Anita Ganeri , David West

Monster Fight Club: Heroes of Myths and Legends

United States of America (2012)

TAGS: Achilles Aeneas Amazons Aphrodite Dido Gorgon(s) Hector Heracles Hercules Homer Iliad Latium Lavinia Medusa Odysseus / Ulysses Odyssey Penthesilea Perseus Trojan War





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

General information	
Title of the work	Monster Fight Club: Heroes of Myths and Legends
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America, United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2012
First Edition Details	Anita Ganeri and David West, *Monster Fight Club: Heroes of Myths and Legends*. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 2012, 32 pp.
ISBN	978144885238-3
Official Website	rosenpublishing.com (accessed: February 6, 2019) davidwestchildrensbooks.com (accessed: February 6, 2019)
Genre	Instructional and educational works, Picture books
Target Audience	Children (6–10)
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

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Creators



Anita Ganeri , b. 1961
(Author)

Anita Ganeri was born in Calcutta, India. Her family emigrated to the UK when she was a baby. She studied French and German and Indian Studies at Cambridge University. She worked as an editor for large publishing companies such as Walker Books and Usborne, before becoming a freelance editor and writer. She has written over 300 non-fiction titles for children which use humorous or unusual concepts to draw in young readers, such as the *Horrible Geography* series ("geography with the gritty bits left in"), and *Writing History* (exploring different types of writing in 6 historical periods) for Scholastic. She is a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society. She lives in Ilkley, West Yorkshire, with her husband and children.

Sources:

hachette.com.au (accessed: February 6, 2019)

en.wikipedia.org (accessed: February 6, 2019)

goodreads.com(accessed: February 6, 2019)

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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David West (Illustrator)

David West studied art and graphic design at art school in Kingston-Upon-Thames and Harrow, specialising in information graphics. He is an illustrator, writer and publisher of children's books, usually non-fiction. He has created over 500 titles on topics such as mythology, dinosaurs, science and technology. His publishing company is called David West Children's Books, publishing mostly non-fiction picture books and graphic novels (*Graphic Mythical Heroes*, *Graphic Mythology*, *Illustrated Guides to Myth*, *Legends and Folklore*, and more. He lives in South London.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: February 6, 2019)

Interview at digitalartlive.com (accessed: February 6, 2019)

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Additional information

Summary

Monster Fight Club is a series of books written in collaboration by Anita Ganeri and David West. In this series, heroes, monsters, mythical beasts, legendary figures from around the world are pitted against one another, much as in a Dungeons and Dragons battle, or computer game. Readers are presented with some context, some facts and some figures about each pair of contestants, before they enter the ring for combat. A double-page narrative, with images of the fighting figures, sums up how the fight unfolds and which mythical figure wins.

In *Heroes of Myths and Legends*, 6 pairs of heroic warriors fight: Sigurd and Achilles, Hua Mulan and Penthesilea, King Arthur and Perseus, Rostam and Herakles, Odysseus and Aeneas, Dobrynya Nikitich and Beowulf.

The introduction explains the book's layout: profile pages, "crammed with fascinating and bloodcurdling facts about each of the contestants," (p. 4) statistics boxes (p. 5) and the main text, "a chilling account of how each fight progresses." A warning, "Blood will be spilled!" (p. 4) sits alongside splashes of blood.

Fight 1 is between the Norse hero Sigurd and the "greatest of all Greek heroes," Achilles. Profile pages provide truncated accounts of each hero's legend, and include snapshots of famous artworks (e.g., Arthur Rackham's illustration of Sigurd killing the dragon Fafnir). Achilles' Stats indicate his Strengths: "Brave and loyal. Mostly invulnerable. Has the Greek gods on his side. Weaknesses: Moody and fond of sulking. Hates being mocked. Has a weak spot on his heel." (p. 9). Achilles sulks; Sigurd challenges him, the battle (once Achilles is over his mood) goes for days with no sign of a winner and "there is no choice but to call the fight a draw." (p. 9)

For Fight 2, between the Chinese heroine, Hua Mulan, and Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons, the profile pages similarly provide information about each figure. The Amazons are noted for the skill in fighting with spears, bows and arrows, and the tragic death of Penthesilea in the Trojan War is discussed. States identify Penthesilea's strengths as a "fearless warrior" and "daughter of a god," and her weaknesses as her grief at the death of her sister, and being "easily killed by Achilles." (p.13) In battle, the pair are closely

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matched, but Penthesilea is surprised by Hua Mulan's agility and is shocked when she realises her opponent is a woman. Mulan knocks Penthesilea to the ground, but unlike Achilles, spares her life. Winner: Hua Mulan.

Fight 3 is between King Arthur and Perseus. The profiles provide context about the Round Table, Arthur's Last Battle, Theseus's Killing Medusa, and Perseus and Andromeda. Images include Caravaggio's portrait of Medusa. Perseus wins this fight. His strengths include his winged sandals, his helmet of invisibility, and the help of the gods. His weaknesses include boastfulness, and (inexplicably to me) being "lethal when throwing the discus." (p. 17)

Fight 4, between Rostam, the "greatest of all Persian heroes," (p. 18) and Herakles, shares information about the Book of Kings (Shahnama), Rostam's Labors, Herakles' Labors, and the Death of Herakles. As the "greatest hero of Greek mythology", with his "superhuman strength," protective lion skin cloak, and semi-divine status, Herakles easily wins – Rostam realizes "that he has met his match. He is fighting an unbeatable foe, and will be lucky to escape with his life,' and mounts his horse, Raksh, and gallops away.

Fight 5 pits Odysseus against Aeneas. Profile pages detail Odysseus's role in the Trojan War, and the Odyssey. It notes Odysseus, "despite his bravery", was originally reluctant to fight and pretended to be mad to get out of the war. Aeneas, the "great Trojan prince and hero," is depicted as a fearless leader. Mention is made of Dido and Aeneas, and the Founding of Rome. Odysseus wins this fight. Mention is made of their having met before, and there is bad blood between them. Odysseus uses his 'special bow' to shoot Aeneas in the heart, and Aeneas drops dead. 'But Aeneas isn't finished yet. His mother, Aphrodite, comes to claim his body and carry it to the gods, who grant her son immortality.' (p. 25). Stats for Odysseus emphasize his bravery, wisdom, scheming, wrestling and archery. His weaknesses: 'some gods dislike him. Gets easily sidetracked when travelling." (p. 24). Aeneas's strengths include his greatness as a warrior and leader in the Trojan War, the support of Aphrodite and Apollo, and his god-given armour. His weakness, "gets lost on long journeys. Bound by destiny." (p. 25)

The last Fight (6) is between Dobrynya Nikitch, a great hero of Russian legend, and the Anglo Saxon hero, Beowulf. Profile pages highlight their shared abilities at slaying monsters. Dobryna Nikitch

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wins the fight, because while they are fighting, Beowulf scents a dragon, runs after it, unable to "resist the temptation to slay one more dragon and is even willing to forfeit the fight for the chance to do so." (p. 29). Dobrynya is declared the winner by default. Strengths for both warriors include magic armour, weaknesses involve willingness to do deals with dragons (Dobrynya), and allergy to dragon's breath (Beowulf).

As with other books in the *Monster Fight Club* series, concluding pages offer readers the opportunity to create their own fights, suggesting ways to do some research, indicating some different possibilities to work with (Classical ones mentioned are: Ajax, Bellerophon, Diomedes, Horatius, Jason and the Argonauts, Cadmus, Theseus), suggesting how to write Stats Boxes, and working out ways to bring the two heroes together.

A glossary explains some words with hints at pronunciation (avenged, blacksmith, chain mail, immortal, invulnerable, mythology, nymphs, pyre, scabbard, sickle, stalemate, stallion…), and an index provides a guide to different factual elements mentioned.

Analysis

As with other books in the *Monster Fight Club* series, this book plays with the idea of the mash-up, the bringing together of heroes from different legendary traditions, and putting them in contest with one another. It draws on the hero statistics in games such as *Dungeons and Dragons*, board games, and computer games. The imagery showing the heroes in battle draws on computer games, being quite polished digital images, with a hyper-real quality, and posed in heroic action. Each page is splashed with drops of blood, highlighting the macho quality of the book, which is likely aimed at boys. Interestingly, the concept allows for an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the heroes, and their stories are not sugar coated. Bad behaviour and tragic ends are mentioned, and while each summary is very short and selective, there is a sense of balance, and realism of a kind, that is supported by the digital images of the heroes, and the use of famous artwork from different periods. Despite its competitive emphasis, the pairing of heroes with similar attributes and storylines encourages readers to take a comparative approach to mythology, and to understand parallels in aspects of mythological storytelling. Readers are encouraged to disagree with the outcomes of each battle, which seem somewhat arbitrary, and to rewrite their own versions.

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	They are also encouraged to think about what it means to be a hero, what a hero's role is in his or her particular myth, and to compare attributes and characteristics among different myth systems. The book is highly visual. The Profile pages are presented as if in manila folders, with images held in by paper clips; the Fight pages are illustrated in a hyper-real digital art, as if the fights are photographed at low angles (thus emphasizing the godly or heroic aspects of the fighters). The appeal of the book for young readers, who may be becoming drawn to playing (violent) videogames, is clear, and the book makes a nod to readers' opinions and ideas, suggesting that they might not agree about the outcome of particular battles, and encouraging their creativity by showing ways for them to make their own pairings and write their stories.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Achilles Aeneas Amazons Aphrodite Dido Gorgon(s) Hector Heracles Hercules Homer Iliad Latium Lavinia Medusa Odysseus / Ulysses Odyssey Penthesilea Perseus Trojan War
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Boys Conflict Diversity Emotions Heroism Humour Learning Magic powers Resilience Survival Violence
Addenda	The series is listed in the titles for David West Children's Books imprint, but I can find no examples of texts published under that imprint. It appears to be printed only in the United States by Rosen Publishing, an independent publisher of educational books), and its back cover bears the imprint "PowerKids Press": rosenpublishing.com (accessed: February 6, 2019) davidwestchildrensbooks.com (accessed: February 6, 2019)

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Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: Monster Fight Club: Heroes of Myths and Legends by Anita Ganeri , David West", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/649. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

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