



The Boy Who Led Them

George Chittenden

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The Boy Who Led Them opens in modern times when a young victim of bullying discovers a two-hundred year old message from Jacob Swift, the king of smugglers, and gets caught up in an adventure that has the potential to solve all of his problems and a mystery several hundred years in the making.

Raised by a fisherman on the English Channel and taken under the wing of the fearsome Billy Bates, Jacob Swift was leading the country's most successful smuggling gang at fifteen, landing cargoes of brandy, tobacco and silk along the Kent coast whilst fighting battles with rival gangs and Customs officers on land and sea.

But when the king of smugglers gets caught up in a plot to steal a priceless treasure he makes an enemy with enough power to bring his empire to its knees.

The Boy Who Led Them is a story of honour, loyalty and England's troubled past. A story of treasure lost and finally found.

The Boy Who Led Them Details

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Author : George Chittenden

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From Reader Review The Boy Who Led Them for online ebook

Matt Jackson says

'It drifted down to the bottom of the sea, where it would remain for over two hundred years, encased in sand, until one day, when that sand would finally shift and deliver the message not into the hands of the legendary smugglers men but into the hands of a troubled young boy.'

Stanley, the troubled young boy, is an unlikely hero in this debut Novel by George Chittenden. Plagued by the modern traumas of bullying, this rather unassuming young man finds himself enthralled into a world of a bygone era, a world of smuggling and violence.

Unlike a large proportion of historical novels, the key to this book's success, is the ever apparent link between the events of the past and a solid grounding in the here and now. For someone who perceives this genre to be for the specialist or indeed feels the need to be well read on the period, rest assured, Chittenden does the work for you. For instance, we are given an overview on how and why the 18th century smugglers favored the import of brandy (one easily imagines it wasn't just for profit) as well as the manner in which these men would go about their job,

'When things went wrong, and if and when that happened, they would use the bats they carried to fight to the death to protect the cargo.'

Overall I was left with two sentiments upon completing this novel. Primarily I was surprised with Chittenden's ability to get me interested in a topic and even genre that I usually dismiss out of hand. As mentioned, this is done through his pace and narrative, which not only informs us of the history in question, but gets us involved with the fate of the anti hero and troubled young boy Stan. Lastly, it's rather refreshing to stumble upon the work of a new novelist who clearly enjoys his craft and has visibly done his homework for our enjoyment. It's a truism that I am sure we all know, getting into such a profession must be a mammoth undertaking, and for these two reasons I think this book should be read and I am certain, enjoyed by many who choose to do so.

Good luck to you George!

Jackson

Rachel says

I received a copy of this book through First Reads from the author in exchange for an honest review.

This book opens with Stanley, being raised by a single mom, in a cramped apartment, with little money, and being teased at school for all of it.

One morning while out at the beach to clear his thoughts, Stanley finds an old bottle, corked up with a mysterious message inside and decides to investigate at the small local maritime museum to see if he can make sense of it. At the museum, Stanley meets Reg, the old docent, who spends most of his days alone in the museum hoping the day will bring a guest. Stanley becomes interested in several pieces in the museum, and Reg begins telling Stanley the story of Jacob Swift, notorious smuggler from centuries ago.

The story Reg tells Stanley about Jacob Swift is an exciting story, but unfortunately, it is relayed to the

reader exactly as Reg tells it to Stanley. And, there are only a couple chapters scattered through the rest of the book where things come back to Reg and Stanley. I think the book could have benefitted from starting Swift's story as being told by Reg to Stanley, but then switching to kind of a flashback and allowing the rest of Swift's tale to be written in more of a present-tense.

It turns out Stanley's message in the bottle contains a clue to the location of a priceless gem, that has been lost for ages. As a docent, Reg is an expert on the lore and legend of Jacob Swift, and has spent much of his life trying to ferret out a connection between Jacob and the gem. The part of the story about Jacob Swift is definitely a swash-buckling adventure tale, and I absolutely love some of the action scenes, they're fast-paced and well-worded. However, I would have liked to have seen more interplay between the past and present, maybe even a bad guy who had also been searching for the whereabouts of the long-lost gem. I think a conflict or race against time between Stanley and Reg and a bad guy could have really rounded out the story.

The book has a few slow spots, but overall a great adventure story.

Peter Dickerson says

This is a book about courage and loyalty and a 200 year old mystery. It is a tale of adventure and misadventure that, we are reminded occasionally of, is being narrated. I enjoyed the book - it was good fun and a good read. 5 stars. Well done to George Chittenden who has also promised a sequel about the further adventures of Alfie and Jim.

Austin Macauley says

When Stanley finds a two-hundred year old message from Jacob Swift, the king of smugglers, he gets caught up in an adventure that may solve all of his problems and a mystery several hundred years in the making. Raised by a fisherman on the English Channel and taken under the wing of the fearsome Billy Bates, Jacob Swift was leading the country's most successful smuggling gang at fifteen, landing cargoes of brandy, tobacco and silk along the Kent coast whilst fighting battles with rival gangs and Customs officers on land and sea. But when the king of smugglers gets caught up in a plot to steal a priceless treasure he makes an enemy with enough power to bring his empire to its knees. This is a story of honour, loyalty and England's troubled past. A story of treasure lost and finally found.

Jeanett says

A really good free read I'd recommend it.

Susan says

This story is full of adventure and mystery. I really like reading, thanks to goodreads and Geogre Chittenden for the ebook.

Michelle & Tony says

I won this from Goodreads.
My husband, Tony, read this book.
This is his review:

A great old fashioned adventure story! What used to be called, "A Ripping Yarn", or "Boys Own Stuff!" It brought back to mind stories like Treasure Island and The Goonies! The great characters are really likeable and the author obviously has a knowledge of local history and geography which adds a good sense of realism and believability! I really enjoyed it and need to know, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT!?!?

David says

Good points: This was a fun, rip-roaring read. It is aimed squarely at the YA market, I'd say, and it was my first foray into that world as a grown-up. (No, I've not read any Harry Potter etc.) I would especially recommend this to anyone who lives in East Kent, since that's where the tale is set, and it's good fun to recognize the locations.

Bad points: I've marked it at only three stars in large part due to the rather poor punctuation. And it is quite repetitive here and there -- but that may be due to its intended audience.

Kalpiti says

Another powerful and engaging Historical Fiction novel as George Chittenden nails down the brilliant story with enough of gravity to give it a weighty feeling.

Though the main hero is supposed to be Stanley who's bullied at school for being raised by a single mother and living under poverty, the main center of attraction in story is rather the notorious smuggler Jacob Swift.

Up on a weekend morning as the sun rises and lays its golden rays on the innocent and smearing face of Stanley, he stumbles on a decision of whether to attend his school the next day and face the absolute turmoil. He jumps on his bicycle and rides straight to the beach to clear his thoughts. Strolling around the water and wandering mindlessly, he finds a bottle with an enclosed message of over 200 years old, none other than of the notorious smuggler "Jacob Swift".

Curious as never before, after glancing through the mysterious message which reads of some hidden treasure, Stanley heads out towards a local maritime museum having a very old existence and deep connection with History.

There he meets Reg Cooper, the old docent (The narrator of the entire story).

Immediately the story kicks in with the narration by Reg Cooper, the old docent and the only one to know the actual True history of Jacob Swift.

Reg, having all the time in universe, briefly narrates the entire story right from the uprising of Jacob Swift as a fisherman's son being expelled from school to being employed by the King of smugglers "Billy Bates".

Yielding some similar connections between Stanley and Jacob, Stanley quickly grabs on the curiosity to discover the history and to decode the mysterious message he found enclosed in the bottle.

Reg revolves the story mainly around Jacob Swift, briefly shedding the light on his uprising and how his first meeting with the King of Smugglers "Billy Bates" changed the course of his life forever.

Billy Bates immediately recognizes the leadership quality within the 15 year old Jacob and plans on training him for the smuggling business, only to one day hand over the entire business empire so the Old Billy Bates can peacefully retire.

The story is too brief but without any sudden shifts and jerks that kept me completely entangled with the plot through out the novel without a problem. Every aspect and character is well thought and well written which gradually progress and gives an crystal clear visionary to imagine the plot and every necessary detail.

Though it was hard to believe at times the intelligence of a 15 year old to make extremely creative decisions to outsmart the custom officers and the cunning magistrate and successfully carry out the smuggling of brandy and other cargoes.

Another thing that didn't resonate well with me was, right in the synopsis the author mentions The lost treasure which was later found and also the death of Jacob Swift. This kills the entire suspense right from the very beginning as I knew the climax and end already.

I will strongly suggest to re-write the synopsis without giving away the spoiler.

But make no mistake, despite the spoiler, you won't want to miss this brilliant novel as it's beautifully written, straight to the point and extremely balanced over it's pace.

This is an amazing story which truly deserves to be read at least once if you love Historical Fiction.

The strong links between the locations of England, France, India were spot on.

Glad that the author made great research over the locations and the expensive GEM stolen from India by a politician which was further stolen by Jacob and the cause of his death bed.

Stanley finally retrieves the most expensive GEM at the end which brings him enormous fortune and fame.

Conclusion:-

The things that amazed me were the beautifully crafted and crystal clear plot, which was brightly imaginable, great choice of words without any foul language (certainly a plus point to me since it's a children's novel), nice character development, strong story line and brilliant narration (which avoided confusion and made the story flow butter smooth)and finally, great cover designing to match the story line perfectly.

Overall, I will definitely rate this novel a 4 stars and give it a thumbs up!

Definitely Recommended!

Crina-Ludmila says

Loved this book!

Peter Cocks says

A ripping yarn in the grand tradition.

Hayley Guertin says

The Boy Who Led Them is an amazing book! I strongly recommend it to people who enjoy old stories, pirate stories, and old tales. I absolutely loved this book! It was cleverly written, the story itself was wonderful, and I enjoyed meeting the different characters in the tale told by Reg Cooper.

George Chittenden wrote a story within a story, which I found was clever. The first chapter is the end of the interesting story that is being told. It certainly made me want to know what would happen next, as well as what had happened before. George delivers that in just the right way.

The characters were fun to discover and meet. I loved getting to know them, and learn their story. The story of smugglers was very well thought out, and just brilliant. The end to The Boy Who Led Them was brilliant and made me feel sad that it had ended. I can't wait to read The Boy Who Felt No Pain, the sequel!

I don't usually read historical fiction, but I loved this one, and I even plan on buying a paperback copy. There is no doubt when I give this book 5 out of 5 stars. Keep it up George!

Rosemarie says

One night in 1792 the cutter that 'The Boy', Jacob Swift, Swifty, King of Smugglers, was on came under attack from a 70-gun warship in The Channel just off Deal, Kent. She sank and every man aboard died. But not before Swifty sent a message in a bottle telling his gang where the greatest treasure he ever got his hands on was hidden.

Two hundred years later, and an unhappy young boy called Stanley is contemplating how best to survive the school bully when he spots something odd on the beach. His discovery leads him to the town's old maritime museum and the curator, Reg Cooper, who has a story to tell. Thus unfolds the tale of Jacob Swift, poor fisherman's son who rises to lead the greatest smuggling gang in Kent. It is a story of loyalty to friends, adventures on the high seas, running from the law, and brandy.

The narrative is detailed and colourful, moving along fairly quickly, and the dénouement, the discovery by Stan of a major treasure, and resulting survival of the museum, is fulfilling. The tale of Jacob Swift's rise and fall is entertaining, if ultimately sad.

The characters of Jacob Swift and his friends are well developed, but the modern day narrator, Reg, and Stan, are flat characters. Their purpose is to tell the story of their antecedents, rather than it being their story. They do not develop at all. There is very little plot; the plot that does exist is merely a vehicle for a more interesting tale. It works, but in a limited sense.

The author is a local historian and writer from Kent; he should know a fair bit about his own county's history. What I wonder about is his general grasp of eighteenth century history. There are several anachronisms in his text; I don't think, though I'm not certain, that balaclavas were in general circulation in the 1780's or that English smugglers would have used litres to measure how much brandy they were importing. Please, correct me if I'm wrong. I mention these because I'd be trotting along happily reading this novel and then I'd be jarred out of the narrative. Also, there were errors of spelling and grammar, 'along' instead of 'a long' for instance, small things that an editor should have picked up on and corrected. These faults irritated me slightly but didn't stop me enjoying the essential story.

