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Women Daredevils: Thrills, Chills, and Frills

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Cummins, Julie. *Women Daredevil: Thrills, Chills, and Frills*. Illustrated by Cheryl Harness. Dutton, 2008. ISBN 9780525479482. \$17.99. 48 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Biography

Subject: Women daredevils--Biography--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

The general fascination with the high-risk exploits of thrill-seekers has fueled entertainment for centuries. Cummins uses this fascination to craft a collective biography of 14 female performers whose daring deeds inspired awe in turn-of-the-20th-century spectators. From human cannonball to bareback rider to barnstormer to tiger-trainer to stunt driver, these women preferred derring-do to the traditional role of women of their day. A two-page chronology of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries notes the accomplishments of selected women in America.

Cummins' sources and acknowledgements document her research. Harness's gauche and pen illustrations capture these women's exploits, but period photographs--where available--would have added realism to the text. A combination of illustrations and photographs could have strengthened the book. In an era of extreme sports and reality television, these women's stunts may seem too tame for some young readers; however, others will be amazed at their daring. Rappaport's *Living Dangerously: American Women Who Risked their Lives for Adventure* (1991), which focuses on 20th century women, would be a useful companion to *Women Daredevils*.

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