Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: Olympia. Deadly Target (Olympia, 8) by Shoo Rayner ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/896. Entry version as of November 01, 2026.

Shoo Rayner

Olympia. Deadly Target (Olympia, 8)

United Kingdom (2011)

TAGS: Artemis Cephalus Cerberus Olympia Olympic Games Procris Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Olympia. Deadly Target (Olympia, 8)
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	9781408311
Genre	Illustrated works
Target Audience	Children (age 8–10)
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
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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

Translation	Rayner is in negotiations with a Chinese company for the *Olympia* series to be translated into Chinese.

Summary

Deadly Target is the eighth 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 'Eggy,' the Olympic champion training Olly and Spiro to throw spears and javelins. They have to throw their spears as far as they can, and as accurately as they can. Olly is frustrated because Spiro, who is a year older, is stronger than he.

At lunchtime, Simonedes, the athletes' history teacher, tells them the myth of Cephalus and Procris; how she ran away from him to join Artemis, but returned with a hound, Laelaps, who always caught his prey, and a javelin that never missed its target. He tells how the great hunter accidentally speared his wife when she followed him to the forest, then drowned himself in grief. While the other athletes feel sorrow for Cephalus and Procris, all Olly can think is that he would like a magic javelin for himself. He asks Simonedes for advice. Simonedes explains that "the first javelin ever thrown was made by the great god, Zeus" (p. 32), and suggests he dedicates his javelin to Zeus. "Carve his name into the wood and maybe Zeus will favour you in the competition!" (p. 33). This Olly does, and when he, his sister Chloe, and Spiro, practice javelin-throwing in a thunderstorm, his javelin is struck by lightning, which burns a 'Z' into the wood. Olly takes this as a sign that Zeus is supportive, and promised not to let him down. Indeed, Olly does win the throwing competition, and is sure to say thank you to Zeus. A page of information about the Olympic games, and javelin-throwing, concludes the work.

Analysis

Deadly Target, like the other books in the *Olympia* series, is an educational reader for primary-school aged children, and features a

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	simple story in which Olly achieves success in javelin-throwing (see here) Rayner conveys some information about how ancient Greek sports worked, including tricks in throwing the javelin, and depicts a little of the daily life of the period (training, eating, learning, family and friends). Of note is that Chloe, Olly's sister, is also good at throwing the javelin, but restricted from being an official athlete by being a girl. The story's focus on athletics and the Olympic Games is likely to appeal to children interested in sports, and Rayner incorporates mythical stories and religious practices into the story to provide narrative interest, and show how religion was a part of Greek daily life.It is left open as to whether Zeus actually strikes the javelin, and what effect it might have on Olly's throwing ability. Olly's lack of sympathy for Cephalus and Procris is intended to indicate his dedication (obsession) to sports, and also to beating Spiro.). The competition between the boys could show children how to defeat bullies, but that is not the main emphasis of the story, which mainly emphasizes different aspects of ancient Greek sports.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Artemis Cephalus Cerberus Olympia Olympic Games Procris Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Boys Child, children Child's view Friendship History Masculinity Religious beliefs Sport Success and failure

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