Tikva Schein, "Entry on: Perseus by Francesco Caffrey", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/663. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Francesco Caffrey

Perseus

Online (2016)

TAGS: Gorgon(s) Medusa Perseus Theseus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Perseus
Country of the First Edition	Online
Country/countries of popularity	English-speaking countries
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2016
First Edition Details	Francesco Caffrey, *Perseus*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016, 102 pp.
ISBN	1533339031, 9781533339034
Genre	Fiction, Mythological fiction, Myths
Target Audience	Children (6–10)
Author of the Entry	Tikva Schein, Bar-Ilan University, tikva.blaukopf@gmail.com
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Creators



Francesco Caffrey (Author)

Francesco Caffrey was an American third grade student at the time of authoring *Perseus*. Inspired by reading the entire Percy Jackson series, he set out to put his own mind and imagination to Greek mythology.

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Additional information

Summary

Perseus is a seventeen chapter short chapter book targeted towards the 6–10 age group.

Chapter 1, *Fighting Medusa*, deals with Perseus' first adventure, encountering and slaughtering the Medusa and then the Gorgons. Chapter 2, *Leaving the Island,* has Perseus summoned by Zeus to accompany Theseus on his journey through the Labyrinth. The detailed map provided seems somewhat out of place in this children's book but provides a frame of reference for this journey. Chapter 3, *Departing*, deals with a mysterious prescient dream encounter with and then escape from the Minotaur, and Perseus' encounter with Aries, a martial instructor with a "maniacal grin". Chapter 4, *The Fight*, has Perseus sparring against Cyrus and hearing monsters from the deep of the sea.

Chapter 5, *Talking with Theseus*, has the ship on which Perseus is travelling with Theseus being attacked by a sea monster. Chapter 6, *Fighting the Arnocbas*, has Perseus building up his skills in anticipation of going to fight the Minotaur and encountering and finally conquering a monstrous sea creature. Chapter 7, *Perseus is Rewarded*, has Perseus supplanting Theseus as the main hero of the ship. Theseus, in jealousy, consults with Aries who advises him to punish Perseus for his upstart behaviour if he persists in showing himself to be superior. Soldiers are sent to Perseus' cabin to trouble him and Perseus evades them and enables himself with the bought time to prepare himself for combat with them.

In Chapter 8, *The Morning*, Perseus defeats the soldiers, has a surprise talk with Asop, a man on board the ship who advises him to see a "magic user" and he is summoned by a mermaid to Poseidon's castle underwater. In Chapter 9, Poseidon warns Perseus not to use his magic powers too much or he'll face possible death. In Chapter 10, *Visiting Archimedes*, Perseus learns magic spells and potions and meets the magic user, Archimedes Kokinos, the "only son of Hecate, Greek goddess of magic". Kokinos tells the story of how he ended up on the ship. Perseus gets trapped in some Arnocba blood by soldiers. He saves himself with seawater and resurrects the Empusa sea monster.

Chapter 11, *Finding Crete*, has Perseus landing in Crete. In Chapter

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12, *The Labyrinth's Entrance*, Perseus assists Kokinas in fighting off a group of Arnocbas. They find Daedalus' Workshop. Chapter 13, *Falling Into the Floor*, shows Perseus meeting Daedalus and asking for his help to find the entrance to the Labyrinth and defeat the Minotaur. They receive a magic scroll but then come into difficulty, getting trapped in a chasm. Chapter 14, *Out of the Chasm*, shows Ambrose leading Perseus and the rest of the warriors out of the chasm via the jagged rocks. In Chapter 15, *Finding the Minotaur's Home*, Kokinos dies. They end up in the center of the Labyrinth. In Chapter 16, *Confronting the Minotaur*, they shoot at the Minotaur with crossbows to no effect. In Chapter 17, *Fighting the Minotaur*, the last chapter, Perseus decides he must use magic against the Minotaur to defeat him. Perseus then wakes up from the battle two years later.

Analysis

From the start of the work, Francesco Caffrey's self-published book *Perseus* represents an interesting take on myth and its relation to truth. Caffrey's author's note preceding the prologue (p. 2) equates "true" with "mythology" and "made up" with his own imaginative creation. The seemingly oxymoronic statement that this is written "partly from true fiction" is at once intriguing and adds a deeper layer of thought-provoking content for the reader, ab initio. Caffrey thus indirectly raises questions regarding the fixed nature of myth – is it something immutable, untouched by reception? Is Classical mythology only Classical according to the timespan in which it was created and not according to the themes it deals with? What happens when this myth is tinkered with millennia later, is that reception a continuation of the original myth, a permutation or something completely different? Such questions on the nature of reception study, reception literature and myth circles is a stimulating beginning to children's literature.

The prologue, written in vivid present, invites the reader to be part of the story and live it in real time. It starts with a timeless opening, "Over the past few months", giving the reader no clue as to when this might be other than verily the few months before reading these lines. The prologue aims to set the scene for the rest of the narrative, introducing the Medusa, the Minotaur and Perseus, stepson of Aegeus.

The English is not entirely fluently written or edited so that some sentences read like magic realism, e.g., "it was terrifying to think that his life would forever end" (p. 6); "Here is a message from the Zeus"

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(p. 10), yet this does not detract from the fast movement of the work, which carries the reader through in its short, punchy sentences. Given it is written by a third-grade student interested in Greek mythology, the quality is particularly commendable. The large font, short sentences, and very short paragraphs make this book easily accessible to the young reader.

Caffrey injects a little characterisation into his work, though not much. Perseus, for example, in Chapter 1, is "terrified" and "relieved", "trying to focus" and ends with a "smile of triumph" but we don't get much more of a deeper look into his persona more than that.

Perseus is shown as a problem-solver, e.g., "An idea suddenly came to him" (p. 9); and a brave, skilled fighter, "but one part of the plan would have to have perfect timing". Yet he also shows that you can be a hero and also make mistakes, "Perseus missed. That might have been the dumbest thing he'd ever done in his life...". This ability to recoup from a fall is a teachable lesson to all young readers about the nature of heroism.

Coffrey uses dreams as a proleptic tool several times through his work. For example, "To the right of the ship he saw the same monster from his dream!" (p. 27). Perseus' uncertainty as to the identity of his father is traced through the story. Wondering whether Poseidon is his father (p. 44) gives a vulnerability to this hero figure which makes him more interesting. He thinks he's the son of Poseidon but at his first meeting with him, Poseidon doesn't acknowledge any fatherhood.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Gorgon(s) Medusa Perseus Theseus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits Childhood Coming of age Emotions Expectations Family Heroism Multiculturalism Relationships Society Storytelling Tradition

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