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Lives of the Pirates: Swashbucklers, Scoundrels (Neighbors Beware!)

Marsha D. Broadway

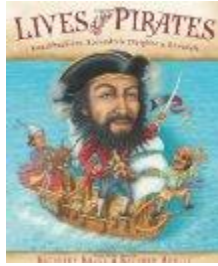
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Krull, Kathleen. *Lives of the Pirates: Swashbucklers, Scoundrels (Neighbors Beware!)*. Illustrated by Kathryn Hewitt. Harcourt, 2010. ISBN 9780152059088. \$21.00. 96 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informative;

Subject: Pirates--biography--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

After a decade, the duo of Krull and Hewitt return with a new title in the kid-dubbed “Big Head” series. This time they tackle the ruthless, swashbuckling exploits of twenty pirates including seven women. Fifth century Princess Alvilda, who ran away from her suitor, Prince Alf, to become a pirate. When Prince Alf captures her ship, she finally marries him. Other pirates the book discusses are the Greek brothers Ajur and Khair. Pirating was a family business for them, and they both became known as Barbarosse, or Red Beard, as they enslaved people along the Barbary Coast. When she wasn't hosting nobles, Lady Mary Killigrew, yet another pirate, joined her husband in raiding ships along the coast of Cornwall and then neatly organized the booty. The book also discusses Madame Cheng who likewise joined her husband in piracy, and after he was washed overboard, she took command of six pirate fleets and eventually 2,000 ships, married her adopted son, and terrorized European and Chinese merchant ships for three years only to be granted amnesty and pardon for 17,000 of her men. Robert Louis Stevenson's Long John Silver even gets a life sketch.

Krull acknowledges that most pirates were private and little information exists about their lives. Public records, except for execution dates, are scarce. But she did her research and found some captivating stories. In her characteristic conversational narrative, she indicates when information may be less than reliable. Hewitt's colorful caricatures give visual hints as to the personalities and penchants of the pirates. For those who enjoyed Krull and Hewitt's *Lives of the Musicians*, —*Writers*, —*Artists*, —*Athletes*, and —*Presidents*, *Lives of the Pirates* will be a rollicking, good read.

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