

Special guest star: Greece



LET'S MEET CONTEMPORARY GREEK LITERATURE

Welcome to all our readers with Issue N. 5 of our Twin Bulletin, the periodical publication of the partner schools of the eTwinning project Twin Library.

The present edition offers a rich gallery of writers and works from Greek literature.

Our partner students of the 9th Senior High School of Kardamitsia, Ioannina in Greece will introduce us to some works of Early Modern and Modern Greek literature.

A selection of their presentations is also visible on our [website](#) in the section dedicated to contemporary Greek literature.

Happy Reading!

The Twin Library Team

Φιλία εστί μία ψυχή εν δυσί σώμασιν ενοικουμένη.

Friendship is one soul living in two bodies

Aristotle (384 - 322 B.C.)



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EARLY MODERN AND MODERN GREEK LITERATURE

Since 800 BC when Homer's famous epic poems *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* appeared, Greek literary production has been incessantly prolific until today. During this long period of time, Greek literature has made fundamental and significant contributions into a variety of subjects of all major fields of human intellectual production including mythology, the epic, lyrical poetry, philosophy, historiography, drama and the sciences.

The first book to be presented to you dates back in the early 17th century. It is a beautiful verse romance (long poem) narrating the love story between Erotokritos and Aretousa. It belongs to the Cretan Renaissance school (Post-Byzantine era) echoing the clash between Medieval apprehensions and emerging Renaissance principles and ideas.

The second book was written in the middle of the 19th century. It is a very interesting book which comments, and on many occasions mocks the social conventions of the era, offering unconventional and pioneer ideas related to politics, religion and family. The extract of the book that the students focused on, referred to women's role in the mid-19th century society and family. It accurately describes the restrictions that women had to live by and offers really innovative ideas about what the role of women should be, ideas that sound modern today despite the fact that the text was written more than 150 years ago.

The last section of the presentation is dedicated to modern Greek literature of the first two decades of the 21st century. Four students review for us their favourite modern Greek novels and young adult fiction books. All these books are written by contemporary Greek authors drawing on a wide and very interesting spectrum of themes like drug abuse, sibling rivalry, maternal love, friendship, family relations and self-discovery

We really hope that you will enjoy reading our reviews and that you will discover new and interesting things about Greek literature!!



17th Century

Erotokritos (17th Century)



Reviewed by:

Evi Didaskalou, Markella Georgoula, Evelina Grammozi, Marilenia Moscheta, Giorgos Dellas, Kostas Makris, Alexandros Eleftheriadis, Nicholas Karras

About the author: Vincenzo Cornaro

Vincenzo Cornaro was born in 1553 in Crete, a large island in south Greece, to an Italian family from Venice. Some of his most famous books are "Abraham's sacrifice", "Erotokritos". He died in 1616 in Xandakas, Crete.

His work was the most important literary and linguistic monument of the Cretan school of literature and his work "Erotokritos" has been characterized as a masterpiece. It led to the renaissance of Cretan presence in the fields of Greek literature, art and generally Greek civilization.



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The plot

In ancient Athens, king Hercules lives with his wife and his beautiful only daughter, Aretousa, whom Erotokritos, a young man, loved. Aretousa falls in love with Erotokritos because of the songs that he sings to her every night by her window.

Meanwhile, the king tries to find out, in vain, who the singer is. The lovers' affair becomes stronger and their undercover night meetings continue. Subsequently, after the pressure by the lovers, Erotokritos' father, whose name is Pezostratos, dares to give a gift to the king for the marriage of their kids. The king gets furious with his audacity.

King Hercules exiles Erotokritos while he imprisons Aretousa, because he rejects the option of this marriage. Instead, he suggests that Aretousa should be married to the young prince of Byzantium but she refuses. After years, when the king of a tribe attacks Hercules' country and sieges Athens, Erotokritos, disguised and unrecognizable, rescues the town.

King Hercules, out of gratitude, offers his reign and the riches of his kingdom to the unknown savior. Erotokritos reveals his true identity, gets married to Aretousa and ascends the throne.

The main themes

- The love story between Erotokritos and Aretousa and the obstacles they faced
- The relationship between family members
- The differences between social classes
- The role of the father in the life of his daughter
- The institution of arranged marriage (προξενιό)

Main Characters

- Erotokritos
- Aretousa
- Hercules
- Pezostratos



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Setting

The story takes place in Greece, at a non specific time with many references to ancient Greece.

Literary Devices

- It is a novel of poetic form which reminds of traditional folk poems and songs
- Its metre is iambic with fifteen syllables
- Its language is the vernacular, with a lot of idiomatic phrases and extensive use of the Cretan dialect
- Vivid, literary and rich expression
- Metaphor
- Simile
- Opposites
- Personification

Themes/ Ideology

- In that era, we notice that women used to hold an inferior position to men. Aretousa's father thinks that his daughter must marry a rich and highly-respected gentleman like himself whom he will choose.
- Also, we noticed the contrast between medieval apprehensions (Hercules) and Renaissance apprehensions (Pezostratos)
- Medieval mindset: what really matters is the social position, property, monarchy and ancestry
- Renaissance mindset: what really is important is knowledge, nobility and bravery.

Our Response

- We really enjoyed reading "Erotokritos".
- We liked its love story and enjoyed its suspense.



- We were perplexed with the contrasted apprehensions between two different worlds; Medieval vs Renaissance.
- We admired Erotokritos' bravery and Aretousa's determination.

19th Century

The mysteries of Kefalonia (1856)



Reviewed by:

Myrtle (Myrsini) Doutsis, Panagiota Markopoulou, Marianna Votsi, Lydia Panou, Antriana Panou, Sissy Thanou, Petros Dovonis

About the Author: Andreas Laskaratos

He was born (where and when): In Corfu, the famous island of western Greece, in 1811.

His fields of work/interests: When he was 21 years old, his uncle gave him a position in the Law School. After that, he worked as a register for a little time. He then resigned and worked as a lawyer for 3 years.

Notable events in his life: He met some of the most significant Greek poets of



his time like Andreas Kalvos and Dionysios Solomos. Because of his modern and avant-guard points of view that he included in his essay 'The Mysteries of Kefalonia' he faced harsh judgement and was forced to move to the island of Zakynthos and then to London.

His most famous books/works: "The Mysteries of Kefalonia", "Ληξούρι εις το 1836" «Στιχοι ρήματα διάφορα», «Ιδού ο άνθρωπος», «Απάντα», «Αυτοβιογραφία».

He died (when and where): In Argostoli which is located in the island of Kefalonia, in 1901.

The impact of his work: His work was ahead of his time. He was open-minded and his ideas did not align with the era that he lived in, so a lot of people did not appreciate him.

However, there were some open-minded people who were inspired by his work.

The Mysteries of Kefalonia (1856)



Plot

There is not a specific plot in this book. The text is rather a commentary on women's role in the 19th - century Greek society, the restrictions in their lives and



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the discrimination against them.

The setting and the characters of the story

The text refers to the island of Kefalonia, Greece in 1856. There are no main characters.

Themes

The marriage market, the position of women in society, discrimination against women. The narrator claims that women should be able to choose their own husband. They shouldn't be chosen as wives for their dowry but on the grounds of their personality and character.

Ideology and the text

The text refers to women in Greece in the 19th century. They were degraded, men didn't seem to care about them and used them as an object of exchange for dowry. Furthermore, women had no right to education and they were destined only to do the household chores and take care of their children.

This text is about marriage and more specifically about dowry. Namely, it talks about how parents used to save money for their daughters' marriage. For this purpose they used to neglect some important needs of their daughters such as clothes or medical help. Women felt pressure because many of their basic needs were not taken care of. They used to be treated as the slaves of the house by doing all the household chores because their parents couldn't afford paying for a maid to help them. That's why women couldn't find freedom anywhere.

The writer believes that parents should treat their daughters with love and respect so that they would stop feeling inferior to other people and so as to be satisfied with their lives and find happiness.

Our Interpretation

Despite the fact that the text was written over a century ago, the beliefs expressed by Laskaratos remain relevant, with the difference that back then they were supported by an extremely small portion of society, while nowadays



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they are endorsed by the vast majority.

In the past, as accurately described by the writer, it was believed that the sole destination of a woman in life was marriage and child-birth, thus every female was raised being taught how to satisfy and serve her husband.

Furthermore, since women were only meant to be housewives, their families showed no interest in paying attention to their education, which was non-existent. Those tactics had a huge impact on the psychological development of the young girls, since they felt trapped in their own households, unable to make decisions for themselves.

Fortunately, today things have changed completely. Women are a lot more independent and the expectations of the society towards them are far different from what they used to be. Nowadays, there's equality between men and women because both men and women have the same rights and obligations. Also in that era, women were only allowed to do the household chores but now things have changed.

Women nowadays play an active role in the marketplace and have managed to gain respect as professionals, their opinions are heard and taken into account and, in the western world at least, their rights are almost equal to men's. Of course, gender discriminations continue to exist, differing in every part of the world, but there has been made a lot of progress that deserves to be acknowledged.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that *The Mysteries of Kefalonia* is an old book, it is appealing to modern young readers because of the progressive spirit that defines it. Laskaratos managed to offer us precious insight to old, strict gender stereotypes and the restricted life that our great-grandmothers were forced to lead but at the same time he conveys ideas about gender roles, family relationships and women's worth that sound more fresh and contemporary than ever.



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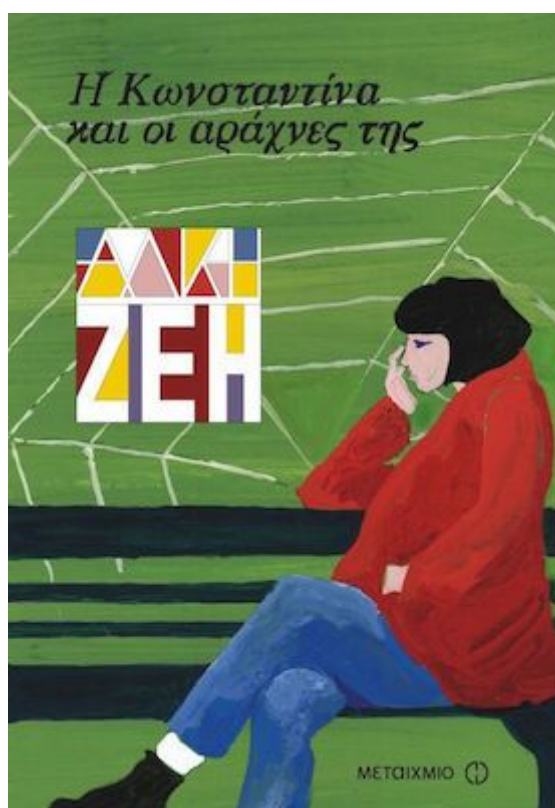
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GREEK CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

Tina's Web

Η Κωνσταντίνη και οι αράχνες της



Reviewed by Myrtle Doutsis

Author: [Alki Zei](#)

Publisher: Kedros

Date of publication: 2002

Number of pages: 242

Genre: Young adult fiction

Main themes

Drug abuse, teen angst, depression, the generation gap, divorce, addiction, love.



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Why I decided to read the book

Before reading the book, I was amazed by all of the author's previous novels that I had read, so I wanted to dive deeper into her work. *Tina's web* was my top choice, because I would get to closer examine, through the eyes of the heroine, the experience of drug addiction and depression.

Tina's web tells the story of a thirteen year-old girl named Konstantina who moves from Germany to Greece after her parents' divorce to live with her grandmother, whom she calls Farmor. However, her difficulty to adapt to the new school environment and her antipathy towards her grandmother gradually make her more and more unhappy. After meeting an older boy with substance abuse issues, Stavros, she too begins to find resort from her troubled life in drugs.

What I liked best

What I liked most about this book is the fact that it is educational in a very subtle, non judgmental way, while also managing to move the reader and make them feel sympathetic for every hero. The characters are exceptionally well-developed and Zei's marvelous writing allows us to better comprehend their internal world and the feelings and motives behind their actions and behavior.

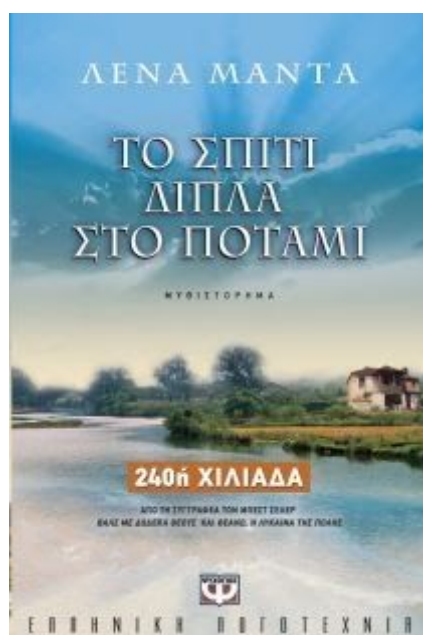
Other books by Zei I would like to read include the following titles: *Achilles' Fiancée*, *Petros' War*, *Wildcat Under Glass*.

Tina's web is undoubtedly one of the best pieces of literature that I have read, so it is very hard for me to spot anything that I may have not liked. The storyline, the way that the characters are written, the vivid narration, every single element of this novel seems flawless to me.

Tina's web is definitely a book worth reading, since it provides an inside look to the world of drug abuse and mental health struggles, in a way that helps the reader both gain deeper understanding of these issues, but also of how such situations should be handled. It is educating, emotional, enjoyable, realistic and thought-provoking.



The house close to the river Το σπίτι δίπλα στο ποτάμι



Reviewed by Antriana Panou

Author: [Lena Manta](#)

Publisher: Psychogios

Date of publication: 2007

Number of pages: 594

Genre: novel

The **main theme** of this novel is about 5 sisters who decided to leave their house. The book describes the life of each girl. These sisters try to live their life but they also bear in mind that when they face problems they will always can go back to their mother. I chose this book because it conveys many different life messages and it also emphasizes maternal love.

The **characters** are Mellisanthi, Julia, Aspasia, Polyxene and Magdalene.

Setting: a village in mount Olympus close to a river.

These 5 sisters left their family and went to other cities of Greece or abroad.



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Their life far away from home is sometimes easy and sometimes really difficult since they have to deal with many obstacles.

I liked the love, the courage and the patience showed by the figure of their mother. I've read many books by this author (for example "The revenge of the Angels")

I didn't like the exaggeration of the feelings of the main characters and generally some scenes of the book.

However, I would recommend this book because it conveys many important life messages and how important is love and family in our lives.

White Orchid Λευκή Ορχιδέα



Reviewed by Lydia-Barbara Panou

Author: Kaity Oikonomou (Καίτη Οικονόμου)

Publisher: Psychogios

Date of publication: May 2010

Number of pages: 571

Genre: novel, romance



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This novel is about real friendship and a group of childhood friends that stayed together even when they became adults. Many things occur, from little quarrels to serious accidents, things that had to end their friendship completely. But in the end, their love is so powerful that they were able to overcome all the obstacles that came on the way and stay together forever.

I read this book because my mom recommended it to me and I don't regret reading it, because it proves that love is more powerful than anything else in this world.

The plot

The plot of the novel is about a group of friends: Nikiforos and Elly (twins), Filio and Antonis. They have been friends since childhood and they try not to get separated. But in time, some things occur, such as love, relationships, quarrels and even accidents and they can't do anything but let their friendship fall apart. Even so, their love is what brings them back together in the future, and even if there are more obstacles to come, love will keep them united forever.

What I liked most about the book

I liked the theme of this book, which is friendship, and the way the author represented its importance. I was also very impressed by the way the author wrote, like the way she described the feelings of the heroes or the messages that she tried to convey.

I would totally read another book by this author because I didn't really find anything negative in the way she writes and describes people and situations. It was easy for me to understand the plot and that really satisfied me.

The only character I didn't like was Fillio's father because he was an alcoholic and he was abusive towards her. Also, I didn't really like Nikiforo's personality at the beginning because he was really spoiled, but gradually he changed and became a better person. Other than that, I loved the book as a whole.

I would totally recommend this book to my friends, because it is about friendship, something so important that everyone should have in their life, and it gives us really positive messages, for example to never give up because in time, everything gets better.

This book was really good and I really enjoyed it. I loved the messages that I got from reading it and I will try not to forget them. It was totally worth it and anyone, especially teenagers should read it!



I'm not my sister
Δεν είμαι η αδελφή μου



Reviewed by Panagiota Markopoulou

Author: Mary Savva-Roubati

Publisher: Minoas

Date of publication: April of 2015

Number of pages: 216

Genre: novel

This book mainly addresses issues related to the lives of teenagers, what pressures they go through everyday and dangers they may face.

The plot of the book drew my attention, as it had to do with people my age, something that I can relate to and understand better.

Plot

This book is about two sisters Alik, the older one, and Maria, the younger one. Alik is an excellent student who always gets good grades, is always organized and everyone's favourite. Maria, on the other hand, is the exact opposite, she is not that good of a student as she gets bored easily and she is very unorganized and messy, that's why she is



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constantly being compared to her sister. Aliko had many friends including a mysterious guy whom she had met through the internet. On the other side, Maria had only one good friend named Peter, but they went on a lot of adventures together. One of them was to explore the yard of an abandoned house. Maria wanted to visit the yard again by herself but on her way there, she meets a sketchy guy named George, who suggested they go for a drink sometime. Maria agrees, so one day later they meet in a bar. George had other intentions though, so he put something in her drink that made her dizzy and lead her to a weird place, which she recognized. It was the place her and Peter wanted to explore. He took her inside where she saw many teenagers under the influence of drugs. She got very scared and returned home immediately. Some days later, she logs into her sister's computer and comes across a conversation with her and a strange guy where they seemed to be very good friends. She then finds out that the guy is George and realises that her sister is in danger of being misled and introduced to drugs or even harassment. She asks the help of Mr Antonis (the school cleaner whom she trusted more than her own parents) and they decided they had to take action immediately to save her sister's life. This "mission" may put their lives at risk but will they be able to save Aliko?

What I liked most about the book

The thing I liked most about this book, was the fact that incidents like this happen very frequently in real life so it made me feel as if I was participating in the story too. I have already read one more book from this author and liked that as well, so I think I would definitely read more!

There is not something specific that I didn't like about the book, but I have to note that the plot may get a little bit confusing if the reader doesn't pay enough attention while reading.

I would definitely recommend this book to my friends because I think the story is very interesting and everybody this age would enjoy reading it without getting bored!

TWIN LIBRARY NEWS

OUR LIVING LIBRARY

Following the example of the initiative “Pesaro, Città che legge” (Pesaro, A reading city) the partner schools of the Twin Library project have given life to an interesting initiative, A living Library!

The students participating in the project selected a passage from their favourite book, *The book that can't miss on our bookshelf*, and recorded themselves reading it live in the original language of the work.

As a complementary step the students have also selected their favourite quotes to create their own bookmarks they have exchanged in a dedicated Twinboard.

The multilingual gallery of videos is embedded in the TwinSpace of the project and represents one of the most meaningful activities aimed at sharing and fostering the passion for reading in the students.

Thanks to everybody for your contributions!