

The book was found

Who Was Harry Houdini?



Synopsis

Every kid has heard of Harry Houdini, the famous magician who could escape from handcuffs, jail cells, and locked trunks. But do they know that the ever-ambitious and adventurous Houdini was also a famous movie star and the first pilot to fly a plane in Australia? This well-told biography is full of the details of Houdini's life that kids will really want to know about and illustrated throughout with beautiful black-and-white line drawings. Illustrated by John O'Brien.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 780L (What's this?)

Series: Who Was...?

Paperback: 112 pages

Publisher: Grosset & Dunlap; F First Edition edition (July 22, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0448426862

ISBN-13: 978-0448426860

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.2 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (64 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #11,027 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 in Â Books > Children's Books >

Biographies > Performing Arts #28 in Â Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures >

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

If the picture on the cover is any indication, Harry Houdini is Sean Penn (there's a striking resemblance). This is an interesting book in the "Who Was" series, detailing Houdini's impoverished boyhood in America (after emigrating from Hungary), his early interest in magic, and a turning point, his discovery of a book about Jean-Eugene Robert-Houdin, the "father of modern magic." Author Sutherland divided the book into 12 chapters, each beginning with "So you want to be a (Magician, Pilot, Hero, Detective, etc.), detailing Houdini's feats in many areas. Several of the escape illusions are briefly explained (including Houdini's great illusion making an elephant disappear!), and there's a humorous bent as the author admits that it's difficult to tell which of Houdini's many statements about himself are true! Houdini traveled from town to town, and it wasn't until he Martin Beck, head

of the Orpheum Circuit's (a string of vaudeville houses), discovered Houdini that he earned international acclaim, staying five years in Europe. The book does a good job at showing how Houdini worked hard at his illusions, and how this practice (and a penchant for self-promotion) catapulted him to fame. It also emphasizes the real dangers and near disasters that Houdini faced, a far cry from today's televised illusionists. Sutherland does a great job of providing relatively unknown information about Houdini: He was the first person to fly an airplane in Australia, his wife played an important part in his stage act, he was in five movies, and he and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (the author of the Sherlock Holmes series) debated the validity of Spiritualism (Houdini thought it was an exploitative sham). Sidebars about, for example, airplanes, movies, WWI add a historical context, During WW1, Houdini raised money for American troops, did shows for the wounded, and even taught soldiers how to escape from German handcuffs! This is a fascinating book that teaches a lot about Houdini and his times. Sutherland doesn't talk down to his readers, and both adults and kids will learn a great deal. The book may even begin or reinforce someone's ambition to perform magic tricks and illusions. John O'Brien's small black and white illustrations add an important measure of interest. 105 pages, with sidebars, two timelines, but no index.

I read this book aloud to my 7 year-old son, and once we started, he did not want to stop. I've tried to read other biographies to him and many I have found so boring and poorly written that I dreaded finishing them. Not so with this one! This was written so as to be interesting for both children and adults. The author weaves in discussion of various historical events and figures and provides just the right amount of detail and analysis at just the right level of sophistication for elementary aged children (e.g., World War I, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Spiritualism, The Wright Brothers' first flight, etc.). He doesn't avoid difficult subjects like death, war, and poverty but at the same time maintains a reassuring tone appropriate for children. The upshot was that we both learned a lot from this book and had a great time reading it. I've now ordered 8 more books in the series and am looking forward to reading them aloud to my son. I can imagine that in a year or so he'll be reading these books on his own and using them for school reports. As an educational psychologist, I will highly recommend this series for my "reluctant readers" who often complain that reading (particularly expository text) is "boring."

My son (age 9) had to do a biography project; however, all of the books he found in the library wouldn't hold his interest. They were quite boring even for me. I found this book and he loved it! It took him a matter of days to read it and he did a great presentation on Houdini. I'd highly

recommend this to all kids since it is educational and entertaining.

I teach third grade and my students LOVE the Who Was series books. I bought them Harry Houdini because he was a person from history that they weren't as familiar with. The kids really enjoyed learning about him and I had a few students choose him for their biography project.

I bought these for my third grade classroom. They are great for the biography genre and then to use for report writing. The three years I've used them so far the kids LOVED them. Easy for their reading levels, informative, and people they have heard of in their lives. They would read their own and then read other that they had heard of. Could have left these books out 1/2 year and they would have still been reading them.

I thought this book was outstanding and I will definitely use it in my classroom. Harry Houdini was a from a poor Wisconsin home. His family suffered until he was able to make money through magic. I find this biography to be telling and moving even for a young reader!

My 9 year old son is hard to buy books for, but when I found this, it caught my eye. He loves magic, so I bought it, hoping he'd like it. He did! It was a good length for him and kept his attention. I recommend this book for kids this age who like biographies or want to learn about magic or magicians.

This series is great for kids because it breaks up the lives of famous people into sections that are both interesting and digestible. They are easy to read and my children have requested that we buy more from the series.

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