

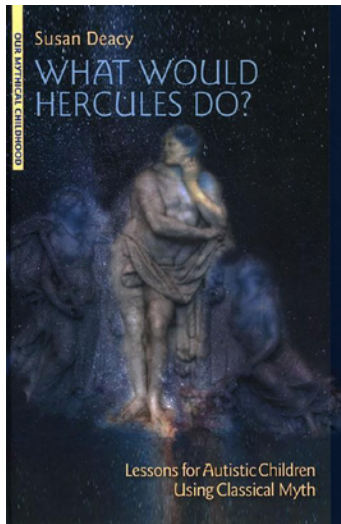
Book Review

What Would Hercules Do? Lessons for Autistic Children Using Classical Myth

Deacy (S.) Pp. 202, b/w & colour ill. Warsaw: University of Warsaw Press, 2023. Cased, £16.99. ISBN: 9788323558729.

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As a Latin teacher seeking to create an inclusive classroom and as a father of an amazing five-year-old who had been diagnosed with autism nearly two years ago, I was particularly interested in Susan Deacy's investigation about how classical mythology might provide a new avenue for educators to effectively and meaningfully engage with autistic students. One of Deacy's stated goals in writing this work gets to the very heart of reaching neurodiverse students, namely, 'the role classical myth can play in

facilitating communication and engagement for autistic children, by utilizing the characters of myth as "gateways" to understanding, identifying, contextualizing, and conceptualizing oneself and others'. The book presents a set of ten lessons based on the scene in which Xenophon tells us that Hercules went into a quiet place and sat in quiet thought. The ten lessons, designed to be implemented in the familiar setting of the classroom, each focus on a theme which resonates with a dimension of autism – communication, decision-making, emotions, planning, interests, and sensory experiences. The book is up to date and based on the most recent research into autism and neurodiversity. It is incredibly practical and laid out in a user-friendly manner. It would certainly prove to be of interest to educators who seek to reach all learners and who seek to create an inclusive learning experience. Each lesson is designed to take between 45 and 90 minutes and could be done individually or as a whole set. The lessons include a teacher-led introductory component, creative activities, and a time for student reflection. The story of Hercules facing seemingly impossible challenge after seemingly impossible challenge is remarkably compatible with the experience of autistic individuals who find themselves having to negotiate ways to meet the challenges which they face in a world that has largely been designed by and to accommodate neurotypical people. The story of successfully facing one seemingly impossible task after another provides an avenue to profound discussion and reflection about challenges faced by those with autism in a world that privileges the neurotypical.

doi: 10.1017/S2058631024000485