

CA Prize-winner 2017: Lucy Coats



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The 2017 Classical Association Prize was awarded to Lucy Coats: an author of picture books, stories and novels. Having studied English Literature and Ancient History at Edinburgh University, she describes herself as a ‘complete bookworm’ and has been a lifelong writer. Her first book, *One Hungry Baby*, was published in 1992 but she has gone on to write over 30 more, many of which have been inspired by the myths and legends of Greece and Rome.

Her Beasts of Olympus series thus features titles such as *Hound of Hades*, *Centaur School*, *The Monster in the Maze* and a cast which includes Zeus, Gaia, Prometheus and Uranus. More recently, Lucy has published two youth fiction novels, *Cleo* and *Chosen*, inspired by the figure of Cleopatra. As she told *The Bookseller* magazine, they ‘came directly from wondering what relationship the younger Cleopatra would have had with her Egyptian gods, and what her teenage life might have been like before she became queen.’ Although the book itself is a complete re-imagining of Cleopatra’s otherwise undocumented younger life, readers are treated to lots of historical nuggets along the way. The result is that her teenage readers get a real ‘feel’ for the ancient world, as Lucy’s careful research – from reading Cassius Dio and Plutarch to Lucan’s descriptions of royal banquets – shines through on every page.

Best known of all of Lucy’s works, however, is *Atticus the Storyteller*, which sees her narrator Atticus – a sandal-maker from Crete – touring ancient Greece with his donkey and telling stories of the destinations he visits along the way: 100 myths in total. Shortlisted for the Blue Peter Book Award, it remains by far the largest compendium of myths for children, and one of the most popular, fifteen years after its first publication in 2002.

In her acceptance speech, Lucy paid a fitting tribute to the ability of the classical world to fascinate and inspire, as she has done with her books for children of all ages. We are sure you will agree that the 2017 CA Prize went to a most deserving candidate and we look forward to more of Lucy’s work in the future. In fact, we don’t have long to wait: watch out for two more titles in the Beasts of Olympus series in 2018: *Gods of the North* and *Unicorn Emergency*.

Dr Kathryn Tempest (University of Roehampton)
CA Outreach Officer 2014-2017