Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: The Maze of the Menacing Minotaur (Zeus the Mighty, 2) by Crispin Boyer, Andrew Elkerton", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1188. Entry version as of November 02, 2026.

Crispin Boyer , Andrew Elkerton

The Maze of the Menacing Minotaur (Zeus the Mighty, 2)

United States of America (2020)

TAGS: Ares Ariadne Athena Chronos Demeter Harpies Minotaur Olympus Periphetes Phineus Poseidon Sinis Theseus Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	The Maze of the Menacing Minotaur (Zeus the Mighty, 2)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2020
First Edition Details	Crispin Boyer, ill. Andrew Elkerton, *Zeus the Mighty. The Maze of the Menacing Minotaur.* Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Partners, 2020, 192 pp.
ISBN	9781426337567
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, Fiction
Target Audience	Children (8–13 years)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@biu.ac.il
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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.

Creators



Crispin Boyer (Author)

Crispin Boyer is an American author. He wrote on various themes, such as nature, history, wildlife and more. Among his books are *That's Deadly!: Fatal Facts That Will Test Your Fearless Factor*, *Everything Ancient Egypt*, *Why?: Over 1,111 Answers to Everything*, National Geographic *Kids Why Not?: Over 1,111 Answers to Everything*. In a podcast, the author explains that his editor wished to have a lighter and funny take on Greek mythology and hence *Zeus the Mighty* was created. The author explains they adapted the myths for children since the original myths are darker.

Sources:

Profile at goodreads.com (accessed: November 11, 2020).

"Author Stories Podcast Episode 776 | Crispin Boyer Interview" at youtube.com Hank Garner channel (accessed: November 11, 2020).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@biu.ac.il



Andrew Elkerton , b. 1967 (Illustrator)

Andrew Elkerton is a children's books illustrator from Scotland. He has worked as a graphic designer for over 15 years in the computer games industry. He was nominated twice for the Language Learner Literature Awards and illustrated various best sellers. He is the illustrator of the New York Times bestseller *How to Catch a Leprechaun*.

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Source:

"Andy Elkerton" at shannonassociates.com (accessed: November 23, 2020).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@biu.ac.il

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Additional information

Summary

This book continues to follow the adventures of Zeus the hamster, Demeter the grasshopper, Athena the cat, Ares the pug, and Poseidon the pufferfish, who live at the Mount Olympus Pet Center in Athens, Georgia (Book 1). The store's caretaker, Artemis (or Artie), listens to the "Greeking Out" podcast which retells the story of Theseus and the Minotaur and our furry friends listen to it as the wise words of the oracle and prepare for action.

In this instalment, the group is battling the over-heating furnace at the store, which they refer to as the menacing Minotaur. The furnace has a long metal pipe on its upper part, stretching from side to side and a chain in the middle, like nostrils and also a metal bar with fur sticking out of it. Hence, its overall appearance may resemble a monstrous bull (the illustration is helpful in explaining the likeness to a Minotaur). This Minotaur dwells at the end of an underground maze in the "Crete" part of the store. While they approach the Minotaur, Zeus and Demeter encounter princess Ariadne, the spider, who guides them through the maze and back to safety.

A subplot is dedicated to the old hamster Phineus, who seems to be giving Zeus bad advice regarding how to rule, which clearly upsets Demeter. He tells Zeus that the others are his minions and that he should sit in his palace and let them do all the hard work. Zeus refuses and Phineus disappears. Athena suggests that Zeus and Poseidon team up to search for Phineus, so they learn to work together and not argue all the time. She and Ares volunteer to check Crete. Yet they suddenly then go missing.

While approaching the Minotaur, Zeus battles the sinister Periphetes (which is in fact a drill gone rogue) and manages to grab his spear (a drill head). Later Zeus battles Sinis, the bat (or Harpy) which tries to kidnap him and fly away with him, but Poseidon rescues him.

In the end, the group reunites with Athena and Ares and Zeus manages to stop the furnace and the terrible heatwave is over. Athena reveals that Phineus deliberately sent her and Ares on missions all over Greece. They also discover that he was in fact in cahoots with Sinis. When Artie returns and discovers the old hamster, she refers to him as Cronus, yet he soon disappears once more with the help of the bat Sinis, before Zeus can fully question him.

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The story is accompanied by cute black and white drawings of the pets in their adventures.

The book also provides the cast of characters and a "Truth behind the Fiction" segment, including information on the Olympian gods and the myth narrated in the story, and a map of ancient Greece.

This book is published by National Geographic kids, and it is accompanied by various online activities on their website. These activities are discussed in our Mythological Education Survey.

Analysis

As in the previous book, this book proves how Greek mythology can be easily adapted and played in imaginative ways. This is a story where animals, as well as objects, come to life in a fantastic and mythical way.

Through the tale of the mighty hamster, Zeus, the young readers become familiar with the myths as well as enjoy a humorous adventure story involving pets. The thrilling quest and the mythological insertions are the backgrounds against which the author emphasizes the theme of friendship.

The crafty Cronus looks down on the other Olympians and tries to make Zeus a ruler in his own image, but Zeus understands the importance of his friends and is also not the kind of ruler who only wishes to sit back and do nothing. Via the characters of Cronus and Zeus, the author presents two types of rulers or of general behaviour: one who just wishes to boss others around and one who is caring and engaged.

Zeus enjoys these adventures for what they are, rather than just as a means to show his greatness (although this is a bonus for him as well). In this story, Zeus makes amends with Poseidon, with whom he had constantly been bickering in the past. Poseidon proves himself a good ruler as well and also a benevolent and courageous friend in need when he invites Zeus to use his own aquarium helmet against the scorching heat of the furnace-Minotaur.

The meeting with Ariadne allows the Olympians to encounter a new friend and Zeus learns to listen to others and accept their assistance. The fact that all the creatures, including the spider and even the drill,

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	are part of the same magical mythological setting only magnifies the uniqueness of the stories. Only Artie and her friend, Callie, who came to do some work in the shop are unaware of what happens when they leave.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Ares Ariadne Athena Chronos Demeter Harpies Minotaur Olympus Periphetes Phineus Poseidon Sinis Theseus Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Animals Emotions Friendship Heroism Humour Invention Journeys Learning Reconciliation

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