



2004

The Giant Rat of Sumatra or Pirates Galore

Lillian Heil

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Heil, Lillian (2004) "The Giant Rat of Sumatra or Pirates Galore," *Children's Book and Media Review*. Vol. 25 : Iss. 4 , Article 10.

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Fleischman, Sid. *The Giant Rat of Sumatra or Pirates Galore*. Illustrated by Hendrix, John. Greenwillow Books, 2005. ISBN 0060742399. \$16.89. 191 pp.

Reviewer: Lillian H. Heil

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Adventure; Historic Fiction;

Subject: Pirates--Juvenile Fiction; Mexican War, 1846-1848--Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews;

A twelve year old from Boston is pressed into service as a cabin boy by his angry stern uncle. When their ship blows apart in a storm he finds himself rescued by a pirate ship - The Giant Rat of Sumatra. As narrated by the boy, he sees the pirates as no more greedy than those he had seen on the streets of Boston. They stand in awe of him because he can read and write. Nicknamed Shipwreck, the boy's loyalty to the captain gets him in trouble with the greedy chief mate who aims to steal the emeralds the captain has. Another difficulty is that San Diego is in the hands of the Mexicans and they are at war with Shipwreck's country -the US. There is adventure aplenty for Shipwreck before he can start his journey home to Boston at the book's end.

The swashbuckling character of the captain, the slinky meanness of the chief mate, and the cabin boy who wonders if his actress mother in Boston will welcome him home add up to fast moving action. The boy's view of the world is of an innocent growing up and finding that adults can be very good, very bad and lots of shades in between.