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P. J. (Tricia) Hoover

The Curse of Hera (Camp Hercules, 1)

United States of America (2018)

TAGS: Achilles Atalanta Athena Cerberus Erymanthian Boar Helen Hephaestus Hera Heracles Hercules Hermes Hydra Jason Nemean Lion Prometheus Sphinx Stymphalian Birds Zeus

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

General information	
Title of the work	The Curse of Hera (Camp Hercules, 1)
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	2018
First Edition Details	P. J. Hoover, *Camp Hercules Volume I: The Curse of Hera*. Austin, Texas: Roots in Myth, 2018, 300 pp.
ISBN	9781949717037 (ebook) ASIN B07J3FCCTH (Kindle ebook)
Genre	Bildungsromans (Coming-of-age fiction), Novels
Target Audience	Children (8–12 year olds)
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Creators

Photo courtesy of the Author.

P. J. (Tricia) Hoover (Author)

P. J. Hoover is an American author. she is the award-wining author of *The Hidden Code* and she writes for kids and teens.

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Additional information

Summary

Logan, a teenage boy, is unknowingly registered by his mother for Camp Hercules, a mythology-themed summer camp. Logan actually wanted to go to a football camp and he resents the idea of spending the summer in what he considers a dorky camp. He initially admits that he knows nothing about mythology and is not interested in it. He is joined by Daniel, a mythology-obsessed friend with whom he has almost lost touch, not having seen him since they were young.

Upon arriving at Camp, the boys team up with a young girl called Harper and together they are part of Team Hydra. The campers are divided into groups which are named after Hercules' labours. Hercules is the camp manager and each team is led by different mythological heroes. The protagonists' camp instructors are Jason and Atalanta, and the team are supposed to find and defeat the Hydra. However, things become strange when all the real mythological monsters of the labours escape the magical amphora in which they were kept, and start roaming the camp. It turns out that Hera put a curse on Hercules, forcing him to continue performing his labours and fighting the monsters eternally. Therefore Hercules decided to create this camp in which the campers will assist him fighting the monsters. The labours then escape to the outside world. The inquisitive trio, together with Harper's roommate, Mia, must find a way to stop the labours, help Hercules and save the world from the wild mythological creatures.

During their life-threatening adventure, Logan realizes he enjoys this camp more than he cares to admit and gets absorbed in the mythological word that has come to life. The children realize that the camp and the mythological heroes are in fact real rather than played by actors, and that mount Olympus actually exists within the walls of the camp. They meet Prometheus, the Sphynx and other deities who help them along the way. To his great amazement, Logan discovers that not only is Greek mythology real, but that his own family is part of it, for Athena is his aunt and Zeus his grandfather, his mother's father, although although her name is not given.

Analysis

Mount Olympus exists in Texas. The premise of this story is that the Greek gods are real and they can appear in the most unimaginable places. Similarly to Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* series, Logan is a

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regular teenager who suddenly finds himself trapped in the wars of the gods on earth, in his native USA. The fragile balance between the mythological world and the modern world are surveyed in other works too, for example *The World's Bellybutton* by Tanya Landman from 2007 or Alan Gibbons's *The Legendeer Trilogy (Series, Book 1): Shadow of the Minotaur* from 2000 to name a few from many other stories.

Logan's resentment of mythology as "dorky" stuff turns to admiration when the secrets of the camp are revealed to him, especially the magical forces which are at power there (for example, a cardboard sword made in arts and crafts lesson becomes real when they must fight the Hydra). The notion of the labours running amok in the present world was also explored in Gerald Vinestock's *Crib and the Labours of Hercules* from 2017.

As Logan immerses himself deeper in the camp and the mythological environment, he finds this world irresistible. He uses his determination and creative thinking in order to help his friends and overcome the various obstacles they must face. This could be the message of the readers- do not be quick to judge something as boring or geeky if you do not really understand it or ever took the time to learn it. You should try new things, you will only benefit from doing so.

This is a typical teen coming-of-age story. During his time in the camp, Logan not only discovers his interest in Greek mythology, but also finds out more about himself. He discovers his inner strength, resourcefulness and his ability to lead others. Besides the fighting monsters and the mythological adventures, the crucial part of the story is Logan's progress and development in his own heroic quest towards adulthood. The revelation that he is in fact related to the Greek gods can only be materialized after he had already shown his development and growth.

The story connects the ancient mythological world with the modern setting of present day Texas, two worlds which initially appear to be worlds apart. Yet in the end, the core of the story is the people and the relationships and friendships between them. The mythological characters are also portrayed in a very human manner, and also suffer insecurities and fears. For example, the instructor Jason is envious of the other instructor, Achilles, and his war stories. Similarly, in a very human manner, Jason and Atalanta do their best to surpass the other team led by Achilles and Helen while at the same time being supportive mentors of the campers in their group.

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Hercules is a less-developed character. At first he is described as an almost cartoonish figure, a body-builder who practices different expressions in front of a mirror. Yet when disaster strikes and the labours get out of hand, Hercules takes full responsibility for his mistakes and does his best to save the people in the camp from the raging labours. It is his leadership and devotion to saving everyone that makes him leader, not just his brute force.

The modern adolescent hero coming of age journey is portrayed via real life-threatening dangers, when he must leave his comfort zone and face new challenges, using his wits and relying on his friends. The mythological setting amplifies the peril but also provides a wonderful setting for the hero to test his powers. The mythological world with its plethora of various characters, of adventures and perils is an optimized setting in which the hero can develop and grow.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Achilles Atalanta Athena Cerberus Erymanthian Boar Helen Hephaestus Hera Heracles Hercules Hermes Hydra Jason Nemean Lion Prometheus Sphinx Stymphalian Birds Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Coming of age Conflict Family Friendship Heroism Identity Magic

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