Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: President of the Whole Sixth Grade (President, 2) by Sherri Winston", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1050. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Sherri Winston

# President of the Whole Sixth Grade (President, 2)

*United States of America (2015)*

TAGS: Caesar Gladiators Pandora Pompeii Rome Spartacus






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

| General information | |
|---|---|
| *Title of the work* | President of the Whole Sixth Grade (President, 2) |
| *Country of the First Edition* | United States of America |
| *Country/countries of popularity* | United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada |
| *Original Language* | English |
| *First Edition Date* | 2015 |
| *First Edition Details* | Sherri Winston, *President of the Whole Sixth Grade: President Series Book 2*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, Hachette Book Group, 2015, 336 pp. |
| *ISBN* | 9780316377225 |
| *Genre* | Fiction |
| *Target Audience* | Children (9–12 year old) |
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## Creators



Photo courtesy of the Author.

**Sherri Winston (Author)**

Sherri Winston is an African-American author. She is the author of *The Sweetest Sound*, *President of the Whole Fifth Grade* among others.

Source:

Official website (accessed: August 10, 2020).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar- Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com



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## Additional information

Summary

Brianna Justice is an African-American 11 year old student from Detroit. In the first book of the series, Brianna aims at being elected as the president of the fifth grade, against the new student, Jasmine Moon. The book focuses on the challenges she faces during the election campaign and the relationship with Jasmine as well as Brianna and her friends. As the title suggests, Brianna is also the president of the whole sixth grade, and she takes her role seriously. Her task in this book is to raise $2500 for the sixth grade's class trip to Washington D.C. The book follows Brianna's attempts to raise the necessary funds as well as focusing on her relationships with her close friends. She feels as if her old friends from the fifth grade are moving away from her while at the same time she meets a new girl, Red, and connects with her. Brianna is a busy girl, also nicknamed "little businesswoman", due to her multi-tasking (student, president, baker). As preparation for the trip, the class civic teacher, Mr. Galafinkis asks the students to prepare a civics journal in which they compare ancient Rome and middle school. Throughout the book Brianna compares her personal experiences with different themes, persons and stories from ancient Rome and mythology; each chapter also takes it name from a Roman theme: The Ides of March, Pandora's Box, The Republic of Rome, Spartacus, Pantomime, Furies, Hail Caesar, The Baths, Roman Holiday, Pompeii, Horatius at the Bridge, SPQR, Grand Pantheon, Neptune, Gladiators, The Roman Legion, The Forum, The twelve Law of Middle School (in reference to the Twelve Tablets).

In the end Brianna succeeds in raising the funds and the class travels to Washington D.C. There she visits the White House with her mother and meets the President, the First Lady and their nephew, whom she befriends. She also recruits her class to assist a senator who is trying to raise awareness on technology teaching in poor schools. In the end Brianna emerges stronger, more confident in herself and learns to let go of her former friendship and find new friends.

Analysis

The book is a classic coming-of age story, in which the brave heroine must come to terms with the changes in her life, especially drifting apart from her former closest friends. Brianna tries to hold on to their past together and initially refuses to accept that things could have changed so drastically since they have all been in the fifth grade. They



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were very close friends not so long ago. Yet she soon discovers that while sadly old friends can be lost yet new ones can be gained. Brianna is an extremely motivated character, who does not let temporary obstacles impede her.

The story is also about race. This book highlights the life and struggle of an African American main character. While she has both white and black friends, the author pays close attention to exploring the life of African Americans. The president as well as the woman senator whom Brianna meets are African American as well (clearly inspired by the Obama couple).

The race of the character is a strong theme in the series, especially in the following third book where themes such as ghetto culture and even Judaism are discussed. Brianna is just like anyone else, but the author emphasizes the fact that she is an African American and while the character does not face outright racism in the book, the importance of keeping one's African heritage and be proud of it is clearly illustrated. The book is of course intended for both white and black readers, yet it seems as if it is more focused on empowering young black girls.

The inclusion of ancient Rome in the book is an unusual addition. There are few books that focus on the classics and also feature a main black character. (One such example is Joan Holub's *Mini Myth* series, in which there are definite considerations of race and gender).

The constant references to ancient Rome help Brianna assess her position in her personal life but also inspire her actions. For example, she refers to herself and her classmates as gladiators or a legion when they assist a senator during their trip to Washington.

The book opens with the following statement by Brianna, who refers to the burning of Rome in the first century C.E.: "The metaphor, about Rome burning, referred to me. My life. Only in reverse, because my world was burning up while the rest of my classmates fiddled, played, and joked around." (pp. 5–6). As the plot progresses, the fire will rise until it is extinguished and Brianna will find her place.

Brianna keeps making humorous yet thoughtful comparisons between the ancient Romans and her fellow six graders: "it turned out that middle school had a lot in common with ancient civilization. Big egos… fighting for territory… weird clothes. The weak getting thrown



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to the lions for fun. And lots of drama." (p. 6).

These notes help to familiarize the readers with the world of ancient Rome, since Brianna explains important themes from that time period, for example the Ides, baths holidays etc. yet these comparisons also share an important role regarding reception. They make our modern lives, and especially the young readers' lives seem not so far removed from that of the ancient Romans. By doing so the ancient civilization appears more understandable and approachable and its strong influence over the modern world (for example in architecture) is emphasized. Brianna does not only explain the Roman terms, she makes them an inescapable part of her life. For example, she explains the term Ides of March and remarks: "I felt like I was suffering through the Ides of October. And in this case, the ides truly sucked." (p. 6). She even connects the myth of Pandora's box to a fight she had with her friends: "I wondered if I had opened my own Pandora's box. Mr. G. said after all the world's evils flew out, one tiny bug with a smiling face came out. It was hope. Was there still hope for us as best friends?" (p. 39).

Brianna truly assimilates the lessons she has learnt about the classics and reflects on them in reference to her own life. Hence the classical culture and myths offer her a broader understanding of her position and even encouragement to face challenges.

One example will suffice to illustrate this point. Brianna learns about the Twelve Tablets: "writing down the laws was a way to show they applied to everyone from the upper crust to the plebeians" (p. 46). The inclusion of the plebs gives her an idea on how to encourage further participation from the students to her fund-raising ideas. She concludes: "I learned today that kids, like Roman citizens, seem to care more when they feel included." (pp. 54–55).

To conclude, the book offer a glimpse into the life of an African-American teenager, who is a good role model for the readers. The book emphasizes family values as well as respect for teachers and education. The assimilation of ancient Roman civilization into the plot becomes an intrinsic part of it, which help propel the actions of the heroine and provides a better understanding of the life of this special six grader.

Caesar Gladiators Pandora Pompeii Rome Spartacus



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| Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts | |
| Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture | Coming of age Conflict Emotions Family Friendship History Identity Individuality Joy of reading Learning Multiculturalism |
| Addenda | The review refers to the Kindle edition. |



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