



The Philadelphia Adventure

Lloyd Alexander

Download now

Read Online →

The Philadelphia Adventure

Lloyd Alexander

The Philadelphia Adventure Lloyd Alexander

Vesper Holly has foiled murderers, crossed mountains, and narrowly escaped earthquakes. Now she's home in Philadelphia, where she can relax-until President Ulysses S. Grant asks for her help. The Centennial Exposition of 1876 is about to begin, and luminaries from around the world will be there. But so will Vesper's arch-nemesis, the evil Doctor Helvetius. There's only one person who can thwart his evil plans-Vesper Holly!

The Philadelphia Adventure Details

Date : Published July 8th 2002 by Puffin Books (first published January 1st 1990)

ISBN : 9780142301449

Author : Lloyd Alexander

Format : Paperback 150 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Adventure, Fiction, Fantasy, Childrens, Mystery

 [Download The Philadelphia Adventure ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Philadelphia Adventure ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Philadelphia Adventure Lloyd Alexander

From Reader Review The Philadelphia Adventure for online ebook

Joshua Van Dereck says

The Philadelphia Adventure is the laziest book in a fairly lazy series (to date; I haven't read the last entry yet).

Vesper Holly is a nice trope of a character--brilliant, charming, eternally morally righteous, rich, etc. She is a millionaire gentleman, globetrotting, teenage woman. Nothing too interesting, but not necessarily a bad sketch. The narrator of this series, Brinnie, is a more interesting character, being at once stuffy, impetuous, cowardly, and not without resource. Some have suggested they are characters from Indiana Jones, but they feel to me more like weak caricatures of Sherlock Holmes and Watson. Their perpetual antagonist, Dr. Helviticus, seems like a poorly realized sketch of Dr. Claw from Inspector Gadget--eternally armed with plots to conquer the world through a preposterous network of agents and planning. Alas, he is also afflicted with the James Bond villains' immortal flaw of exposition and willful imprisonment of nemeses that he should obviously just off.

As trope adventures, the books in this series are generally fine—light, unchallenging reads with occasional bits of humor and cleverness. The trouble with the Philadelphia entry, which I vaguely recall looking forward to reading 2 or 3 books back in the series as a radical departure in setting, is that it is the most decidedly self-referential of the books. Dipping liberally into references to previous adventures and characters that have neither relevance nor bearing on the story itself, the book is often tiresome. Indeed, the whole concept for the series seems very tired by this novel, and that rather dampens the few cute/clever moments that arise. Alexander did do some research for this entry, and he clearly takes great relish in a few of the descriptions of setting, seeing as it is set in his own childhood stomping grounds. These high points don't really elevate the novel though, and it is a decidedly disappointing read from someone as technically talented and imaginative as Alexander.

Heather Culley says

I like Philadelphia, it seems.

Madeline says

Five books into the Vesper Holly series, Lloyd Alexander finally switches up his formula, and it's a welcome change.

I don't mean that Dr. Helviticus isn't present - hahahaha no, sadly, this useless villain is still the main antagonist, and it's gotten to the point where I don't even want to discuss him in my reviews because I'm so tired of him - but this isn't a typical Vesper Holly adventure in every other sense.

First and most importantly, (as one can immediately tell from the title) this story doesn't take place in some made-up exotic land, but almost literally in Vesper's backyard. Not only is the story set in a real location, but the plot revolves around real people and events from history: the story starts with Ulysses S. Grant ("call me Sam" he tells Vesper, as presidents do when conversing with twenty-year-old women they have just met) coming to Vesper's mansion and informing her that that dastardly villain Dr. Helviticus (cue eyerolling and

muttered, "Christ, already?" from yours truly) has kidnapped the two young children of the emperor of Brazil. The reason that Grant has come to Vesper for help is because Helvitius is demanding that the ransom for the kids be delivered by Vesper herself. Because that's a good idea. At this point, I'm starting to think that Helvitius just has a crush on Vesper and, in true rom-com style, keeps coming up with increasingly ridiculous plots just so Vesper can show up and foil them. The ransom itself involves the emperor basically handing over control of Brazil's economy to Helvitius, and it's reminiscent of Dr. Evil's demand for ONE HUNDRED BILLION DOLLARS in exchange for not blowing up the world.

Anyway, Vesper leaps into action with the whole Vesper Holly Gang - Brinnie, Smiler, and Slider - and a new addition to the group. His name is Tobias Passavant, his nickname is The Weed, and he has apparently been living in the Holly mansion for several months while he uses Dr. Holly's library for his research. His introduction is about as abrupt and nonsensical as that time Dawn Summers joined the cast of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* at the end of season four (as I did when I compared Vesper to Lara Croft, I'm crediting Alexander with taking inspiration from something that didn't exist yet - this book was published in 1990, long before Buffy and the gang showed up). Anyway, The Weed is basically a human Deus Ex Machina, appearing whenever Vesper and the others are in trouble and having an unimaginably vast sphere of allies - they include sailors, hunters, a Philadelphia pretzel vendor, and President Grant. He and Vesper are obviously going to bang.

The plot moves at typical Vesper Holly breakneck pace, and culminates with the gang trying to locate a bomb that Helvitius has placed at the Centennial Exposition (an event that actually happened in 1876, which the Emperor of Brazil did in fact attend). The ending is a little anticlimactic ("I found the bomb!" "Oh no!" "It's cool, I disarmed it." "Hooray!") but the rest of the story moves along at an appropriately fast clip. Also my favorite character, Aunt Mary, makes a brief appearance where she outwits Helvitius, cementing her status as the most capable person in the book. I know that there's only one more book to go in this series, but I still hold out hope that Mary will be our final narrator. There's also a nice little Sherlock Holmes reference, where Brinnie witnesses Vesper and Helvitius grappling with each other and plunging into a river - neither one of them is dead, obviously, because like I said, we still have one more book.

It's weird to say that I liked this book so much because it was rooted in reality, because realism has never been a selling point of the Vesper Holly books. But this story is proof of the saying that the truth is stranger than fiction - the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition might not have actually been threatened by an incompetent supervillain, but all the other details Alexander provides are true, including the little detail about how the Emperor of Brazil was responsible for making sure everyone noticed the little display by an unknown man named Alexander Graham Bell. There's a nice afterword where Lloyd Alexander explains all of his historical inspirations for the book, and it was enough to make me wish that the entire series had been like this: Vesper Holly has fantastical adventures in real cities while sneakily teaching kids about awesome real stories from history. But since the final book in the Vesper Holly series is called *The Xanadu Adventure*, I doubt that this is the direction Alexander will take things.

It's not a typical Vesper Holly story, but *The Philadelphia Adventure* is a fun little digression from the usual formula. Appreciating a Vesper Holly adventure because it's rooted in reality is not something I would have expected, but Vesper has always been able to surprise me.

Josie says

I also loved this series in middle school because it had a smart, sassy, and indomitable female adventurer whose escapades rivaled Indiana Jones and whose archnemesis was slicker and more sophisticated than Moriarty--and she'd best him every time!

Mz. Diana Gagliardi says

A great series in the style of Doc Savage and other pulp heroes. Holly Vesper is a stong, opinionated young lady, very different from many of her ilk in 1876 Philadelphia. She is a hometown girl and, with her erstwile compatriots (including our humble narrator), she is excited to see the World's Fair and her country's centennial happen so near to her home (Lloyd Alexander was also a Philadelphian native).

When she finds that there is a plot afoot to kill the president (and ruin the Fair!) she does what she always does- takes extrodinary measures to keep that from happening!

Tobinsfavorite says

I liked this wrap-up. I won't exactly miss Vesper Holly, but I'm glad I met her. A new character appears who keeps reminding Brinnie of all the friends they've met along the way while exasperating him completely, so I know we've left Vesper in good hands!

I especially liked the Author's Note at the end, so don't skip that.

MMG says

Lloyd Alexander is an awesome writer of children's books. But his best stories are the Prydain chronicles and the stand alone books like The Remarkable Journey of Prince Jen, the Wizard in the Tree, etc.

Laura says

What's not to like about adventure, travel, and Vesper Holly?

Seth says

One of the Vesper Holly Adventures, this book is sure to give you a fun ride. These books are quick reads, both well-written and easily read. My only complaint is for lack of depth. These books compare closely with popular series such as National Treasure, Indiana Jones, and the Tombraider video game series--very much the crowd pleasers, but not necessarily a lot more than that.

Chrisanne says

"Beans!"

Enter The Weed! Annoyance for Uncle Brinnie, Delight for the rest of us!

Laura Verret says

Meet Vesper Holly, the female Indiana Jones!

The Story.

Miss Vesper Holly is a young woman not easily daunted. Why, I have seen her stand before Queens and chieftans as comfortably as though there were none but us – my wife Mary, that incorrigible young man whom Vesper calls “the Weed”, and myself, Professor Brinton Garret, her guardian – present.

Even so, I did not expect her to receive the news of President Grant’s arrival at her home with such calmness. After all, it is not every day that America’s private citizens are visited by their commander in chief! But President Grant – Sam Grant as he urges us to call him – did not call upon Vesper to command. He came to make a request.

It seems that two children – friends of the emperor of Brazil – have been kidnapped by none other than Dr. Helvitius, fiend incarnate, and Vesper’s arch-nemesis. He refuses to release the children unless he is given certain documents – documents which will make him the effectual ruler of Brazil! But the strangest part of his demand is that he insists that these documents be delivered to him by none other than Vesper!

Vesper, dear girl, is undeterred by the thought of personal danger. She is adamant that the children must be recovered at any cost. But, as I watch her think, I can see that she is even now developing a stratagem to not only rescue the poor children, but to defeat Dr. Helvitius’ evil schemes!

Discussion.

Fearless. Indomitable. Intellectual. Well-traveled. Highly civilized. Passionately dedicated to the pursuit of justice. This is Vesper Holly.

She has been called the female Indiana Jones, a comparison which, though I have never seen an Indiana Jones movie, I feel is likely a just one. Not only does Vesper dash around between nations solving highly dangerous problems of national importance, but she does so with an air of complete competence. On the few occasions when she is down, she is most certainly not out, and whenever her wits fail her, her cunning never does.

Some may think that this sounds like a feministic scenario, but it simply isn’t. Oh, Vesper’s plucky alright. And she is often the primary leader in her investigations. But her leadership isn’t a self-declared, rebellious, in-your-face leadership – it’s a natural one, the result of her obviously superior brain power. She is sometimes abrupt, but is never disrespectful.

One of my favorite parts about the Vesper Holly adventures is the fact that Vesper isn’t a one-man show; she has an entire team behind her. Firstly there is Professor Brinton “Brinnie” Garret, the narrator, who, though sometimes fussy, is always good hearted. Then is Brinnie’s wife, Mary, who is not only sweet and gentle, but can be entirely hard-nosed when those she loves are in danger. Then there is the Weed, a brilliant young archaeologist whose gawky but effective antics provide great humor throughout the story. Lastly, the towering twins, Smiler and Slider, provide the muscles and additional manpower to Vesper’s counter-plots.

The Vesper Holly stories self-consciously imitate the most dramatic installments of the adventure genre.

Alexander had a fine line to walk here – one notch more of drama and the whole story would feel completely overdrawn. One notch less, and the story would fall into dredging cheesedom. But he walked his line and achieved adventures which are archetypical but original; impossible, but highly probable in Vesper’s world. Vesper herself is a dear darling girl with a startling brain and an amazing aptitude for stratagem – Dr. Helvitiis is a perfidious rapsallion whose sinister snarls are chilling and whose plots are never less than national in scheme.

Dr. Helvitiis reminds me of Sakharine from Spielberg’s recent *The Adventures of Tintin*. Ruthless and unprincipled, but ever gentlemanly in dress and expansive in manner. It’s my favorite type of villain, really. Of course, the fact that Dr. Helvitiis pulls Rathbone’s Moriarty-style unconfirmed deaths at the end of each story and prompt reappearances at the beginning of the next, doesn’t hurt anything.

Brinnie’s narrative, in keeping with the style of the story, is well-worded and the written style feels like a throwback to the 1890s adventure story – no small feat for a modern author. I think you’ll understand what I mean when you read the following passage, in which Brinnie describes the Delaware River.

“Even in our present misfortune, I could not help but be moved by the sight of our noble waterway. Admittedly, it had none of the tropical flamboyance of the Amazon or the sweep of the Mississippi. It flowed majestically but with a certain Quaker modesty; it was a good, sensible river.” [pg. 49]

Notice, they weren’t in “trouble”. They were in a “present misfortune”. Brinnie didn’t think the river looked beautiful. He was “moved by the sight of our noble waterway”. Fun, high-falutin’ phrases. Here, Brinnie exhibits a more colorful style as he describes President Grant’s bodyguards,

“They looked as cheerful as crocodiles dressed up like undertakers.” [pg. 5]

No cautions – no language, no romance, and, while there was quite a bit of adventure *excitement*, there was no *outright* violence.

Conclusion. Great fun – the highly developed characters combined with the detailed plot and nostalgic narrative style make for a tremendous read.

Andrew Clement says

Okay, so time to revisit my childhood. First of all I loved everything that Lloyd Alexander wrote, he was my favorite author! The Vesper Holly series is like Indiana Jones except it has a beautiful, witty and resourceful heroine instead of Indy. I am fairly certain that had I met Vesper Holly at the time I would have proposed marriage, I had a huge crush on a literary character. Its true, I am not ashamed of it! :*)

Catherine Mustread says

Instead of adventuring in a fictional place, this fifth book in the Vesper Holly series is set in 1876

Philadelphia and concerns a real event, the Centennial Exposition. President Ulysses Grant (fictionally) asks Vesper's assistance with the kidnapping of two children connected with the delegation from Brazil. Vesper, Brinnie, and a new interesting character and possible future love interest for Vesper, "Weed," have their usual exciting adventures in the greater Philadelphia area.

I loved the more authentic setting and the author's note at the end of the book about the time and place and how much is true.

Kiera Beddes says

Genre: realistic fantasy

Summary: Vesper Holly is the most perfect heroine in the world. A mix of Sherlock Holmes with Indiana Jones, Vesper continually thwarts the plans of her archenemy, Dr. Helvitus. This book is set during the world exhibition, where Vesper must save two children belonging to the ruler of Brazil who Helvitus is attempting to blackmail.

Response: I love Lloyd Alexander. I love these books, especially for a young, smart girl reader. Vesper is such a good heroine. The books aren't too dense (content-wise) but just a fun read.
