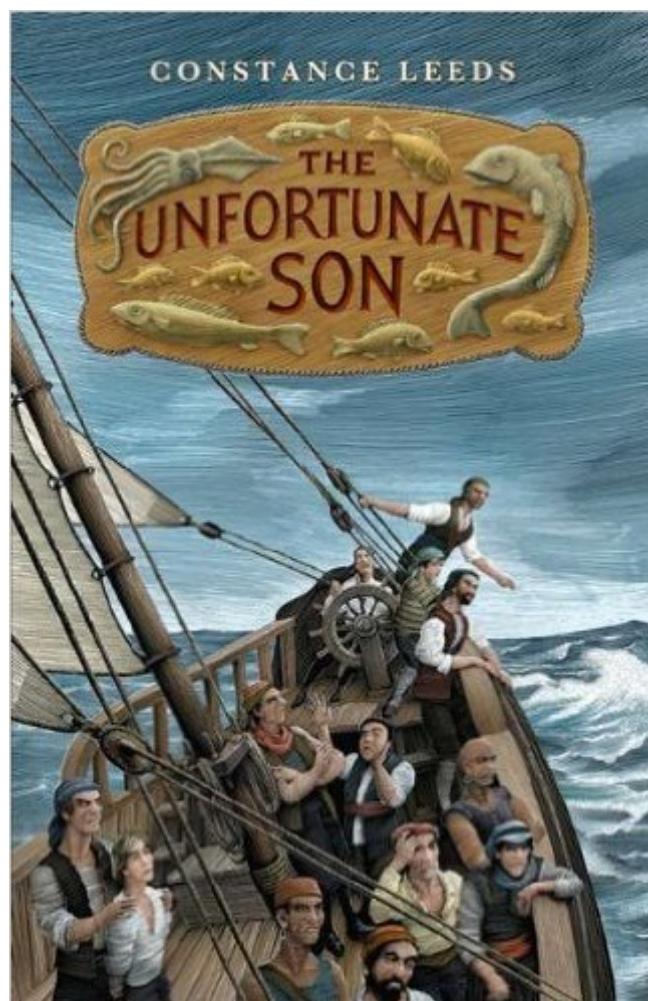


The book was found

The Unfortunate Son



Synopsis

Kidnapping, family secrets, and adventure on the high seas--perfect for middle grade fans of historical fiction! What does it mean to be lucky? Luc doesn't really know. He was born with just one ear, his father constantly berates him, and his younger brother is already bigger and stronger than he is. But when he is chosen to become an apprentice to a local fisherman, his life takes a turn for the better. Luc is a natural at sea, and before long he and a teenaged girl who lives with the fisherman form a strong bond. That bond is tested when Luc is taken captive by a band of merciless pirates, and sold into slavery. Moving from 1485 to 1500, from France to Africa, from humble beginnings to a noble future, this historical fiction adventure will leave readers pondering the true meaning of good fortune.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 690L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Viking Books for Young Readers; First Edition, Second Printing edition (June 14, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0670013986

ISBN-13: 978-0670013982

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 1.2 x 8.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #819,872 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Africa #584 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Europe #17184 in Books > Children's Books > Action & Adventure

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

Please understand that all my reviews focus on the interests of my middle school students. I never do a full plot synopsis in a review. I almost did not read this book because I was falling victim to the age-old temptation to judge a book by its cover. Hence the quote in place of a title for this review (the quote comes from the book). This book is so much more than a pirate story! The book begins in media res and that makes it difficult to discuss almost any plot element without spoiling some of the surprises in the story. In short, it is a book about two youngsters, Luc and Beatrice, who had horrific

experiences as young children. They end up being cared for by a brother and sister team that are not related to them. We watch them grow up, and they both endure good times and bad. The main setting for the book is late medieval France. There is so much to like about this book. Character development is superb, and you find yourself really caring for and admiring both Luc and Beatrice. It would be easy to say that Luc is the main character, but I think that would be wrong. It is as much about Beatrice as it is Luc. You are incredibly lucky if you have someone as loyal as Beatrice in your life. The pace of the plot is very, very steady; it is not fast, by any means, but neither is it ever very slow. It seems just right for the subject matter. Where the book really shines, in my opinion, is with the narrative voice. Leeds, the author, got it just right. Very subdued, calm, and steady, the narrator manages to relate exceptionally strong emotive scenes without being either sappy or cold. I must admit that the ending shook me up; I literally had shivers down my spine. The same kind of feeling I get every time I read, "Scout, stand up; your father is passing."

Constance Leed's latest book supports the old adage that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover. Despite its amateurishly illustrated cover, 'The Unfortunate Son' is an engaging adventure story about Luc, the son of a French nobleman who, for reasons explained within, is raised as an olive farmer and then a fisherman. Captured by Barbary pirates and sold as a slave to a learned doctor in Tripoli. From there, the story alternates between Luc's life as a slave and the efforts of his friends and family to find him and bring him home. At the risk of alienating young readers, there is much to be learned from Luc's adventures. Foremost is that it provides a fascinating contrast between life and learning in the Christian and Islamic worlds in the closing days of the Dark Ages. It is all too common for us to believe that throughout history the Europeans were the enlightened cultures and that Africa and the Middle East was backwards and ignorant. This is not the case as Leed's well-researched second novel demonstrates. I really enjoyed this book. My only complaint is that I finished it far too quickly. I obtained the copy of the book I read from my local library.

This book was required reading for our son's 6th grade class. It is solid, if not stellar. He has enjoyed reading it.

Luc and Beatrice have both experienced more than their fair share of misfortune. Luc, born with just one ear, endured constant harassment from the bitter man who raised him, and Beatrice lived as an orphan after she witnessed her father's execution and suffered her mother's abandonment. Their lives, however, improved immeasurably when, through their separate journeys, they each

found refuge and support from Pons, a generous local fisherman. Their friendship prospered until Luc was kidnapped by a dangerous group of pirates and sold into slavery, thus taking him from France to North Africa. Would he ever see his kindred spirit Beatrice again? This work of historical fiction wraps a compelling story together with important economic themes related to wealth, poverty, slavery, and work. The changes in setting and time add further dimensions to hold the reader's interest and enrich the book's substantive content.

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