Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Step Into Reading: The Twelve Labors of Hercules by Marc Cerasini , Isidre Mones ", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/523. Entry version as of November 07, 2026.

Marc Cerasini , Isidre Mones

Step Into Reading: The Twelve Labors of Hercules

United States (1997)

TAGS: Amazons Athena Atlas Augean Stables Cerberus Ceryneian Hind Charon Cretan Bull Diomedes (of Thrace) Diomedes' Mares Erymanthian Boar Geryon Hercules Hippolyta Hydra Nemean Lion Oracles Stymphalian Birds Thebes Titans Twelve Labours of Heracles Underworld Zeus



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

General information	
Title of the work	Step Into Reading: The Twelve Labors of Hercules
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1997
First Edition Details	Marc Cerasini, *Step Into Reading: The Twelve Labors of Hercules (A Step 3 Book)*. New York: Random House, 1997, 48 pp.
ISBN	0679883932 (pbk).
Genre	Comics (Graphic works), Myths
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
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Creators



Marc Cerasini , b. 1952
(Author)

Marc is an American author of various books for children as well as young adults' novels, among them novelization of movies, such as *Wolverine*. He also wrote a *USA Today* bestseller *AVP*: *Alien Vs. Predator* and original novels on Godzilla.

Sources:

Profile at harpercollins.com (accessed: October 9, 2018).

Profile at fantasticfiction.com (accessed: October 9, 2018).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com



Isidre Mones , b. 1947
(Illustrator)

Isidre is a Spanish illustrator and comic book artist from Barcelona. He works on children's books, games, DVD covers and more.

Source:

Blog (accessed: January 9, 2020)

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Additional information

Summary

This is an illustrated depiction of Hercules' labours. The book opens with the infant Hercules and the snakes. Then we see Hercules as a young man who fights others and seeks counsel from the oracle. The book focuses on the 12 labours which also end the book. There is a depiction of each labour separately.

Analysis

This book is targeted at young readership and therefore there is no harsher concepts as murder or infidelity. The book opens with a story about two snakes that tried to kill a baby, followed by a question – "Who was that amazing baby?" (p. 5). Strangely, there is no reference at all to Hercules' divine lineage, and the events are presented as if Hercules was simply a very strong boy. When Hercules grows up, we are told that "he was so strong that sometimes he hurt people when he didn't mean to." (p. 7). Of course, Hercules is depicted as innocent; there is no sign of his anger either. In some other retellings, it is emphasized that Hercules could neither control his temper, nor his power. But here, his strength is the main point. In the illustration we see Hercules standing above a vanquished rival (possibly after a fight), who is half lying on the ground, showing that he is not seriously hurt. Hercules becomes a hero after vanquishing a gang of bandits. Since he is already a hero, he seeks the counsel of the oracle as to what to do next, and is told to perform 12 tasks for the king.

Much of the mythological reference is vague; the king is unnamed and presented as hating Hercules because he was stronger than him. The reference to the gods is very limited; Hera and Zeus are non-existent, while Athena helps him with the Stymphalian birds, and the sun god is briefly mentioned. This Hercules lives in an almost godless world, an interesting choice in a mythological tale. The gods are an inevitable part of Hercules' story and they are the key motivators of his tale. If they are removed from the narrative, it becomes more superficial; the story is merely one of a strong man looking for adventures. However, since this is an early retelling book, it is possible that the author was more interested in presenting a clear story to children than dealing with the mythological elements (this is also why the names of the different people and creatures are not mentioned, as they are difficult to read). Hercules' physique is very visible in the drawings; his muscles are well emphasized. This is

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	almost a super-hero kind of story, chasing the monster of the week. An unusual amount of space is devoted to King Diomedes' betrayal of Hercules, possibly in order to provide some action scenes for the readers. At the end of the story, while the gods are hardly present, Hercules pays his respect to them in the temple. Hercules is thus described as pious towards the gods. This completely changes the original conflict between him and Hera, and perhaps provides a lesson here for children to thank god for any assistance. Hercules is described as living a life "of adventure" (p. 48), as if adventure is what constitutes a hero. He is also almost devoid of any emotions in this story, basically a cardboard character, simply fighting and moving on to the next adventure.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Amazons Athena Atlas Augean Stables Cerberus Ceryneian Hind Charon Cretan Bull Diomedes (of Thrace) Diomedes' Mares Erymanthian Boar Geryon Hercules Hippolyta Hydra Nemean Lion Oracles Stymphalian Birds Thebes Titans Twelve Labours of Heracles Underworld Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Animals Heroism Journeys Masculinity

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