

How to Be a Pirate

Cressida Cowell

Reviewed by: Kartikeya Krishna, 16

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The story starts during a Sword-fighting-at-Sea lesson where Hiccup is, as usual, terribly attempting to try and swordfight. The lesson is stopped though as some kind of an object creates a hole in their boat and it sinks. Hiccup and Fishlegs climb the trunk and float along the sea until they get back to Berk. Stoick, Hiccup's father, opens the coffin and out comes a man named Alvin the Poor but Honest Farmer. Alvin tells the Hooligans (Hiccup's tribe) that he has found a riddle that leads to the treasure of Grimbeard the Ghastly, Hiccup's ancestor and the roughest, raunchiest, and craziest Viking to ever sail the seas. They figure from the riddle that the treasure is in the Isle of Skullions, an island inhabited by blind, flightless, deaf dragons called Skullions that are extremely sensitive to smell. According to the riddle, the Heir to the Tribe's hunting dragon will sniff out the treasure, and Hiccup and his cousin Snoutlout (who unlike Hiccup exceeds at pretty much everything) get into a fierce competition over finding the treasure and proving that they are the rightful heir.

The Vikings go to the Isle of the Skullions where Snoutlout finds a small treasure chest along with Grimbeard's famous sword, the Stormblade. However Grimbeard, being the notorious pirate as he was, booby-trapped the chest with a smell to wake up the Skullions, causing the Vikings to flee with the treasure. Once the Vikings reach Berk, they begin to fight over the treasure and (unnoticed) are attacked by another group of Vikings known as the Outcasts, Vikings that are so gruesome, dirty, evil, disrespected, and cannibalistic that they have been cast out of society and added into the new tribe. Alvin the Poor but Honest Farmer reveals himself as being, in fact, Alvin the Treacherous, the chieftain of the Outcast tribe. Another fight ensues where the ship catches on fire and sinks along with Hiccup, Fishlegs, Alvin and Toothless (everyone else had escaped onto the Outcasts' ships) who sink with the ship but are alive because of an air pocket underneath the ship. Toothless then finds an underwater cavern filled with air and, as the group begins to explore, they find a door which leads to Grimbeard's ACTUAL treasure. Alvin then tells Hiccup of a vow to kill the heir of Grimbeard, because of whom he has lost a hand, and begins to fight Hiccup. They eventually realize that there is a monster in the room called a Monstrous Strangulator and Hiccup, through his wit and good fortune, get the Strangulator to eat up Alvin and then kill himself. They soon surface with the aid of Toothless.

For some reason when I read this book it struck a personal chord with me. This is a children's book but, if you try and look for some deeper meaning other than what is explicitly stated, this book does have its own profound connotations. For example, Hiccup discovers that he is in fact not that bad of a swordfighter, something that the author continuously alludes to by saying that Hiccup in fact grew older to become a master of the art of sword fighting. The story of how Hiccup and Fishlegs promise to never tell anyone else of the treasure they have found because the Hooligan tribe is not yet ready to be able to keep such a great treasure. How Hiccup, even though everything had pointed to Snoutlout being the true heir, proves through Grimbeard's own set of traps that he is in fact the proper heir of the Hairy Hooligan tribe. This book was a very good book which I strongly recommend to anyone of any age or gender to read and enjoy.

Recommended Titles

How to Speak Dragonese by Cressida Cowell

How to Twist a Dragon's Tale by Cressida Cowell

How to Cheat a Dragon's Curse by Cressida Cowell