



Mendoza the Jew: Boxing, Manliness, and Nationalism, A Graphic History

Ronald Schechter, Liz Clarke

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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.



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