



YouthREAD 2025

Grades 6-8
Book Selection

THE LABORS OF HERCULES BEAL

Written by Gary D. Schmidt

Herc Beal may be named after a mythical hero but he's no superhero, so when his homeroom teacher assigns him to duplicate the mythical Hercules's amazing feats in real life, he's skeptical. After all, there are no Nemean Lions on Cape Cod!

Missing his parents terribly and wishing his older brother wasn't working all the time, Herc finds new friends, human and animal, to help him. And though his mythical role model performed his twelve labors by himself, Herc begins to see that he may not have to go it alone.

**Join our CommunityREAD by reading and sharing this book,
then enrich the experience with these questions and activities.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- There are some very funny and light parts in *The Labors of Hercules Beal*; there are also some very sad, serious parts. Why do you think the author chose to include both funny and sad scenes? Did you like that this book was both funny and sad? Why or why not?
- Describe Herc's relationship with his brother, Achilles, at the beginning of the book? How has Herc's relationship with his brother changed by the end of the book?
- What did you think about the Classical Mythology Application Projects that Lieutenant Colonel Hupfer assigned his homeroom students? Why do you think he assigned them?
- Have you ever learned an important lesson from reading a book, like Herc did from reading and recreating the Hercules myths? If so, what was the book, and what did you learn?
- Take a close look at the art on the cover. What details from the story are represented on the cover? Do you think this cover is a good representation of the story? Why or why not?
- What does Herc learn about family and community?

ACTIVITIES

- Use details in the book to create your own map of the setting. You should include important places in the story, like the Beal Brothers Farm and Nursery, neighboring houses, and the Cape Cod Academy for Environmental Sciences.
- Read the myth of the twelve labors of Hercules. Compare and contrast the labors in the myth with the labors Herc Beal performs.
- Choose one of Hercule's twelve labors. Write about how *you* would recreate it in your hometown.
- Herc's classmate Ty Malcolm is tasked with creating a graphic novel retelling of *The Odyssey*. Choose a scene from *The Labors of Hercules Beal* and recreate it in a different format. It could be a graphic novel, a painting, song lyrics, a skit, or any other creative format you would like.

Share what you did with the library on Facebook (facebook.com/FHCPL) or Instagram (@FHCPL).



WHAT IS COMMUNITYREAD?

CommunityREAD is a month-long community event that encourages reading and discussion. Each year, a different CommunityREAD book is chosen, along with a selection of YouthREAD books that explore similar topics and themes for younger readers.

The 2025 CommunityREAD book is *Gaining Ground: A Story of Farmers' Markets, Local Food, and Saving the Family Farm* by Forrest Pritchard. The author will speak at the Marathon Center for the Performing Arts on Thursday, March 20 at 7:30 PM.

2025 YOUTHREAD TITLES

- Preschool: *Here Are the Seeds* by JaNay Brown-Wood
- Grades K-2: *Amara's Farm* by JaNay Brown-Wood
- Grades 3-5: *Stepping Stones* by Lucy Knisley
- Grades 6-8: *The Labors of Hercules Beal* by Gary D. Schmidt
- Grades 9-12: *Bend in the Road* by Sara Biren

