Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: Olympia. Run Like the Wind (Olympia, 1) by Shoo Rayner ", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/883. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Shoo Rayner

Olympia. Run Like the Wind (Olympia, 1)

United Kingdom (2011)

TAGS: Cerberus Hermes Olympia Olympic Games





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

General information	
Title of the work	Olympia. Run Like the Wind (Olympia, 1)
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2011
First Edition Details	Shoo Rayner, *Olympia: Run like the Wind.* London: Orchard Books, 2011, 64 pp.
ISBN	9781408311790
Genre	Illustrated works
Target Audience	Children (aged 8–10)
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
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This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Shoo Rayner , b. 1956
(Author, Illustrator)

Shoo (Hugh) Rayner is an author, illustrator, and teacher of drawing. He was born in Kingston-upon-Thames, the child of a member of the British Army who moved around the world. He spent his childhood in Germany, Pakistan, Yemen, and the United Kingdom. He is a graduate of Anglia Ruskin University (formerly Cambridge College of Art and Technology). He lives in Gloucestershire, near the Forest of Dean.He has illustrated over 250 books, and has two successful Youtube sites teaching drawing (Shoo Rayner Drawing, and Draw Stuff Real Easy).

Rayner creates picture books and middle-grade fiction for children. He admits that after failing his English O level he developed a visual approach to writing and telling stories. He refers to himself as a "storyteller illustrator" (see here, accessed: December 4, 2019). His published output is prolific: he has published a large number of series of Early Readers for children, including the *Lydia* series, the *Victor* series, the *Little Horror*s series, the *Ginger Ninja* series, the *Monster Boy* series, and the *Olympia* series.

Rayner's work in these series involves simple, easy-to-read stories, aimed at readers "at the most important stage of reading development where they can be put off, or enthused for life." (*Something about the Author*, 169)

Sources:

Official website (accessed: December 4, 2019)

Official channel on You Tube (accessed: December 4, 2019)

DrawStuffRealEasy, channel on You Tube (accessed: December 4, 2019)

Profile at en.wikipedia.org (accessed: April 6, 2019)

'Hugh (Shoo) Rayner,' *Something About the Author,* Ed. Lisa Kumar.

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Vol. 151. Detroit, MI: Gale, 2004, p. 168-171.

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au and Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Questionnaire

Response to author's questionnaire on Author's Vimeo channel (accessed: April 4, 2019).

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Additional information

Summary

Run Like the Wind is the first in author-illustrator Shoo Rayner's *Olympia* series of chapter books, which show what life was like for ordinary children in Ancient Greece. It features Olly, whose father runs the gymnasium where the great athletes train, and who dreams of being an Olympic champion, if only he can beat his arch-enemy, Spiro. The story opens with Olly being chased through the streets of Athens by Spiro's dog, Kerberos, who hates Olly even more than his owner does. They pass the statue of Leonidas, and head to a temple, where they scatter burnt offerings, and meet Olly's sister, Cleo. Olly explains to Cleo that he is going to win the Olympic games. Looking at a statue of Hermes, Olly declares "If I had Hermes' winged sandals, I could beat anyone. I could run like the wind!" (p. 18). The father of Chloe's friend Hebe is the temple priest. Olly asks him to make a sacrifice to help him. In return, Hebe's father asks Olly to bring him two small birds. Olly traps the birds and brings them to the temple. The next day, Olly visits the temple again, and Hebe's father presents him with a two pairs of wings, each pair tied onto a strip of leather. "These wings are gifts from Hermes,' explains the priest, 'Tie them to your ankles when you race and believe that you can win!'" (p. 28).

Olly spends the day working at the gym, tidying up after the athletes, then lays out meals at mealtime for the athletes. Over dinner, Simonides, the history teacher, tells them stories about the gods. He explains about Hermes's speed and winged sandals, and his role as god of athletes.The athletes, and Olly, call out "Hermes! Let us run like the wind and win all our races!" (p. 32).

The next morning is the final training session before the Boys' Athletic Festival. Olly joins the race. Buoyed by his wings and his belief in his abilities, he wins his race, just beating Spiro, who accuses him of cheating, and tears the wings from his ankles. Ariston, Olly's dad, agrees, that magic is not allowed at the festival. "Hermes has shown you that you are *as fast as* Spiro. Only you can prove that you are *faster*." (p. 40). The next day, before the race, Olly talks again with the priest. He explains what has happened. The priest advises him to give his wings back to Hermes. Olly throws them in the sacred fire. As they burst into flames, and thick smoke rises upwards, Olly whispers "Hermes, I will not fail your faith in me."

At the race, Spiro continues to tease Olly, as they wait behind the

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hysplex. It is released, and the athletes begin running. Spiro pushes and spits at Olly, and by means of this trickery races ahead. In the crowd, Olly notices Chloe, holding Kerberos, who is straining at the leash, irritated by the noise of the crowd.He slips the leash, and chases Olly, who runs faster than ever before ("as if someone had pulled the levers of a *hysplex* inside him" (p. 57)). Olly easily outpaces Spiro, and wins the race.

A final page gives some simple facts about the Olympic games, i.e. when they began, why they were held, that athletes competed naked, and that the running races were held in the Stadion: "the course was said to have been paced out by the Greek hero, Herakles" (p. 63).

Analysis

Run Like the Wind is an educational reader for primary-school aged children. It uses large text and simple language to help new readers, and the story is accompanied by lively cartoon-like drawings of the action (on his website, Rayner describes his approach in researching ancient Greek culture and art, accessed: April 9, 2019).

A simple and accessible story about a boy who wants to be good at running and win races is the focalising device that shows elements of the ancient world.Rayner depicts daily life in Ancient Greece (training, food, family and friends, city life, and religious beliefs) through Olly's search for glory at running. The story's focus on running and the Olympic Games seems likely to appeal to children interested in sports and athletics. Rayner's use of classical allusions interweaves some familiar classical figures (Hermes, Kerberos) into an otherwise non-mythical story. The minor subplot of Olly's competition with the bad-tempered Spiro is not sophisticated, but readers who identify with Olly will be pleased when he wins. Rayner leaves it open as to whether Olly really receives help from the gods, or achieves his goals by his own efforts, though it is likely readers can take the message that self-belief causes success (a common message in popular culture).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Cerberus Hermes Olympia Olympic Games

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Boys Child, children Child's view Friendship History Masculinity Parents (and children) Sport Success and failure

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