Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Profiles in Greek and Roman Mythology: Hercules by Jim Whiting ", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/952. Entry version as of November 03, 2026.

Jim Whiting

Profiles in Greek and Roman Mythology: Hercules

United States of America (2008)

TAGS: Deianeira Eurystheus Hera Heracles Hercules Sophocles Twelve Labours of Heracles Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Profiles in Greek and Roman Mythology: Hercules
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2008
First Edition Details	Jim Whiting, *Profiles in Greek and Roman Mythology: Hercules*. Mitchell Lane Publishers, Hockessin Delaware, 2008, 48 pp.
ISBN	9781584155539
Genre	Adaptations, Myths, Retelling of myths*
Target Audience	Young adults (12–17)
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Creators



Jim Whiting , b. 1943
(Author)

Jim Whiting is an American journalist and writer based in Washington State. For 17 years he was the editor of *Northwest Runner* magazine. He has written or edited over 200 children's books on a wide variety of non-fiction topics including history, zoology, and music. He has written biographies of a number of figures from the ancient world in this *Life and Times - Ancient Civilizations* series, as well as many other biographies for young people in the *Profiles in American History* and *Life and Times – Masters of Music* series, also published with Mitchell Lane.

Sources:

archive.org (accessed: October 12, 2019).

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Additional information

Summary

This book narrates the various stories connected with Hercules: his birth, labours and other adventures, including his slavery at Omphale's palace and the Trojan War. The book also include further information (titled F.Y.I. sections) about Zeus' affairs, Hades, Sophocles, the Argonaut and a brief Greek history. The text is accompanied by various photos of museum artifacts and paintings as well as a map. At the end there are notes, further reading (including academic research) and an index.

Analysis

This book is meant to provide more than a basic information about the classical hero. The author appears to have done his research and his narrative is based on the *Who's Who* research of Michael Grant and John Hazel* whom he notes. He also cites from Sophocles' *The Trachiniae* regarding Hercules' death. The author begins Hercules' lineage from Perseus and explains the power struggle over the rule of Mycenae, with Eurystheus being born an hour earlier than Hercules due to Hera's machinations. He includes many details which are not always incorporated in stories about Hercules' exploits. The book therefore appears educational and informative.

The author opens the story *in medias res*, during the first labour of killing the Nemean lion and then goes back to the beginning of the myth. Hence he catches the interest of the readers right from the start.

The book is intended for juvenile readers and not little children, therefore the author does not shun from narrating Hercules' senseless killing of his family, of his lyre teacher Linus, and of Iphitus from Euboea. The book is created as a series of individual stories about Hercules' exploits and therefore there is no character development for Hercules himself.

After narrating Hercules' myths, the author devotes a chapter to "the impact of Hercules" in which he considers the reception of the hero. He explains the heroism of Hercules according to Karl Galinsky and W.B. Stanford and explores the various mentions of Hercules' story, from the *Iliad* to tragedies and to modern interpretations, such as *Gulliver's Travels*., T.S. Eliot and others.

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Therefore the book does not only provide the main tales of Hercules and valuable information about the relevant Greek myths, but also situates Hercules in modern culture, from ancient Greek to our modern times, from Greek tragedies to common idioms (such as ”Herculean task”) He thus illuminates the continued interest in the Greek hero and his relevance even today. The Hercules in his book is not just an ancient relic whose legend is told only for the entertainment of children (which is equally important), but has also been a source of influence for centuries, whose story certainly did not end with the myth.

In his conclusion, the author says that “Hercules shows what happens when a person or a country becomes especially strong. This strength can be used for evil purposes. The Greeks hoped that if people realized this, they would use their individual and social strength for good purposes.” p. 42. Therefore extreme powers can be dangerous if not properly controlled and employed.

* M. Grant, J. Hazel, *Who’s Who in Classical Mythology*, New York, Routledge, 2002.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Deianeira Eurystheus Hera Heracles Hercules Sophocles Twelve Labours of Heracles Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Conflict Death Family Good vs evil Heroism
Further Reading	Maurice, Lisa, “From Elitism to Democratisation: A Half-Century of Hercules in Children’s Literature”, *JHF* 2.2 (2019): 81–101. Galinsky, G. Karl, *The Herakles Theme: The Adaptations of the Hero*

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in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century, Totowa, New Jersey, Rowman and Littlefield, 1972.

Grant, Michael, and John Hazel, *Who's Who in Classical Mythology*, New York, Routledge, 2002.

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