

Elli Peonidou: How University Students View Her Work

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I have dealt with Elli Peonidou's work for children and young people on many occasions, not only because she has written a large number of books covering a broad range of styles and topics but also because her work is noteworthy and deserves to reach the largest possible readership.

The inspiration behind this essay, which refers exclusively to her Short Stories and Fairytales, was the reaction of my students at the European University of Cyprus who expressed such fulsome praise for Peonidou's work when they studied these particular genres. The students were extremely impressed by the way the selected texts by Elli Peonidou that they had studied fully reflected and verified the definitions of these two genres, thereby indicating this talented and experienced author's mastery of whichever genre she chooses and her ability to adapt her language to the specific age group for which she is writing.

Since 1979, the year in which she published her first volume of children's literature, the writer has enjoyed a long and fruitful career that continues to the present day, during the course of which she has produced more than twenty books for children and young adult readers.

In recent years she has focused more systematically on Contemporary Fairytales and Short Stories. In the Fairytale genre, following "*The Two Children and the Black River*" with which she began her career as an author of children's literature, she returned in 2000 with "*Visit to Planet Allispossible*" and "*Ten Orphaned Fairytales*", in 2002 with "*Daisy's Enchanted Petals*" and most recently, in 2008, she published "*The Triplets and their Fairy Godmother*". In these books, the students described as extremely successful the blend of fantastic and realistic elements, the way contemporary issues and problems are discussed, the careful avoidance of sexism, the fact that there is no obvious attempt at sermonizing, the familiarity of the language used, the smooth narrative and the frequent humour of the narrative style.

In the Short Story genre, following the publication of "*Children's Stories*" (1986), "*Glass, Wooden, Paper and Other Stories*" (1990), "*The Adventures of Little Coffee in Seven Cups*" (1991) and "*Straight and Crooked Stories*" (1993) which were reprinted in 2004, 2005, 2008 and 2009 respectively, she wrote "*Lucas, Nikos and the Sausage*" (1999), "*Pussy Cat Stories*" (2009) and the latest one, "*The Little Cloud Who Was Scared of the Wind*" (2010).

Regarding her Short Stories, the students were impressed by the way the writer succeeds in stories of such brevity – whether standalone stories or as part of a core work – in presenting fully-rounded concepts and texts that are interesting, attractive and comprehensible to the young children for whom they are intended. Most of all, however, from all the positive aspects of Elli Peonidou's

writing, the students were most impressed by her approach to abstract and difficult concepts such as freedom, world peace, the planet's ecological problems, what it means to be a refugee, and bad habits such as smoking and others, which she presents in a simple, easily understood manner, illustrated with examples from her young readers' daily lives wherever she believes that they may have difficulty in comprehending what she is saying.

I end these few words with the wish that Elli Peonidou will continue on her creative, mature course with many more books for children.

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