Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Hercules: Prince of Power by Bob Layton", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/259. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Bob Layton

Hercules: Prince of Power

United States (1982)

TAGS: Heracles Hercules Olympus Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Hercules: Prince of Power
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1982
First Edition Details	Bob Layton, *Hercules: Prince of Power*. New York: Marvel, 1982, 200 pp.
ISBN	9780785139553
Genre	Action and adventure comics, Alternative histories (Fiction), Comics (Graphic works), Mythological comics, Mythological fiction
Target Audience	Crossover (Young adults and older children)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
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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.

Creators



Courtesy of the Author.

Bob Layton , b. 1970
(Author)

Bob is a highly prolific and imaginative American comic artist with over 5000 comic book credits. Bob works on comics as well as television and films. He worked for many companies, including Marvel and DC Comics. He reinvented the Iron man series in the 70s. He also launched one of the first mini-series in comic history, *Hercules: The Prince of Power*.

Layton said in an interview that “it took a bit of pushing to have a finite series about a drunken super-hero published at Marvel... I loved the big dumb lug and I've always had a soft spot for forgotten secondary characters. Plus, I felt that Hercules hadn't found his niche' in the Marvel Universe, being relegated to supporting roles and such. Also... I felt that the Marvel books took themselves WAY too serious in those days. I wanted to lighten things up a bit. I've always enjoyed writing comedy and Herc was a perfect foil for my brand of humor” (Cited from online interview, accessed: June 27, 2018).

Sources:

Official website (accessed: June 27, 2018).

Profile on Comic Vine (accessed: June 27, 2018).

Online interview (accessed: June 27, 2018).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University,
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Questionnaire

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1. What drew you to writing/working with Classical Antiquity and what challenges did you face in selecting, representing, or adapting particular myths or stories?

Character… character… and character! The elements that make a good story are the conflicts that create change in the characters. A good character is always a work in progress, constantly adapting to challenges that life throws at him while trying to control the inner demons that sometimes push him down unexpected roads.

2. Why do you think classical / ancient myths, history, and literature continue to resonate with young audiences?

The positive aspect is that the film industry is keeping the super-hero genre alive and demonstrating that there is definitely an audience for this particular form of entertainment. I believe that these Hollywood producers, seeking to recapture the "sense of wonder" they experienced as youngsters, have now become a new creative extension for the medium of comics – taking their favorite icons back to their more accessible roots.
The truth is that many of the comic-based movies are what the comics themselves used to be, back when they were accessible on newsstands to a mass market.

And in a time where our belief in our time-honored institutions and public figures are being challenged, the genre offers hope that some of our ideals are being kept alive through these fictional heroes.

3. Do you have a background in classical education (Latin or Greek at school or classes at the University?) What sources are you using? Scholarly work? Wikipedia? Are there any books that made an impact on you in this respect?

I learned to read from comics when I was only four years old, after my older sister Sue became bored with reading the same comic to me about fifty times. As I matured, I began to comprehend the true potential that the medium had and became obsessed with becoming part of it. My early days were filled with the literary tales from Edgar Rice Burroughs and Arthur C. Clarke. Having grown up dirt poor,

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college wasn't in my future. Fortunately, I was able to educate myself through the local public library and eventually was awarded an apprenticeship with a famous DC Comics artist. I worked for him until I was competent to get work on my own merit.

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

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Additional information

Summary

Hercules is the hero in a galactic setting; he has a family now which he needs to protect against all kinds of evils. Regarding the backstory, Hercules returns to Olympus and starts acting rowdily, as a result of which Zeus exiles him to the vast universe to learn some humility. He knew that he would be considered a god on earth and therefore sent him to roam the vast outer space. Hercules then begins his galactic adventures, even racing against a spaceship with his chariot. He changes his attire to a more super-heroic style (black and red tights and vest). Hercules confesses to his girlfriend, Lyana, that he promised himself not to fall in love with a mortal ever again, after she ages and died while he remained immortal.

Analysis

Even in space, 300 years into the future, Hercules' attire resembles the ancient Greek style, with a one shouldered chiton and high strapped sandals. He also wears a kind of helmet. At the beginning he is described as follows (p. 5): "He is the son of Zeus, High father of the gods, He is a rogue, A hero, An avenger! Throughout the ages he has been known as Hercules, Prince of Power!" Olympus is described as a high mountain no mortal can climb. Hercules refers to himself as "the lion of Olympus". Therefore we see how the mythological elements of the character are maintained even in this fantasy–sci-fi setting.

An addition of sensitivity to the otherwise buff character is presented via Hercules' relations with his family. In the original myth Hercules' family is mentioned in the terrible circumstances of their murder. In this universe, Hercules is aided by a loving family who supports him and fights besides him. He is part of a group and not a lonely hero anymore. He is even willing to sacrifice himself for his family, in contrast to the original myth in which he laboured to purge himself of their murders. Although he is loud and reckless, when it comes to his family Hercules is a mature and loving father figure, a role he could not play in the original myth. This could be seen as a kind of "what if" scenario; what if Hercules' family loved and prospered and his offspring were as tough as he was. This graphic-novel character is being given the family life Hercules did not enjoy on earth.

Heracles Hercules Olympus Zeus

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits Emotions Family Friendship Values
Further Reading	Kovacs, George and C. W. Marshall, *Classics and Comics,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Kovacs, George and C. W. Marshall, *Son of Classics and Comics,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

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