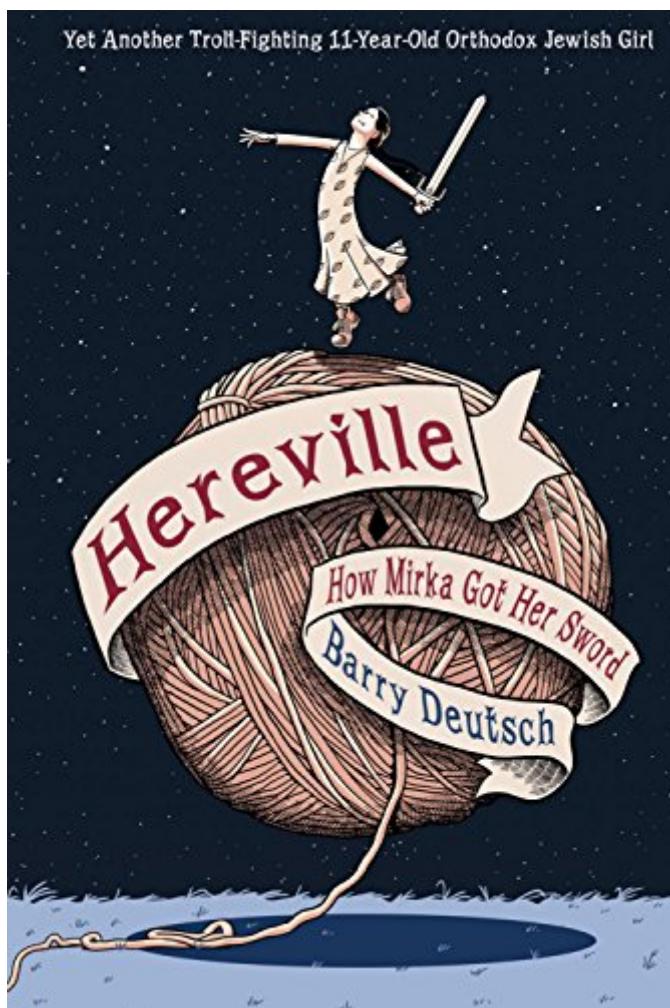


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# How Mirka Got Her Sword (Herville Book 1)



## **Synopsis**

Spunky, strong-willed eleven-year-old Mirka Herschberg isn't interested in knitting lessons from her stepmother, or how-to-find-a-husband advice from her sister, or you-better-not warnings from her brother. There's only one thing she does want: to fight dragons! Granted, no dragons have been breathing fire around Hereville, the Orthodox Jewish community where Mirka lives, but that doesn't stop the plucky girl from honing her skills. She fearlessly stands up to local bullies. She battles a very large, very menacing pig. And she boldly accepts a challenge from a mysterious witch, a challenge that could bring Mirka her heart's desire: a dragon-slaying sword! All she has to do is find—and outwit—the giant troll who's got it! A delightful mix of fantasy, adventure, cultural traditions, and preteen commotion, Hereville will captivate middle-school readers with its exciting visuals and entertaining new heroine.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Probably the most noticeably unique aspect of this series is that it's set within an orthodox Jewish culture. But besides that it also gives you some delightfully individual personalities. There's Mirka,

an eleven-year-old girl who wants more than anything to be a hero and slay monsters. Fruma, her stepmother, one of whose life goals appears to be teaching Mirka how to argue (or is it possibly teaching Mirka logical thinking?). And Mirka's various siblings and step-siblings who deal with her with varying degrees of frustration and success. Personally, I think their whole family would be fun enough to read about, but apparently Barry Deutsch wanted to give us something more, so we also have a crazy, magical adventure involving a witch, a pig, a troll, and some yarn. It's all wonderful, although my favorite part is probably the way Mirka does math.

My oldest daughter is almost seven, and she is an avid reader. She prefers graphic novels to chapter books, and we are always looking for graphic novels with appropriate content for her. We found *Hereville: How Mirka Got Her Sword* at the library in the next town over. We enjoyed the book so much that we purchased our own copy. This graphic novel was written and illustrated by Barry Deutsch. *Hereville* is subtitled "Yet Another Troll-Fighting 11-Year-Old Orthodox Jewish Girl", and this pretty much sums up the book. Mirka lives with her father and stepmother and blended siblings. Mirka lives in a Jewish enclave, and she is so sheltered from the world that she doesn't recognize a pig when she sees one. The pig has been following Mirka because Mirka stole from the pig's garden. The pig does whatever it can to make Mirka's life miserable, like stealing her homework! But when Mirka intervenes and rescues the pig from boys who are tormenting it, the witch who owns the pig offers a reward: there is a sword in *Hereville*, but Mirka must defeat the troll who guards the sword. Does Mirka have what it takes to fight a troll? Deutsch uses a lot of Yiddish expressions, but he always provides a translation. I think that familiarity with the Orthodox culture helps understand the book, but it's not mandatory. The book provides a fairly accurate portrayal of Orthodox Jewish life- except for the talking pig, etc. Readers will learn a lot about customs and traditions, and how they fit into Mirka's personality. *Hereville* is a very clever book. In the first two pages, Mirka doesn't want to do knitting, and debates with her stepmother about free will and preordination. This intellectual trend continues throughout the book. While I don't want to give away the ending, I will say that when Mirka fights the troll, she doesn't use weapons. The art style is fairly realistic, and the illustrations are enhanced by the use of the colored pages. Orange pages are used in daytime scenes, and blue pages are used at night. The body language and facial expressions are among the best I have seen. My daughter and I both enjoyed *Hereville*. My daughter liked the action and adventure, and I appreciated the intellectual slant. I found the book to be wry, and very clever. I would absolutely

recommend *Hereville: How Mirka Got Her Sword*. The reading level is not very high, and this gives the book a broader appeal. Everyone from children in the middle years of elementary school to adults can enjoy *Hereville*. It's got action, adventure, and humor- all with an Orthodox slant!

At first this book did not appeal to me because I thought it was too short. I read it again and have then re-read it several times and have now come to like it a lot. It is about a Orthodox Jewish girl named Mirka. In the story she accidentally comes across a witch's home and steals a very large grape. A talking pig suddenly attacks her, eating her homework and butting her off cliffs from behind. But keeping pigs is strictly forbidden in *Hereville* so her siblings think she is crazy for seeing a talking pig. In the end she has to fight a troll to get the sword that any real hero would have. This book would appeal to fans of Jeff Smith's *Bone: The Complete Cartoon Epic in One Volume*, in fact there is a hidden reference to *Bone* in the book. Even though I am Jewish, I have learned a lot about Orthodox Judaism from reading this book, but it would appeal to anyone, Jewish or non-Jewish. I think anyone younger than 5 years old would be scared of parts of this book and some of the drawings could possibly be frightening to a young reader. I think anyone ages 5 - 12 would enjoy *Hereville*. It's an exciting, well-drawn graphic novel!

I \*LOVE\* the *Hereville* books. The detail in the illustrations, the style of illustration, is very appealing. The dialogue is great, the stories cover the spectrum of all emotions, from boredom, frustration, even horror, to joy, relief, and love. I read a lot of "religious approved" books, and I've never seen anything like this, it is at the same time such a blend of fun and exciting fantasy, together with real Observant Jewish life.

Another writer mentioned this book to me, because my uncommon name is shared with the heroine, and is in the title. I HAD to get it. And in this case I can recommend this middle grade graphic novel to all, even if your name is nowhere in it. In fact, because it is set in a Jewish Shtetl (Yiddish for the Jewish part of town) and most of the names are Yiddish, it is unlikely many potential readers would find their names there. But what they will find is a cast of good characters, a riveting story, masterful drawing and a lot of Yiddish phrases strewn throughout. These are explained in an unobtrusive way, and are delightful. Oh, and the main character, Mirka, is a powerhouse of a girl. She's the sort girls and boys would be thrilled to spend a few hours with, and come back again to many more times. Try it, you'll like it. My grandma was right!

I bought this for my little sister (an Orthodox Jew) for her 10th birthday. She loved it so much she asked me to read it. The art is fun in a sort of Americanized manga style. The story is cute with admirable, realistic characters. My only complaint was that the story is a little bit disorganized and uneven. It feels like anything can happen, and often does. This didn't bother my sister though. Girls (especially Jewish girls) will like this and see some of herself in Mirka, but boys will find it entertaining too. It finds a nice balance between high octane action and heart-felt family values.

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