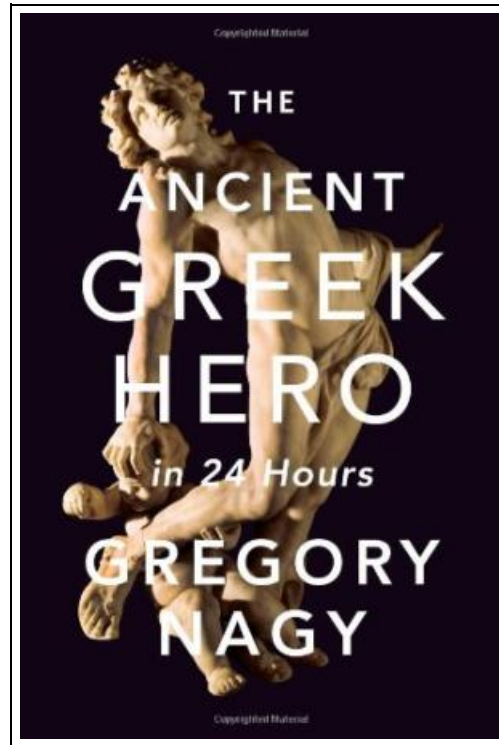


The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours.



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Reviews

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THE ANCIENT GREEK HERO IN 24 HOURS.



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Condition: New. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) / London, 2013. XVII,727p. Half cloth wrps. 'The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours is Gregory Nagy's Mooc book. The massive open online course is one of the most significant developments in higher education in years and Nagy is one of the foremost Homerists of his generation, so the book deserves attention both as an academic publication and as a pedagogical experiment. (.) This is a densely packed book and one that repays slow consumption. 'The ancient Greek concept of hero,' starts Nagy, 'goes beyond the word's ordinary levels of meaning in casual contemporary usage.' It denotes 'humans of the remote past, endowed with superhuman abilities and descended from the immortal gods themselves.' Like the gods, the heroes inspired worship. Ancient Greek communities sacrificed at the tombs of the heroes and prayed to them. They also listened to poems that exalted the great deeds of the heroes of old: the Homeric epics, but also shorter lyric compositions (for example, the songs of Sappho and Pindar). Nagy argues that myth and cult were intertwined, and at times antagonistic, ways of remembering the heroes. Poetry was Panhellenic in orientation: it preserved the 'imperishable fame' (kleos aphthiton) of the heroes for all those who understood Greek. Ritual was, necessarily, a local affair. It framed myth (since poetry was performed at religious festivals) but could never aspire to the same universal appeal. It was by listening to shared poems about gods and heroes that the Greeks felt united, even while they lived in independent city states and followed different ritual calendars. One of the greatest achievements of Nagy's research is that it powerfully illuminates the relationship between myth and cult. Readers will also learn the importance of close reading and the necessity of learning...



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