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Young Adult Fiction

Getorix: The Eagle and The Bull
Judith Geary
Caroline S. Garrett, illustrator
Claystone Books/Ingalls
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This adventure story begins on the first day of December, 101 B.C.E.,[i][b][/i][/b] as fourteen-year-old Getorix and his father, Claodicos, await execution. “Such a broad and heavy blade will take our heads cleanly at the first stroke,” Claodicos promises in the novel’s opening line. Claodicos, a Celtic leader, is executed after Romans defeat him. Eager to die bravely and honorably like his father, Getorix is furious when he is told his life has been spared. How will he ever show his father that he has the heart of a Cimmeri unafraid of death? Why didn’t the gods allow him to die instead of sentencing him to a life of slavery?

Keltus, a Celtic slave serving Roman officials, is charged with the task of preparing Getorix to serve a thirteen-year-old Roman named Lucius. Getorix decides he will never submit to such a destiny. Several times Getorix confronts Keltus and Lucius, tempting them to battle him so that he might die a noble death. But Getorix is unprepared when he begins to realize that a friendship with Lucius isn’t impossible and they might actually have something to teach each other. After all, they both enjoy stories, especially *The Songs of the Adventures of Odysseus*, and they both long to live up to their powerful fathers’ expectations.

The author is a teacher at Appalachian State University and senior editor for High Country Publishers. Though this is her first novel, her articles about ancient Roman history and culture, partially based on her travels to Rome, appear in various publications. She began Getorix’s tale while taking a writing course taught by Orson Scott Card. Geary has done extensive research, though some of the historical details seem tacked on rather than necessary parts of the narrative. The book includes a wealth of maps, diagrams, illustrations, sources, biographies of characters, and a useful glossary of difficult terms.

The author’s son designed the cover, adapting the art from a drawing by Caroline S. Garrett, an assistant professor at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia,

who also provided two other illustrations for the book. Garrett has both a Master's of Fine Arts and a Master's in Art Education from Cranbrook Academy of Art and Ohio State University, respectively. She has illustrated several books for children, such as *Jeremiah* and *Jacob's Dream* , and her illustrations have appeared in *Ladybug* magazine. The illustrations in *Getorix* help readers visualize the relics, costumes, weapons, and people of ancient Rome.

Getorix will be of interest to readers because many of the themes—love, friendship, honor, freedom, acceptance, cultural conflict, patience—are as applicable today as they were in the past. History teachers will appreciate the book because of its educational value. The authentic setting, dialogue, and characterization beckon readers to travel to worlds of long ago.

Kaavonia Hinton