Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Greek Mythology's Twelve Labors of Hercules: A Choose Your Path Book by Brandon Terrell", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/406. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Brandon Terrell

Greek Mythology's Twelve Labors of Hercules: A Choose Your Path Book

United States (2013)

TAGS: Alcmene Artemis Athena Atlas Augean Stables Augeas Cerberus Cretan Bull Diomedes (of Thrace) Diomedes' Mares Erymanthian Boar Eurystheus Geryon Hera Heracles Hercules Hesperides Hippolyta Hydra Iolaus Minos Nemean Lion Nereus Poseidon Prometheus Pythia Stymphalian Birds Zeus



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General information	
Title of the work	Greek Mythology's Twelve Labors of Hercules: A Choose Your Path Book
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2013
First Edition Details	Brandon Terrell, *Greek Mythology's Twelve Labors of Hercules: A Choose Your Path Book*. [S. l.]: Lake 7 Creative, 2013, 164 pp.
ISBN	9780988366299 (paperback) / 9781442449404 (ebook)
Genre	Choose-your-own stories, Didactic fiction, Instructional and educational works, Mythological fiction, Myths
Target Audience	Children (Older children: 9–13 years old)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
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Creators



Brandon Terrell , 1978 - 2021
(Author)

Brandon Terrell is an American author from Minnesota. He is the author of numerous children books: picture books, graphic novels and more, among them *Quarterback Scramble* (Sports Illustrated Kids Graphic Novels), *8-Bit Baseball* (Sports Illustrated Kids Graphic Novels), *Phantom of the Library* (Snoops, Inc.).

At the opening of the book *Greek Mythology's Twelve Labors of Hercules: A Choose Your Path Book (Can You Survive?)*, the author explains he has been a fan of Greek mythology ever since reading the adventures of Hercules in the fourth grade. He urges the readers to search about Hercules' character on their own as well.

Sources:

Profile at the goodreads.com (accessed: June 28, 2018).

Profile at amazon.com (accessed: February 12, 2018).

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Additional information

Summary

This is a “choose your own path” book, in which the reader takes on the role of the hero and makes decisions and choices of action and plot development at each stage to create an interactive adventure, following instructions within the book in order to proceed. Within the framework of the story, the reader/hero of the book – referred to in the second person as “you” – while attempting to avoid a bully in the school library, hears strange noises coming from a book entitled Greek Mythology: The Twelve Labors of Hercules. The first choice to be made is whether to pick up the book or not. If it is picked up, the reader is transferred to an ancient world and become Hercules. On choosing this course, the reader meets the Pythia, who presents the option of going to see King Eurystheus. Refusal of this option, or of picking up the book, ends the adventure, but by choosing the positive, the reader then progresses through Hercules’ labors: fighting the Nemean Lion, Hydra, catching the deer, the Erymanthian boar, Augean stables, the Stymphalian birds, the Cretan Bull, Diomedes’ horses, the Belt of Hippolyte, Geryon, the golden apples and Cerberus. At the end of the story, there is a short explanation about the origin of myths and their retelling through the years by different storytellers.

Analysis

This book allows the readers a very close encounter with Hercules; they do not just read about his adventures but actually become the hero himself, as in a computer game, and make decisions for him. This gives the reader a much more active role as well as a better understanding of the hero’s actions and motivations, and “provides an educational slant in that it teaches logical and deductive thought.”

With regard to theme, since the framework of the story involves dealing with a bully, the story itself helps the reader cope with this issue, gaining in strength (emotional as well as physical) and self-confidence, as he or she becomes Hercules, the strongest hero of all. By not only reading about Hercules, but actually acting like him, the reader’s self-esteem can increase. The introduction is very clear: “You are Hercules. Your mother is a mortal woman named Alcmene. Your father is Zeus, king of the gods. This means that you are a mortal with super-strength.”

The myth has of course been adapted to suit the younger audience. It

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is interesting that at the end of the book, the reader does not receive immortality but is rather promised a place by Zeus' side in the future, and fame: "The people of Greece will share stories of your labors for centuries to come. Your name will become linked to courage and to bravery." In another alteration, Hercules' murder of his own family has, unsurprisingly, been removed from the plot, and another reason given for the labors. Here Hercules/the reader seeks immortality so as to end his fear of Hera, paralleling the framework structure, in which the reader is in fear of a bully. This is a life lesson, reflecting the didactic slant of the books, seen in a number of ways.

At each labor, for instance, the reader can choose a different path. In the case of the Nemean lion for example, he can kill him with a sword, or hide in a cave; one choice will lead to success and the other to failure, yet there is ample explanation given for each. Thus the pros and cons of each action are set out, and the lesson is taught that labors take courage as well as strategic planning. On occasion, help from others (e.g. Iolaus or the goddess Athena) is accepted, teaching that one does not always need to be self-sufficient.
Similarly, during the labor to get Hippolyte's belt, the reader is at one point led to apologize to the Amazon queen for taking her belt. It helps the reader understand the rift caused between Hercules and the queen because of Hera's manipulation, and also emphasises that when Hercules fights with Hippolyte and defeats her, he does not exercise unreasonable force upon her; she loses in a fair fight to him. Hera's role is also stressed on other occasions: "Months pass, and you hear nothing from the king. You wonder if Hera is behind his decisions, sending you on tasks and hoping you'll fail. You are almost certain she is to blame."

The clearest didacticism of the story comes at the end. From the beginning of the book, where the reader was hiding from a bully, now, after being Hercules, he knows how to cope. The bully waiting near the bus is likened to Cerberus guarding the underworld yet the reader does not fear: "You've learned from your adventure that bravery means different things at different times." Rather than hiding or running away, the reader now walks past the bully and talks to him. He does not, however, somewhat in contrast to Hercules, use necessary strength. The message here is that a true hero doesn't necessarily use brawn, but brain. In a lesson relevant for modern youth, the last page declares: "You have survived the Twelve Labors of Hercules; but more important, you have learned how to handle different and difficult situations."

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Alcmene Artemis Athena Atlas Augean Stables Augeas Cerberus Cretan Bull Diomedes (of Thrace) Diomedes' Mares Erymanthian Boar Eurystheus Geryon Hera Heracles Hercules Hesperides Hippolyta Hydra Iolaus Minos Nemean Lion Nereus Poseidon Prometheus Pythia Stymphalian Birds Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits Communication Conflict Friendship Heroism Intellect Interactivity Violence

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