Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: Olympia. Wrestle to Victory (Olympia, 2) by Shoo Rayner ", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/884. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Shoo Rayner

Olympia. Wrestle to Victory (Olympia, 2)

United Kingdom (2011)

TAGS: Archimedes Heracles Olympia Olympic Games





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

General information	
Title of the work	Olympia. Wrestle to Victory (Olympia, 2)
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: Wrestle to Victory*. London: Orchard Books, 2011, 64 pp.
ISBN	9781408311800
Genre	Illustrated works
Target Audience	Children (aged 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

Wrestle to Victory is the second 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. Olly has to give in to Spiro this time, and promises to do his errands for a week. The first errand involves taking a parcel to Simonedes, the history teacher, for his library. The parcel contains a scroll on mathematics, written by Archimedes, which pleases Simonedes.

At lunch, Simonedes tells stories to the athletes while they eat. He tells the story of how Atlas tried to trick Heracles into holding up the sky, but how Heracles outwitted him. Olly is impressed by Heracles' strength and cunning, but as he gets up from the table, Spiro trips him and he falls. The boys wrestle, and again Spiro comes out on top, and when Olly cries 'Help me, Heracles,' the other athletes laugh.

But Simonedes helps him, first by whispering 'use your brain', and then by showing him how to wrestle.

It turns out the old history teacher was a champion wrestler in his day. He shares tips with Olly – to vary his moves and technique. He shows him how to shift heavy weights using instructions from Archimedes, i.e. using a lever to move a large stone. Together, Simonedes and Olly work out how he can use his smaller body as a lever to move the larger Spiros. Simonedes shows him how to fall without hurting himself. At the next wrestling match, Olly uses his new techniques, and is the victor. He is a popular victor with the crowd: "They'd waited a long time for the day that Spiro was beaten by someone smaller and more skilful. Like Simonedes, the audience knew that skill and learning was always better than brute force." (p. 56). The next day, when Spiro tries to bully Olly into taking his parcel to Simonedes, Olly calmly takes the parcel and walks away. Spiro's bravado is deflated, and Olly feels "as if the weight of the world had been lifted off his shoulders" (p. 62),

The story closes with a page of Olympic Facts, about the games, and about types of wrestling: Orthia Pale, in which wrestlers throw their opponent to the ground three times, and Kato Pale, in which the loser

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	would raise a finger to admit defeat.
Analysis	*Wrestle to Victory* is an educational reader for primary-school aged children (see here). Here, the simple, accessible story about Olly's desire to be a good wrestler is combined with a story about how to overcome a bully. The emphasis on using the brain to beat a larger opponent, combines the myth of Heracles with some ideas about ancient mathematics, and suggests to young readers that victory does not depend on raw power, but on skill and thought. The tense relationship between Spiro and Olly runs throughout the *Olympia* series, and while Spiro's aggressiveness does not fade, this episode is the only one in which Olly challenges his bullying directly. This is likely because of the story's emphasis on sporting conflict, through the focus on wrestling.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Archimedes Heracles Olympia Olympic Games
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Boys Child, children Child's view History Masculinity Parents (and children) Sport Success and failure

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