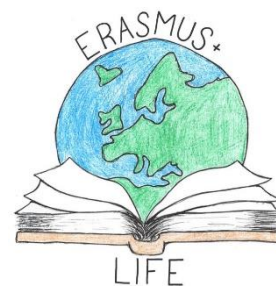


Literature for Everyone LIFE

2019-1-DE03-KA229- 060128

Chania, Greece

May 2022



Creative Writing Activities

Based on Alki Zei's Novels

And the summaries of:

Wildcat Under Glass

Petros' War

Achilles' Fiancee



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

What did the wildcat witness?



Wildcat under glass by Alki Zei

Set in 1936, the story centres on a family living on a Greek Island whose members react in different ways to the changing political climate after a Fascist dictatorship is installed. Nine-year-old Melia, the narrator, fears for her beloved cousin Niko who is in the resistance movement and has had to go into hiding, Grandfather, Mama and Stamatina hate what is happening, so too does their father, but he is concerned he will lose his job at the bank if he is not seen to outwardly comply with the new rules and regulations. Great-aunt Despina doesn't see what all the fuss is about and Melia's older sister, Myrto proudly joins the Fascist Youth organisation at school unaware of the sinister undertones of the fascist doctrine. Combined with changing life on the Greek island due to the war, is the portrayal of the idyllic summer holidays Melia spends in Lamagari with her friends Artemis, Manoli, Odysseus and little Aurora. The stuffed Wildcat in a glass cabinet holds a place of honour in the family home and comes to symbolize the spirit of freedom that was kept alive in Greece after the Fascist dictatorship came to power.

Reference: <https://www.outsideinworld.org.uk/browse-books.asp?booksearched=true&booksearch=Alki+Zei&Country=&Continent=&Age=&imageField.x=52&imageField.y=13>

In your group discuss, write and then narrate an imaginary story that the wildcat witnessed. The narrator is the wildcat itself.

“Petro, what was it like?”

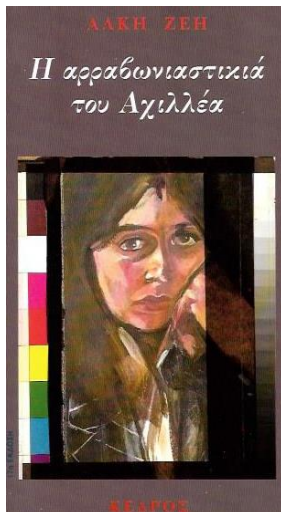


Petro's War by Alki Zei

As Athens is occupied by Italian and German troops in 1941, ten-year-old Petros decides it will be his heroic war filled with deeds of valour just like those of his heroes in his many books. However, liberating a dog from a German soldier and painting slogans on walls after dark for the Resistance do not require the heroism he had imagined. As the book gathers momentum, the reality of war and its hardships begin to take their toll on the population. Petros witnesses the terrible famine that envelopes Athens, people dying of hunger, with even his own grandfather going out begging for food. Dead bodies begin to be left outside the cemetery walls as people are unable to bury their dead. Most Greeks are united in their opposition to the invaders but there are still those who are prepared to collaborate such as the local Baker with his three daughters, nicknamed 'The Little Czarinas' and Petros' neighbour who takes up with a German soldier. The mood changes significantly and the situation becomes much more serious when the Nazis take full control of Athens from the Italians after Italy joins the allies. The protest march against forced labour through the streets of Athens is particularly full of pathos – the humorous image of oranges being hurled at the Carabinieri soon turns to tragedy. Petros finds himself caught up in the terrifying 'Blocko' – on 1st May 1944 when the Germans randomly round up people in the city and herd them to the main square blocking off the exits and witnesses individual callous acts of cruelty towards those he cares about. **Reference:** <https://www.outsideinworld.org.uk/browse-books.asp?booksearched=true&booksearch=Alki+Zei&Country=&Continent=&Age=&imageField.x=52&imageField.y=13>

In your group find 5-8 pictures showing Athens under German occupation. Write questions that you would like to ask Peter and his family about their lives during the occupation. Ask the other groups to imagine the answers.

Three cities and self-discovery: what matters most?



Achilles' Fiancée by Alki Zei

The scene is Paris, sometime after the 1967 military coup in Greece. Eleni, together with a group of her friends and fellow political exiles, finds herself working as an extra in a French film: The Horror Train. It is not the first time Eleni has been caught up in a deadly drama, nor is it her first ride on a horror train. As the director waves his arms, shouting directions and re-shooting the sequence, Eleni's mind wanders to her first train ride: "Athens-Piraeus. My first big trip by train." " - You're Eleni? I'm Achilles." "They don't ask which Achilles. One name is enough...". For the rest of her life, Eleni will be "Achilles' Fiancée", fiancée of the guerilla leader, the brave, handsome kapetanios whose code-name is Achilles. In the demonstrations against the German occupiers of Greece, in prison where she waits for a death sentence during the post-war persecution of suspected leftists, in exile in Tashkent where the exiled Greek communists fight amongst themselves, and finally in Paris. But somewhere along the way Eleni becomes an independent character with a mind of her own. As she begins to doubt the slogans that she fought for when she was a blind follower of leaders like her fiancé, Eleni involves us in her own private world of self-discovery. It is a woman's world, where human warmth and friendships matter more than abstract ideals. The Greek word for a novel is mythistorema, a word that combines myth and history. In her story of a young woman's struggle to survive through an extraordinary period of Greek history, Alki Zei has woven the threads of her own quasi-mythical life into the stuff of history.

Reference: <http://www.alkizei.com/en/works/102-achiles-fiancee>

Helen lived in three cities: Paris, Rome, Tashkent. Look for information about these cities. Make a drawing of a characteristic monument, attraction, etc. of each city (eg Eiffel Tower-Paris), draw Eleni and a symbol of what really matters in the same picture. Then write a short caption in French, Italian and Uzbek respectively.