Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: Olympia. Throw for Gold (Olympia, 4) by Shoo Rayner ", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/981. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Shoo Rayner

Olympia. Throw for Gold (Olympia, 4)

United Kingdom (2011)

TAGS: Acrisius / Akrisios Eurus / Euros Olympia Olympic Games Perseus Zephyrus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Olympia. Throw for Gold (Olympia, 4)
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	9781408311905
Genre	Illustrated works
Target Audience	Children (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

Summary

Throw for Gold is the fourth 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 and Spiro learning to throw the discus. Spiro is stronger than Olly, and hurls his discus further. His dog pounces on the discus when it lands, and pretends to kill it. The boys are being instructed by Eury, a handsome discus-thrower, who tells Olly that he called on the wind Euros to help him throw his first discus (and later took the god's name). Olly imagines that he is being supported by a warm, balmy breeze, and throws his discus more successfully this time. Eury tells him that he was supported by the breeze named Zephyr.

At lunchtime, Simonedes, the athletes' history teacher, tells them the myth of king Acrisius, destined to be killed by his son, Theseus, who accidentally slays him by throwing the discus. Olly, who always enjoys being carried away by Simonedes' retellings, listens in horror, forgetting to serve lunch, and when the athletes call for bread, Eury helps, by tossing the bread like a discus to the waiting diners.

Olly wonders if it is possible to make a loaf of bread the size of a discus, and he and his sister Chloe visit Nestor, the cook, who helps them make some dough. While they wait for it to rise, the siblings help Nestor in the kitchen, and he praises them for their interest in food, in contrast with the sports-obsessed athletes. Confessing that they want to use their bread for discus practice horrifies Nestor, who wails "Sport! It's all anyone thinks about in this crazy town" (p. 47).

Olly explains to Chloe that his arms get tired when he practices throwing the discus. They work on their technique, throwing the bread, which crumbles, and is eaten by the sparrows. Spiro and Kerberos interrupt, and Kerberos enjoys pouncing on the bread-discus and eating it, until there is none left.

The next day, Spiro's throwing has force but no technique, but Olly, who has honed his technique on his practice-bread, trusts in Zephyr, and throws his discus elegantly, to Eury's pleasure. "Style and

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technique beat brute strength every time," he said. "Especially with a little help from the spirit of the wind," said Olly, smiling (p. 62).

A page of information about the Olympic Games, and some information about the discus event (in which judges took into account distance, style, and technique) concludes the book.

Analysis

Throw for Gold an educational reader for primary-school aged children, and features a simple story in which Olly achieves success in discus-throwing. 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 instance (see here, accessed: March 13, 2020), he is inspired by Greek images of running and jumping, and advises young artists to look at the way Greek artists depicted feet.

Throw for Gold, like the other books in the *Olympia* series, interweaves Greek mythology and social history, providing some facts about ancient sport, and relating relevant myths to each activity. Here, the story of the tragic death of Acrisius, when Perseus accidentally slays his father with a misdirected discus, is loosely connected, and the idea of throwing well by understanding the nature of the winds (Euros and Zephyr) is drawn out as well. The friendship between Olly and his sister supports some element of inclusion for girls and encourages young readers to think about the opportunities available (or not available) for girls in the ancient world.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Acrisius / Akrisios Eurus / Euros Olympia Olympic Games Perseus Zephyrus

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture

Boys Child, children Child's view Friendship History Masculinity Religious beliefs Self Sport Success and failure

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