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Dare the Wind: The Record-Breaking Voyage of Eleanor Prentiss and the Flying Cloud

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Book Review

Title: Dare the Wind: The Record-Breaking Voyage of Eleanor Prentiss and the Flying Cloud

Author: Tracey Fern

Illustrator: Emily Arnold McCully

Reviewer: Cynthia Frazier

Publisher: Farrar Straus Giroux

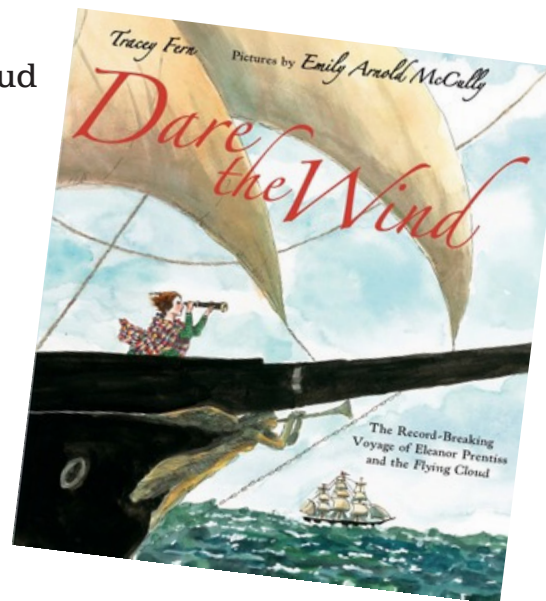
Publication Year: 2014

ISBN: 9780374316990

Number of Pages: 31

Interest Level: Outstanding

Rating: Preschool, Primary



Review

Ellen Prentiss's father was a trading ship captain in Massachusetts in the early 1800's. Even though she was a girl, Captain Prentiss taught his daughter seamanship and how to navigate the seas using a sextant and chronometer. Ellen loved sailing and using her knowledge of the stars, moon, and sun to cross the waters. Later, Ellen, as navigator, and her husband, Perkins Creesy as captain, successfully sailed cargo ships in established shipping lanes. The Creesy's then had the wonderful opportunity to sail an extreme clipper, called the Flying Cloud. Clipper ships were much different than other sailing vessels, they were sleek and lightweight and designed for speed. As thousands of people were headed to the gold fields of California, Ellen and Perkins hoped to cut travel time in half with the Flying Cloud. A journey over land or by sailing around Cape Horn in a traditional ship took many months. The Creesy's goal was to deliver their important cargo and passengers to San Francisco in record time. This journey was fraught with trials and dangers. The story of the flying Cloud with her female navigator is both inspiring and noteworthy.

Dare the Wind is a picture book for first to third grade readers. Based on real people and events, author Tracey Fern tells the true story of a 19th century girl who through determination and practice entered a male dominated field to excel. Fern peppers the pages of her book with nautical terms that add interest and movement to the story. Her vivid descriptions of the wind, waves, and dangers of the voyage will keep the attention of young children being read to, as well as children who read the story to themselves. Additionally, Emily Arnold McCully, an award winning illustrator, highlights every page with compelling ink and watercolor snapshots of 19th century life and adventures at sea. Several of the drawings are pictured in the round suggesting a look through a spyglass. Her depictions of the many faces of the sea (waves, becalm, storm) ably support Fern's narratives. Word and picture together paint an absorbing story that is sure to catch the interest of children and adults alike.