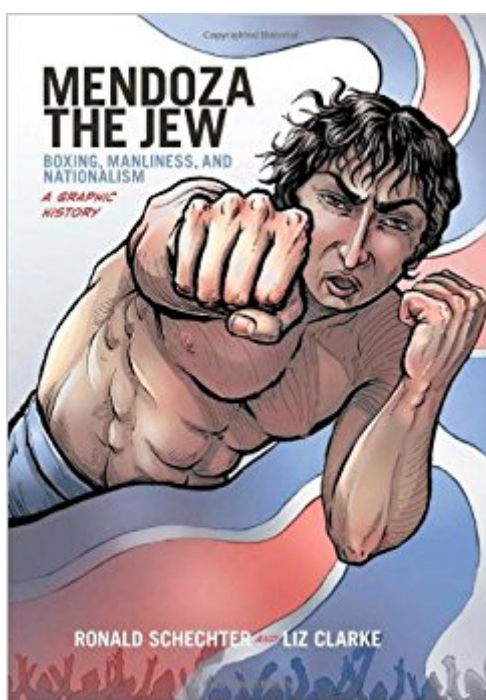


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Mendoza The Jew: Boxing, Manliness, And Nationalism, A Graphic History (Graphic History Series)



Synopsis

Inspired by the resounding success of *Abina and the Important Men* (OUP, 2011), *Mendoza the Jew* combines a graphic history with primary documentation and contextual information to explore issues of nationalism, identity, culture, and historical methodology through the life story of Daniel Mendoza. Mendoza was a poor Sephardic Jew from East London who became the boxing champion of Britain in 1789. As a Jew with limited means and a foreign-sounding name, Mendoza was an unlikely symbol of what many Britons considered to be their very own "national" sport. Whereas their adversaries across the Channel reputedly settled private quarrels by dueling with swords or pistols--leaving widows and orphans in their wake--the British (according to supporters of boxing) tended to settle their disputes with their fists. *Mendoza the Jew* provides an exciting and lively alternative to conventional lessons on nationalism. Rather than studying learned treatises and political speeches, students can read a graphic history about an eighteenth-century British boxer that demonstrates how ideas and emotions regarding the "nation" permeated the practices of everyday life. Mendoza's story reveals the ambivalent attitudes of British society toward its minorities, who were allowed (sometimes grudgingly) to participate in national life by braving pain and injury in athletic contests, but whose social mobility was limited and precarious.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Engagingly written and beautifully illustrated, *Mendoza the Jew* packs a powerful punch. It will

engage students while teaching them much about eighteenth-century British society. Graphic history is here to stay."--Mark Kishlansky, Harvard University "This is an innovative, imaginative, and exciting book about a fascinating, but largely forgotten figure: the eighteenth-century Jewish boxer Daniel Mendoza. Students and general readers alike will find in it a splendid introduction to the history of eighteenth-century Britain, the history of the Jews in Britain, the history of sport culture, and also to the ways that historians work. Scholars will find in it a superb document collection, accompanied by a cogent, concise analysis of Mendoza's life and career. And everyone will find in it a marvelously entertaining and brilliantly drawn story."--David A. Bell, Princeton University "The English boxer Daniel Mendoza's triumphs and setbacks are grippingly described by Ronald Schechter and boldly illustrated by Liz Clarke. Readers will be drawn in by the taut narrative, which is supported by thoughtful analysis of pugilism, the Jewish community, and national identity during the age of the French Revolution. The book's generous selection of primary sources lets readers investigate the materials with which Schechter has built his narrative. The accompanying essays (and suggested assignments) invite students to think critically about how historians build their historical accounts. Mendoza the Jew will be welcomed by students, professors, and readers alike."--Stuart Semmel, Yale University "This vivid portrayal of Daniel Mendoza's life is full of emotion and history. It instructs us in sports, Jewish, gender, and political history even as it captures the reader's interest through engaging dialogue and graphics. The author's discussion of his method and his offering of primary documents ensures the place of Mendoza's story in the classroom."--Bonnie Smith, Rutgers University "This is an engaging yet sophisticated exploration of issues of ethnicity, nationalism, and manliness in modern Europe through the story of Britain's first minority sports star. Mendoza has it all--beautiful illustrations, a compelling narrative, a diverse selection of gripping documents, and great writing questions."--Rafe Blaufarb, Florida State University "Mendoza the Jew is an exciting and innovative way of introducing students to history that prompts them to think historically."--Lynn Hunt, University of California, Los Angeles

Ronald Schechter is Associate Professor of History at the College of William and Mary. His book *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (2003) won awards from the American Historical Association and the Society for French Historical Studies. Schechter is also the editor of *The French Revolution: The Essential Readings* (2001) and the translator/editor of *Nathan the Wise* by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing with Related Documents (2004). Liz Clarke is a professional artist and illustrator based in Cape Town, South Africa.

I am interested in bare-knuckle boxing, so I really bought the graphic novel for that reason--learning about a bare-knuckle boxer through the medium of a graphic novel. The narrative featured several bare-knuckle matches, primarily between Mendoza and Humphreys, but focused quite a bit on his identity as a Jew (very much a small minority at the time) in England and what this meant at the time. There are several sections to the book, and only two are in comic book form: one dealing with Mendoza's life, and another on the process the author went through to write the book. I frankly lost interest when I got to this section, and only just finished the book after putting it down for months. A great portion of the book is actually just prose, and reprints some of the primary source material for the fights (which actually get a bit repetitive) and also deals with historiography and AGAIN with the author's process of researching and developing the graphic novel. I have mixed feelings about this. As a teacher, I can kind of see its merit, but as a reader of graphic novels, I found it pedantic in the extreme, and don't really think most readers will be that interested in perhaps half or more of the book. I gave it a 4 because it dealt with bare-knuckle boxing, the treatment of Jews and the overall time period very well in the graphic novel itself, and that deserves recognition. I am an academic, a professor, etc., so I understand trying to teach the research process and all, but it was really over the top, and it will probably turn most readers off. I think it's reasonable to think that most readers do not want to read about the author and his process of developing the book in a way that competes with the actual titular subject of the book. I do wish it actually had much more of a focus on bare-knuckle boxing, and there are many greats in bare-knuckle boxing whose stories would lend themselves very well to the graphic novel format.

For people who love learning history the easy way, with pictures and lively story-line, this book is great fun. Many people do not know that there was a large clan of Jews named Mendoza in London for many hundreds of years (even when Jews were not supposed to be living in England), and that one of the originators of boxing for sport was Daniel Mendoza. If you love sports history, OR Jewish history, OR English history, OR just like an enjoyable read, I can recommend this book. Daniel Mendoza also happens to be my great grand uncle 3 or 4 times removed, which added to the fun of discovering this book.

This book worked equally well as a compelling story, told in graphic novel form, and as a thoughtful history lesson, using primary sources and a strong narrative to highlight the social realities of a particular era. I thoroughly enjoyed the book and learned a lot from it.

It is okay.

Compelling

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