



Artemis the Loyal (Goddess Girls)

By Joan Holub, Suzanne Williams

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It's time for the annual Olympic Games, and the four goddessgirls are not happy--especially Artemis. Even though she's better at sports than most of the godboys, she can't compete because rules say the Games are boys-only. No fair!

Led by Artemis, Athena, Persephone and Aphrodite, the ladies of Mount Olympus hatch a plan to get Zeus to open up the games to everyone. Will they succeed--or end up watching from the sidelines again?

These classic myths from the Greek pantheon are given a modern twist that contemporary tweens can relate to, from dealing with bullies like Medusa to a first crush on an unlikely boy. Goddess Girls follows four goddesses-in-training - Athena, Persephone, Aphrodite, and Artemis - as they navigate the ins and outs of divine social life at Mount Olympus Academy, where the most privileged gods and goddesses of the Greek pantheon hone their mythical skills.

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

The *Goddess Girls* series by Joan Holub and Suzanne Williams puts a modern spin on classic Greek myths! Follow the ins and outs of divine social life at Mount Olympus Academy where the most privileged godboys and goddessgirls in the Greek pantheon hone their mythical skills.

About the Author

Joan Holub is the award-winning author of over 125 books for young readers, including *Groundhog Weather School*, *Vincent van Gogh Sunflowers and Swirly Stars*, *Zero the Hero*, *Wagons Ho!*, *Who Was Marco Polo?*, *Bed Bats & Beyond*, and the *Doll Hospital* chapter book series. Of the four goddessgirls, she's probably most like Athena because she loves to think up new ideas for books. But she's very glad her dad was never the principal of her school! Visit her at joanholub.com

Suzanne Williams is the award-winning author of over 30 books for young readers, including *Library Lil*, *Mommy Doesn't Know My Name*, *My Dog Never Says Please*, and the Princess Power and Fairy Blossoms series. Her husband says she's the Goddess of Annoying Questions. (Most having to do with why her computer misbehaves.) That makes her kind of like Pandora, except that Pandora never had to deal with computers. Suzanne lives near Seattle in Washington State. Visit her at suzanne-williams.com

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Artemis the Loyal



1

No Girls Allowed

RACE YOU TO THE SPORTS FIELDS!" ARTEMIS challenged her twin brother, Apollo, as they crossed Mount Olympus Academy's courtyard on Wednesday afternoon. Practices for the Olympic Games, which would take place on Saturday, were now in progress. Talented athletes from all over Greece, Mount Olympus, and other magical realms, had come to MOA to compete.

Apollo crouched in a runner's stance with his fingertips touching the courtyard's marble tiles. "You're on."

Artemis crouched too. "Ready. Set. Go!" she shouted.

They took off at the exact same moment. Both immortal twins flew across the courtyard and down a crowded grassy hill, legs pumping. Artemis's three dogs kept pace beside them. They liked to run too!

The twins' best sport was archery, but Artemis loved any kind of athletic competition. As archers, she and her brother were evenly matched. However, with some extra effort she could usually beat him in a race. Right now he was a couple of feet behind her. Slowly, she began to widen her lead, her eyes on the sports fields.

Ahead of them, colorful banners waved high on the flagpoles that lined the edges of the largest field. Each

had a logo for a particular sport. However, there was no logo for archery. It wasn't an Olympic event. Not that it mattered in Artemis's case. She had no chance at winning in the Olympics. Why? Because all those competitors here for the Games? Every single one of them was a boy. Not a girl among them. Girls were not allowed to compete in the Games.

Thinking about it, Artemis's shoulders tightened. It wasn't fair!

She glanced back at Apollo. *Ye gods!* He was gaining on her! Just then Ares, who was the fastest runner at MOA, saw them coming. A crowd of students had gathered alongside one of the tracks to watch the foot race practices and he was among them. Grinning at Apollo, he cupped his hands around his mouth and called out: "Go! You can beat her. She's a *girl*!"

That did it! Gritting her teeth, Artemis gathered all her determination. Her eyes locked on the finish line. With a huge burst of speed, she sprinted across the edge of the field, well ahead of Apollo.

"Whoa!" shouted Ares. He jumped back to avoid her plowing into him before she could skid to a stop.

As she stood catching her breath, Artemis shot him a superior glance. "I may only be a *girl*, but I won, didn't I?"

"Uh-huh, sure. Good race," Ares said lamely.

Artemis had noticed that whenever a girl was good at sports, boys seemed to lose interest. Turning, she saw Apollo standing behind her. His face was as red as her favorite chiton.

"Thanks a lot!" he grumbled. "Way to embarrass me in front of my friends!"

What? she thought. *I'm supposed to lose, just so he can save face? No way!*

"Hey, Artemis, over here!" Athena called from the stands. A light breeze blew a lock of the goddessgirl's naturally wavy brown hair across her cheek, and she pushed it back with one hand as she waved with her other. Still annoyed at her brother, Artemis stomped off to sit with her friend. All the event practices were going on at the same time, and Athena was watching the discus-throwing. She scooted over to make room for Artemis.

A godboy named Atlas was up first. He held a discus—a disk about the size of a dinner plate—in his right hand. As the girls watched, he sprang into action. Twisting his body, he turned in a full circle to gather momentum. "Argh!" he grunted. Then with a mighty heave, he flung the discus high and long. It flew half the length of the field!

The other MOA boys had come over to cheer his attempt. "Way to go, Atlas!" Apollo called out. He punched his fist in the air.

"That rocked!" called Ares.

Artemis glared at them. Sure, they got all excited when a *boy* did well at sports! *Hmph!*

Suddenly, Ares seemed to forget all about the discus and his head jerked in Artemis's direction. She straightened. *What's he looking at me for?* But then she realized he was staring at something beyond her.

Looking over her shoulder, she saw her friend Aphrodite approaching. Half the boys on the field stopped what they were doing to watch the goddessgirl stroll toward Athena and Artemis. Her long hair shone like gold in the sunlight, the hem of her bright blue chiton fluttered with her every step, and her sparkling blue eyes smiled at Ares as she gave him a little wave of her blue-nail-polished fingers.

Those boys probably thought all girls should be girly-girls like Aphrodite and leave athletics to the guys. “It’s not fair,” Artemis complained aloud.

“I know,” said Athena, grinning. “She does get attention. But Aphrodite was just born gorgeous. She can’t help it that she’s the prettiest girl at MOA.”

“No, not that,” said Artemis. “I meant it’s not fair that only boys get to compete in the Olympics. I’m a good athlete. So are other girls around here. Why shouldn’t we be able to participate in the Games?”

“Maybe the boys are afraid you’d win,” said Aphrodite, smiling as she joined them.

“Maybe we *would* win,” Artemis said earnestly.

“You’re serious?” said Aphrodite, staring at her in surprise. “You’d really like to be in the Games?”

“You bet your sweet lip gloss I would,” said Artemis. At first her dogs had been content to lay at her feet, but now they began to paw at her, bored. Flipping her shiny black hair out of her eyes, she pulled a bone-shaped ball from her pocket and tossed it to the grassy area outside the sports fields. The magical ball zigzagged, bouncing high and then low. Her three dogs went crazy and tore after it.

Athena shook her head. “No chance. Zeus decided long ago that the Olympics are just for boys. Always have been, always will be.” She gestured toward the long, giant billboard at the far side of the field. It depicted glorious scenes from past Olympic Games throughout history. Boys wrestling. Boys running track. Boys throwing javelins. Boys, boys, boys!

Athena was probably right, though. Zeus was her dad, after all, so she’d know. And not only was he the principal of MOA, he was also Kings of the Gods and Ruler of the Heavens. Basically, his word was law.

“But doesn’t it make you mad?” asked Artemis, feeling her irritation rise. “Even a little?”

Aphrodite shrugged. “Not really. I don’t want to compete. I’d rather watch all the boys sweating it out from a comfy seat in the stands.”

“I never thought about it before,” Athena said, combing her fingers through her hair. “But Artemis does have a point. If we did want to compete, we should be— Oh, no!” Catching sight of her crush, Heracles, farther down the field, she gasped. A scaly dragon-boy had just snatched him up in his sharp talons! Muscles bulging, Heracles quickly reversed things, flipping the dragon-boy over his head and slamming him to the ground. Flames shot from the dragon-boy’s snout, singeing the ends of Heracles’ hair.

Athena bounced excitedly in her seat and yelled, “Yes! Pin him!”

Glancing over his shoulder at her, Heracles grinned and gave her a thumbs-up.

Just then, with ears flapping and tails wagging, Artemis’s dogs returned. Her beagle, Amby, was in the lead

with the ball, which he dropped in the palm of her hand. “Good job,” she said, unfazed by the dog slobber that now covered the ball.

Aphrodite scooted away a little, but didn’t say anything. Everyone knew she had an aversion to dogs. And dog slobber.

“Thirsty, boys?” Artemis asked, noticing how hard her pooches were panting. Hopping up, she led them to an oval-shaped stone fountain a few feet away. It had been designed in the shape of a big *O* (for Olympics) by Poseidon, godboy of the sea, especially for these Games. At its center, water sprayed outward in loops and twists from its many spigots, seeming to dance in the air for a few seconds before tumbling back into the pool below.

Poseidon had waded into the fountain’s waters and was tinkering with the pump mechanism, trying to make each spigot sound a different musical note when water spurted from it. All around him, magical fish were practicing tricks, which they would perform during the Games. And every now and then a weird sound or sour note honked from the pipes as he worked.

Pocketing the ball, Artemis reached into the pool at the base of the fountain to scoop up some water. “Here,” she said, holding her cupped hands out so each dog in turn could drink from them. When they’d finished lapping up the water, she pulled the ball out again. Winding up, she pitched it downfield. Amby scampered after it, but Nectar, Artemis’s greyhound, beat him and her bloodhound, Suez, to it. Just as Nectar was about to snatch it, the teasing ball spun away, moving up into the stands.

“Hey, you’ve got a pretty good arm for a girl,” a mortal boy named Actaeon called out. He and a god-boy named Hades had apparently been watching her from where they stood by the sand pit, waiting their turns at the long jump. At any other time, Artemis might have taken Actaeon’s words as a compliment. But at these boy-only games, and given what Ares had said after her race with Apollo—it made her steaming mad.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” she shouted back. “You don’t think girls can throw?”

But Actaeon didn’t hear because right then a cheer rose up from the crowd in the stands over at the track. Another practice footrace had begun and Ares, as usual, had broken out in front of the pack of runners.

“Go, go, go!” Aphrodite yelled from the stands. She and Ares had an on-again, off-again relationship that had been more on than off lately—ever since Ares had sung a sweet song about her at the last school dance. “That’s the way!” she cheered. Because of course that’s all girls could do at the Games. Cheer for the boys.

Grr, thought Artemis.

“Has Hades jumped yet?” someone asked. Artemis looked over her shoulder to see Persephone. She was standing nearby, shielding her green eyes with her pale hand as she looked toward the sand pit. A gold necklace with a GG charm encircled her throat and glinted in the sunlight. “I couldn’t get here any earlier. I stayed late after Garden-ology class in fourth period to help Ms. Thallo unpack a new shipment of seeds.”

“No worries,” said Athena, joining them just then from the stands. “He hasn’t had his turn yet.” The three girls and Aphrodite were best buds as well as the most popular goddessgirls at MOA, and they all wore the look-alike GG necklaces.

“Oh, good.” Persephone’s red curls bounced as she went up on tiptoe, waving to catch Hades’ eye. He sent

her a nod in return, looking a little relieved. “I didn’t want to miss it,” she told the girls. “He thinks I’m his good-luck charm.”

Artemis sighed as Nectar trotted up with the ball and dropped it at her feet. Weren’t any of her friends as bothered as she was that they could only support the boys’ efforts rather than participate in the Games themselves? As she bent to grab the ball, the ground suddenly shifted under her feet, knocking her off balance.

Stomp! Stomp! Stomp!

“Godzooks!” she exclaimed. Forgetting all about the unfairness of the boys-only games, she threw her arms wide to keep from falling. Beside her, water whooshed up in a wave and splashed from the fountain’s pool to slap the ground.

Looking around, she found the source of the rumbling. Giants! *Two* of them. Each was twice as tall as the tallest godboy at MOA, with shoulders twice as wide, too. And they were coming this way.

What can they possibly want?

Users Review

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