Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: Mr Archimedes' Bath by Pamela Allen", peer-reviewed by Miriam Riverlea and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/37. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

Pamela Allen

Mr Archimedes' Bath

Australia (1980)

TAGS: Archimedes Greek Science





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

General information	
Title of the work	Mr Archimedes' Bath
Country of the First Edition	Australia
Country/countries of popularity	Australia
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1980
First Edition Details	Pamela Allen, *Mr Archimedes' Bath*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1980, 32 pp.
ISBN	9780207172854
Awards	1980 – NSW Premier's Literary Awards – Ethel Turner Prize
Genre	Humor, Illustrated works, Instructional and educational works, Picture books
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com Daniel A. Nkemleke, Université Yaounde 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

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Creators



Pamela Allen , b. 1934
(Author)

Pamela Allen was born in Devonport, in Auckland, New Zealand in 1934. She moved to Australia with her painter husband in 1980, and returned to Auckland over thirty years later. She trained as a fine artist at the Elam School of Arts, in New Zealand. Her first picture book was *Mr Archimedes' Bath*, the first of a series of picture books about aspects of water displacement theory (Who Sank The Boat? and *Alexander's Outing* followed soon after). Allen has built a distinguished career as a writer and illustrator of picture books. She has received numerous awards, for individual books, including several Book of the Year Awards from the Children's Book Council of Australia, two New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards, and the Margaret Mahy Medal, New Zealand's most prestigious award for children's literature.

Sources:

Profile at the bookcouncil.org.nz (accessed: June 3, 2018).

Profile at the thelittlebigbookclub.com.au (accessed: June 3, 2018).

Profile at the storylines.org.nz (accessed: June 3, 2018).

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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Additional information

Summary	A humorous picture book about the principle of water displacement discovered by the Greek mathematician, Archimedes. In this book, 'Mr Archimedes' shares his bath with three animals: a goat, a wombat, and a kangaroo. Trial and error in the bath (in which each animal is 'blamed' in turn for taking up too much room) show the principles of displacement in action. Finally, Mr Archimedes shouts 'Eureka!' and explains to the animals that they are all making the water go up and down. Illustrations are pen-and-ink line drawings, with cross-hatching and watercolour shading.
Analysis	*Mr Archimedes' Bath* is a lightly handled picture book about the scientific principle of water displacement, as discovered by Archimedes. The setting is quasi-modern (the bath appears to have plumbing; Mr Archimedes wears trousers and a shirt), and the inclusion of two Australian animals (kangaroo and wombat) show the interaction of ancient Greek ideas with a modern setting. The playful retelling of Archimedes' discovery using Australian animal friends, mimics a child's bathtime with toy animals, and a certain amount of spilled water. Mr Archimedes' cry of 'Eureka!' precipitates the discovery that the principle is the same regardless of who is in the bath.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Archimedes Greek Science
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Friendship Water

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