Joanna Kłos, "Entry on: TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series World's People and Places: The Scientific Origins of the Minotaur / The Ancient Origins of the Olympics / This is Sparta – Fierce Warriors of the Ancient World by TED , Amy Adkins , Armand D'Angour, Matt Kaplan , Craig Zimmer", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/80. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

TED , Amy Adkins , Armand D'Angour , Matt Kaplan , Craig Zimmer

TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series World's People and Places: The Scientific Origins of the Minotaur / The Ancient Origins of the Olympics / This is Sparta – Fierce Warriors of the Ancient World

Online (2015)

TAGS: Agoge Crete Diamastigosis Greece Minos Minotaur Olympia Olympic Games Pankration Pentathlon Sparta Zeus



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General information	
Title of the work	TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series World's People and Places: The Scientific Origins of the Minotaur / The Ancient Origins of the Olympics / This is Sparta – Fierce Warriors of the Ancient World
Country of the First Edition	Online
Country/countries of popularity	worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2015

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.

First Edition Details	*The Scientific Origins of the Minotaur*. Matt Kaplan, Educator, Amy Adkins, Script Editor, Outis, Director, Cem Misirlioglu, Sound Designer. TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series World's People and Places [1]. ed.ted.com, July 20, 2015, 4 min. 4:40 (accessed: August 20, 2018). *The Ancient Origins of the Olympics*. Armand D'Angour, Educator, Amy Adkins, Script Editor, Diogo Viegas, Director, Marcelo Vaz, Artist, Leonardo Bentolila, João Machay, Animators, Alessandro Monnerat, Editor, Cem Misirlioglu, Brooks Ball, Composers. TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series World's People and Places [2]. ed.ted.com, September 3, 2015, 3:19 (accessed: August 20, 2018). *This is Sparta – Fierce Warriors of the Ancient World*. Craig Zimmer, Educator, Amy Adkins, Script Editor, Franz Palomares, Director, Peter Linder, David Obuchowski, Composers. TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series World's People and Places [3]. ed.ted.com, March 8, 2016, 4:27 (accessed: August 20, 2018).
Running time	4 min 40 sec / 3 min 19 sec / 4 min 27 sec
Official Website	*The Scientific Origins of the Minotaur* (accessed: August 20, 2018); *The Ancient Origins of the Olympics* (accessed: August 20, 2018); *This is Sparta – Fierce Warriors of the Ancient World* (accessed: August 20, 2018).
Available Onllne	*The Scientific Origins of the Minotaur* (accessed: August 20, 2018); *The Ancient Origins of the Olympics* (accessed: August 20, 2018); *This is Sparta – Fierce Warriors of the Ancient World* (accessed: August 20, 2018).
Genre	Animated films, Instructional and educational works, Internet videos, Short films
Author of the Entry	Joanna Kłos, University of Warsaw, joanna.klos@student.uw.edu.pl
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Creators

TED (Company)

Logo retrieved from Wikipedia, public domain (accessed: December 8, 2021).

TED: Technology, Entertainment, Design (accessed: July 6, 2018) is a media organization focused on "ideas worth spreading", which organizes conferences and creates online talks for free distribution. One of its initiatives is TED-Ed (ed.ted.com), an online platform hosting short interactive lessons. Each lesson consists of four sections:

– *Watch* – animated educational video (available also on YouTube);

– *Think* – a short quiz about the video's content;

– *Dig Deeper* – a concise text on where to search for more information on the topic (providing mainly hyperlinks to educational websites rather than "traditional" bibliographical references);

– *Discuss* – a forum with two types of discussions: Guided (i.e. created by the educators), and Free (i.e. created by the viewers).

Prepared by Joanna Kłos, University of Warsaw, joanna.klos@student.uw.edu.pl



Amy Adkins (Producer)

Amy Adkins is a producer and writer working on entertainment and research in digital media projects. In 2012–2015 she was active in two projects ran by the University of Utah: student game design competition Games 4 Health; and The Gapp Lab in which graduate students and staff worked on medical games and apps. Since May 2015 she cooperates with TED-Ed, creating scripts for animated informational and educational films; currently she also works for

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Adobe.

Source:

LinkedIn profile (accessed: July 5, 2018).

Bio prepared by Joanna Kłos, University of Warsaw, joanna.klos@student.uw.edu.pl



Armand D'Angour

Armand D'Angour, born November 23, 1958, is an Associate Professor of Classics at Oxford University and Fellow/Tutor at Jesus College in Oxford. He authored more than a dozen of scholarly publications, among them a book: *Greeks and the New: Novelty in Ancient Greek Imagination and Experience* (2011), awarded *Spectator*'s Book of The Year title. His research centres on Greek music, alphabet, poetry; he writes poetry in Greek and Latin, including poems for the Olympic Games in 2004 and 2012. D'Angour's website hosts translations of classical texts, odes composed by him, information on his rich academic research and concerts – as he is a recognized cello and piano player as well.

Sources:

Official website and blog (accessed: May 24, 2018).

Profile at the Wikipedia (accessed: May 24, 2018).

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Bio prepared by Joanna Kłos, University of Warsaw, joanna.klos@student.uw.edu.pl



Matt Kaplan

Matt Kaplan is a science correspondent for The Economist who collaborated also with *National Geographic, The New York Times, Scientific American, Nature, New Scientist*. He has written two books about explanations of natural phenomena provided in mythical narratives: *The Science of Monster*s (2013) and *Science of the Magical* (2015). The motto of his website and blog: "So much science, so little time" illustrates how wide the area of Kaplan's scientific interests is. According to his own auto-presentation, he wrote about *Star Wars*, jellyfishes, seismology, female spiders and much more. One can also find dozens of posts on medicine and biology in his blog.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: June 28, 2018).

Twitter profile (accessed: June 28, 2018).

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Craig Zimmer

Craig Zimmer has a BA in History and a BEd in Secondary Education and Teaching. Since 1998 he teaches at St. Mary Catholic District School Board in Ontario. He is a certified "Ted-Ed Innovative Educator" and has designed a *TED-Ed Innovation Project* which connects TEDx speakers and students in Canada.

LinkedIn profile (accessed: May 29, 2018).

Bio prepared by Joanna Kłos, University of Warsaw, joanna.klos@student.uw.edu.pl

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Additional information

Summary

The Scientific Origins of the Minotaur

The video starts with a short synopsis of the Minotaur's myth: beneath the palace of king Minos lives a dreadful monster whose roar makes the earth shake. The tale has possibly been invented in order to explain some natural phenomena, unexplainable in the ancient times. The earliest accounts about the Minotaur do not speak of a human-bull hybrid, but underline that he lives under ground and produces earthshaking sounds. As such hybrids are mythical and archaeologists did not discover the Labyrinth on Crete, the myth may refer to the seismic activity on the island affected by numerous earthquakes because of its location in a subduction zone.

The myth of the Minotaur is also compared to the Hawaiian myth of Pele, the goddess of fire, volcanoes and creation. In contrast to Minotaur, she is not associated with destruction only – volcanic lava makes Hawaiian ground very fertile. In conclusion, the video states that "mythology and science are actually two sides of the same coin," as both serve to explain, but using very different discourses.

The section "Discuss" contains one guided discussion: "Think of your favorite myths and legends for a moment and now consider how they may or may not be more than mere fiction," with 9 answers so far.

As at March 29, 2017 the video had been viewed 646967 times; it gained 9558 "thumbs up" and 391 comments on YouTube.

The Ancient Origins of the Olympics

The animation is designed with the charm of a vintage movie, with the black-framed screen and narrator's voice reminiscent of the old-fashioned newscasters. The Olympics began as part of a religious ceremony honouring Zeus and by now have become "the greatest show of sporting excellence on Earth." The date of the first games – 776 BC – and the meaning of the term *Olympiad* are discussed. According to the educator, such events have been especially important to Greeks because they "fostered excellence" and competed in many fields, not only sport. Follows a list of Olympics' disciplines in chronological order: the 200 yard dash, boxing, chariot racing,

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hoplitodromos, *penthatlon*, *pankration* (the last one is compared in the animation to modern computer war games); the characters of Koroibos of Elis and Orsippos of Megara are introduced. Because "all good things must end," the emperor Theodosius banishes the Olympics in 391. Despite this serious setback, the Olympic spirit survived, the games were resurrected in 1896 and gained a globe-wide prestige. The video ends with the motto "Citius, altius, fortius."

The sections *Think*, *Dig Deeper, Discuss* do not include classical motifs and references.

As at March 29, 2017 the video has been viewed 507463 times; it gained 3451 "thumbs up" and 149 comments on YouTube.

This is Sparta – Fierce Warriors of the Ancient World

In ancient Greece military conflicts were a "way of life." Usually the poleis were surrounded by defensive walls – yet, as the Spartan warriors were the best, their land did not need walls to be protected. Information about Sparta comes from authors who lived in various periods and were not impartial. After the thesis of the video: "For Spartans the main purpose of their existence was simple – to serve Sparta," basic information about Spartan customs and education is presented. Weak newborns were abandoned; boys and girls were supposed to be strong in body and mind, and remain loyal to their native land; the concept of *agoge* and the reasons why bullying or stealing was promoted in the Spartan upbringing; the role of *diamastigosis*; both girls and boys had to learn to write and read; the standard features of a perfect Spartan woman were: strength, health, education, and readiness to bear great warriors; only men who died in the battlefield and women who died in childbirth were honoured by tombstones – as, according to the last words of the lesson, they "died so that Sparta could live."

The section *Dig Deeper* contains references to educational classical sites such as, ancient-origins.net and ancientmilitary.com (accessed: August 20, 2018). The section *Discuss* contains one guided exchange: "Do you think that we can deem Sparta to be an effective civilization? Support your answer," with 24 responses so far.

As at March 29, 2017 the video has been viewed 652532 times; it gained 10719 "thumbs up" and 1545 comments on YouTube.

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Analysis	The videos serve as a didactic tool, which assists young people learn basic information about ancient Greek culture, but also – reflect on the conclusions while interacting with the material's providers through discussions and YouTube comments. This helps to preserve the classical world as a vivid and important topic for contemporary educational discourse. Various attitudes to classical tradition are displayed in the lessons: the video on the Minotaur encourages students to view ancient texts critically; the video on the Olympics shows the ancient world as a source of traditions worth continuing; the video on Sparta highlights cultural relativism while presenting without judgement peculiarities of an ancient civilization quite different from our contemporary societies.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Agoge Crete Diamastigosis Greece Minos Minotaur Olympia Olympic Games Pankration Pentathlon Sparta Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	History Interactivity Knowledge Learning Society Sport Success and failure War
Further Reading	Bryan, Lara, *Oxonian's Olympic Ode a Success*, cherwell.org, July 29, 2012 (accessed: August 20, 2018). D'Angour, Armand, *Greeks and the New: Novelty in Ancient Greek Imagination and Experience*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Gapp (University of Utah) project's website (accessed: August 20, 2018).

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Kaplan, Matt, *The Science of Monsters: The Origins of the Creatures We Love to Fear*, New York: Scribner, 2013.

Kaplan, Matt, *Science of the Magical: from the Holy Grail to Love Potions to Superpowers*, New York: Scribner, 2015.

McClure, Laura, *When Tedx Speakers Mentor Student Speakers, Everyone Wins*, Ted-Ed Blog, September 29, 2016 (accessed: August 20, 2018).

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