Sarah F. Layzell, "Entry on: The Tillerman Cycle (Series) by Cynthia Voigt ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/972. Entry version as of November 12, 2026.

Cynthia Voigt

The Tillerman Cycle (Series)

United States (1981)

TAGS: Aeolus Alexander the Great Ancient Greek Dance Apollo Aristotle Circe Cyrus the Great Daedalus Dryades Fall of Rome Hippocratic Oath Homer Horace Icarus Lotus Eaters / Lotophagoi Nemesis Odysseus / Ulysses Odyssey Orion Penelope Persian Empire Phaethon Pleiades Polyphemus Scylla Sisyphus Trojan War Venus





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

General information	
Title of the work	The Tillerman Cycle (Series)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America; Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1981
First Edition Details	Cynthia Voigt, *Homecoming*. New York, NY: Atheneum, 1981, 388 pp. Cynthia Voigt, *Dicey's Song*. New York, NY: Atheneum, 1982 [[pp]]. Cynthia Voigt, *A Solitary Blue*. New York, NY: Atheneum, 1983, 249 pp. Cynthia Voigt, *The Runner*. New York, NY: Atheneum, 1985, 225 pp. Cynthia Voigt, *Come A Stranger*. New York, NY: Atheneum, 1986, 248 pp. Cynthia Voigt, *Sons From Afar*. New York, NY: Atheneum, 1987, 280 pp. Cynthia Voigt, *Seventeen Against the Dealer*. New York, NY: Atheneum, 1989, 233 pp.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

ISBN	9781442428782, 9781442428799, 9781442428805, 9781442428812, 9781442428829, 9781442428836, 9781442428843
Official Website	cynthiavoigt.com (accessed: March 12, 2020).
Awards	For Voigt: 1995 – Voigt was awarded the Margaret Edwards Award for a body of work including the first four Tillerman books. For individual titles: 1983 – *Dicey's Song*: Newbery Medal; 1984 – *A Solitary Blue:* Newbery Honor Book; 1987 – *Come A Stranger:* Judy Lopez Medal.
Genre	Fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Young adults
Author of the Entry	Sarah F. Layzell, University of Cambridge, sarahlayzellhardstaff@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Cynthia Voigt , b. 1942
(Author)

Cynthia Voigt is an American author best known for the Tillerman family novels. She is the author of 33 books for children and young people, and two books for adults, spanning a range of genres and audiences. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, Voigt graduated from Smith College in 1963 and later became a secondary school English teacher. Her novels have won numerous awards, including the prestigious Newbery Medal for *Dicey's Song* in 1983. The first Tillerman novel, *Homecoming*, was nominated for a National Book Award in 1982.

Source:

Official Website (accessed: 04 September, 2019).

Bio prepared by Sarah Hardstaff, University of Cambridge, sflh2@cam.ac.uk

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Additional information

Adaptations

Homecoming was adapted as a 1996 made-for-television movie, directed by Mark Jean.

Some of the novels have been adapted as school study guides; this is especially the case for *Dicey's Song*, as is typical for winners of the Newbery Medal.

Translation

Homecoming:

Chinese: *Hui jia*, You shi, 2004.

Dutch: *Onder de blote hemel*, trans. M Slagt-Prins, Querido, 1985.

French: *C'est encore loin, la maison?*, trans. Rose-Marie Vassallo, Flammarion, 1993.

German: *Heimwärts*, trans. Matthias Duderstadt, Bertelsmann, 1992.

Spanish: *Los Tillerman encuentran hogar*, trans. Anna Benet, Noguer y Caralt, 1995.

Swedish: *Den långa vägen hem*, trans. Rose-Marie Nielsen, Bonniers juniorförl., 1983.

Dicey's Song:

Chinese: □□□□ (Daixi zhi ge), trans. Zhaoyu Zhou, Hebei shao nian er tong chu ban she, 2015.

Dutch: *Het verhaal van Dicey*, trans. M Slagt-Prins, Querido, 1986.

Finnish: *Tuulta purjeisiin*, trans. Sirkka Salonen, WSOY, 1985.

French: *La chanson de Dicey*, trans. Rose-Marie Vassallo, Flammarion, 1993.

German: *Wir Tillermans sind so*, trans. Matthias Duderstadt, Sauerländer, 1987.

Japanese: □□□□□□□□ [Daishīzu songu], trans. Shima Noriko & Hayashi

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Toyomi.

Korean: *Disiga bureunun norae*, trans. Kim Sang In & Kim Ok Soo, Seoul Education, 2008.

Norwegian: *Det nye hjemmet*, trans. Isak Rogde, Bokklubbens barn, 1990.

Swedish: *Diceys sång: det nya hemmet*, trans. Rose-Marie Nielsen, Bonniers juniorförl., 1984.

A Solitary Blue:

Chinese: □□□□□ (*Gu dan de lan se*), trans. Xiaoyi Wang, Bei jing yan shan chu ban she, 2014.

Dutch: *Niemand anders dan ik*, trans. M Slagt-Prins, Querido, 1990.

French: *Le Héron Bleu*, trans. Rose-Marie Vassallo, Flammarion, 1989.

German: *M wie Melody: die Geschichte von Jeff, Dicey Tillermans Freund*, trans. Cornelia Krutz-Arnold, Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1997.

Swedish: *Solo för gitarr*, trans. Harriet Alfons, Bonniers juniorförl., 1985.

The Runner:

Dutch: *De hardloper*, trans. M Slagt-Prins, Querido, 1987.

French: *Samuel Tillerman*, trans. Rose-Marie Vassallo, Flammarion, 1993.

German: *Samuel Tillerman, der Läufer*, trans. Matthias Duderstadt, Sauerländer, 1989.

Swedish: *Bullet*, trans. Hans-Jacob Nilsson, Bonniers juniorförl., 1986.

Come A Stranger:

Dutch: *Wilhemina Smiths*, trans. M Slagt-Prins, Querido, 1989.

French: *Une Fille Im-pos-sible*, trans. Rose-Marie Vassallo, Flammarion, 1993.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

German: *Mina, Dicey Tillermans Freundin*, trans. Matthias Duderstadt, Sauerländer, 1989.

Swedish: *Minas Kärlek*, trans. Rebecca Alsberg, BTJ, 1989.

Sons From Afar:

Dutch: *De verloren vader*, trans. M Slagt-Prins, Querido, 1989.

Finnish: *Isän jäljillä*, trans. Sirkka Salonen, WSOY, 1989.

French: *L'Enquête*, trans. Rose-Marie Vassallo, Flammarion, 1990.

German: *Der Schatten des Vaters: James und Sammy Tillerman*, trans. Matthias Duderstadt, Sauerländer, 1991.

Swedish: *Spåren efter Frank*, trans. Rebecca Alsberg, Bonniers juniorförl., 1989.

Seventeen Against the Dealer:

Dutch: *Alles op één kart*, trans. M Slagt-Prins, Querido, 1990.

Finnish: *Vaarallisilla vesillä*, trans. Sirkka Salonen, WSOY, 1991.

French: *Dicey Risque Tout*, trans. Rose-Marie Vassallo-Villaneau, Flammarion, 1994.

German: *Dicey Tillerman: Bindungen*, trans. Eckart Meissenburg and Matthias Duderstadt, Sauerländer, 1991.

Swedish: *Noll gånger insatsen*, trans. Rebecca Alsberg, Bonniers juniorförl., 1990.

Summary

The Tillerman Cycle follows the lives of four siblings – Dicey, James, Maybeth and Sammy Tillerman – abandoned by their parents and in search of a new home. Over the course of seven novels, spanning nearly a decade in the children's lives, Voigt explores themes of family, home, resilience, and the relationship between individuals and society. Brief summaries of the novels are included below; for more detailed summaries, see the individual entries elsewhere in the OMC survey.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Homecoming opens with the abandonment of the Tillerman children by their mother. Led by the eldest, Dicey, the children make their way mostly on foot down the east coast of the United States. Eventually the children arrive at their mother's hometown and must convince their grandmother Abigail that she should let them live with her on her farm in Crisfield, Maryland. As the novel ends, the children have started school and are starting to settle in at their grandmother's home.

Dicey's Song shows Dicey and her siblings adapting to their new home with their grandmother. Abigail takes on much of the responsibility for the younger children, leaving Dicey feeling useless. As the novel goes on, Abigail continues to encourage Dicey to stop mothering her siblings, but also seeks Dicey's help to deal with the problems that they face in adjusting at school. Readers are introduced to Dicey's future love interest Jeff and her friend Mina. Abigail and Dicey travel to Boston together to see the Tillermans' mother Liza, now a patient in a psychiatric hospital. Liza dies and her mother and daughter bring her remains home.

A Solitary Blue tells the story of Jeff. When Jeff is seven, his mother Melody abandons him, purportedly to devote herself to helping others. Meanwhile Jeff's father, an academic known as the Professor, is distant and seemingly uncaring. After an illness, Jeff has contact with his mother for the first time in several years, staying with her family in South Carolina for two summers, eventually becoming. depressed and isolated. He and his father move to Crisfield to aid his recovery. There he meets Dicey and the rest of the Tillermans.

The Runner is a prequel to the other Tillerman books. Set in 1967–1968, the novel focuses on Samuel 'Bullet' Tillerman in his final year at high school before signing up to go and fight in the Vietnam War. When he is asked to coach a black student called Tamer Shipp, Bullet finds his prejudices and ways of thinking challenged. The novel ends with Abigail turning up unexpectedly to see Bullet run for his school, followed by a final chapter set in 1969 in which she is informed of his death in Vietnam.

Come A Stranger tells the story of Mina. The novel starts a couple of years before Mina and Dicey meet, with Mina finding out she has been awarded a scholarship to a prestigious ballet summer camp. She loves her time at the camp, despite being the only black student, but the following summer, she is sent home early. On her way home, Mina

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

meets Tamer Shipp (from *The Runner*). Mina meets and befriends Dicey, and engineers a meeting between Tamer and Bullet's mother (Dicey's grandmother). The novel ends with Mina meeting a boy her own age and considering a future as a lawyer.

Sons From Afar is the only Tillerman novel that focuses on two main characters, with the perspective alternating between James Tillerman and his younger brother Sammy. As they go through adolescence, the brothers struggle to cope with the lack of a father figure and begin a quest to find out more about their father, Francis Verricker. The boys' investigations lead them to a Baltimore bar, where the revelation that they are Francis's sons leads to them being beaten up by one of his creditors.

Seventeen Against the Dealer centres on Dicey, now aged twenty-one and working obsessively at her own boat-building business. After Jeff breaks up with her, and her grandmother Abigail becomes seriously ill with pneumonia, Dicey's attention is brought back to her family. Meanwhile a mysterious drifter and gambler called Cisco (implied to be Francis Verricker) squats at Dicey's workshop and helps her with her work. Cisco leaves suddenly after stealing a large sum of money from Dicey, the latest in a series of disasters for her business. The novel ends with Dicey and Jeff getting engaged, with Dicey closing the business while still planning to build a boat.

All the novels contain references to Greek and Roman history, culture and mythology, except *Dicey's Song*, which nonetheless maintains the intertextuality of the series as whole through references to literature, folk songs and the Bible. Figures such as Odysseus, Icarus and Sisyphus, and stories from antiquity are often named and discussed by characters as they work through questions of identity, family and community. Throughout the series, classical history and mythology feature both in formal, classroom education and in less formal interactions that nonetheless contribute to self-discovery and relationship-building.

Analysis

Throughout the series, classical inspirations appear as touchstones, ways of understanding the world and other people. In particular, the recurring references to the myth of Sisyphus reflect tensions about the desire for progress and the search for stability that underscore the whole series. Other recurring classical themes relate to education,

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

	philosophy, history and ways of living with others in society while developing as individuals. Voigt frequently uses classical stories and characters which highlight family relationships, such as Daedalus and Icarus. She also uses classical references to make connections between societies, cultures and over long periods of history. This might suggest a belief that certain aspects of human nature are universal and unchanging, or, alternatively, reflect Voigt's ability to make readers think differently and more deeply about a character or situation. Please see the entries on the individual volumes elsewhere in this database for more detailed analyses.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aeolus Alexander the Great Ancient Greek Dance Apollo Aristotle Circe Cyrus the Great Daedalus Dryades Fall of Rome Hippocratic Oath Homer Horace Icarus Lotus Eaters / Lotophagoi Nemesis Odysseus / Ulysses Odyssey Orion Penelope Persian Empire Phaethon Pleiades Polyphemus Scylla Sisyphus Trojan War Venus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Abandonment Adolescence Adventure Adversity Animals Appearances Authority Child, children Christianity Coming of age Communication Conflict Death Depression Disobedience Diversity Divorce Emotions Environment Expectations Fairy tale references Family Freedom Friendship Gaining understanding Gender expectations/construction Gender, male Health* Heritage Historical figures History Homesickness Humanity Identity Individuality Integrity Intellect Intertextuality Invention Isolation/loneliness Journeys Judgement Learning Loss Love Masculinity Maturity Names Nation Nature Old age (Old people) Oppression Orphans Other literary figures, texts and writers Parents (and children) Past Peers Philosophy Political changes Punishment Race Rejection Relationships Religious beliefs Resilience Respect Sacrifice School Siblings Social class Society Sport Students Success and failure Survival Teachers Travel Truth and lies Values Violence War Water Witch Youth
Further Reading	Clark, Dorothy G., "Edging toward Bethlehem: Rewriting the Myth of Childhood in Voigt's *Homecoming*", *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 25.4 (2000): 191–202.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Digilio, Alice, "What Makes Bullet Run? *The Runner* by Cynthia Voigt", *The Washington Post*, (accessed: October 16, 2019).

Fraustino, Lisa Rowe, "Abandoning Mothers", in Lisa Rowe Fraustino and Karen Coats, eds, *Mothers in Children's and Young Adult Literature: From the Eighteenth Century to Postfeminism*, Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2016, 216–232.

Greenway, Betty, ""Every Mother's Dream": Cynthia Voigt's Orphans", *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 1991 Proceedings (1991): 127–131.

Hardstaff, Sarah, "Economies of Childness in Cynthia Voigt's *Homecoming*", *Children's Literature in Education* 50.1 (2019): 47–59.

Hardstaff, Sarah, "From the Gingerbread House to the Cornucopia: Gastronomic Utopia as Social Critique in *Homecoming* and *The Hunger Games*", *The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Literature* 19.1 (2016) (accessed: August 5, 2019).

Hardstaff, Sarah, "Money and the Gift in the Novels of Mildred Taylor and Cynthia Voigt", *Barnboken*, forthcoming.

Hardstaff, Sarah, ""With special obligations": Constructions of young adulthood and caregiving in *The Road to Memphis* and *Seventeen Against the Dealer*", in Jutta Ahlbeck, Päivi Lappalainen, Kati Launis and Kirsi Tuohela, eds., *Childhood, Literature and Science: Fragile Subjects*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2018, 141–152.

Henke, James T., "Dicey, Odysseus, and Hansel and Gretel: The Lost Children in Voigt's *Homecoming*", *Children's Literature in Education* 16 (1985): 45–52.

Hoffman, Mary, "Growing Up: A Survey", *Children's Literature in Education* 15.3 (1984): 171–185.

Hylton, Jaime, "Exploring the 'Academic Side' of Cynthia Voigt", *The ALAN Review* 33.1 (Fall 2005).

Lesley, Naomi, *Fictions of Integration: American Children's Literature and the Legacies of Brown v. Board of Education*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2017.

Nikolajeva, Maria, *The Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature*,

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2002.

Pearce, Elizabeth A., *Limitation, Subversion, and Agency: Gendered Spaces in the Works of Margaret Mahy, Cynthia Voigt, and Diana Wynne Jones*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Illinois State University, 2014.

Pearson, Lucy, "Family, Identity and Nationhood: Family Stories in Anglo-American Children's Literature, 1930–2000", in Catherine Butler and Kimberley Reynolds, eds., *Modern Children's Literature: An Introduction*, London: Palgrave, 2nd edition, 2014, 89–104.

Plotz, Judith, "The Disappearance of Childhood: Parent-Child Reversals in *After the First Death* and *A Solitary Blue*", *Children's Literature in Education* 19.2 (1988): 67–79.

Reid, Suzanne E., *Presenting Cynthia Voigt*, New York, NY: Twayne Publishers, 1995.

Watson, Victor, "The *Tillerman* Series", in Margaret Meek and Victor Watson, eds., *Coming of Age in Children's Literature: Growth and Maturity in the Work of Philippa Pearce, Cynthia Voigt and Jan Mark*, London: Continuum, 2003, 85–124.

Wolf, Virginia L., "The Linear Image: The Road and the River in Children's Literature", *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 1986 Proceedings, (1986): 41–47.

Zoppa, Linda J., "Color and Class: An Exploration of Responses in Four African-American Coming-of-Age Novels", in Karen Patricia Smith, ed., *African-American Voices in Young Adult Literature: Tradition, Transition, Transformation*, Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1994,169–192.

Addenda

Other tags:

Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus;*

Common points between Rome and USA;

Roman occupation of Britain.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Sarah F. Layzell, "Entry on: The Tillerman Cycle (Series) by Cynthia Voigt ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/972. Entry version as of November 12, 2026.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.