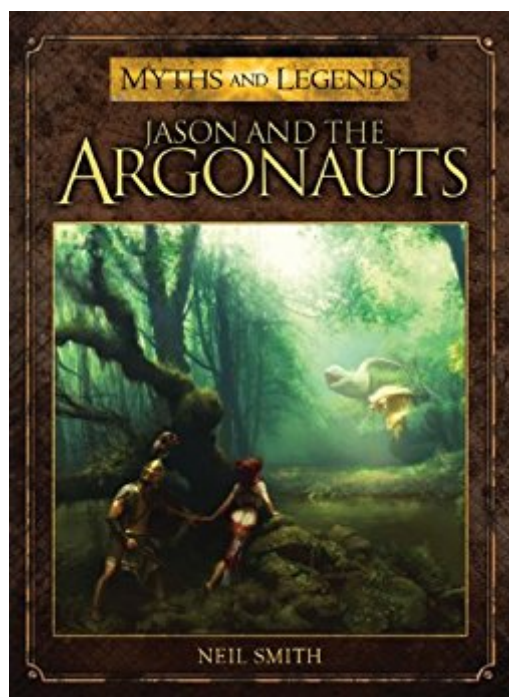


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Jason And The Argonauts (Myths And Legends)



Synopsis

The voyage of Jason and the Argonauts and their hunt for the Golden Fleece is one of the most enduringly popular of all of the Ancient Greek heroic myths. Accepting the quest in order to regain his kingdom, Jason assembled a crew of legendary heroes, including Hercules, Orpheus, Atalanta, and the twins Castor and Polydeuces. With this band of warriors and demi-gods, Jason set sail in the Argo on a journey across the known world. During their quest, the Argonauts faced numerous challenges including the Harpies, the Clashing Rocks, the Sirens, Talos, the bronze giant, the sleepless dragon that guarded the fleece, and, of course, the fickle will of the gods of Olympus. Filled with magic, monsters, sword fights, and sacrifice, this ancient adventure story is given new life by Neil Smith who also examines its historical context, its classical sources and its enduring legacy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jason and the Argonauts, retold by Neil Smith and illustrated by Jos© Daniel Cabrera Peña, is one of a sequence of books in a new series by Osprey Adventures entitled MYTHS AND LEGENDS. It's a pretty straightforward text, and serves as a solid introduction to the story beyond

the highly abridged versions one gets in schoolbooks. One wishes, though, for a bit more verve in the storytelling itself. The introduction is a very brief (one and a half pages) essay placing the story in historical context in terms of when it is assumed to be set, gives a little information on the two authors mostly credited for the versions of the story as we now think of it (Apollonius of Rhodes in the 3rd century B.C. and Gaius Valerius Flaccus in the 1st century A.D.) and on which this tale is mostly based. Finally, it mentions the tale's connection to other adventures, such as the Arthurian cycle and Tolkien's LORD OF THE RINGS. The rest of the text, about 70 pages or so, is the tale itself, enhanced by illustrations and brief sidebar excursions into areas of interest. As mentioned, we get much more detail regarding Jason's adventures than usual, and my guess is that most readers will be pleasantly surprised by the number of adventures Jason and the Argonauts encounter, as well as how varied their exploits are, including navigating ocean dangers, fighting off harpies and giants, facing armies, and dealing also with the more mundane dangers of the world -- wild boars, poisonous snakes, and the like. Those who have seen either the famed Harryhausen movie version or the less-famed made-for-TV one might recognize more of the adventures, but as both movies truncated the story and took creative liberties, Jason's journey should still seem fresh.

The renowned publisher Osprey embarked on a journey. Famous for their military history books, they now set sail for a new quest...with the same formats filled with art and written by respected authors, they now vie for the retelling of ancient myths and legends to an adult target group. Risky? Yes. Tough? Definitely. Paradigm changing? No doubt. Worthwhile? Definitely. They hit the mark. Osprey already had a few books dedicated to areas that weren't entirely History or military history, but I believe this is their first series focusing on mythological and fantasy themes. Neil Smith manages to take the Argonauts tale in a way I've never seen before. When you study mythology you may find academic volumes about them or narrative ones. Smith made a syncretism effort and managed to fuse both views. He retells the legend of Jason and the Argonauts using the most famous version, but he also provides background, boxes with information on certain aspects of history (like ships, weapons, etc.) or other versions of the legend. This story is the archetypal quest tale. A group of heroes with distinct characteristics join together for a worthwhile purpose and for glory. This group includes Herakles, Castor, Polydeuces, Atalanta, Argus, Idmon, Ancaeus, the fathers of the main Trojan War heroes (like Telamon, father of Ajax; Pelaeus, father of Achilles or Laertes, father of Odysseus), among many others. They face monsters, storms and geographical terrors, and when they reach Colchis they find that their adventure is far from over. Jason is quite different from other Greek heroes. Although powerful, in most versions of the tale he never defeats

personally the obstacles (or he is heavily helped by others).

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