

Deepening Understanding

YR4 Historical Narrative Text

Ancient Olympics Adventure by Laura Curtis



His heart thumping in his chest, Alexius knew this was his chance, his chance to prove to the crowd that he was the best charioteer the Olympic Games had ever seen. Gripping the reins of his trusted horses - Hector and Homer - Alexius cast a quick sideways glance at his rival Pollux. Rolling his eyes, Alexius saw that his arch-enemy was gazing at his reflection in the mirrored plate upon his leather-clad arm. Typical. Even when they were practising back in their little village, Pollux had always been more concerned about his hair than training. Alexius had no idea how Pollux had actually gained the skill to steer a chariot around a dust track let alone compete in the toughest, yet most prestigious competition there was.

Letting out his breath in steely determination, Alexius turned his head forwards and sharpened his gaze on the crowds before him. All around him and filling the huge hippodrome were thousands of people who looked like a sea of white in their togas. Alexius could hear the roar of the crowd as they cheered wildly in anticipation. This was his moment...

It had taken nearly three days of hard travelling under the hot, blazing sun but finally Alexius had arrived. He had excitedly explored the valley



of Olympia until finally he had reached the magnificent Temple of Zeus. It was a rectangular building, with 13 limestone columns spanning each of the four sides that held up the huge roof. Inside was an ornate mosaic floor with a special hexagonal marble section where the victors were crowned. Feeling overwhelmed and rather insignificant, Alexius had respectfully stepped inside and it was then that he stopped in awe. For before him, towering up high - six times the size of a man - was the huge statue of Zeus sitting majestic on his giant throne. With eyes that seemed as if they were alive Zeus stared at all below him. He was resplendent in gold and ivory and clutched a golden sceptre in his hand. Alexius had whispered a soft wish before stepping outside once more into the heat of the Greek sunshine...

"Alexius Patronia" The roar of the crowd thundered in Alexius' ears as his name was announced by the herald. He barely heard, immersed in those few tense moments before a race - where a second felt like forever - but he could feel the electric energy of his supporters as they cheered his name. He knew that he and Pollox were the two favourites - he couldn't let his supporters down.

Alexius briefly scanned the competition. In Lane 1 was a tall, stick-thin man with black oily hair, who was apparently the best charioteer in Eastern Greece. Next to him in Lane 2 was a small but stocky man who was adjusting the leather belt and straps that criss-crossed his robe of cloth. In Lane 3 was Pollox, still admiring his reflection. Alexius himself was in Lane 4, which was the furthest away from the centre of the racetrack. He had not been lucky in the draw but he still had hope.

There was a momentary hush from the crowd as the herald raised his arm to start the race. Holding his breath too, Alexius waited and watched...in a flash the arm dropped. The signal had been given. The race had started! They were off!

In a blur of galloping hooves and dust clouds spiralling off the wheels, the four charioteers urged their horses into action. With a flick of the reins, Alexius drove his loyal horses along the long, dusty track of the hippodrome, trying desperately to manoeuvre himself into a good position. To his left, the man with black, beady eyes was glaring



menacingly at him, to his right was the shorter, stouter competitor and straight ahead was Pollox who was cackling with glee as he led the pack. Onwards he pushed his horses, if he could just overtake one at a time...Skilfully, Alexius weaved his way in front of the stick thin guy, who suddenly lost control of his chariot and went skidding off the track. So then it was down to three...

"Ah ha, I'm beating you little boy. Eat my dust!" the short man cried as he drove his horses to the right, practically taking the whole space where Alexius was heading. With a cry, Alexius held his breath: surely they were going to collide! However, the man's plan went horribly wrong: just at that moment a bolt flew out of one of his wheels and with a crash the chariot tumbled over sideways. Gasping in relief, Alexius grabbed the reins tighter. Phew that had been close! Just one more split-second and...but he wasn't going to think about that now: it was now down to two and there was a race to win!

"Go boys, you can do it!" Hearing the pleas of their Master and as if fuelled by super-strength magic horse feed, Hector and Homer burst into action, their hooves a flurry in the dust...but was there time? There was the corner...it was going to be tight! Closing his eyes and holding his breath, Alexius dove to the left the way he had practised 1000 times at home. His horses instinctively reacted and careered in perfect unison around the bend, over-taking Pollux as they did so. It was the crescendo of the crowd that told him: he was winning!! His eyelids flashing open, he looked. Yes! Only 100 metres ahead and coming rapidly towards them was the finishing line...all he had to do was hold on....

"Run boys, RUN!" Alexius cried as he held firm upon the chariot. There was the line, there was the herald with the flag...sensing Pollux was hot upon his wheels he gave one last cry and in a flourish of hooves, wheels and dust he crossed the line first. Victory! He had done it!!

As Alexius stood upon the winner's mosaic tile, the wreath of glistening, glossy leaves with sprigs of gold being lowered onto his head, he grinned a grin so wide, so beaming that he felt sure his mother and father back home would be able to see it. Still grinning, he looked up and thanked Zeus for making his wish come true.

