Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Hercules' First Six Tasks: Short Stories Teens to Young Adult by Ryan Madison", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/263. Entry version as of September 14, 2026.

Ryan Madison

Hercules' First Six Tasks: Short Stories Teens to Young Adult

Australia (2013)

TAGS: Alcmene Alexander the Great Antigone Augean Stables Deianeira Erymanthian Boar Eurystheus Hades Helen Helios Hera Heracles Hercules Hippolyta Hydra Iolaus Nemean Lion Oedipus Omphale Sphinx Stymphalian Birds Thespius Zeus

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

General information	
Title of the work	Hercules' First Six Tasks: Short Stories Teens to Young Adult
Country of the First Edition	Australia
Country/countries of popularity	Australia
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2013
First Edition Details	Ryan Madison, *Hercules' First Six Tasks: Short Stories Teens to Young Adult*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013, 74 pp.
ISBN	ASIN: B00FGY2WVK / Paperback: 978-1492825807
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, Mythological fiction, Novels, Short stories
Target Audience	Young adults (Older teens)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
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Creators

Ryan Madison (Author)

From the book:

The author lives in Australia and he writes fiction for kids. His day job is a plumber. Among his books we find separate adventures of Hercules (Hercules and the Cretan Bull, the Hydra etc.) as well as Ghostly Tales from the Haunted Cottage, Unique Australian Animals etc.

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Additional information

Summary

In this installment we have a part of Hercules' adventures mixed with other historical figures such as Alexander the Great. There is no decisive chronological development for the narrative. Hercules receives different tasks from Zeus and on the way he meets all kind of people, such as the mysterious King Phillip, the king of his home-land; he also meets Helen and Alexander, and Oedipus' family.

Analysis

The book is dedicated to "all those readers who are immersed in ancient Greek Mythology" (p. 12). This is the first statement from the author that can build up curiosity regarding the narrative. Then follows a brief review of Hercules' tasks, named "some History" in which the author numerates the 12 labors. The author finishes the review with a personal statement saying: "I believe that the entertainment value of the story is important; therefore I do not allow the truth to intrude too much and mess up the tale." (p. 26–28) This comment serves as an explanation to the reader or clarification that the following narrative would stray from the more conventional mythological narrative on the labors.

The story begins in the middle of the fight with the Nemean lion. The author warned us he did not intend for the truth to mess up the fun, therefore Hercules is at the Trojan court and needs to go to Sparta to receive his second task. Geography, as well as the original myth are of little importance here, as the author mixes together different myths. The reason for Hercules' tasks is: "He walked among men, earthbound, but Hercules fought for his right to dwell upon Olympus with Zeus, his father, and above all Gods. It was a right he would have to earn, facing danger no man or God had encountered before or since." (p.65–67).The author is aiming to write an entertaining story for children; he prefers the version of Hercules proving himself worthy for Olympus (and receiving his tasks from Zeus himself for that aim), than the more sordid atonement for his crime. There for this is the explanation behind his tasks which befits the light tone of the book.

The story is a wondrous mish mash. It is a very innovative manner of introducing the Hercules story, yet the jumping back and forth throughout the narrative could be confusing. For example, we meet

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	Helen at Alexander's castle at the beginning of the story and suddenly in the next chapter we read that Hercules saved her without knowing who she was. There is no indication that this part of the story preceded the first chapter. In another interesting and somewhat strange addition, Hercules encounters Oedipus' family and falls in love with Antigone. The feeling the reader gets is a kind of a Shrek universe in which the tales (in this case, myths) are mixed together. This is a novice and certainly exceptional enterprise by the author, yet there is not enough clarity and clear progression of the narrative. Hercules jumps around encountering people and the addition of Oedipus' family does not really add any substantial account Hercules' narrative, since Hercules simply leaves Antigone after he saw her embracing another man. What could have been an interesting reception of two myths into one story is left unaccomplished and Hercules hurries back to another task. Furthermore, it is nice mixing the myths, but when real history is also thrown in to the mix in references to Alexander the Great the result could be a complete confusion between History and Myth. Mixing myths is a nice way to entertain children, but we would not want them to think that Alexander the Great was a fictional character. In the end, the book offers a unique way to retell the ancient myths, yet lack of polish and a clear distinction between the different episodes hamper the effect.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Alcmene Alexander the Great Antigone Augean Stables Deianeira Erymanthian Boar Eurystheus Hades Helen Helios Hera Heracles Hercules Hippolyta Hydra Iolaus Nemean Lion Oedipus Omphale Sphinx Stymphalian Birds Thespius Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Family Friendship Heroism Love
Addenda	The entry refers to the Kindle edition: Ryan Madison, *Hercules' First*

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