

The Shortest History of Greece

Heneage (J.) Pp. 242, ills, maps. Exeter: Old Street Publishing, 2021. Cased, £12.99. ISBN: 9781910400869.

Stephanie Saunders

Kent College, Pembury, UK
stephanie.saunders@live.com



Heneage's *The Shortest History of Greece* claims 'Read in a day. Remember for a lifetime.' It certainly delivers on its promise of being a short fly-through Greek history, though reading in a day will be reader-specific. At fewer than 250 pages, Heneage takes the reader on a whistle-stop tour of Greece, from the Homeric Age to modern day. Of course, one shouldn't expect depth from a book of this nature – breadth is definitely the name of the game here and it is done very well.

Split into four parts, the book takes a chronological journey. The first part deals with 'beginnings' to 1453 and the fall of Constantinople; the next covers up to 1830 and the Battle of Navarino. The penultimate part continues to 1949 and the civil war, whilst the final one ends the narrative in the present day.

Due to its short length, the book naturally covers events in a succinct manner. It is an excellent refresher of history for those who have already studied it or a gentle primer for those new to Greek history. It certainly wouldn't be out of place amongst a classroom collection of further reading. The writing is easy to read, though with a few challenging words that students may need to look up. Nevertheless, I can see keen Year 9 students picking this up. The layout is attractive – the lines are nicely spaced so as to be accessible to most readers; the sections are kept short, allowing one to dip in and out as one pleases; and good use is made of pictures and maps. My only quibble would be that these would have benefited from being in colour but of course that would impact on the cost and layout of the book. I particularly enjoyed the frequent asides placed in grey boxes. Here, Heneage adds further detail, biography, and stories on key people, events, and ideas that might not fully fit in within the main narrative. These are excellent for sparking curiosity and I can see them being a good jumping-off point for further research. The book ends with a short list of 18 suggested books for further reading, arranged in

chronological order, perfect for those whose interest has been piqued by the section they have read.

In all, I would highly recommend this book to teachers, students, and those generally interested in a short and sweet run through vast swathes of Greek history.

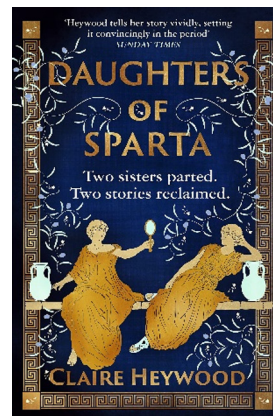
doi: 10.1017/S2058631022000356

Daughters of Sparta

Heywood (C.) Pp. 336, map. London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 2021. Cased, £16.99. ISBN: 978-1-529-34993-1

Jodie Reynolds

Greenhead Sixth Form College, Huddersfield, UK
jreynolds@greenhead.ac.uk



Claire Heywood's debut novel is an inspired addition to the growing genre of literature which retells the Greek myths from a more feminist perspective. The novel charts the lives of two women- Klytemnestra and Helen - from their early childhood, through to the events with which they are most famously associated – Helen's liaison with Paris and subsequent flight to Troy and Klytemnestra's murderous relationship with her husband.

As a teacher who has the wonderful job of teaching Classics to groups of teenaged students, it is always refreshing to think about a character from a different perspective. Heywood's Helen is vividly drawn and I was struck by how she managed to create someone who evokes both sympathy and frustration in equal measure. Helen's decision to abscond with Paris is foregrounded by an exploration of the effects of Helen's childhood, where her mother is distant, and the difficulties of childbirth. From a modern perspective, it seems that Heywood is encouraging us to view Helen as perhaps suffering from some form of post-natal depression. What I liked though, was the fact that she does not seek to absolve Helen from blame. Helen is portrayed as rather self-absorbed and naïve and it was very enjoyable reading something which asks the reader to view events through the eyes of such a complex character.

My favourite part of this novel was the portrayal of Klytemnestra. She is a character who is rather unsympathetically dealt with by the ancient authors and the version presented by Heywood is of a woman pushed into terrible actions through no real fault of her own. Knowing how the story has to end does not ruin this novel. In

fact, it helps to create a sense of anxiety as you read and Heywood does a great job with how she builds upon existing literature and tradition with events of her own invention. These feel very authentic and the pace is perfect in building towards the climax of the story.

The only criticism that I could level at this book is that I felt it could have been ended a little later in the life of Klytemnestra. I would have liked to have seen how Heywood might have handled the reaction of Orestes and Elektra to their father's murder. However, I felt that Helen's story had a perfect ending as it helped to underline her character in that she was able to move on and forget about the war, leaving the reader frustrated at her self-absorption. I will be recommending this book to my own students, but I would be careful about lending it to some younger readers as some of the discussions of sex might be a little adult for them. However, this is not gratuitous and is essential for the story that Heywood is building. Overall, I enjoyed it very much. This book is a real page-turner and it will be interesting to see where Heywood goes next.

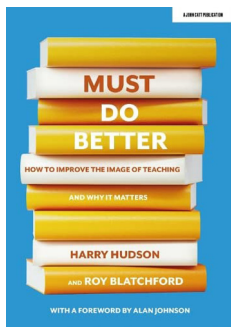
doi: 10.1017/S2058631022000599

Must Do Better: How to Improve the Image of Teaching and Why it Matters

Hudson (H.), Blatchford (R.), Pp. 159. Woodbridge: John Catt Educational Ltd., 2022. Paper, £15. ISBN: 978-1-913622-97-8

Dr. Jessica Dixon

Woldingham School, Surrey, UK
j.e.dixon@hotmail.co.uk



If there is one statement that haunts the teaching profession, it is this infamous line from George Bernard Shaw's 1903 play *Man and Superman*: 'Those who can, do; those who can't, teach.' This is the starting point of *Must Do Better*, which is a rallying cry for a reframing, redirection, and reinvigoration of teaching. The book is co-authored by Harry Hudson and Roy Blatchford. Hudson is a History teacher at a West London secondary school who writes for several publications including

The Times and *The Spectator*. Blatchford is Director of Blinks Education who, as a former Headteacher and Ofsted inspector, has a wealth of experience of schools at all levels.

The book starts by surveying the image of teaching across the generations and highlights the pervasive stereotyping of teachers as of low worth, brutal and/or lazy, particularly by authors such as Jane Austen and Charles Dickens. Hudson and Blatchford suggest that these stereotypes remain dominant because of society's deep respect for the English literary canon. However, they ask why, if we can question 19th and 20th century portrayals of women and

race, do we continue to accept their attitude towards education as fact (p. 30).

The book is then organised into three parts. It first identifies the problems facing the image of teaching, then explores the nature of teaching in the 21st century before suggesting the changes needed to raise teaching to a higher level in the national consciousness. A nice touch is that each chapter is introduced with a quote from a celebrity about their favourite teacher, most of which, but not all, taken from Pamela Coleman's 2012 book *My Favourite Teacher*.

The first problem identified by Hudson and Blatchford is pay, both in terms of starting salaries to recruit the best graduates but also salaries further up the pay scale to increase retainment. They further argue that what they term the 'illusion of knowing' (p. 44) needs to be broken, namely that everyone has experience of school as a pupil and so assumes that they 'know' what schools and teaching are like, even if their experience is outdated. Two further problems that they address are perhaps more contentious. Namely, that the media and unions only promote a negative view of teaching. The media do so because negative stories are more likely to lead to sales and clicks (p. 58) and the unions, as the only public voice for teaching, hold the profession back by just voicing grievances (p. 61).

Part Two examines the nature of 21st century teaching and celebrates the modern profession. Hudson and Blatchford see teaching as a balance between social justice, intellectual challenge and cutting-edge pedagogic developments, which they argue is the USP of the teaching profession (p. 94). They applaud that teaching is becoming an ever more technical and scientific profession and that increasing numbers of teachers are engaging with research to create the best conditions for learning in the classroom. The result is that teaching is 'finally coming of age as a truly professional profession' (p. 78). They highlight the positive impact teachers can have on their individual pupils whilst also enabling social mobility on a wider level. However, they make a point that teaching should not be seen merely as a charitable endeavour nor as separate from the roles and responsibilities of the state (p. 93).

In the third and final part of the book, Hudson and Blatchford make a range of suggestions for how the problems they identify can be overcome. They encourage individual teachers to develop a public voice by writing articles and books aimed at a public audience, as Hudson already does. They would also like the government to do more to increase wages, improve recruitment and to support the teaching profession more generally. They further outline what they term 'radical' suggestions. Firstly, that private schools should be abolished to level the educational playing field as it were. Or if this is not possible, then state schools should learn more from private schools, which are free to stick to what they know and aren't at the mercy of government or Ofsted fads (p. 150). Secondly, that trainee teachers should be prevented from coming straight from university, instead being only able to start teacher training after a few years' life experience.

Must Do Better is a thought-provoking and rousing read for anyone who wants to celebrate and promote teaching. However, if its aim of improving the image of teaching is to be a success, it must be read by those outside of education. There are parts of *Must Do Better* which some may not agree with. Nevertheless, it opens an important debate on how to move away from 'those who can't, teach' and shines light on what the modern teaching profession has to celebrate.

doi: 10.1017/S2058631022000605