



Seabird

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The history of America at sea is presented through the travels of Seabird, a carved ivory gull.

Seabird Details

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Author : Holling Clancy Holling

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From Reader Review Seabird for online ebook

Jennifer (JenIsNotaBookSnob) says

This book is something to see for the illustrations and the transition from sail. The text is definitely a bit dated. It starts out charming, but, the whaling portions will be disturbing to many. Additionally, it's very patriarchal, only Ezra's wife gets a mention and the rest of them have neither illustration or name attached to them. They are just accessories to the story for the purpose of begetting the son who is in the story.

BUT, if you can look past all of that, the illustrations are pretty cool as is the history of sailing. This book makes me want to look into other books by Holling in hopes of finding one similarly illustrated but more palatable for present day readers.

Susannah says

Ezra, Ship's Boy on a whaling vessel in 1830, sights a pure white bird in a snowstorm while on watch in the crow's nest. Inspired, he creates Seabird, a scrimshaw masterpiece made from walrus tusk. Seabird travels with Ezra and his descendants--a sailor, an engineer, and an airman--over the course of a century. Holling's description of the wind, waves and sky made me long to sail in a clipper, but the whaling vessel would be less than pleasant. Thank goodness the need for whale oil is past! I can't think of a better way for children to learn about these bygone occupations than through a story. The drawings are detailed, interesting, even humorous. and the paintings colorful and absorbing.

Liz says

Good history lessons, good science lessons, both in the story and in the illustrated margins, and good illustrations. The only reason I didn't love this book was because I dislike whaling intensely. That and the disjointed appearance of the gull.

Heather says

We're not liking this one as well as we did Paddle-to-the-Sea. Maybe I didn't do my homework well enough, but I didn't know the first part of the book was about a whaling ship. We're reading along and they kill a whale and start stripping the blubber off and boiling it down and it gets a little gruesome. My boys all looked a little green in the gills for a while.

I'll let you know how we like the rest once we finish it.

Okay, we finished it. We followed the change in ships from whaling to sailing a schooner to steam and liner and finally airplane. It was interesting but very short. If your kids express an interest you could go much more indepth.

We liked the book better as we went along, but it still didn't captivate us like Paddle-to-the Sea did. I think we will probably read it again when the younger ones are a little older, but I'm still not positive.

Fritz Van Buskirk says

Difficult to explain the format Hollingsworth used to captivate me for years with this book. Large format book with exquisite illustrations, with detailed miniatures all around the margins. Story begins with a boy aboard a tall-masted whaling ship and the ivory gull, Seabird, carved by a sailor for him. Grippingly text and gorgeous illustrations depicts all about whales, whalers, processing, and goes on to two more generations of seamen, each handing Seabird to their son, ending with Seabird being passed to the great grandson on board a steamship. Cross sections of ships and lots of information about sea life captivated me. Magic.

Nancy Thompson says

A good story with insight to the Whaling Industry during its high. We did this as part of our geography lessons and I enjoyed the book way more than the lessons that accompanied the book. The drawings are so very good. Holling Clancy Holling books are treasures.

Mandi Ellsworth says

As with all of H.C.H's books, there is a wealth of knowledge within the pages of this story. My children couldn't wait to see where Seabird would go the next day. This man's books are worth owning, as my kids want to start over and read them again. I will own them. The pictures are detailed and accurate and fantastic. A person could spend months researching all the things H.C.H addressed. This book spans a little more than a century, following first a whaling ship (He even talks about how they used to skin the whale and make oil from blubber. It's such a taboo topic these days, that that part of history is rarely talked about). He moved from a whaler to a clipper to a steam ship to a cruise liner. We went around the world with them. I can't say enough good about this. So, so worth reading.

Courtney Clark says

Pagoo is still my favorite Hollings' ever, but Seabird might be second.

Leah says

It's been years since I've read a book by Holling Clancy Holling. The detail remains fascinating and the illustrations incredible. The story was sadder than I remembered, however. There is so much detail and focus on Ezra right before and after he makes Seabird, and then all of a sudden the years are flying by at an incredible rate and so much is summed up in so few words. Something I had never noticed before was that the women in the story are nameless and faceless. I think the

only reason they're mentioned at all is because they are needed for the sons to be born and the male line to continue.

I still want to reread Paddle-To-The-Sea and the others. They were a part of my childhood and remain fascinating.

Amy says

Read with a third child...just lovely!

Karol says

This childrens' book looks at "ships" across 4 generations, from a whaling ship powered by sails, to a "ship" that flies. I liked the multi-generational and historical aspects of the book, but of course didn't enjoy the whaling part of it. The illustrations were just beautiful.

Anne says

Holling's books are beautifully written and illustrated, bringing history and geography to life. This one is best for 8 and up as the technical sailing details make it a little more difficult to follow.

Contemplative says

Another H C H classic natural science "living book". Sea Bird takes us on a wonderful adventure through the shipping industry beginning with whaling and ending with actual flight in planes. Who would have thought so much change could happen over one lifetime and through four generations? The beginning whaling chapters weren't exactly our favorite but the story did pick up for us after that. There's a wonderful unit study resource at www.homeschoolshare.com that can be used along with this book.

Phil Jensen says

Delightful! Holling tells a multi-generational story about fatherhood, the wonders of the natural world, the joy of discovery, and the pride of hard work, all in 27 single-page chapters. Each chapter is told in lively, poetic prose and faces a gorgeous full-color illustration. The margins are filled with helpful diagrams that provide additional information about sailing and whaling. Wait... whaling?

Does this book work in 2017?

Yes, I say it does. Holling provides detailed descriptions of whaling. He voices no ecological concerns either for the whales or for the coal and oil-fueled ships. There are some outdated terms- "Eskimo" and "Oriental." All this is indicative of the 1940s (when this book was published) and I don't see anything harmful in it. If a

student was reading this book, I would gently comment on these topics, but I think the benefits of the lessons on progress and striving for better are well worth it.

The only piece I wish had been handled a little differently is the omission of women. The characters in this book seem to conjure babies out of thin air, all the children are male, and when they have family gatherings, there are no women present! I wish Holling had been more complete in that regard.

Laura says

Holling always sucks me in. His books start a bit sluggish for me but I'm always delighted by the end. These delightful generations of 'ships' and their owners cover so many facets of learning all tied together. Seabird is my new friend.
