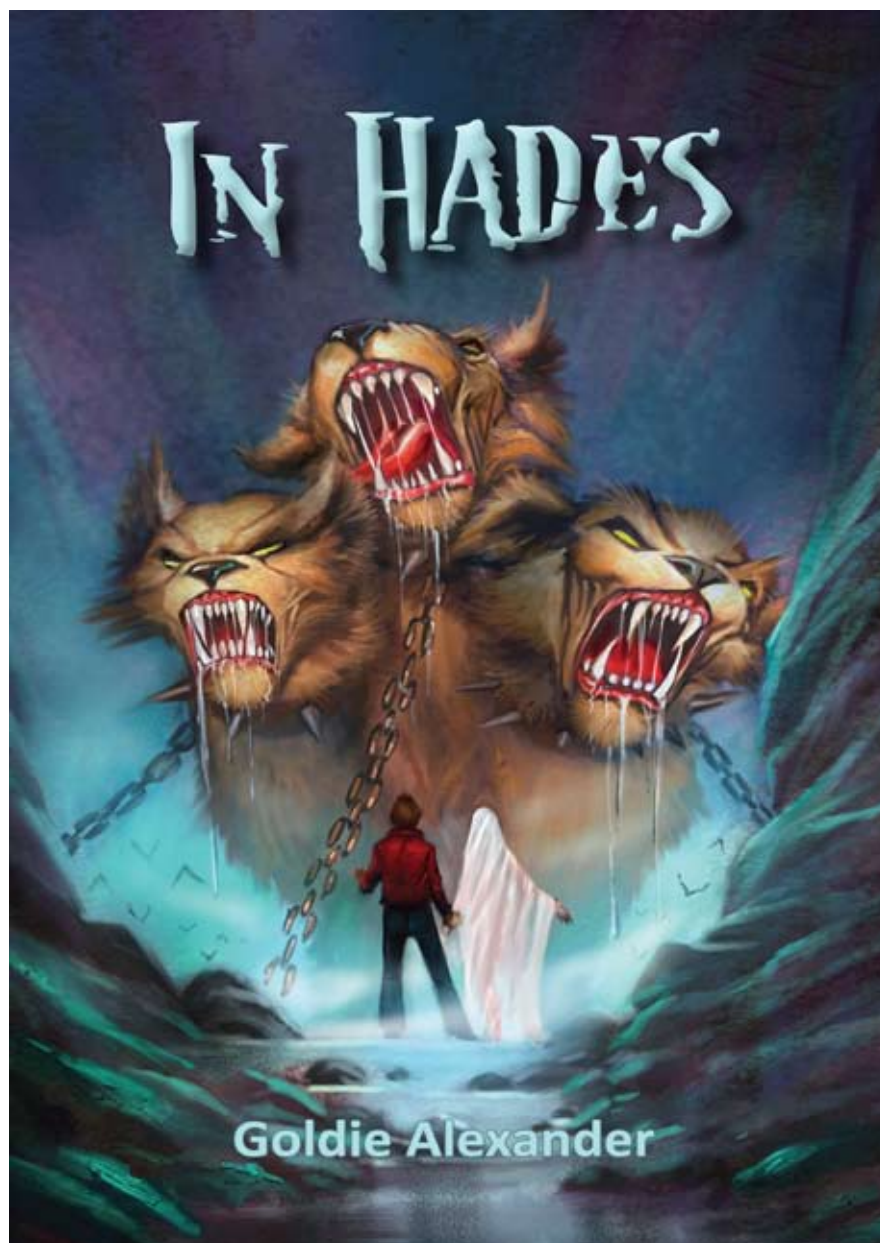


## In Hades

by Goldie Alexander



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# Story Outline

Seventeen-year-old Kai lives on the streets. The night Rod, his 12 year old autistic brother, comes looking for him, the two steal and crash a car and die. Searching for Rod, Kai finds himself in Hades where he meets dead Bilby-G. As their adventures continue, these youngsters are magically transformed to what they were before Kai became a street-boy and Bilby-G became anorexic.

In their efforts to find Rod, the youngsters come across some of the mythical characters described by Kai's Greek grandmother, Yia-Yia, before she died: a multi-headed dog. A blind prophet. Twin whirlpools. Three goddesses. A dangerous sea-nymph. The powerful sea-god and his evil one-eyed son.

As their journey continues, Kai and Bilby-G fall in love. However, before Kai can find Rod, they must seek forgiveness for those they hurt in the past as well as forgiving themselves. Having achieved this, the lovers ascend to the Afterlife to be greeted by Rod and Yia-Yia.

# Writer's Notes

## **Genre**

In *Hades* is magic realism. These poems are intended to unite contemporary life with ancient stories where monsters threaten the hero and heroine's existence. The shape of each poem is important as the lines trace the hero's adventures. The monsters are based on the magical events in Homer's *Odyssey*.

## **What is a verse novel?**

A verse novel is a type of narrative poetry in which a novel-length narrative is told through the medium of poetry rather than prose. Either simple or complex verse forms may be used, but there will usually be a large cast, multiple voices, dialogue, narration, description, and action in a novelistic manner.

Verse narratives are as old as the epic of *Gilgamesh*, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but the verse novel is also a distinctively modern genre. Although the narrative structure is similar to that of a novella or short novel, the story usually a series of short sections, often with changing perspectives. Verse novels are often told with multiple narrators, providing readers with a view into the workings of the characters' minds.

## **In *Hades* is very loosely based on Homer's *Odyssey***

*Odyssey* is one of two major ancient Greek epic poems attributed to Homer. It is, in part, a sequel to the *Iliad*. The poem is fundamental to modern Western culture, and the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the oldest existing work of Western literature. According to DCH Rieu<sup>1</sup>, these works are believed to have been composed towards the end of the 8th century BC, somewhere in Ionia, the Greek coastal region of Anatolia.

The *Odyssey* describes the many adventures Ulysses (also known as Odysseus) encounters as he sails home after the Trojan Wars. Ulysses is a favourite of the goddess Athena. However, she cannot protect him when he incurs the god Poseidon's wrath for accidentally killing the sea-god's son. He must brave the terrible Cyclops, the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, and other life-threatening monsters before he can come to his home island of Ithaca. Even then he must rid his land of Penelope's would-be suitors and re-establish justice and prosperity. No one is quite sure who wrote the *Odyssey*, but it's generally believed that a blind poet called Homer included many ancient myths and legends into his epic poem. Many of the mythical characters were symbols of dangerous places for sailors as they made their way around the Mediterranean.

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<sup>1</sup> Introduction to *The Odyssey* (Penguin, 2003).

## **Some characters in the Odyssey**

- Ulysses: the adventurer who must travel twenty years before Poseidon allows him to return home.
- Ithaca: Ulysses is this island's king.
- Tiresius: the blind prophet.
- Poseidon: the god of the seas and of earthquakes. Also known as Neptune.
- Athena: the goddess of hunting and of wisdom
- Cyclops: a terrible one eyed monster.
- Scylla and Charybdis: the seven headed serpent
- The Sirens: their song lures sailors to their death.
- Lotus Eaters: folk with no memory or thought for the future.

Not all of these characters are used in *In Hades*, however the concept of adapting present and past as metaphors does occur. For example:

- Kai becomes a metaphor for the legendary Ulysses who must travel for a long time before he finds redemption.
- The blind prophet Tiresius is his Old Blind Git.
- Other characters include:
- Mud Dogs that guard the gates of Hades.
- Twin whirlpools Scylla and Charybdis
- The goddesses Diana and Persephone.
- Demons: bodiless heads with shark-teeth empty sockets instead of eyes
- The island of Lotus: originally the island of forgetfulness, now a waterfall in the bush.
- A dangerous sea-nymph: the Sirens.
- The sea pirates, other souls lost in Hades.
- The powerful sea-god and his son: Poseidon, the all powerful sea god, and his evil one eyed son.

# The Poems

There are 47 poems

1. The Accident
2. After the accident and the loss of Rod
3. S-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-d. Time slows down.
4. Descending into the underworld.
5. Kai's yia-yia (grandmother)
6. 34 Station Street& Kai leaving home
7. My Mate Len.
8. Sleeping Out.
9. Street Kids Jim & Blue
10. No Fixed Address.
11. My brother Rod.
12. Really Dead.
13. Mud Dogs.
14. Meeting Bilby G.
15. What's Different?
16. Old Blind Git.
17. Candice: School Queen.
18. My Family
19. Warehouse of the Souls.
20. The Apple Orchard
21. Scary Horror Movie
22. Bilby G. Talks.
23. The Waterfall
24. She Does the Same.
25. Bilby-G's Story.
26. Kai's History.
27. Down to the Wine-dark Sea.
28. All About You.
29. Bilby G's Death.
30. Whirlpools.
31. On the Beach
32. Three Goddesses.
33. Is Fore-warned is Fore-armed?

34. 34. The Sea-Nymph.
35. 35. Our Two Families
36. Dad Leaving Home
37. The Whole Truth
38. Falling in Love
39. Funerals
40. Hades Angels
41. The Sea-God
42. The one-eyed monster
43. Mind-Games
44. The Escape
45. More Gods
46. Ascending
47. Finale

# Activities

## **Activity 1**

You will find a number of retellings of the original story on the internet. Authors such as James Joyce have used the story as their framework, as Joyce did in *Ulysses* with its magnificent beginning “Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead ...”, and ending “... yes she said yes I will yes”. It is a fantastic book, if more admired than read. Goldie Alexander has also written a novel, *Neptunia* ([www.fivesenseseducation.com.au](http://www.fivesenseseducation.com.au)), using the *Odyssey* as a framework for younger readers.

Read some of these retellings of *Odyssey* and write your own short story about seeking redemption.

## **Activity 2**

Some of our favourite modern books and films, such as *Cold Mountain* and *The Road* have been retellings of the *Odyssey* legend. There has even been a version on *The Simpsons*. The Coen brothers movie *Oh brother, where art thou* takes on a modern form. You really have to know the book to catch the sly little references, like John Goodman is the one-eyed murderous bible salesman, and the incredibly gorgeous bluegrass Sirens.

Choose a poem from *In Hades* and write a short film script for it.

Explain why you chose that poem.

Who would you cast in the roles for each character in the poem you have chosen and explain why.

## **Activity 3**

Verse novels can be challenging to write, but the use of language and structure can enhance story telling.

Write your own verse account of an incident that happened to you. Remember that a verse novel can compress your story to only major occurrences.



#### **Activity 4**

Reviews tell other people what you think of something. They are often written for books and films and are a personal opinion of the story and your thoughts.

Reviews include a synopsis of the story, what you liked about the story, or didn't like about it and why.

Research book reviews and then write your own review of *In Hades*. You may like to send it to the author and publisher.

