



Airborn

Kenneth Oppel

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Matt Cruse is a cabin boy on the Aurora, a huge airship that sails hundreds of feet above the ocean, ferrying wealthy passengers from city to city. It is the life Matt's always wanted; convinced he's lighter than air, he imagines himself as buoyant as the hydrium gas that powers his ship. One night he meets a dying balloonist who speaks of beautiful creatures drifting through the skies. It is only after Matt meets the balloonist's granddaughter that he realizes that the man's ravings may, in fact, have been true, and that the creatures are completely real and utterly mysterious.

In a swashbuckling adventure reminiscent of Jules Verne and Robert Louis Stevenson, Kenneth Oppel, author of the best-selling *Silverwing* trilogy, creates an imagined world in which the air is populated by transcontinental voyagers, pirates, and beings never before dreamed of by the humans who sail the skies.

Airborn Details

Date : Published May 24th 2005 by HarperCollins (first published 2004)

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Author : Kenneth Oppel

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Genre : Science Fiction, Steampunk, Fantasy, Young Adult, Adventure

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From Reader Review Airborn for online ebook

TheSaint says

If you like a lot of action in your reading, you'll love *Airborn*, by Kenneth Opiel. This 2005 Printz honor title reads just like watching a movie. Mr. Cruse is awfully young to work aboard a luxury airship. Even if he is only a cabin boy, he aspires to greater responsibility. Luckily, many opportunities arise for him to prove his mettle to the captain. But after the Aurora is attacked by pirates and left foundering after a typhoon, Matt's cunning and ability face test after test, leaving him physically and mentally challenged.

Catie says

3 1/2 stars

Read this book if:

You love young, honest lads from humble beginnings who are nonetheless destined for great things.

You love high-seas adventures featuring acts of derring-do, bands of murderous pirates with creative names, shipwrecks on tropical islands, overachieving cabin boys, and smarty-pants rich girls.

You grew up with *Treasure Island*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *Horatio Hornblower*, Aubrey and Maturin, or even Jacky Faber.

You like the younger side of YA.

You find the idea of a moody Eastern European chef named Vlad who loves fish and only understands English when it's convenient amusing.

You're willing to accept that in this world there's a gas that's lighter than Hydrogen, is completely inert, and smells like mangoes.

You'd like an excuse to say, "holy flying cats!!" a few times.

Don't read this book if:

You think the above sounds incredibly juvenile.

Eliza Crewe says

fun, light adventure read. I liked the MC, but the main female character was a spoiled, self-centered, idiotic brat.

Skip says

A second-generation airshipman, cabin boy Matt Cruse catches a glimpse of a sinking balloon ship, and helps engineer the daring rescue of its sole occupant. While dying, the balloonist tells Matt about magnificent winged creatures. On a later cruise, the dead man's granddaughter Kate arrives to find whatever her grandfather saw. A little bit of piracy and some stormy weather adds some spice to the story. Personally, I thought *Leviathan* by Scott Westerfield was a better story and more steampunk. 3.75 stars.

Ann says

Most definitely one of the best books I've read in a long time. Perhaps *best* isn't quite the right word... I've read several wonderful books this year. But, for me, this is definitely one of my all-time favorites.

Seldom do I come across a title that has a strong plot, a great writing style, and wonderful characters that are multi-dimensional, real, and vivid. It felt like every time I tuned in I was visiting with friends.

This was a fast read, catching me from the start. The plot is quite unique and kept me surprised and guessing all along the way.

What was so refreshing, and immediately apparent, was that the protagonists were *good* characters. They weren't perfect, but their flaws were normal and understandable—they did want to be good people and do the right things. This said, this is an adventure book (if I had to pick just ONE genre that is). However, the book never felt like it was *just* plot driven, nor did it ever feel like it was *just* character driven. Instead, it was a wonderful, well-paced combination of the two.

A small warning (and minimal spoiler): there are deaths. Many are not gruesome, and some are simply hinted at (allowing more sensitive readers to infer what they will). But, there are obvious deaths, some of which might be unnerving for young, sensitive readers. The descriptions of the deaths are short and not very detailed, but those with active imaginations could find themselves just a tad grossed out at times. This aside, the story is very sweet, very innocent, and, in my opinion, a wonderful, great, fantastic story!

I listened to the audio version (Full Cast Audios) and was extremely impressed! This is a full cast recording, so each character has it's own accompanying actor or actress, each of whom I thought brought volumes of details to their characters while still staying very true to the text.

Highly recommended!!! And I can hardly wait for the next adventure!

I'm glad to start listening to this! The book and audio recording have come highly recommended and from just the first chapter I can see why - I'm already sucked in!:D

Katie found this book and it looks like it could be quite fun!:)

The Captain says

Ahoy there me mateys! This was an audiobook that I picked up because I was looking for a fluffy young adult book. I think somewhere I had heard there be dragons. Well, there be no dragons here. But there are cool flying animals, airships, silly fish-loving chefs, sea-adventures, pirates, lost islands, smart feisty girls, daring kind-hearted boys, and adventure!

The other appeal of this particular audiobook was that it was performed by Full Cast Audio. According to their website "Full Cast Audio (FCA) has a simple mandate: to produce unabridged recordings of fine children's novels using a full cast rather than a single reader. Whenever possible, we invite the author to serve as narrator." They are located back in me (very) old stomping grounds of Syracuse, New York where it snowed every day from Halloween to April. I heard about this company because mateys of mine worked as voice actors for the company. At yet I had never listened to a single book. This is back in the day where audiobooks really weren't a thing and these productions were treated more as radio plays. So I was delighted to finally hear one.

I absolutely loved the main character, Matt Cruse, and his love for the airship, Aurora. The ship felt real and lived in. Ye got a real sense of Matt's life onboard. Matt was poor but plucky, hard-working, and ambitious. The story is told from his perspective. Joining him on the ship is Kate de Vries, an upper class passenger. She likes science and photography and out-witting her chaperone. She is out to solve a mystery and draws Matt into the chase.

I thought overall that this was an excellent foray. Matt could get a bit overbearing and Kate was a bit short-sighted and stubborn. But the world building was lovely, the pirates were dastardly, and the science behind both the ship and creatures was fascinating. The plot was intense and full of action. I loved the voice performances and the sound effects. The side characters were as wonderful as the main duo. It was an engaging and quick read. It could work as a standalone though it is part of a larger trilogy.

I want me an airship!! Arrr!!

Check out me other reviews at <https://thecaptainsquartersblog.wordp...>

Qt says

I quite enjoyed this one!

rye says

DO
NOT
READ
THIS
REVIEW
IF
YOU
HAVE

YET
TO
FINISH
THIS
WONDERFUL
BOOK

-OML Kenneth Opiel has no mercy. Airborn is definitely competing against The Giver for the best book I read for Language Arts class.

-I admit, I was a little hesitant about this book. I've never been all that interested in flight or aircraft and I thought the book would only be about that. Nope nope nope nope.

-Everything in this book was so fantastical and all the characters were wonderfully unique and delicious. I loved Matt and Kate and their very cute friendship. Opiel didn't solely focus on the romance between them which I loved because literally every YA book has romance. This did have romance, but it focused more on the friendships. My favorite character was no doubt, Vlad. Vlad is so so so extra and absolutely love him as a human being.

-Speaking of Vlad, let's talk about ships. Not the Aurora...a different kind of ship. MATT + KATE = MATE!! VLAD + WALKEN = VLAKEN!! I've never shipped characters in a book for school this much before. Jonas + Fiona is up there but they can not overthrow Vlaken!

-This book reminded me a lot of the TV Show, Lost. Lost is a about survivors of a plane crash who get stranded on a mysterious island. The same thing happens in Airborn, but definitely not as terrifying..

-The Cloud Cats were absolutely wonderful! (I just realized how much I am using the word wonderful in this review, whoops.) I loved how Kate & Matt's Cloud Cat (oml that rhymed) slayed and feasted on a good portion of the pirates.

-PIRATES! PIRATES! PIRATES! I've never been all that interested in pirate books. Captain Hook left a lasting impression on me, so I've been a bit of a pirate hater for most of my life. OH MY WAS I WRONG. The pirates in this book were so devious but were a little hesitant to kill. This disappointed me a tiny bit because I wanted them to STAB STAB STAB STAB even though they were antagonists and most likely would kill my favorite characters. As long as they don't slay Vlad, Kate or Matt i'm fine. This isn't saying I didn't like the other characters but I love some good ol' murder in my novels.

HEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHE. R.I.P. Bruce even though I didn't like him that much. HE DIDNT DESERVE IT. KENNETH OPIEL HAS NO MERCY BUT I WISH HE HAD EVEN LESS MERCY BECAUSE MURDER AND MISCHIEF AND SLAYING AND PIRATES AND STUFF.

-CRYPTIDS! CRYPTIDS! CRYPTIDS! I loved all the exploring involved within this novel. Some of my favorite scenes involved Kate and Matt adventuring deeper in the island BUT THOSE DARN PIRATES UGH.

-The food! All of the food is this book made some hungry and I honestly want to hire Vlad so badly it's not even funny.

-Mostly I've been rambling about the setting and the characters and not much about the writing. BUT THE WRITING WAS WONDERFUL (there's that word again - Kyrie Lee Ross, 2016). I loved all of the dialogue and all of the conversations were so great! The descriptions of the island and creatures were very unique.

-I think I'm done now. I've never had this much fun writing a review. Woah.

Alex Keats says

A story so strong it swept me off my feet and left me ... airborne

4.5

Tori says

Dear author,

I feel obliged to inform you of several things. I have just finished your book Airborn, and there were a few things that bothered me. For starters, do you know what happens when you clog the barrel of a gun? If you do so and pull the trigger, it does not make an anti-climatic little click that allows your hero to get away from the villain pointing the gun at him. It goes boom. You are seriously hurt, if not possibly dead.

And your wording wasn't very clear, but I think you said pineapples grow on trees. When writing a book that takes place on an island, you might want to research such things, since pineapples actually grow on the ground.

So maybe you just didn't spend enough time in your research and editing stages, because my inner Grammar Nazi found three typos in your novel.

Let's look at your novel. Flying airships. Good. Sky Pirates. Very Good. Weird flying cats. What? I guess my issue is that I found no purpose for them. I mean, they took up almost half of the book, but to me it still fell very flat and was way pointless and a little to weird.

But then that last little bit pretty much explains your whole book for me. It had some potential, but fell flat, like the shipwrecked air ship, though it never got inflated again.

And your characters didn't help. The ones I wanted to know more about you never let me get close to (Baz, the Captain) and the main characters I would rather have left behind. Matt seemed to week and childish and had no depth. And why in the world did he want to go to the air academy, when it would just get him to beginning sail master, a position the captain had already promised him if there was an opening (And in the end whatshisname died, and there was an opening) So it **really** didn't add up there.

And don't get me started on Kate. I'm tired of "perfect female characters"! Strong ones, yes. I'm all for a strong female character. But don't make her so impossibly strong and perfect and unafraid, (and always their one fault seems to be that they're a bit headstrong.) Don't have her look at a terrible leg wound from an animal's deep claws and teeth marks, and not be at all shocked/afraid/ill/etc. And fine, if you have to make her thus, do so. But then don't make her so stupidly simple, thinking these "cloud cats" won't hurt her. I mean really, they're just giant cats in the wild... *head desk* But thank you author for not making them actually tame, because I was really worried for a while there...

It had some potential, but it didn't make it. Though it did give me a chance to write a good rant, which I tend to enjoy (Is that strange?)

Sincerely,

Someone who is probably not going to read one of your books again.

P.S. And why did you have some strong language in there? No reason for that at all >>

P.P.S And I had to come back the day after writing this because I forgot the names! Why in the world did you call the oceans Atlanticus and Pacificus?

Alexandra says

2/1/18 \$1.99 for Kindle.

I really liked this one.

Airborn is about a cabin boy on an passenger air ship. It takes place in an alternate history of our world - so it may be classified as fantasy, but it is not really a fantasy story - it's an adventure story. Has an 1800's or maybe Edwardian feel. It might appear to be more of a "boy book", but there is a main character who is a girl, so there's someone girls can relate to, and a bit of wholesome romance. I wouldn't assume girls wouldn't like this one.

There's also a bit of a mystery. The protagonist, 15 year old Matt, is likable, responsible, honest and the story is well written.

For parents - There wasn't anything in it to give parents pause - except for a few deaths in the battles with the pirates - a couple good guys, a few bad guys, but although there were sad deaths (the good guys) nothing was too graphic. No bad language, a couple chaste kisses. I think this would be a great book to read to kids that were not old enough to read it themselves. Pretty G rated. I'd only hesitate with very young children because of the deaths, and the pirates may be scary for them.

If you enjoy this series I think you may also enjoy Arabella of Mars.

Cindy says

A book about airships! I really was looking forward to liking this book as it's not the typical magic fantasy and really isn't even fantasy per say. It was a very slow moving book at first but at times I really got into it. It's a great adventure book with a bit of a mystery.

I really don't care for first person books, because it gets really old after a while. I found that Matt (the main character and narrator) was annoying, obnoxious and thought he was better than everyone else. He came across as really arrogant.

I believe had this book been told in another way it wouldn't have been so repetitive. And sometimes it felt like the book was going on forever before we moved to a different part of the story.

A few things that bothered me about this was that the kid was 15 and he thought he should be captaining the ship because he was there for 2 years (slight exaggeration) but he thought he was owed so much. I also didn't like that he acted like he knew EVERYTHING there was to know. He didn't know a lot he knew everything out there about airships.

Second thing was that he kept going on and on about how at home he felt, it was like "okay I got it the first 500 times you told me".

Overall fun read but sometimes frustrating and annoying. Great YA book that doesn't have magic in it! I did love the adventure part and it would be great for a boy!

Elevetha says

2.5 stars.

I enjoyed it. I did. But I kept comparing it to Leviathan. There are enough similarities that I couldn't help it and I did try to be objective.

Let's start with characters, shall we?

Matt is nice but a bit bland. I'm sorry, but to speak plainly; he's in love with the airship, with the idea of flying, aaaand...that's pretty much it.

Kate: Oh, Kate. The sassier, I-just-don't-care character. I liked her, though she was a carbon copy of many girl characters I've run across recently. And I wasn't sure how I felt about her at the end. (view spoiler)

The story: Pirates and Cloud Cats!! Not really what I was expecting when I picked it up. I mean, it was all centered about this animal that they call a "cloud cat" and its discovery.

And the pirates were there for some danger so we didn't get too bored.

Man, I'm ripping this up, aren't I? Well, in all honesty, it was good. Writing was good and it had some nice imagery. I thought it was a bit lacking in character development and plot but I liked it and I'll probably try the rest of the books in the series.

Miss Clark: Don't bother yet, though. I'll let you know if the series is worth it after I'm done.

Also, Leviathan is loads better.

Sesana says

Airships! Sky pirates! Strange creatures! Quite a bit going on here. Add in class issues and an adventurous young lady with scientific aspirations and it more than fills 500 pages.

There's basically two storylines going on here. There's swashbuckling action against a group of sky pirates, and a quest to prove the existence of a strange creature, something like a gigantic bat. Our POV character is Matt Cruse, a poor young man born to fly on airships, but held back because he's essentially enlisted, and can't afford to go to the airship version of West Point. His partner in swashbuckling and scientific discovery both is Kate de Vries, who is wealthy, determined, and not exactly good at planning out the consequences of her actions. Later, they team up with Bruce Lunardi, the new member of the crew who got his position because daddy owns the airship.

The plot moves along at a good pace. A 500 page book without padding! A story that is given all the pages it needs! It's a marvelous thing. And the pirate captain makes quite an interesting villain. He doesn't show up much in person, but he makes an impact when he does. The strange creatures are also fascinating when they show up.

I mentioned class issues playing a part in the story. Matt wants to advance in rank on the airship, but he can't afford officer training. He should be able to work his way up through the ranks, but not if somebody else buys his position out from under him. Obviously, Matt is quite resentful of Bruce Lunardi, and he certainly has a right to it. After all, Bruce doesn't even really want to serve on airships, but he has to give it a shot if he wants to keep his access to daddy's money. Otherwise he might have to earn his own way in the world, and wouldn't that be horrible? Oddly, Matt, who as a teenager is not only earning his own way through the world, but helping to support his mother and sisters, is somewhat sympathetic. I am not.

Kate is also a very difficult character to like. She's incredibly reckless and thoughtless, and not just with her own safety. Granted, in the end her actions do pay off, but that's just luck. She's also blissfully blind to her own privilege, and that too never gets called out. Her response to Matt mentioning that he hasn't the money to get officer training can be summed up as, "Well, just get a scholarship!" It's cringe-inducing. It made her almost unlikeable to me, and I usually love spunky girls of a scientific bent. Maybe she'll mature in the later books.

I will be reading those later books, bricks that they are. I like airships, and I like Matt. I'd like to see what becomes of him.

Sarah says

I'm so glad I decided to listen to the Full Cast Audio production of this young adult novel. In fact, I didn't realize until after I had listened to it that it won a 2007 Audie Award. I believe it. I was riveted during this novel, even though I have read the book (and its sequel) before. Riveted while driving through whirling snow on a Chicago interstate is a little dangerous, but I survived.[return][return]Matt Cruse was born on an airship and has worked on one since the age of 12. He's only a cabin boy, but knows everything about the ship and has dreams of flying his own one day. Once he meets Ms. Kate de Vries (spelling?) he obtains a new interest. She is pretty, rich, demanding, intelligent, and strong minded. She insists that her grandfather discovered a new mammal high above an island in the Pacificus, and wants Matt to help her prove it. And, boy, do they ever. They find cloud cats, are ransacked by pirates and end up shipwrecked in the middle of nowhere. This adventure story is so exciting and I wish I could get more students to read it. It's a Printz honor book, too, so even the stuffy literary librarians agree that this book has quality! :)

Charlotte says

Damn straight.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is YA. This is YA in all its shiny glory. If you're tired of beautiful supernatural new kids falling in love with the mortal they can't be with...

Well. This is YA.

Damn straight.

Amanda says

Really liked this adventure story. The fantasy elements are handled well and I think the interpersonal struggles of the main characters are not overly done. It was really fun to read.

Rebekah says

I liked Matt as the protagonist. He was an intelligent and passionate young man who loved what he did. There is a lot of adventure in this book, especially at the end where it got especially exciting. Loved the creature that Kate's grandfather discovered and the mysterious island the Aurora lands on. Very cool world building.

However, I found Kate extremely annoying. In the beginning I thought she was mildly irritating but by the middle she was pushing obnoxious. I appreciate persistence, but she couldn't see anything else but what she wanted and totally took advantage of Matt without ever recognizing what she was asking of him. She was so selfish and pigheaded! By the eighth disk, I can honestly say I hated her. Everything bad that happened in the last fourth of the book was caused by her. Without Matt and his ingenuity, the whole ship would have died. There was no apology from Kate. She got what she wanted in the end, so all is well. Hooray for her (not).

I listened to the book in my car--I wonder if I would've had such a violent reaction to her if I had been reading it instead?--and found myself yelling at Kate because she was being so STUPID. I told Matt repeatedly to just leave her behind, Kate deserved whatever she got. I finally picked up the book and read the last few chapters because I could not listen to her any longer but the story was all so exciting I needed to know how Matt would fix Kate's dumbness.

So yeah, Kate completely ruined the book for me. I realize I'm missing a very beautiful forest because of a tree, but she was a large tree who's branches kept whacking me in the face. And yes, sometimes I do get overly passionate about characters and so hopefully this review isn't too obnoxious, in and of itself.

I am interested in Matt and his later adventures, but since Kate is going to be in the books too (and the romantic lead, I'm assuming), I won't be picking them up. Sorry Matt, but I just can't handle more of Kate. I'm surprised you can.

Susan says

This book is reminiscent of the best pirate adventures of the past, but ups the ante by setting half of the tale in the air, rather than the seas, and by taking time with characterizations, rather than creating stock Baddies. There is admittedly an odd subplot with mysterious creatures which is...interesting enough, but really I found myself caught up the most with the "high seas" (or perhaps in this case, high *over* the seas) drama. Even the technical parts about the various parts of the airship, details about the mechanisms, and the behind-the-scenes peek into crew life on the fictional and fantastic Aurora were fascinating to me. The pirate crew are a mixture of elegant and rough unsavory characters that feel particularly true-to-life from what I've read on the subject. These villains are neither caricatures nor buffoons, and they evoke a sense of danger that's almost

palpable. Reluctant readers might be thrown by the length and the formality in the speech of the characters who are after all, from another time. Still, I think a case could be made for this as a sort of crossover for a boy who reads mainly nonfiction and is interested in nautical subjects, aviation, or real life pirates. And who doesn't love that? Many girls will find plenty of things to hold their interest as well between the adventure and the smart, strong-minded, and brave Kate, who befriends the protagonist and leaves such a strong impression on the reader that she really comes close to stealing the show at times.

Christy says

It starts of a little slow. But if you stick with it, you might be surprised. And even when it is slow, for some reason, it moved. It flowed very well. An enjoyable read.
