



2017

Argos: The Story of Odysseus as Told by His Loyal Dog

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McMillan, Tessa (2017) "Argos: The Story of Odysseus as Told by His Loyal Dog," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 38 : Iss. 1 , Article 17.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol38/iss1/17>

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Book Review

Title: Argos: The Story of Odysseus as Told by His Loyal Dog

Author: Ralph Hardy

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Publisher: HarperCollins Children's Books

Publication Year: 2016

ISBN: 9780062396785

Number of Pages: 400

Interest Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent



Review

It has been many years since Odysseus left Ithaca for the Trojan War. Odysseus's dog, Argos, maintains his promise to protect Odysseus's family during his absence. But times are becoming desperate for Penelope—Odysseus's wife—and Telemachos—their son. Greedy men, calling themselves suitors, take advantage of Penelope's hospitality on a daily basis. These suitors try to pressure Penelope into admitting Odysseus is dead so she can remarry one of them. Since many suitors see young Telemachos as a threat, they plot to kill him. His life is repeatedly spared thanks to Argos's keen intellect and boundless strength. During these troubling times, any word about Odysseus reinforces Argos's loyalty to his master. Argos charges all seafaring birds to come to him with any information. Through these birds, Argos hears the adventures and tragedies of Odysseus's journey. After twenty years, Odysseus comes home and thanks Argos for fulfilling his duty. Argos passes away and his narrative is taken up by Leander, Argos's son. Leander joins Telemachos and Odysseus to defeat the suitors and win back their home.

Argos is a great introduction for young readers to a "PG" version of the Odyssey. Hardy's canine spin on the classic Greek tale is an insightful read on the power of loyalty and family. Argos is a bear-like dog, recognized by all as the faithful "Boar Slayer" to Odysseus. When Argos is charged to protect Odysseus's family, he goes above and beyond his call. For example, Argos takes on the fatherly role of teaching young Telemachos how to properly hunt and be brave during a fight. Argos does this because he knows Odysseus would have taught his son these skills if he were there. Later, Argos actually becomes a father and he learns, like Odysseus, how much it hurts to be tragically separated from his family. At times, the story can be a bit tedious because more than half of the book is just the retelling of Odysseus's adventures. But Hardy does a good job at keeping the narrative fresh and unique, while he sets up suspenseful problems Argos must undergo at home.