Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Odd Gods: The Oddlympics by Adam J. B. Lane, David Slavin", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1369. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Adam J. B. Lane , David Slavin

Odd Gods: The Oddlympics

United States (2020)

TAGS: Adonis Apollo Hercules Juno Jupiter Neptune Olympic Games Venus Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Odd Gods: The Oddlympics
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	USA and worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2020
First Edition Details	David Slavin, *Odd Gods: The Oddlympics*. New York, Harper Collins, 2020, 231 pp.
ISBN	9780062839572
Genre	Fiction
Target Audience	Children (10–12 years old)
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Creators



Adam J. B. Lane (Illustrator)

Adam J. B. Lane is an author, illustrator and cartoonist. He was born in London and grew up in Pennsylvania. He studied at Harvard and the California Institute of the Arts.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: August 4, 2020);

harpercollins.com (accessed: August 4, 2020).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@biu.ac.il



David Slavin (Author)

David Slavin is an American author, writer and performer. He writes children's books, satire books, cultural and political commentary for leading newspapers, such as Los Angeles Times, the New York Times, Huffington Post. He has been a voice-over artist for over 20 years.

Source:

harpercollins.com (accessed: August 4, 2020).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@biu.ac.il

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Additional information

Summary

The publisher describes this series as '*Diary of a Wimpy Kid* meets *Percy Jackson*'. This is the third book of the *Odd Gods* series, which follows the adventures of Oddonis. Oddonis and his brother, Adonis, are the twin sons of Zeus and his Norse goddess wife, Freya. While Adonis is the handsome and successful god of love, Oddonis is strange-looking and socially awkward. In this book, Oddonis and his group of misfits lose in a game of tug to the gods group. The gods group are excited and proclaim that they are unbeatable, when suddenly a messenger arrives. The Roman gods wish to contend against the Greek gods in a tug-of-war.

Apparently the Roman school is headed by principal Deadipus' younger brother, Fredipus, who joined the Roman side and constantly tries to prove their superiority over the Greeks. Zeus does not want to allow the game but in the end he wants Adonis to teach the Romans a lesson and show them that they are only second best; yet when the groups meet, the Romans win the game, after making Adonis believe he has a pimple on his face so he leaves in the middle to check it.

The children are amazed at the close similarity between themselves and the Roman team. The Romans send Apollo, Neptune, Venus and Hercules, but also include odd members in their team, Heightania (a very tall girl), Oddopollo, Apollo's odd brother, Belchous (who immediately befriends Gaseous), Minervous who befriends Mathena and Bacteria who befriends Germes.

After they lose the game, Zeus is furious. He therefore decides to challenge the Romans to an athletic competition to crown the best middle school on all Olympus, the Godlympics. Zeus makes everyone, both gods and odds, train hard for the events. Oddopollo sends Oddonis a letter, complaining that on his side they are training hard as well. There is even official merchandize attached to the games on the Greek side, such as pain reliever and nectar. Each group asks the children to spy on the other team.

In the end, the day of the festival arrives and the groups gather at the big stadium. While Zeus and Jupiter hail their teams, they ask them to fight to the death, to the horror of Freya and Juno, but suddenly the young captains, Adonis and Apollo refuse to compete: "All of us — Greeks and Romans, Gods and Odds — gather together and stand

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beside Adonis and Apollo." (p. 150).

The children claim that the adults have ruined the fun of the games so in the end the games are changed to children vs. adults. There are five events in the competition: the first is the long jump, which the children win; then the discus, which the adults win; the footrace and javelin follow, both being won by the children. Before the final competition, Juno and Freya appear as the children's lawyers to make sure that their husbands don't cheat. The final event is the three-legged race in which Zeus and Jupiter compete against Oddonis and Oddpollo who win.

Thus the children win the games and the adults are asked to stop acting childishly. They also become the children's servants for the rest of the year.

The text is accompanied by black and white illustrations that form an integral part of the plot. Through them, we see what Oddonis is thinking or the strange sights the group sees. The illustrations are vital to the flow and understanding of the story. It feels as a hybrid between a comics and a novel.

Analysis

The series as a whole emphasizes individuality and uniqueness and the value of being 'odd'. In this book the theme is teamwork. It also explores another theme, children who act more maturely than the adults. The games in this book expose the maturity and ingenuity of the children who use their skills and wits in the different events and show how pitiful the adults are, since they cannot overcome their own petty behaviour.

The author cleverly manipulates the Greek and Roman cultures who already vied for superiority in ancient times. The Romans felts out shined by the ancient Greek culture and tried to show their superiority. Here the Greeks are sure that the Romans simply copy them and the fact that the Romans are an exact replica of their Greek counterparts emphasizes this impression. As Oddonis notes, "the Roman Gods aren't just legit…they're almost exact copies of the Greek Gods!" (p.35).

The author is of course making fun of how the Romans employed the Greek pantheon for their own needs. He even makes Apollo part of the

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Roman team, although this god was the most Greek of all the gods, encompassing many Greek arts (yet he was most favoured by Augustus who dedicated a temple to him after Actium, hence perhaps his place in the Roman team). While each group claims superiority, the readers can easily see that they are the same, not just in their appearance but in their behaviour as well. Zeus and Jupiter are conceited and bad-tempered, constantly fighting with each other. In contrast, the mothers, Juno and Freya, are tender and caring. Juno in this story is a benevolent and kind goddess as well.

Oddonis explains that he chose the race for the last event since he knew it would require team work, something the adults are not capable of, especially Zeus and Jupiter. The children teach the adults a lesson about being mature and working together.

The Olympic Games are a literary trope to indicate unity, especially when the Olympic games are altered. For example, in the *Goddess Girl* series, the goddess girls decide to create all-girls games since they are excluded from the existing boys-only games. The new girls' games allow the girls to exhibit their merits and invite other goddess girls from different cultures. In the case of the Oddlympics, the games are conducted as a mean for the Greek gods to show their superiority (since they were after all a Greek invention), yet in the end, both Greek and Roman children decide to compete together against the adults and thus prove their unity and team work, regardless of their origin. Hence the games which were a divisive element at the beginning, end up as a unifying element for all of the contestants (except for Zeus and Jupiter).

The games also provides a satirical nod at capitalism, in the way they are being marketed to both Greek and Roman sides. This is reminiscent of the capitalism aspect of the Disney movie *Hercules* (1997), which also explored the capitalistic side of heroism. In the historical reality, the games were indeed used to promote and enlarge the prestige of various poleis.

From a cultural point, this book shows that the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome were more similar than they were willing to admit. This is of course not an accurate assumption, since these were quite distinct cultures. The Romans appropriated the Greek pantheon, as they also did with other deities , yet they had different sets of customs and morals from the Greeks. Yet in our modern eyes they are many times grouped together to create a Greco-Roman world, ruled by the

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	same gods. The message may be that, in the end, we are all similar, no matter who we are or where we come from. There is no point in trying to outshine one another and we should try to cooperate instead.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Adonis Apollo Hercules Juno Jupiter Neptune Olympic Games Venus Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Childhood Coming of age Communication Conflict Family Friendship Humour Intellect
Further Reading	Maurice, Lisa, "Chapter 20 Disney's Hercules in Context: Mouse-morality for Mini-heroes" in Alastair J .L. Blanshard and Emma Stafford, eds., *The Modern Hercules. Images of the Hero from the Nineteenth to the Early Twenty-First Century*, Leiden: Brill, 2020, 468–487.

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