Pauline Reynolds, "Entry on: The Bow: Win or Lose? by Catherine Mayo", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/349. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Catherine Mayo

The Bow: Win or Lose?

Australia (2014)

TAGS: Ancient Warfare Gods Greek Art Greek Law Greek Philosophy Greek Religion Tablets





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	The Bow: Win or Lose?
Country of the First Edition	Australia
Country/countries of popularity	Australia; New Zealand
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2014
First Edition Details	Catherine Mayo, *The Bow: Win or lose?* Newtown NSW: Walker Books, 2014, 400 pp.
ISBN	9781925081015
Official Website	catherinemayoauthor.com (accessed: July 20, 2018)
Available Onllne	Chapter One is available here (accessed: July 20, 2018)
Genre	Mythological fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Young adults
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Creators



Catherine Mayo (Author)

Catherine Mayo is a musician and violin maker as well as an author from New Zealand. She was born in Auckland, New Zealand. Her university training is in history, and in Ancient Greek – passions she discovered when she was a child reading Barbara Leonie Picard's retelling of Homer's *The Odyssey*. Mayo attended Auckland University and studied history, philosophy, French, music, art history and geology. She is part of a bluegrass band called *Gentle Annie* which has toured as far as Alaska, and is a professional luthier (building and restoring violins). Mayo's first book was *Murder at Mykenai* published in 2013; her second was *The Bow: Win or lose?* published in 2014. She also contributed to *The Book that Made Me* (edited by Judith Ridge), published in 2016, all three books were published by Walker Books Australia. Her first novel won a Storylines Notable Book Award for Young Adult fiction in 2014, and her subsequent novels are set in Ancient Greece.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: September 30, 2017).

bookcouncil.org.nz (accessed: September 30, 2017).

walkerbooks.com.au (accessed: September 30, 2017).

canelo.co (accessed: February 9, 2021).

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Additional information

Summary

The Bow: Win or Lose? takes place in Ancient Greece. It is the second of Mayo's novels set in this period, the first book being *Murder at Mykenai*. A teenage Odysseus is helping to protect his father's kingdom. After the death of his grandfather, Arkeisios (in the city of Argos), Odysseus travels with Eurybates (his father's squire) to find his grandfathers hidden wealth. Odysseus is disguised as servant to Eurybates, who is dressed as an Egyptian priest. He finds gold hidden in the grandfather's tomb, but finds himself under attack, and is saved by his grandfather's friend Diomedes and his soldiers, and hidden in their fortress. During his time as Diomedes' guest, Odysseseus learns to shoot a bow from the master Stenelos whom he quickly surpasses in skill. When the fortress and town come under attack, Odysseus and Eurybates leave with the gold this time disguised as women. On their way, they save a young slave girl, Skotia, who had also escaped, and whom Odysseus had previously met and developed feelings for. But Skotia is unaware of who he and Eurybates really are as they escape through valleys, mountains, and waterways, narrowly evading capture from their enemies. They eventually reach her home town and she is reunited with her aunt. After leaving Skotia Odysseus returns home and faces other challenges, which involve defending his father's stolen property within the theatre of Greek law. During this time Skotia has recurring dreams about him and his impending death, so she travels to warn him. While achieving the impossible (stringing and shooting the Great Bow of Eurytos), Odysseus is distracted and is almost killed by an enemy - only to be saved by Skotia's impassioned cry. In the end, Odysseus does not 'get the girl', but instead recognises the importance of friendship (because he was saved by both Skotia and Eurybates). The themes of religion and ritual are woven throughout the story. The second half of the book is dominated by the goddess of Arkadia, Demeter, whose domain is of mountain caves and crops. The masculine energy of Odysseus and Eurybates is balanced by Skotia and her aunt Danae.

Analysis

The Bow: Win or Lose? follows on from Catherine Mayo's first novel *Murder at Mykenai* but can easily be read separately. While Odysseus is a practical and 'noble' youth, aware of his place in the world, he willingly disrupts these roles through the disguises he wears: firstly he becomes a servant to Eurybates (thus reversing the order of master-

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servant); secondly he and Eurybates dress as women; and thirdly he plays the role of a possible husband to a girl who was a slave. This reflects the reality of adolescent ideals of equality and fairness, issues that are readily important in the school situation as well as politically in the Western world. Gender equality is a large theme of this book, where Skotia is not overcome by Odysseus' position as son of a king, but rather, saves his life out of friendship and a need to be free of obligations to him. The thread of religion and ritual throughout the book is explored and shifts between belief in old ways, balanced by the necessity of survival. A large part of the narrative acknowledges the abilities of adolescents to make good decisions even if this means they must defy authority.

In order to create the world for the reader, Mayo uses objects as a way into getting a feel of life in the Bronze Age. The characters engage with these objects (for example, tablets, weapons, paintings, buildings, as well as clothing) which brings the story to life. In addition her attention to geology of the areas her characters cover is detailed and descriptive.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Ancient Warfare Gods Greek Art Greek Law Greek Philosophy Greek Religion Tablets
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits Coming of age Friendship History Humanity Individuality Intellect Learning Love Religious beliefs Subjectivity Values
Further Reading	Reviews: Docherty, Bruce, "The Bow: Win or lose? by Catherine Mayo", *Bobs Books Blog: Children's and Young Adult Book Reviews by Bob Docherty*, available at bobsbooksnz.wordpress.com (accessed: July 20, 2018).

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Maps:

Mayo, Catherine, "The Bow: a drift map of Dysseus's flight from Tiryns as described in the Bow", *Pinterest*, (accessed: July 20, 2018).

Teacher resources and quizzes:

National Geographic, "10 facts about Ancient Greece: learn all about this super-cool civilisation!", (accessed: July 20, 2018).

Greek-Gods.Info *Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Greece*, www.greek-gods.info (accessed: July 20, 2018).

"Ancient Greece Test Quiz", *Ducksters Education Site*, (accessed: July 20, 2018).

"Trivia Quiz: Ancient Greece for Kids", (accessed: July 20, 2018).

ancienthistory.about.com (accessed: December 10, 2017).

Addenda

In a blog written for Christchurch Kids Blog in 2014, Mayo writes about how quickly a building can be caused to disintegrate, linking suddenness of the destruction of the Parthenon to the earthquakes so well known in Christchurch.

See: Cath Mayo, "How fast the world can change" Christchurch Kids Blog, 2014, (accessed: July 20, 2018).

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