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Opening extract from

Olympic Poems

Written by

Brian Moses

Roger Stevens

Published by

Macmillan Children's Books

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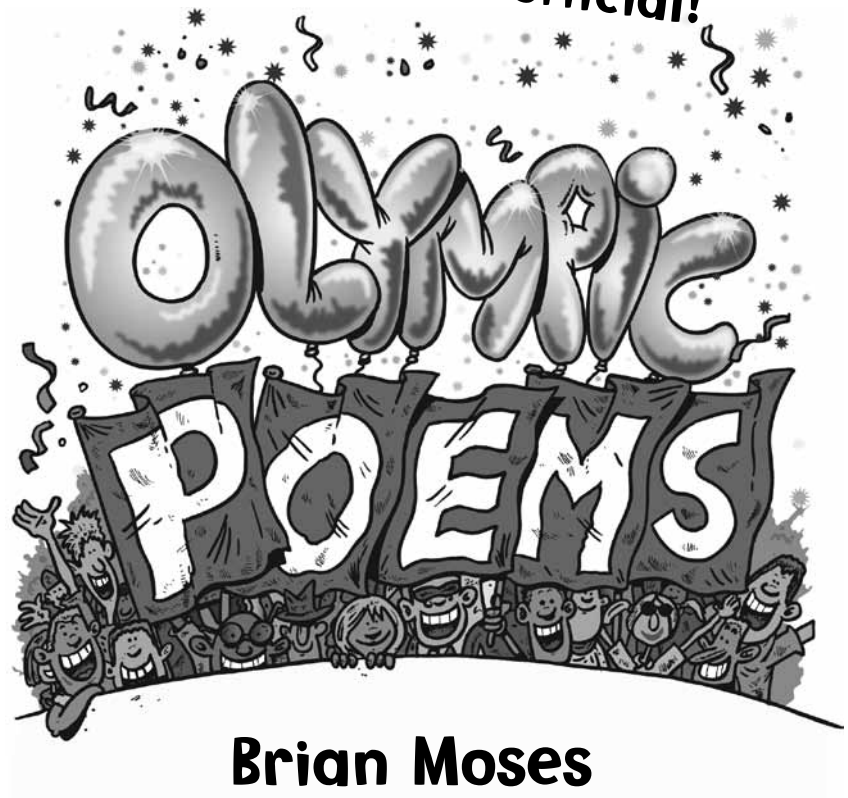
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Brian Moses and Roger Stevens

Illustrated by Nathan Reed

MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

The Olympic Games

'The most important thing is not to win
but to take part'
Bishop of Pennsylvania, 1908



First published 2012 by Macmillan Children's Books
a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited
20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR
Basingstoke and Oxford
Associated companies throughout the world
www.panmacmillan.com

ISBN 978-1-4472-0552-4

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1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

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For our 2012 Olympic athletes (BM)

For Lily, Ruby, Merlin and Sam (RS)

Poetry Marathon 1 of 4

This poem is nervous to begin with.
All the other poems look fit, confident,
sure they can do it,
sure they can flit through these pages
at lightning speed.
But the sound of a gun signals the off
and words run
hither
and
thither
for a moment until they collect themselves
and fall into a rhythm . . .

Moving fast
Make no mistake
This marathon's
A piece of cake
I'm proper chipper
Nippy, zippy
I've seams and reams
Of energy
For my next trick
I'm electric
Like a striker
On a hat-trick
Ducking, diving
Through the pages
How I love
These early stages. *. . . to be continued*

Advice for Staging Your Own Olympic Games

Never play volleyball with a bag of flour
Never use Mum's hairbrush as a baton in the relay race
The flower-bed is not a sandpit for the long jump
And remember – the Olympic Games does not include kiss-chase

Never pole-vault in the vicinity of Grandpa's greenhouse
Never throw the discus using Mum's best plates
The broom handle is not a pole – nor is it a javelin
Never use flowerpots (especially if they have flowers in) for weights

Your dog is a dog, not a horse
Although, at a push, could be used for equestrian events
Do not use the duvet covers in the airing cupboard
To make those big marquee-type tents

Never use the complete set of Delia Smith for the winners' podium
Never bribe the judges with crisps, chocolate, football cards or cash.
And finally when Mum comes home to find her house and garden in a mess
Say, Excuse me, but I'm in the hundred metres – must dash!

Roger Stevens



To Be an Olympic Athlete . . .

You need a lion's heart
and a swift pair of feet,
to be a champion
Olympic athlete.

You need exercise,
so get off the settee,
jog in the park
instead of watching TV.

You need a fire in your eyes
that never goes out,
no room at all
for any moment of doubt.

You need a real hunger
to go out and win,
you need a resolve
to never give in.

You need to break through
that barrier of pain,
and a mantra that tells you to
'train, train, train'.

Then one day, who knows,
to the sound of applause,
you will stand on the steps
and the gold will be yours.

Brian Moses



Athlete

Fast runner
Never give upper
Hard trainer
Careful eater
Stop watcher
Dawn catcher
Muscle stretcher
Dream follower
Team member
Record maker
Gold winner

Roger Stevens

Sporting Definitions

Dressage – how long it takes to get ready
Fencing – building a wooden barrier around the stadium
Greece – the name of the film where John Travolta invented Olympic dancing
High Jumper – badly knitted garment by Granny
Long Jumper – (see High Jumper)
Triple Jump – a visit by three ghosts
Parallel Bars – two pubs exactly opposite one another on a street
Pole Vault – jumping over someone from Poland
Rowing – argument
Shuttlecock – male chicken going backwards and forwards between two hens
Water Polo – small mint dropped in pool

Roger Stevens



The Overtaker

I'm an overtaker,
off down the line.
I don't wait around.
I haven't got time.

I'm an overtaker,
I can't stay back.
I'm out in front
ahead of the pack.

Better keep clear
in the swimming bath.
Everybody
out of my path.

I'm an overtaker,
watch me run.
Every sports day,
sound of the gun.

There I go,
off down the track.
Nothing is going
to hold me back.

Head in the clouds,
I don't look round,
keep my feet
clear of the ground.



Run to school
every day,
any old race,
I'm OK.

Dash home at night,
have lots of fun.
I'm an overtaker,
watch me r . . . . . un!

Brian Moses

Winning

I once thought it was all about winning,
but it's not.

I once thought I could win easily,
and I could,

till the day I raced with David Fleming.
David who was teased and tormented.
David who had nothing going for him.

David, just behind me,
straining and aching to win . . .

And I could have won so easily,
I could have . . .

But I didn't.

I pretended to be hurt,
slipped, clutched my ankle,
let him win.

Watched the grin spread
over his face.

I let David Fleming
win the race

and it felt
so good.

Brian Moses



Slow Motion

In television
High-definition
Slow motion
The facial muscles pull
Seem to disfigure the jaw
And a bead of sweat
Like a free-falling diamond
In the weightlessness of space
Catches the sun

Roger Stevens

Sprint

The air is hot. The sky is blue. Expect
No favours from the sun. You stand alone.
Survey the stadium, the crowd. Inspect
The track. A moment's doubt. Can it be done?

And then the training – days, months,
    years – kicks in
And you are focused on the prize. You know
With certainty what you must do. Begin
With deep breaths. Stretch. Relax. It's time
    to go.

A billion eyes are watching. You can't hide.
There's silence. You can hear your beating
    heart.
You crouch. Into the starting blocks you slide.
You wait. Time stops. You hope there's no
    false start.

Marks. Get set. Kick. Ten seconds and you're
    done.
You are the bullet in the starter's gun.

Roger Stevens

Running the Marathon

I'm going to run the marathon,
wearing a diving suit,
strapped to a parachute.
With a cloak and staff like Noah,
pushing a garden mower.
In a ballet dancer's tutu,
cracking a cowboy's lasso.
Yes, I'm going to run the marathon,
inside a suit of armour,
leading a Tibetan llama.
As an ancient prince from Khartoum,
in a Loch Ness Monster costume.
As Adam running from Eve,
or a camel from Tel Aviv.
Yes, I'm going to run the marathon,
As a green and grotty ogre,
in an Imperial Roman toga.
As a bridegroom on his wedding day,
or someone dressed to play croquet.
In a dragon costume from China,
as a luxury ocean liner.

Yes, I'm going to run the marathon
and I want to get myself seen.
Although maybe, just maybe,
I think it might be best
to forget all these wacky ideas
and stick with shorts and vest!

Brian Moses

