Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Myths and Legends: Theseus and the Minotaur by José Daniel Cabrera Peña, Graeme Davis", 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/955. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

José Daniel Cabrera Peña , Graeme Davis

Myths and Legends: Theseus and the Minotaur

United Kingdom (2007)

TAGS: Aegeus Ariadne Heracles Hercules Hippolytus Labyrinth Minos Minotaur Theseus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Myths and Legends: Theseus and the Minotaur
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom, United States of America, Canada
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2007
First Edition Details	Graeme Davis, *Myths and Legends: Theseus and the Minotaur.* Oxford: Osprey publishing, 2014, 80 pp.
ISBN	9781472804051
Genre	Instructional and educational works
Target Audience	Crossover (Older children, teens)
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Creators



José Daniel Cabrera Peña (Illustrator)

From the book *Jason and the Argonauts (Myths and Legends)*: José Daniel is a Spanish painter from Granada; he works on books as well as films. He writes that he is "focused in historical, fantasy and sci-fi illustration" among others (source see here, accessed: February 26, 2019).

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Graeme Davis (Author)

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Additional information

Summary

This book, part of the *Myths and Legends* series, surveys the myths attributed to Theseus: his eraly life and journey to Athens, the myth of the minotaur including the events preceding the creation of the labyrinth and king Minos, the desertion of Ariadne and the death of Aegeus, (the vents of the labyrinth take up 25 pp), Theseus as the king of Athens, Theseus and Pirithous, the Lapiths and Centaurs, Helen and Persephone, the Amazons, Phaedra and Hippolytus Theseus' death and decedents, reception of Theseus (in tragedy, TV etc.). The narration is accompanied by a glossary and bibliography.The narrative is also accompanied by lavish illustrations, as well as photos of ancient artifacts from museums.

While the book is titled *Theseus and the Minotaur*, it covers more myths and provides more information on his titular hero, besides the episode with the Minotaur. The book is not a direct myth narration, but offers more educational research on the character of Theseus and the world he was living in, including for example information on Minoan culture. The book offers a narration of the various myths relating Theseus but also includes broader information, for example on King Minos and the Minoan civilization, the Bull-cult in Crete and more. The author cites ancient authors, for example Plutarch, in order to present the ancient versions of the myths as correctly as possible.

In the concluding section, "the legend grows" the author provides an overview of the reception of the myth. He shows how it was handled by ancient dramatists (Euripides and Sophocles), poets and authors (Ovid and Seneca) and later adapters of the myth from Boccaccio to Suzanne Collins, the author of *The Hunger Games*. Movies and TV series are also mentioned as well as a unique section called "the Minotaur brand" in which the author surveys how the powerful image of the mythological creature provided its name to various commodities, from bicycles to Britain's Royal Navy ships.

Analysis

The book is aimed at older readership, since it provides a lot of information for the readers and does not censor the material. For example, it is mentioned that Pasiphae copulated with Poseidon's white bull, an incident which is many times glossed over in myth adaptation for young readership.

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In the conclusion, the author offers his opinion of Theseus. For him, there is little which sets Theseus apart from other heroes. He was not as doomed as Oedipus or as cunning as Odysseus and even his enemies were more colourful than he was, in particular the iconic Minotaur. The author suggests that in order to try and reconstruct "something of Theseus the man" p. 72, we need to carefully read the myths and try to distinguish his acts in his youth and as a king. He concludes that "in an age when fantasy has surpassed mythology as a popular form of literature, and Theseus has been eclipsed by the Minotaur, it is still interesting to consider the nature of this enigmatic hero…whatever his virtues, Theseus stands among the most human of the Greek heroes". p. 73. This evaluation can teach us on how myth are perceived today, when the fantastic elements and monsters can easily eclipse the human heroes of the narrative. It can also alludes at Theseus' seemingly weakness as a hero, if his own character is being so easily overshadowed by his enemies.

The author raises the intriguing point in his conclusion that the monsters in many myths eclipse the heroes and are in the end what we remember of the story. Whether Theseus was the most human hero is a different question; he certainly exhibits a mix of emotions and various actions, many of which are not considered heroic or even humane in the modern world. Yet perhaps it is these actions that make him truly human. This attempt to try and find the man behind the hero is important, since it gives the myth a deeper layer of understanding and reasoning and makes these ancient heroes more approachable and increases sympathy with them on the part of the reader.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aegeus Ariadne Heracles Hercules Hippolytus Labyrinth Minos Minotaur Theseus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Conflict Death Emotions Good vs evil Journeys Revenge

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