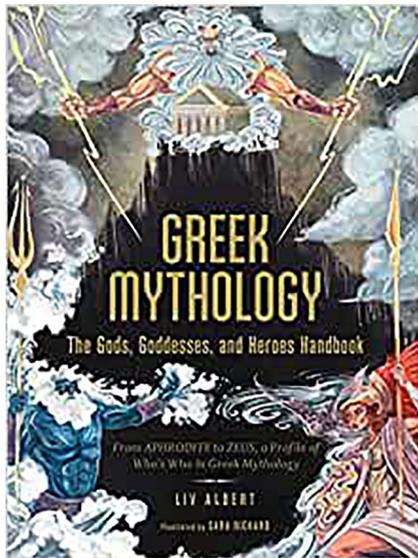


## Greek Mythology. The Gods, Goddesses, and Heroes Handbook

Albert (L.) Pp.239, colour ill. Stoughton, MA: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2021. Cased, £12.99. ISBN:978-1-5072-1549-4.

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I enjoyed reading this, but what is not to like with Greek mythology? The title of the book tells you exactly what to expect and the illustrations by Sara Richard are exciting and beautiful in equal measure. I particularly liked the acknowledgement from the start that these stories began life as an oral tradition and that this inevitably means that there are potentially several versions and no one version is 'right'. This

does sometimes confuse students; I recall one very lively 'debate' with a Y8 class over the 'correct' order of Heracles' labours! The book is helpfully divided up into generic sections – Olympian Gods, deities (e.g. Titans, nymphs etc.) and heroes, both those with immortal parentage and those without. This allows characters such as Daedalus, Oedipus, and the Danaids to be included which rounds out the stories nicely and includes stories which might not, perhaps, be so commonly known. Obviously, this being Greek mythology, there are some stories which involve xenophobia or assault and mutilation, but they are carefully told, and sadly such things were and continue to be facts of life. The entries about each character are engaging and there are little additions at the end of some stories to pique the interest further and maybe encourage personal research. The book ends with a helpful index and reading list which is perhaps aimed more at teenagers but within the book there are references to films such as Disney's *Hercules* or the Percy Jackson books and films as well as the classic *Clash of the Titans*. I would think this was a useful addition to any school library, and although some of the entries might be a little graphic for very young pupils, this is Greek mythology, and that was never known for holding back!

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## Daughter of Sparta

Andrews (C.M.) Pp. 375, map. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2021. Cased £14.99. ISBN: 978-0-316-54007-0.

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Claire M. Andrews, who has spent her life on both sides of the Atlantic and is now an enthusiast of Vermont's rugged outdoor activities, has penned quite a remarkable debut novel. Her *Daughter of Sparta* is not just self-avowedly feminist in its re-shaping of a very formidable ancient female identity through the guise of mythical Daphne, but Andrews has taken the quite minor (and somewhat distasteful, it might be added) myth of her protagonist and Apollo and woven it into a

truly cosmic saga. Instead of being a hapless victim of Apollo's amorous pursuit – where she is transmogrified into a laurel tree to evade the god's lust in the ancient accounts – Daphne emerges through Andrews' reworking as so powerfully self-assured that she is as much god-saviour as god-slayer.

True to the ancient myth(s), Daphne is exceptionally wary of the deities of Mount Olympus. Magically ensnared by Artemis – who ambushes Daphne and her brother during the Spartan *Carneia* to ensure her compliance – the young warrior is called upon to do no less than save the very deities she holds in such low regard. Artemis forces her brother, Apollo, upon the reluctant heroine to rescue nine mysterious items stolen from the home of the gods; as the human and her godly counterpart battle seemingly endless supernatural forces – the combat rarely lets up – their own relationship (without giving too much away) also evolves. The 'shock ending' to the novel certainly highlights how far Andrews' heroine has moved away from the ancient mythic stories regarding her fate, while also establishing a fine basis for at least one sequel (which the author is currently penning).

Another striking aspect of Andrews' vision for this re-imagined Daphne-Apollo relationship is the sheer scale of the canvas she paints them upon. Stretching from Sparta to Minoan Crete, Mount Olympus to Mount Kazbek, Hades to Tartarus, Andrews also has her reluctant heroine encountering everyone from Prometheus, the Minotaur, Centaurs and Arachne, to the riddling Sphinx of Thebes (along with many, many more creatures plucked from the ancient Greek imagination). It's a virtual 'who's who' of Greek mythology

and is a real delight – if not also a memory test – for those of us engaged by such a modern-day mythography. A neatly-illustrated map within the opening pages of the novel helps guide those who may fear contracting travel sickness from the speed Andrews moves her reader across this world.

Like her deeply mysterious arch-nemesis in the novel, Daphne also emerges as of uncertain origins and powers throughout most of the pages. Despite her tender years (only 17, which would seem implausible given her prowess if it wasn't for her not-altogether disclosed lineage), the heroine proves as much a match for Spartan manhood as the mercurial god Apollo, as well as virtually every other force she encounters. Daphne is intent upon not just her mission to rescue the stolen Olympian items in order to salvage the waning powers of the gods, but in uncovering her own true identity and that of the merciless rival who pits such obstacles against her. This sense of mystery pervades the work, as does the unrelenting brutality of the forces that she and her allies must combat. No less than the fate of Mount Olympus resides in her ability to solve all of these grim, if not also gory and tragic, challenges.

Andrews' writing style is terse and pithy, with short chapter lengths that rapidly move the reader from one semi-mythical locale to the next. The pace and rhythm of the work is well measured. She also possesses a fine sense of humour, often reflected in the banter her protagonists deploy. It might be said that Andrews possesses the writerly confidence equivalent of her exceptionally brave chief protagonist. As publisher James Patterson points out in the brief Foreword, he knew that *Daughter of Sparta* was something special not just in that the author has transformed Daphne from ancient victim to contemporary heroine, but that in battling the forces of ancient misogyny this fresh Daphne emerges as one who holds her own against the very gods and is fully deserving of the traditionally-male glory she reaps.

I look forward to reading the sequel.

doi: 10.1017/S2058631022000411

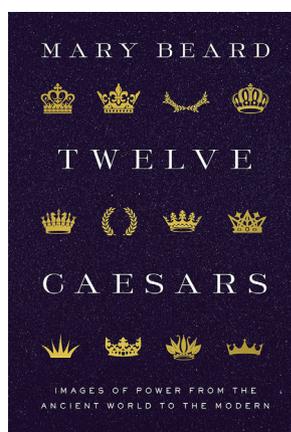
## Twelve Caesars. Images of Power from the Ancient World to the Modern

Beard (M.) Pp. xii + 376, b/w & colour illis.  
Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021.  
Cased, £30, US\$35. ISBN 978-0-691-22236-3

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Mary Beard's latest volume, *Twelve Caesars*, follows on from her recent works aimed at a non-academic audience – *SPQR* (2015) and *Civilisations: how do we look* (2018) – in its focus on the relevance and impact of the Classical World. The subject of this volume is not the 'Twelve Caesars' themselves, but their images and the meaning that these images have held for modern audiences, ranging from the 16th



Century AD to the present day. *Twelve Caesars* discusses the identification and mis-identification of images, how these images have been understood and used, and the wider implications of the early Emperors' legacy in our modern world. The author masterfully combines expert knowledge and scholarly rigour with a clear and engaging writing style.

The project began with a series of lectures, the A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, delivered by Mary Beard in Washington DC in Spring 2011, but it finds greater relevance at the time of publication due to the increasing scrutiny of images and their impact after Edward Colston's statue was toppled in June 2020. In the author's own words, both the images of the Emperors and 'contested images' today 'provided a focus for debates on power and its discontents (and they are a useful reminder that the function of commemorative portraits is not simply celebration)' (p.275). In this way, *Twelve Caesars* situates Classical forms of expression at the heart of modern debates about heritage, power, and commemoration.

*Twelve Caesars* is divided into eight chapters, each dealing with a particular aspect of the images of the 'Twelve Caesars'. The book begins and ends with a striking Classical image: a sarcophagus that was once believed to have held the remains of the Roman Emperor Alexander Severus. This sarcophagus was brought back to America from Beirut by a certain Commodore Jesse Elliot in the early 1840s and offered as a resting place for Andrew Jackson. The former president balked at the autocratic image that being buried in a Roman Emperor's sarcophagus would have brought and refused in strong terms. The sarcophagus has since been labelled (and celebrated) as the 'Tomb in Which Andrew Jackson REFUSED to be Buried' (p.6). This story is endemic of the work as a whole: *Twelve Caesars* gives a well-researched and often fascinating insight into images and objects related to the ancient world and discusses the issues that they provoke.

In the second chapter, the book discusses the problems associated with positively identifying the images of the 'Twelve Caesars'. This rigorous and thorough overview will be particularly interesting to students of the Classical World, who perhaps have not approached images from the ancient world with the same degree of scepticism. The excellently reproduced colour images allow the reader to engage well with the discussion.

The third chapter addresses the form of images, both in portraits and on coins. It shows how imperial images were emulated and even reproduced in efforts to communicate messages about power. The fourth and fifth chapters then consider the way in which the images of the 'Twelve Caesars', inspired by Suetonius' biographies, were codified as a set, reproduced, and how modern versions of the images became influential in their own right. In these three chapters, Beard discusses how the interaction between ancient and modern images is a two-way process: modern interpreters imitated and reproduced ancient images to add meaning to their own works, but in the process they added layers to the subjects with which they interacted.