

Galapagos George

Jean Craighead George

Reviewed by: Kaden Shover, 17

Star Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are Charity

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Galapagos George is a book written by Jean Craighead George who wrote books like this to inspire people's interest in all creatures no matter their size or significance in places all over the globe. The story is about a giant tortoise named Giantess George, and takes place over one million years ago in South America. In the beginning, George and those like her are living in an ancient desert. One day a storm strikes South America, and sweeps away everything including Giantess George into the seas. After finally surfacing, she and other tortoises climbed floating trees and drifted west for days. Finally the trees stopped and they landed on a tiny island close to the equator, six hundred miles from their original home and amazingly they were all the same kind of tortoises. She and the other tortoises have to adapt to their new home and they begin evolving to survive, which included growing longer necks to reach the tree leaves. Thousands of years later, long after Giantess George dies at almost two hundred years old, the evolved tortoises have adapted with long necks and shells like fans so they could reach the leaves easily. In 1535, the island was discovered by the bishop of Panama who names it Galapagos Island, the "Island of the Tortoises." The story goes on to tell of the destruction by man of the tortoise population from 200,000 to just thousands, until in 1970 scientists found a long neck tortoise they named Lonesome George near Pinta Island, a descendant of Giantess George. They take him to the Charles Darwin Research Station on Santa Cruz Island where they are a protected species. Lonesome George was one of the rarest species in the world, and became famous but unfortunately was never mated and the last of his species.

What I enjoyed most about this story was the chronological way the author described the evolution of this interesting and gentle giant. This story is an inspiration to those interested in preserving endangered species while telling how a species actually became extinct as a result of humans not respecting how nature and humanity can coexist. What is also so wonderful about this book is the factual information and research about the evolution of this species. The author provides a great deal of information including key terms, timelines and resources to study the Giantess tortoises at the end of her book. The book is also beautifully illustrated to show the tortoises in their habitat accurately.

This book is recommended for ages 4-8 but anyone interested in exploring rare environments or learning about respecting nature and protecting endangered species will find this book great reading. You can find this book at the Library, on Amazon, and at Barnes & Noble.

I would suggest the following books to readers if they liked this book:

Island: A Story of the Galapagos by Jason Chin

Galapagos Wildlife: A Folding Pocket Guide to Familiar Animals by James Kavanagh

“Galapagos” Means Tortoises” by Ruth Heller