



Elijah of Buxton

Christopher Paul Curtis

Download now

Read Online →

Elijah of Buxton

Christopher Paul Curtis

Elijah of Buxton Christopher Paul Curtis

Master storyteller Christopher Paul Curtis's Newbery Honor novel, featuring his trademark humor, unique narrative voice, and new cover art--now in paperback!

Eleven-year-old Elijah lives in Buxton, Canada, a settlement of runaway slaves near the American border. He's the first child in town to be born free, and he ought to be famous just for that. Unfortunately, all that most people see is a "fra-gile" boy who's scared of snakes and talks too much. But everything changes when a former slave steals money from Elijah's friend, who has been saving to buy his family out of captivity in the South. Now it's up to Elijah to track down the thief--and his dangerous journey just might make a hero out of him, if only he can find the courage to get back home.

Elijah of Buxton Details

Date : Published September 1st 2012 by Scholastic Paperbacks (first published 2007)

ISBN :

Author : Christopher Paul Curtis

Format : Kindle Edition 364 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Fiction, Childrens, Middle Grade, Cultural, African American

 [Download Elijah of Buxton ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Elijah of Buxton ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Elijah of Buxton Christopher Paul Curtis

From Reader Review Elijah of Buxton for online ebook

Jay says

I have nothing but excellent things to say about this book, which is top notch historical-fiction for all ages covering the final era of American slavery. This was one of the books I recently read and discussed with my 11 year old daughter for educational progress.

When she selected it, I thought that it would be a good lead in for the Autobiography of Frederick Douglass (which is our next joint read). What we got out of this read instead was so much more than preparation! This is such a solid book that I recommend it for every American youth.

The story of Elijah and the Buxton Colony, actually known as the Elgin Colony, is a symbolic coming of age story of a young boy born free in Canada during the last decade of American slavery. The author skillfully eases the reader into the brutal environment of existing slavery to the South (Buxton is not far from Michigan...with only the Canadian-U.S. border between them which, due to laws, determined freedom or bondage for people of color. The opening chapters, which familiarize the reader with characters and colony life, ease into the bigger scenario of slavery so artfully, it is almost as if the author is purposely symbolizing the understanding process of a child growing up and gradually noticing the evils of the world.

The author covers the issue of slavery without really candy-coating the atrocities and horrors, but his writing style allows the intellectual understanding and maturity level of the reader decipher how vivid the picture develops, and there are several references that mainly students of history will pick up on. One such subtle issue was described in a memory by Elijah's mother from when she was a young American slave girl whose mistress had taken her north to Michigan where she was able to see Canada across the river (which looked the exact same as America, but was called the land of the free). When she told her mother, her mother became irate and beat her for not making a run for Canada and screamed at her "Don't you know what horrors they got in store for you"? This was clearly a subtle reference to the trend of slave owners who often raped their female slaves.

The historical references in the story are really strong. The author makes references of the abolitionists, John Brown and Frederick Douglass, and the following issues were skillfully touched on in this historical-fiction story: 1) The beating of a slave to death 2) The Underground Railroad 3) Separation of slave families and the attempts to buy family members out of slavery in America 4) Slavers coming North into Canada 5) The use of the N word by a free born.

One of the most symbolic coming of age elements of the book is how the children played a game called "slavers and abolitionist".

Great read! Highly recommended!

Audra says

Elijah of Buxton is one of the best young adults novels I have ever read. The author does an excellent job of weaving historical facts into the story, giving readers a raw glimpse into what those that managed to escape the cruel grip of slavery must have felt. It gives you a new appreciation for the resiliency of Black people who are still standing despite all the terrorism we have endured.

This book made me laugh and cry. I felt so many emotions ranging from contemplative to joy to utter despair. Elijah of Buxton masterfully told the story of a handful of people who were brave enough to escaped north to Canada, "the land of milk and honey." But freedom did not offer ease for their lives. They had to deal with the scars of slavery--emotional, physical and mental--as they worked hard to build new lives for themselves as free people, all while wondering and worrying about the family members they left behind in chains in America.

Elijah, having never been a slave, heard the stories of slavery from his parents, but never truly understood the horrors of it until he was forced to venture out of Canada and into Michigan, where he met a family of slaves. He always wanted to be seen as "growned-up." Well, I think that's exactly how they saw him when returned from Michigan with some very precious cargo.

I'm already reading the sequel, The Madman of Piney Woods.

Kenya (ReviewsMayVary) says

I loved this story of Eli, the first free-born black child of Buxton, a black settlement in Canada. He gets into some little trouble and then some big trouble. The audiobook is a great read. This is probably considered middle grade.

Phil Jensen says

Oh, Christopher Paul Curtis, you had me at this description of hoopsnake poisoning:

You swell so much that after exactly seven and a half days the pressure in your body becomes too great and you explode like an overheated steam boiler! In seconds your stomach and your lungs and your other entrails are flung around you for miles

Then Curtis seals the deal with a two page long section combining my two favorite things: Frederick Douglass and vomit jokes.

Clearly, Curtis has upped his comedy game. He has also upped the dramatic stakes. It seems impossible that anything could be more tragic than the final chapters of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963*, but this book achieves it. The main character is a brilliant proxy for the reader- a person connected to slavery who has to learn about it through a series of painful revelations.

Curtis' style is a masterful ode to Mark Twain. He skillfully evokes Twain's irony, fascination with lies, exaggerations, use of dialect, and discursive narrative structure. *Elijah of Buxton* should be required reading for anyone attempting *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

This book also contains a section on the N word that explains it better than I've seen anywhere else. This section should also be required reading.

Newbery Comments

2008 was a controversial year at the Newberys. *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!: Voices from a Medieval Village* was a book nobody asked for and it continues to gather dust to this day. On the other hand, *Feathers and The Wednesday Wars* were both quality books that connected with readers. They are both still popular today. However, I argue that *Elijah of Buxton* is distinguished in ways that surpass any of the other contenders. Tragically, though, it is often forgotten or overshadowed by Curtis' other books. This is a masterpiece waiting to be rediscovered.

jo says

It's going to be hard for me to write about this book without resorting to blatant gushing, but I'll do my best. *Elijah of Buxton* is one of those books that kept popping up on all the *lists* this year. When it won both the Newbery Honor and the Coretta Scott King Award, I thought I'd better pick it up and give it a shot.

Now I had read Christopher Paul Curtis' *Bud, Not Buddy* when it won the Newbery Medal in 2000, and I liked it quite a bit, but I have to admit I wasn't completely blown away. I didn't rush out and recommend it to everyone I knew. *Elijah of Buxton* is another story.

The book is set in the mid 1860's in Buxton, Canada--one of the early Black settlements of escaped slaves from the United States. Elijah, the book's fictional hero, is the first free-born child in the settlement.

In some ways, it's a basic coming of age story. Elijah is what his mother calls a "fra-gile" child, and he is trying very hard to learn how to become more grown-up. In other ways, it's an amazing glimpse into what life on one of these settlements could have been like. There is a poignant juxtaposition between the young children in the settlement who've known nothing but freedom, and the adults, who have each risked everything to be free and carry heavy wounds and scars that the children can't begin to comprehend.

Mostly what I loved about this book, besides the beautiful writing and engaging story, is that it is ultimately a story about community. It is about how people can come together to try to make the world a better place, *not just for themselves*, but for one another. When Elijah, who goes to school and can read and write, is asked to read a letter to Mrs. Holton, informing her that her husband has been whipped to death by a slave owner, the women of the settlement go with him:

"Mostly I think I didn't bawl 'cause once Ma and them women bunched up 'round Mrs. Holton with their watching, waiting eyes and hands, it felt like a whole slew of soldiers was ringing that parlour with swords drawn and weren't no sorrow so powerful it could bust through."

I'll warn you, *I* bawled. I cried straight through the entire last three chapters. But it's not just sadness that makes you cry, it's the redemption and grace and joy mixed up in the sadness that is so affecting. This is a beautiful story and I know it won all the "literature for young people" awards, but I would recommend it to adults as well. A good story's a good story, after all.

You can visit the real Buxton Museum website [here](#).

You can read about Christopher Paul Curtis' R.E.A.D Program and Kenya School Project [here](#).

Fred Kohn says

I mistakenly thought that this was the author's Newbery medal-winning book. Did I "waste" time reading this when I had intended it to be credited towards my project of reading all the Newbery medal books? I don't think so! I enjoyed every page.

Kyle Kimmel says

The boys picked to read *Elijah of Buxton* for this month's discussion. The librarian asked me how I tricked them into reading an historical novel. I told her it was my wit and good looks. I think it has more to do with the cover. Anyhow, some have loved it, and some have struggled. Third graders are so used to being told to make sure words are spelled correctly that when they read a novel with dialect that is different it takes them out of their comfort zone.

On Friday during Independent Reading I look up because I hear Chris say "oh my god, oh my god, WOW!" He was almost to the end of the book. He gets up goes to his friends and rereads them the part. They begin to discuss the book. So much for the discussion this Wednesday, and Independent Reading. I think the guys have discussed the book more then any adult book club. There are times when we see and hear things that tell us this is why I put up with No Child Left Untested and the CSAP.

Luann says

I had a hard time deciding what to rate this book. It isn't very action-packed or exciting. In fact, the events from the book description don't take place until the last 100 pages of the story. For the first 240 pages I felt like I was waiting for the real story to begin.

Also, the heavy use of dialect makes the reading a bit tedious. I hope I never have to read "gunn" used for "going to" or even "gonna" again!

On the other hand, I was fascinated with the setting. I learned a lot I hadn't known before about the settlement of runaway slaves called Buxton in Canada.

I also really liked the characters, especially Elijah and his wonderful sense of humor. He makes a great narrator. A favorite "Elijah" quote that made me chuckle: "All the growned folks that hadn't never learnt to read nor write whilst they were 'slaved in America had to take lessons at the school house at night. Between cooking and cleaning and gardening and sewing and knitting and working the fields at harvesttime and helping out at the chopping bees and the raising bees and tending to her sheep and shearing 'em and gathering wool and carding it and spinning it, Ma had been lazy and was slacking off on her school lessons and they warent sticking particular good."

In fact, I found myself marking the place of several great quotes:

Wisdom from Elijah's neighbor: "Mr. Leroy kept chomping and said, 'Fish eating's like anything else in life, Elijah. If you go at it 'specting something bad to happen, all you gunn do is draw that bad thing to you. You

caint be timid 'bout nothing you do, you got to go at it like you 'specting good things to come out of it. If I's to worry 'bout bones choking me, it'd happen every time I et fish. Ain't nothing further from my mind.' Fish bones snapped in his mouth like dry twigs."

Wisdom from Elijah's Ma when comforting a neighbor who just found out that her husband had died: "Well, the body don't never endure, do it? But I hopes . . . naw, I *knows* that something inside all of us be so strong it *caint* be stopped. It fly on forever."

Wisdom from Elijah's Pa when they found out Mr. Leroy was conned out of a huge sum of money that was meant to buy his family out of slavery: "Let this here be a lesson to you. You caint let your wantings blind you to what's the truth. You always got to look at things the way they is, not the way you wish 'em to be."

I can see why Elijah of Buxton won so many awards, and I'm definitely not sorry I read it! But because of the issues mentioned above, I really can't give it more than three stars.

babyhippoface says

Okay, I'm sold. It took me months to finally getting around to reading this one, and that's too bad, because I could have been recommending it all this time. It's fantastic.

Elijah Freeman was the first child born free in the Buxton settlement of Canada. His life is made up of family, school, chores, and fishing, and although he has heard stories about life in captivity from the former slaves around him, he leads a very different life. When an unscrupulous, self-proclaimed preacher makes off with the money a man was going to use to buy his wife and children out of slavery, Elijah is taken to America to help find the thief.

Award-winner Curtis has crafted a masterpiece for children. In situations that range from hilarious to heart-breaking, Elijah and his Buxton friends and family are incredibly real. They display strength, integrity, loyalty, humor, and extreme sacrifice. Hearing about slavery and seeing it for himself are two very different things for Elijah. Readers will feel like they are standing along-side him as he sees for himself the horrors of slavery and struggles to reconcile what he witnesses with his sense of justice. Personally, I wanted to grab the mystery pistol myself and get the job done.

I listened to the audiobook, and Mirron Willis has done an absolutely outstanding job. While it's 8 CDs, and certainly takes much longer to listen to it than it does to read it, I think it's worth it just to hear Willis' narration. He doesn't just read this, he *acts* it. That's why it's so long--he doesn't rush through; he says every single line like it's coming from a real person feeling every word right from the bottom of his soul. You know when you're talking out loud to your CD player that this is a powerful piece of literature.

I laughed out loud, and I was moved to tears more than once. I cannot recommend it strongly enough. Read it. Today.

(But I still hate this cover. Elijah looks like one of Willie Tyler's ventriloquist dummies. The new, paperback cover is MUCH better.)

Jennifer says

Despite that I liked Curtis's lively, colorful, convincing portrayal of everyday life in Buxton, I felt that *Elijah of Buxton* had a slow start. However, towards the middle of the novel, when Curtis began weaving individual Buxton residents' escape and slave stories into Elijah's daily experiences, I slowly came to love the book. As I was reading the novel on a CTA (Chicago Transit Authority) bus, I found myself tearing up, suddenly struck by what Elijah and his mother would call being "fra-gile-ness," while I was reading the scene in which the new escaped family arrives in Buxton. I loved the way in which Curtis incorporated the stories of many of Buxton's free blacks to develop believable, human characters, show the myriad, torturous paths to freedom (or back to slavery), and the enduring pain that continues to linger under the surface of free Buxton. By beautifully developing his characters and binding them to readers' hearts, Curtis manages to convey the full sadness and horror of the Buxton residents' experiences without extreme graphical violence or an overly heavy story. We, as well as Elijah, are reminded that "people that used to be slaves are toting things 'round with 'em that caint be seen with your regular eyes....They've seen people acting in ways that caint help but leave scars and peculiarities" (101). By extension, these "scars and peculiarities" continue to lay beneath many of societies' present ills. We as a society oftentimes unknowingly hurt and offend, deserving the same rebuke that Mr. Leroy gives Elijah for using the word "nigger": "Ya'll's ignorant in a whole slew of ways. Y'all ain't been told your whole life what you is" (99).

In my opinion, *Elijah of Buxton* is largely the story of the title character coming of age through learning about his heritage, not necessarily in the classroom with Mr. Travis, but through hearing the stories of his community and experiencing the legacy of fear and violence, and ultimately, joy in freedom and H(h)ope. Curtis sprinkles others' stories into the novel, and I thought to myself while reading the novel, "The title of the novel is *Elijah* of Buxton, so why does it seem like so little time is spent on the narrative episodes of his experience?" It occurred to me while writing this, that, simply, Elijah's story is the story of the community of Buxton and vice versa. As alluded to earlier, Elijah's story is our story, the story of individuals making sense of the world around them, of learning and becoming "growned up," which I think that Curtis conveys wonderfully through Elijah's comically confused, sometimes naïve observations of the world around him. With this method, Curtis captures the feeling of disconnect and confusion we oftentimes feel when something is beyond the scope of our understanding and experience. This is one of the reasons why I think that this novel would be good for educating children, as well as adults, who are largely unfamiliar with the broad repercussions of slavery, or who cannot associate the legacy of slavery with a human face with which to empathize.

Other things that I admired about this novel were its uncompromising immediacy, realism, and complexity. Although it may seem far-fetched that Elijah encountered Frederick Douglass or talked to captured slaves, Curtis recounts realistic stories about slavery through believable and well-developed characters. The stories about slavery, escape, and life in Buxton do not contain shocking graphical descriptions, yet they retain a strong emotional punch.

L Frost says

I wish I could give the first half of the book one rating and give the second half a different rating. The book has a slow start and doesn't seem to really have any sort of plot. It seems more like a collection of short stories from the life of 11 year old Elijah. As the book continues, more humor is found in the stories perhaps as the reader becomes more familiar with the characters. Even when it shifts to having more of a plot in the second half and developing a more serious tone, the author still incorporates humor as the story is told through the mind of a child. It's a good work of historical fiction that blends humor with a serious and sad section of history. The author also deals in a unique way with the subject matter by viewing it through the eyes and life of a free child living in a free settlement in Canada as opposed to life as a slave in the US. The Buxton Settlement itself would be an excellent place to study in a history class that focuses on this time

period, just prior to the Civil War. There was no foul language or sexual situations. There is quite a bit of slapping, backhanding, etc of children which would have been commonplace for the time period. There is also a tense serious scene dealing with death, slaves and weapons, but it doesn't cross over to actual violence occurring in the scene or become gruesome in a way that would be inappropriate for readers 6th grade and up. Some advanced 4th & 5th grade readers would enjoy this book as well as middle school and up. The author writes in the dialect and spelling of the main character and the other characters so it may be more of a challenge for younger students to read.

Julie says

I laughed and cried. Elijah became flesh and blood to me, and of course, I learned a little more about slavery and what it means to be free. It took a page or two for me to get accustomed to the dialect. I kept waiting for the library copy to come in, but went ahead and bought it. It's one worth owning.

Bob Redmond says

Curtis, in Newberry-Award winning style, tells the story of a young boy growing up in the (historically real) all-black community of Buxton, Ontario, Canada, in 1859. The book is completely absorbing, and one forgets immediately that this is a book for young adults or grade schoolers. Curtis writes with such a clarity of purpose and faithfulness to his story that there's no question of whether the book is merely edifying.

Elijah, the first boy born in the community, is 11 when this story begins. Like TOM SAWYER, this book begins with early chapters of barefoot country life, eccentric neighbors, boyish daydreaming and pranks. And also like SAWYER, this book culminates in a truly harrowing drama in which the world of adults (and slavery) finally reaches Elijah.

I'm tempted to say that the world of slavery reaches -- like MORDOR (Tolkien's wellspring of evil) -- finally to touch Elijah. I began this review wanting to mention Edward Jones THE KNOWN WORLD, to which this book merits a comparison (that's saying something, since Jones won the Pulitzer). But it's TOM SAWYER and THE LORD OF THE RINGS that also demand comparison, since Curtis has managed to write an adventure story about slavery. It's hard to suggest that the book is as good as HUCK FINN, but it's the inevitable conclusion: this is one hell of a book.

WHY I READ THIS BOOK: I read a review of the book in 2007, or saw it on a list of top YA authors, or ran across it while browsing in the bookstore. Or all three. It stayed in my box of books to read, and finally I got to it.

Jonathan Peto says

Elijah is free born, as are some of the other children around him, but the adults in his community, Buxton, are former slaves. Other than that, except for a few details here and there, such as when some newly escaped slaves arrive, the story is mainly a pleasant character study with an interesting, folksy, historical setting, though that is done so well that the settlement of Buxton feels like a character too. Elijah fishes, takes care of horses, attends school, visits a traveling vaudeville show without his parent's knowledge, etc. I do not know if a ten or eleven year old would keep reading it, especially because of the dialect, but I read it aloud and my

son did not protest. The last hundred or so pages is where the action really begins. Most of the tension before that is due to a man who calls himself the Preacher, but the Preacher does something unforgivable. That results in Elijah's first trip across the border (Buxton is in Canada). Elijah knows something about slavery in the US from the stories of the adults in his community, but he is not at all prepared for its reality, and after all those peaceful, rustic pages neither is the reader, so Elijah's first glimpse of slavery in the US was as horrific for me as it was for him, a very, very effective ending. Although I definitely felt that ending was worth the wait, the slow buildup did undercut the book's overall power.

Barbara says

A story set in a Canadian settlement of runaway slaves. Elijah was the first child born there, thus the first person born free, living in the community. The book at 340 pages is a bit long for this kind of novel and though there are many small incidents, the major incident in the book doesn't happen until the last quarter of the book. I was waiting for something to happen. I suppose it's a deliberately different construction for a young adult novel. Because of its length, I probably won't put this on the reading list for my students in my Social Studies Methods class as they have so much reading to do.
