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Robert Baxter , I. M. Richardson

# The Adventures of Hercules

*United States (1983)*

TAGS: Atlas Augean Stables Cerberus Ceryneian Hind Delphi Diomedes' Mares Erymanthian Boar Eurystheus Geryon Hera Hercules Hippolyta Hydra Megara Nemean Lion Stymphalian Birds Thebes Titans Twelve Labours of Heracles Underworld White Bull Zeus




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

| General information | |
|---|---|
| *Title of the work* | The Adventures of Hercules |
| *Country of the First Edition* | United States of America |
| *Country/countries of popularity* | United States |
| *Original Language* | English |
| *First Edition Date* | 1983 |
| *First Edition Details* | I. M. Richardson, *The Adventures of Hercules.* Mahwah: Troll associates, Inc., 1983, 32 pp. |
| *ISBN* | 0893758663 (pbk). |
| *Genre* | Picture books |
| *Target Audience* | Young adults |
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## Creators



**Robert Baxter , b. 1930**
**(Illustrator)**

Baxter is an illustrator and studio artist who works with both watercolour and oil. He studied at the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles in 1954–1957. He was one of six artists who started Studio II, a school/studio in Connecticut. He currently is on the faculty of two Connecticut schools – Silvermine School of Art and Rowayton Art Center. He has won eleven awards, the last being the Ogden Pleisner Memorial Prize from the American Watercolor Society in 1999, and his last exhibition was in 2011 at the Westport Historical Society in Connecticut.

Source:

Profile at the dabbertgallery.com (accessed: July 4, 2018).

Bio prepared by Allison Rosenblum, Bar-Ilan University, allie.rose89@gmail.com



**I. M. Richardson (Author)**

I. M. Richardson has written a number of children's retellings of classic literature such as *Demeter and Persephone: the Seasons of Time*, *The Adventures of Eros and Psyche*, *The Adventures of Hercules*, *Tales from the Odyssey*, etc.

Source:



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Profile at the goodreads.com (accessed: June 25, 2018).

Bio prepared by Allison Rosenblum, Bar-Ilan University, allie.rose89@gmail.com



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## Additional information

Summary

This is a picture book for an older audience. On each page we have a labour of Hercules with a water-color like illustration, thus we have a narration and illustrations of all 12 labours. The language is aimed at young adults rather than small children. The illustration are also not naïve but in a more adult style. The story follows Hercules from his infantry and the killing of the snakes, then we arrive at his adulthood (killing a lion, helping the king of Thebes, and killing his family) and the completion of the 12 labours which ends the book.

Analysis

The story is aimed at young adults, yet there are details which have been softened for them. For example, it is simply noted that Hercules' mother was mortal and "this annoyed the goddess Hera, who was Zeus's wife" (p. 4). There is no direct mention of Zeus' infidelity apart from this occasional remark. Even though the book is very short, it still manages to tell Hercules' story without, in some detail, even stating that as a young man, Hercules killed a lion and wore its skin. This is a different lion from the Nemean lion, and it suggests that the author would give a complete narrative as possible of Hercules, despite the brevity of the book and that he is well aware of the original myth. The next page depicts how Hercules helped Creon of Thebes and as a result, married his daughter Megara – again, a part often omitted from stories, suggesting that the author aimed to present a full depiction of the Hercules myth. On the next page the author mentions that Hera "caused him to attack his wife and kids." (p. 9). There are no further details and no mention of murder, yet the illustration depicts what the words do not. A shocked young Hercules is seen covering the side of his face, almost floating in the middle of a black square. Above his head are light silhouette depictions of three children, almost skeleton-like. This is a very powerful and even haunting, imagery. The picture in this case provides more impact than the words in describing the horror of Hercules' deed.

From this event we follow Hercules on his 12 tasks. Hercules is told by the oracle that if he works for king Eurystheus for twelve years, he will be "free of…pain and guilt." (p. 10). This again hints at the more mature tone of the story. Hercules is not asking for a way to be a hero, but for a way to atone for his actions. The mentioning of the years is also an interesting addition, since in most stories there is no time



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element with regard to the labours. Perhaps for a young readership it could give an essence of truism to the story. The long passage of time will educate children that being a hero requires hard work and time.

In the following pages, depictions of the labours are shown sometimes over a  two-page spread, some on a single page. In the story of the Amazons, again, there is no mention of killing, but only of fighting between Hercules and the Amazons. However, again, the illustration completes the narrative. We see Hercules holding an Amazon above his head while others are lying on the ground. This suggests a harsh battle and again it shows that the illustrations are an intrinsic part of the story; they are intended not only to decorate the book but also to add another layer to it.

The story ends before Hercules' death, which is not included in the book. This is of course hinted at by the title of the book, which focuses on the adventures of Hercules, the most famous of which are narrated. There is a full closure since the ending notes that the oracle's prophecy came true and "Hercules had become the hero of all people." (p. 32). The question remains, however, as to what makes Hercules a "hero of all people"? It is true that he completed amazing tasks, but he is not described as helping people in any stage, other than in the killing of the Nemean lion. This point demonstrates that the tradition of Hercules as hero is so strong that his title as a people's hero has become synonymous with his name, even if there is no real evidence for it in the actual narrative.

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|---|---|
| Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts | Atlas Augean Stables Cerberus Ceryneian Hind Delphi Diomedes' Mares Erymanthian Boar Eurystheus Geryon Hera Hercules Hippolyta Hydra Megara Nemean Lion Stymphalian Birds Thebes Titans Twelve Labours of Heracles Underworld White Bull Zeus |
| Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture | Adventure Animals Death Emotions Family Heroism Journeys Masculinity |



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