

Marc Cerasini , Isidre Mones

Step Into Reading: The Twelve Labors of Hercules

United States (1997)

TAGS: [Amazons](#) [Athena](#) [Atlas](#) [Augean Stables](#) [Cerberus](#) [Ceryneian Hind](#) [Charon](#) [Cretan Bull](#) [Diomedes \(of Thrace\)](#) [Diomedes'](#) [Mares](#) [Erymanthian Boar](#) [Geryon](#) [Hercules](#) [Hippolyta](#) [Hydra](#) [Nemean Lion](#) [Oracles](#) [Stymphalian Birds](#) [Thebes](#) [Titans](#) [Twelve Labours of Heracles](#) [Underworld](#) [Zeus](#)



We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
<i>Title of the work</i>	Step Into Reading: The Twelve Labors of Hercules
<i>Country of the First Edition</i>	United States of America
<i>Country/countries of popularity</i>	United States
<i>Original Language</i>	English
<i>First Edition Date</i>	1997
<i>First Edition Details</i>	Marc Cerasini, <i>Step Into Reading: The Twelve Labors of Hercules (A Step 3 Book)</i> . New York: Random House, 1997, 48 pp.
<i>ISBN</i>	0679883932 (pbk).
<i>Genre</i>	Comics (Graphic works), Myths
<i>Target Audience</i>	Children
<i>Author of the Entry</i>	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
<i>Peer-reviewer of the Entry</i>	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

Creators



Marc Cerasini , b. 1952 (Author)

Marc is an American author of various books for children as well as young adults' novels, among them novelization of movies, such as *Wolverine*. He also wrote a *USA Today* bestseller *AVP: Alien Vs. Predator* and original novels on Godzilla.

Sources:

Profile at harpercollins.com (accessed: October 9, 2018).

Profile at fantasticfiction.com (accessed: October 9, 2018).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University,
ayelet.peer@gmail.com



Isidre Mones , b. 1947 (Illustrator)

Isidre is a Spanish illustrator and comic book artist from Barcelona. He works on children's books, games, DVD covers and more.

Source:

[Blog](#) (accessed: January 9, 2020)

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University,
ayelet.peer@gmail.com



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood... The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Additional information

Summary

This is an illustrated depiction of Hercules' labours. The book opens with the infant Hercules and the snakes. Then we see Hercules as a young man who fights others and seeks counsel from the oracle. The book focuses on the 12 labours which also end the book. There is a depiction of each labour separately.

Analysis

This book is targeted at young readership and therefore there is no harsher concepts as murder or infidelity. The book opens with a story about two snakes that tried to kill a baby, followed by a question – "Who was that amazing baby?" (p. 5). Strangely, there is no reference at all to Hercules' divine lineage, and the events are presented as if Hercules was simply a very strong boy. When Hercules grows up, we are told that "he was so strong that sometimes he hurt people when he didn't mean to." (p. 7). Of course, Hercules is depicted as innocent; there is no sign of his anger either. In some other retellings, it is emphasized that Hercules could neither control his temper, nor his power. But here, his strength is the main point. In the illustration we see Hercules standing above a vanquished rival (possibly after a fight), who is half lying on the ground, showing that he is not seriously hurt. Hercules becomes a hero after vanquishing a gang of bandits. Since he is already a hero, he seeks the counsel of the oracle as to what to do next, and is told to perform 12 tasks for the king.

Much of the mythological reference is vague; the king is unnamed and presented as hating Hercules because he was stronger than him. The reference to the gods is very limited; Hera and Zeus are non-existent, while Athena helps him with the Stymphalian birds, and the sun god is briefly mentioned. This Hercules lives in an almost godless world, an interesting choice in a mythological tale. The gods are an inevitable part of Hercules' story and they are the key motivators of his tale. If they are removed from the narrative, it becomes more superficial; the story is merely one of a strong man looking for adventures. However, since this is an early retelling book, it is possible that the author was more interested in presenting a clear story to children than dealing with the mythological elements (this is also why the names of the different people and creatures are not mentioned, as they are difficult to read). Hercules' physique is very visible in the drawings; his muscles are well emphasized. This is almost a super-hero kind of story, chasing



the monster of the week. An unusual amount of space is devoted to King Diomedes' betrayal of Hercules, possibly in order to provide some action scenes for the readers.

At the end of the story, while the gods are hardly present, Hercules pays his respect to them in the temple. Hercules is thus described as pious towards the gods. This completely changes the original conflict between him and Hera, and perhaps provides a lesson here for children to thank god for any assistance. Hercules is described as living a life "of adventure" (p. 48), as if adventure is what constitutes a hero. He is also almost devoid of any emotions in this story, basically a cardboard character, simply fighting and moving on to the next adventure.

Classical, Mythological,
Traditional Motifs,
Characters, and
Concepts

[Amazons](#) [Athena](#) [Atlas](#) [Augean Stables](#) [Cerberus](#) [Ceryneian Hind](#)
[Charon](#) [Cretan Bull](#) [Diomedes \(of Thrace\)](#) [Diomedes'](#) [Mares](#)
[Erymanthian Boar](#) [Geryon](#) [Hercules](#) [Hippolyta](#) [Hydra](#) [Nemean Lion](#)
[Oracles](#) [Stymphalian Birds](#) [Thebes](#) [Titans](#) [Twelve Labours of Heracles](#)
[Underworld](#) [Zeus](#)

Other Motifs, Figures,
and Concepts Relevant
for Children and Youth
Culture

[Adventure](#) [Animals](#) [Heroism](#) [Journeys](#) [Masculinity](#)

