

## Book Review

### Circus Maximus: Race to the Death

Gray (A.) Pp. xiv + 347, ills. London: Zephyr, 2021.  
Cased, £6.99. ISBN: 9781800240575.

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appeals to boys? It is certainly lively and compelling. This is a very well-researched novel, and young readers will also gain a wealth of background information about chariot racing, the Circus Maximus and the factions and politics of the different teams which competed – a subject which obsessed many Romans at the time. I would certainly recommend it to my pupils (although with the caveat that it is aimed at the slightly younger age-group).

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I've seen this novel, aimed at 9–12 year olds ('middle grade'), described as '*Ben Hur* meets *National Velvet*'. Young Dido rejects the traditional roles of a girl in ancient Rome in order to pursue fame as a charioteer at the Circus Maximus. Her father is a horse trainer and it is when he is murdered that she is not only placed in danger, but also liberated to pursue her adventure.

This is a rip-roaring tale centring on a female lead, but could it be one of those rare things, a book with a female protagonist which also