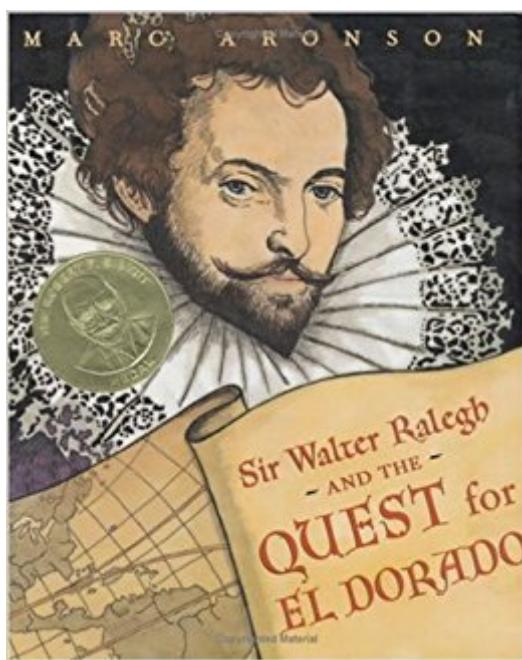


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Sir Walter Raleigh And The Quest For El Dorado



Synopsis

In this extraordinarily well researched and insightful biography, Marc Aronson explores the amazing accomplishments and dismal failures of one of the most flamboyant figures of the Elizabethan age. Best remembered for laying his coat in a muddy puddle so that Queen Elizabeth I could walk across it, Sir Walter Raleigh committed himself to pleasing his monarch and obtaining power in her court. He heroically risked his life in battle time and again, chasing after glory to win her favor. His notoriously ill-fated quest for the mythological golden city of El Dorado was perhaps his grandest attempt, but it also was his undoing, and Raleigh ultimately paid for his mistakes with his life. Despite his shortcomings, he was not only charismatic and brave, he was brilliant as well, and his contributions to the New World and to western culture as a whole were vast and enduring. MAPS, ENDNOTES and BIBLIOGRAPHY, TIMELINE, INDEX.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Demonstrating the same keen passion for his subject as in his Art Attack, Aronson examines the life of a contradictory and complex Elizabethan figure, both poet and soldier. As in the best of biographies, the author expands his narrative beyond the details of a single life to draw a nuanced and compelling portrait of the times in which he lived. Aronson sets the stage with a preface

describing the many, often conflicting symbolic meanings that the quest for El Dorado, the fabled South American city of gold, held for early modern Europeans. He deftly intersperses a chronological account of the often paradoxical details of Raleigh's life with the tumultuous changes taking place in early modern Europe. In this way Aronson provides a cultural context for a man who could write love sonnets to his queen and also mount bloody battles against the Irish. He makes no excuses for Raleigh, but vividly paints the rise of a gentleman farmer's son, with no real connections, to a court favorite. In another irony, because Raleigh was favored by the queen, she granted him a "patent" to stake claims in the New World yet he himself did not set sail: "Raleigh remained near money and power, while his men sailed off the edges of the map." Both fascinating and daunting, the account may be challenging for those with little prior knowledge of the period; however, the exceedingly well researched archival maps and prints, time line, "Cast of Characters" and extensive endnotes and bibliography will help budding historians get their bearings. Aronson's portrait of "the first modern man" is both provocative and tantalizing, revealing his subject as a person of canny wit and magnetism with all-too-human shortcomings. Age 11-up. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 7 Up-A welcome book on an important historical figure in European and North American history. Scholars now agree on the spelling of the man's name as "Raleigh," so beware of possible confusion. Sir Walter led an active, ambitious, and sometimes acrimonious life. From humble beginnings to the court of Elizabeth I (who appropriately is a primary figure in the book with much insight given to her as a person and as a ruler), Sir Walter played a role in the social, political, and cultural worlds of his time. Aronson begins with an impressive cast of characters that demonstrates the vast influence of his subject: royalty, New World chiefs, conquistadors, and famous writers, all of whom are blended together to tell this complex, interesting, well-written, and readable story. While it is doubtful that Raleigh actually threw his cape down to prevent Elizabeth from stepping in a puddle, he did introduce potatoes to Ireland. The many elements of the man's personality are explored in a well-rounded and fair manner, with several examples of his own writings—from poetry to a suicide note—interspersed throughout. The quest for El Dorado has a recurring role here, just as it did in Raleigh's life, but despite the title, it is not necessarily the main thrust of the book. Well illustrated with black-and-white prints and original maps, and including thorough endnotes and a great comparative time line, this book is exemplary nonfiction and pure gold for libraries. Andrew Medlar, Chicago Public Library, IL Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Very good.

my son enjoyed it.

did not realize when i bought this book that is basically for children, probably up to the age of 12 or so. for this grade level, it was fine. but this is certainly not a book for adults. it's too simple.

Sir Walter Ralegh (the way he spelled it) was so much more than a promoter of tobacco--although he certainly did promote tobacco. He was so much more than a man who lay down his cloak so Queen Elizabeth I would not get her feet wet--a story which may or may not be true. He was a man from a poor background who rose almost as high as one could in Elizabethan England--and then fell about as low. Stunningly researched, brilliantly written, full of fascinating facts (did you know there were no maps of England that showed ROADS until the 1590s), this is young adult writing at its finest.

This is such an insightful biography of Sir Walter Ralegh's life which consisted of pleasing Queen Elizabeth I, trying to gain power and money, and then ending his life trying to find the mythological golden city, El Dorado. The author used the preface to introduce and inform the reader what El Dorado meant to the early modern Europeans. He also included maps, prints, and timelines, which gives the reader a more broad and easy to read interpretation of his life. The author also includes Ralegh own writing from poetry to even a suicide note. There is a lot of research in this well put together biography. Along with all of this great information, the author includes a picture of six foot tall Sir Walter. This biography is obviously written to inform the reader of the history of Sir Walter Ralegh, and give a little inside of how the world worked back in the day. This book is recommended to ages 11 and up.

I'm not fond of thin volumes interspersed with pictures, which I equate with books for kids. Marc Aronson's **SIR WALTER RALEGH AND THE QUEST FOR EL DORADO** is an exception. In addition to this extremely clear and highly interesting account of personages, plots and exploration, Aronson provides a picture of the 6 foot tall Ralegh, on page 25, which shows him as exquisitely handsome, male-bait for a queen who doesn't have her eyes in her pockets, as we French say. As a boy of 15 Ralegh (Aronson's spelling) was already in France fighting for Protestantism, and as with most boys of that age, whose intelligence and courage reside in their scrotum, he was fearless of death, killing,

at that tender age, his first man much the same as a boy today bags his first deer. As far as I'm concerned, Aronson's only faux pas is his claim that the indecisive Elizabeth was perhaps the greatest of England's kings, which is ridiculous when one considers Henry II and Henry V. (Here one confuses longevity for greatest, as one does with Queen Victoria.) My own books can be found on under Michael Hone.

This book reads like an entertaining adventure novel but it is so much more. The court intrigues of Elizabethan England and not so different from the politics of today, both in government and corporations. The author has made a lifelong study of Sir Walter Ralegh and his passion shows. Ralegh's strengths, weaknesses and luck, both good and bad made him who he was and changed the world. The Mechanical Age: The Industrial Revolution in England (World History Library) Colonial Living.

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