

Reading the Soldier books

The Urth list — 8 messages, 4 voices, 20 Jan 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3778>

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James Wynn — 20 Jan 2003, 19:04

Regarding reading the Soldier books, Nutria wrote:

You might want to skim Bulfinch's Mythology before starting in. You've gotta know a bit, yea more than a bit, about ancient Greek mythology. And if the series continues, you're going to have to know something about Zoroastrianism also, I suspect.

Crush refutes:

I gotta respectfully disagree with this. This is no more true than that one needs to know a lot about Sun mythology and symbolism to enjoy the "New Sun" or (the "Long Sun"), or to know about world Serpent mythology and classical references to enjoy the "Long Sun".

When you read these books you will ****want**** to find out more about the things you read about there (e.g. Cybele, Spartan culture & history, etc.). But, one might know a decent bit generally about Greek mythology, literature, and history and still find he has plenty to learn while reading "Mist" and "Arete."

For reading the Soldier books, I recommend doing what one would do for Wolfe's other works:

1. Read the books
 2. Look up the obvious blanks the stories imply to you (or read Graves' "Complete Myths" from start to finish because this was an important source for this work)
 3. Reread the books
- Crush

James Jordan — 20 Jan 2003, 19:13 · follows James Wynn

James,

I gotta respectfully defer to your much better advice.

Respectfully,

Nutria

At 01:04 PM 1/20/2003, you wrote:

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James Wynn — 20 Jan 2003, 21:18 · follows James Jordan

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Crush is responding to his own posts now:

For step 2, of course Herodotus' History is also invaluable reading and "The Golden Ass."

-- Crush

Michael Straight — 21 Jan 2003, 17:10 · follows James Wynn

On Mon, 20 Jan 2003, James Wynn wrote:

I gotta respectfully disagree with this. This is no more true than that one needs to know a lot about Sun mythology and symbolism to enjoy the "New Sun" or (the "Long Sun"), or to know about world Serpent mythology and classical references to enjoy the "Long Sun".

I agree that you probably don't need to know a lot about Greek Myth to appreciate the books, but I think you'll find the plot ***much*** easier to follow if read up a little on the history of the Persian and early Peloponnesian wars (especially focusing on the role of Sparta and their relationship with their slaves). I found the one of the major events of Arete totally incomprehensible until someone clued me in to the historical event it is based on.

Here's a few good links:

<http://www atrium-media.com/bibliotheca/greekhistory/thermopylae.html>
http://joseph_berrigan.tripod.com/ancientbabylon/id28.html
<http://ancienthistory.about.com/library/prm/blevilempired.htm>

-Rostrum

James Wynn — 21 Jan 2003, 20:03 · follows Michael Straight

Rostrum said:

I found the one of the major events of

Arete totally incomprehensible until someone clued me in to the historical event it is based on.

Crush urges:

The links were nice. Thanks. But as for the Arete event in question, tell us! Tell us!

-- Crush

James Jordan — 21 Jan 2003, 21:25 · follows James Wynn

At 02:03 PM 1/21/2003, you wrote:

Rostrum said:

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Arete totally incomprehensible until someone clued me in to the historical event it is based on.

Crush urges:

The links were nice. Thanks. But as for the Arete event in question, tell us! Tell us!

-- Crush

I, Nutria, will tell you. It's the scene at the end of the book, which hints that the helots were massacred by their Spartan owners, immediately after the Spartans freed them for helping fight in the battle. Which they were. But it's far from clear in the book what is going on. There are even missing pages!

Bet I'm right. Anyway, that's the one that stumped me the most.

Nutria

Josh Geller — 24 Jan 2003, 10:08 · follows James Jordan

Huh.

It must be confusing to read this stuff without first knowing Herodotos etc.

I had never thought of that.

J.

On Tue, 21 Jan 2003, James Jordan wrote:

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Nutria

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Michael Straight — 26 Jan 2003, 01:11 · follows Josh Geller

On Tue, 21 Jan 2003, James Jordan wrote:

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Nutria is right, except the scene in question is in the middle of Arete, at the end of the Part 1.

Supposedly true history: Spartan slaves were forbidden from touching weapons under penalty of death, but the Spartans armed them for the war with the Persians. After the war, to address this contradiction, the Spartans pretended they were going to free said slaves, but instead killed them all.