lessons. Instead, he proceeds merely by trying to shed additional light on them. His introduction on the lessons also provides no new context, but just gives the historical basis for Aristotle’s arguments existing in the first place. This should in no way put the modern reader off from reading the book as it is very enjoyable in returning to Aristotle and brushing up on some other great lessons like ‘never have a truly admirable person undergo a change from good to bad fortune. This evokes only shock and disgust in an audience, not pity and fear’.

Just as we do today, Aristotle experienced the writings of great writers, good writers and utterly bad writers. In this volume Freeman continues on this theme showing why Aristotle thought that these disparities existed between writers. And to Aristotle it was always pretty obvious why this happened. They abandoned and disregarded his rules of writing. Aristotle, as translated and shown by Freeman, gives instructions, and these instructions are based upon Aristotle’s own knowledge and study of literature.

The *Poetics* does remain a necessary read for both readers and writers. What it previously lacked was clarity and cohesion, not to mention readability! It required a concise translation that would go beyond the mere words and become concise in method and user-friendliness as well. Freeman succeeds in creating just such a concise work because he does not eliminate any of those elements that are the most important aspects of the book. By eliminating only the contradictions and convulsions Freeman brings to life a work that is invaluable in the traditional history of writing. The expounding of the very Natural Law of Storytelling is enshrined in this volume for future generations. It allows the reader to focus on the pivotal elements of what is good literature.

Although young writers should try to adhere to the principles that Aristotle laid out in his *Poetics* when they start out in their writing careers, these principles can also guide readers in identifying good literature. And in our age of Netflix and streaming it may even guide viewers into identifying good movies or series! And we can thank Philip Freeman and his new translation for that. He has modernised and revitalised a book that had become an irksome task to writer and reader alike. Again, Freeman does not part from the historical narrative or tradition even in his footnotes, but the key contributions will be the revitalisation of an ancient Classic and a philosopher who knew how to tell a story.

doi:[10.1017/S2058631023000831](https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631023000831)

Telling Tales in Nature. Forest Tales

Robinson (L.) Pp. 56. Independently published, 2022. Paper, £6.00. ISBN: 979-8367880434.

Steven Hunt

University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK
sch43@cam.ac.uk



This slim volume follows the pattern of Robinson’s *Underworld Tales*. It contains four short chapters, each of which is centred around a tree and its associated dryad: the walnut tree, the elm, the holm oak and the black poplar tree.

After a brief description of each tree, again attractively illustrated by Lydia Hall, Lorna Robinson (of Iris Project fame) tells a mythological story from the point of view of the dryad herself.

For the walnut tree, Robinson skilfully turns the story around –

the happy-go-lucky dryad sisters feast on the walnuts, until one of them is taken by Dionysus: their end is bitter-sweet. The elm tree dryad is concerned with dreams, and the mysterious story of Orpheus is at the centre, until Morpheus takes it away. At Dodona stood the oak tree sacred to Zeus: the story of the holm oak reimagines the creation of the oracle, with a slightly wry angle. The sisters of the black poplar tell the tale of a mysterious brother, who returns from a chariot race in the sky.

The stories are allusive and full of charm; the background information interesting in itself – whoever knew that Galen was onto something close to aspin?

doi:[10.1017/S2058631023000405](https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631023000405)

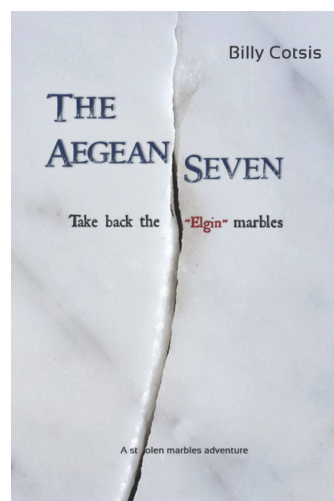
The Aegean Seven Take Back the ‘Elgin’ Marbles

Cotsis (B.) Pp xxx. + 128, ills. Independently published, 2021. Paper, £6.99. ISBN: 97806446852638.

Hilary Meyrick-Long

St. Andrew’s Episcopal School, Austin, TX, USA
[hmeystick-long@sasaustin.org](mailto:hmeyrick-long@sasaustin.org)

As with all the reviews I write for the Journal of Classics Teaching, my task is to gauge the suitability of a book for teacher use in



classroom instruction. Whatever my personal feelings about a book, I try to stick to this goal. Therefore, I will say at the outset that I do not believe *The Aegean Seven* to be suitable for classroom instruction. Without a doubt, students taking Classical Civilisation, Ancient History or Ancient Greek in middle or high school are likely to study the fifth century building programme on the Acropolis, and I would imagine that most teachers who implement such courses would spend time covering the removal of the

Parthenon marbles from the Acropolis by Lord Elgin. The post-classical history of the Parthenon marbles is dramatic, engaging, and has far-reaching consequences that affect politics and international cultural relations to this day. A well-written work of fiction on this topic would be a great ancillary read for students.

However, the body-shaming language of *The Aegean Seven*, (Lord Elgin is constantly referred to as a 'little fatty'), the sex scenes (albeit tame), and the slightly confusing storyline do cause me not to recommend this to my fellow teachers of Classics. This aside, instructional time in the classroom with students gets ever more precious while the requirements from examining boards are ever more stringent, so the introduction of any book less than vital, less than helpful, less than inspiring, seems wasteful.

The premise of this book is a fictionalised account of seven people who work together to take back the Parthenon marbles from the British Museum. The author describes it as a 'dramedy', 'An Ocean Eleven minus Brad Pitt meets Dan Brown, Byron and Thucydides'. For me, the storyline fell a little short of this. However, there were definitely things I appreciated on a personal level about Cotsis' work. For example, I appreciated Bouboulina's cameo role as she definitely doesn't appear enough in literature, and I appreciated the naming of one protagonist as Melina, after Melina Mercouri, late champion of the marbles' return to Greece. I also appreciated how the book spotlights the struggles of the early eighteenth century and the author's challenge to the reader to learn as much as they can about Greek places from 'Alexandria and the Cyrene to Constanta and Mariopoulis and more'. For teachers of the ancient world however, I just don't think that this book is the one with which to do it.

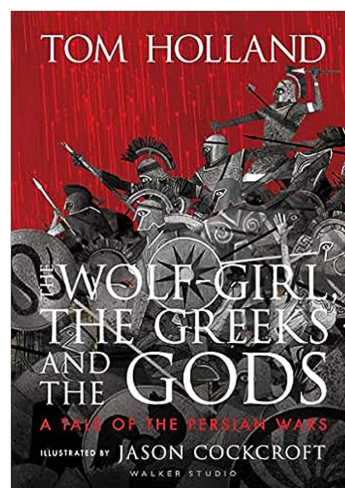
doi:[10.1017/S2058631023000612](https://doi.org/10.1017/S2058631023000612)

The Wolf Girl, The Greeks and the Gods. A Tale of the Persian Wars

Holland (T.), Pp. 209, b/w & colour ills, colour map, London: Walker Books, 2023. Cased, £25. ISBN: 978-104063-9474-0

Sian Squire

Shrewsbury Colleges Group, Shrewsbury, UK
SES@ssfc.ac.uk



Tom Holland is one of the most recognisable names when it comes to books on the ancient world. This is his first book written for children, even though many have been introduced to history through his podcasts with Dominic Sandbrook *The Rest is History*. Holland has the ability to make the past highly accessible and this book is no different. It is a delight from the minute you receive a copy – sumptuous illustrations by Jason Cockcroft perfectly comple-

ment the story. A lot of care and attention has gone into the binding of the book, just as it should be – we all have beloved children's books on our shelves that last well into adulthood. This one will be a keeper.

The story revolves around Gorgo, a Spartan princess whose mother dies in the first chapter of the book uttering the mysterious words 'The Persians are coming'. The rest of the book is about the unfolding of that prophecy and the subsequent battles against the Persians. It is a book in two parts. In the first part, Gorgo is a young girl who is told myths and legends by her nurse, Lampito. She lives in a world where the world of gods and mortals is interwoven masterfully. At one point, Lampito tells the story of Actaeon and Artemis and a deer darts out of the woods near Gorgo – clearly a sign that the gods are present and watch the world of humans. We hear about the origins of the worship of Artemis at Brauron and how Athenian girls 'turn into bears' or Spartans into wolves. This mix of the world of the divine, mortal and supernatural gives this