Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: Olympia. Race for the Stars (Olympia, 6) 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/886. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Shoo Rayner

Olympia. Race for the Stars (Olympia, 6)

United Kingdom (2011)

TAGS: Artemis Cerberus Chariot Racing Olympia Olympic Games Orion





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

General information	
Title of the work	Olympia. Race for the Stars (Olympia, 6)
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: Race for the Stars*. London: Orchard Books, 2011, 64 pp.
ISBN	9781408311929
Genre	Illustrated works
Target Audience	Children (aged 8–10 years)
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

Race for the Stars is the sixth 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. In *Race for the Stars*, Olly's sister Chloe, who has an affinity with animals, wants to enter the Junior chariot race. Though women and girls are not allowed to race, horse and chariot owner Lydia secretly helps Chloe train by night. When Chloe enters the race, she is not heavy enough, but her cousin Spiro's dog Kerberos joins her in the chariot, and her skill and gentleness in coaxing the horse to gallop faster mean that she wins the race.

While Chloe trains, Spiro and Olly perform their tasks as apprentices to the athletes' academy, setting up lunch for the athletes, and listening to the historian, Simonedes, tell the story of Artemis's prowess as an archer, and her love for Orion, stung by a scorpion and placed in the stars where she visits him in the heavens. As with others in the series, Simonedes' discussion of the myth provides a link with the action of the children: here, it is a loose link between Artemis's skill as a hunter and charioteer, and Chloe and Lydia's desire to join the chariot race. Though Rayner makes it clear that women could own, but not race, chariots, Chloe's role in the race goes unremarked upon. A final page provides some 'Olympic Facts,' including information about why teenagers commonly were chariot racers, and about Cynisca, the Spartan chariot owner.

Analysis

Race for the Stars is an educational reader for primary-school aged children, which uses large text and simple language to help new readers (see here).

Here, Rayner combines a story about Chloe's desire to be a chariot racer with reflection about the excitement of racing and the challenges girls faced in ancient Greece. The emphasis on Chloe's affinity with animals underscores a gendered understanding of how girls and boys operate, and suggests a modern view of how to treat and train animals (even a fierce dog named Kerberos (after the guardian of the underworld) responds to gentle greatment). But countering the gendered presentation of gentleness, Lydia is a fierce

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	chariot-owner, who takes her prize without a backward glance at Chloe – in this, as in other stories in the series, Rayner points out simple facts about life in Ancient Greece. As with other stories in the series (*Jump for Glory*), Rayner shows characters thinking about when to bend the rules, and when not to.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Artemis Cerberus Chariot Racing Olympia Olympic Games Orion
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Boys Child, children Child's view Friendship Girls History Masculinity Parents (and children) Sport Success and failure

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