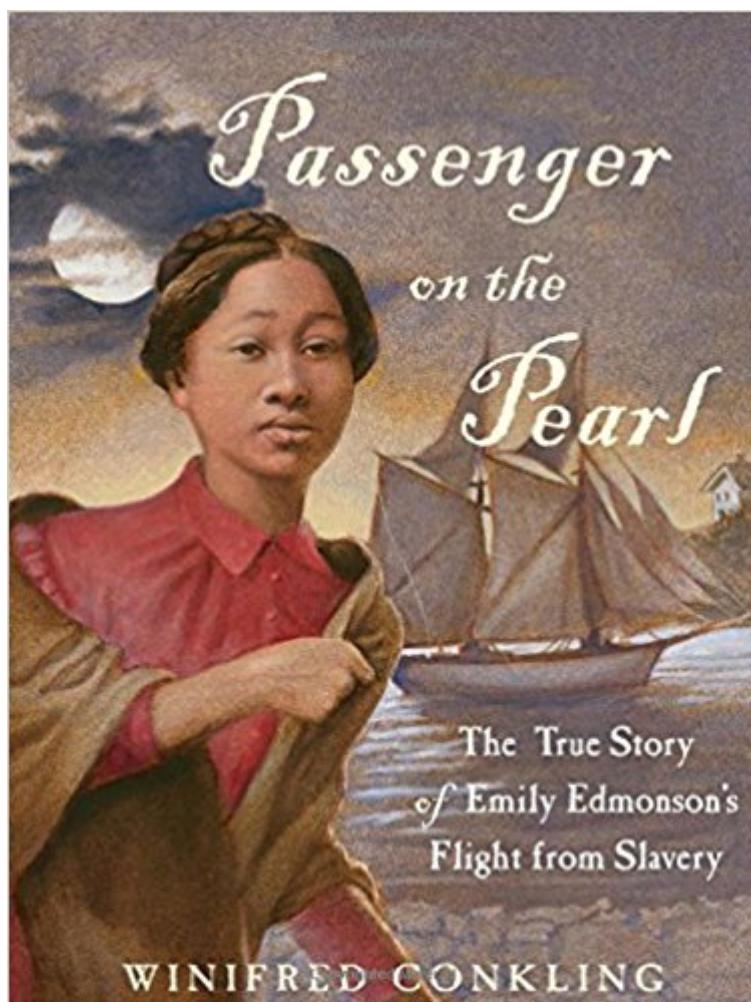


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Passenger On The Pearl: The True Story Of Emily Edmonson's Flight From Slavery



Synopsis

The page-turning, heart-wrenching true story of one young woman willing to risk her safety and even her life for a chance at freedom in the largest slave escape attempt in American history. In 1848, thirteen-year-old Emily Edmonson, five of her siblings, and seventy other enslaved people boarded the Pearl under cover of night in Washington, D.C., hoping to sail north to freedom. Within a day, the schooner was captured, and the Edmonsons were sent to New Orleans to be sold into even crueler conditions. Passenger on the Pearl is the story of this thwarted escape, of the ramifications of its attempt, and of a family for whom freedom was the ultimate goal. Through an engaging narrative, informative sidebars, and more than fifty period photographs and illustrations, Winifred Conkling takes readers on Emily Edmonson's journey from enslaved person to teacher at a school for African American young women. Conkling illuminates a turbulent time in American history, showing the daily lives of enslaved people, the often-changing laws affecting them, the high cost of a failed escape, and the stories of slave traders and abolitionists.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #644,439 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 in Books > Teens > Education & Reference > History > United States > Civil War Period #76 in Books > Teens > Education & Reference > History > United States > 19th Century #119 in Books > Teens > Biographies > Women

Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

Customer Reviews

Gr 7-10 •This title is an in-depth historical narrative concerning several people involved in an attempted slave escape in 1848. The Pearl was to ferry 13-year-old Emily Edmonson

and scores of other runaway slaves from Washington DC down the Potomac River and up the Chesapeake Bay. However, the ship was captured before reaching free soil. Conkling narrates the tumultuous stories of Edmonson, her family, and the others involved, tracing their lives from their ill-fated jail escape to the slave auctions, the Deep South, and finally to freedom. Readers will discover how Edmonson came into contact with important figures in the antislavery movement, including Frederick Douglass, Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Primary documents give an authentic voice to the text, including excerpts from Frederick Douglass's autobiography. Nineteenth-century plates, illustrations, photographic portraits, and posters enhance the text. Historical photographs of slaves and slave pens are particularly moving. Maps clearly outline the geography relevant to the narratives, and frequent text blocks separate contextual information from the primary narrative. This work covers information about slavery that is often not found in other volumes, such as the Second Middle Passage—•the transportation of slaves from the Upper South to the Lower South—•and the uncomfortable reality of slaves as "second wives" to white men. Conkling's work is intricate and detailed, and some readers may be overwhelmed by the vast number of names encountered here. Nevertheless, this is a strong and well-sourced resource. —•Jeffrey Meyer, Mount Pleasant Public Library, IA

—•"Edmundson's life story is compelling and inspiring. It provides the perfect hook for readers into the horrors of slavery . . . This is a great introduction into a little-known but important historical figure and a fascinating look at the impact of a lesser-known abolitionist attempt. —• VOYA —•"Conkling's work is intricate and detailed . . . This is a strong and well-sourced resource. —• School Library Journal —•"Passenger is a great resource for teaching young readers about the tragedy of slavery, as experienced by a girl their own age. —• Historical Novels Review —•"Clearly written, well-documented, and chock full of maps, sidebars, and reproductions of photographs and engravings, the fascinating volume covers a lot of history in a short space. Conkling uses the tools of a novelist to immerse readers in Emily's experiences. A fine and harrowing true story behind an American classic. —• Kirkus Reviews —•"Conkling is a fine narrator . . . Readers familiar with the trials of Solomon Northup will find this equally involving. —• The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books —•"Conkling provides an effective antidote to the oversimplified picture of slavery in America painted by some outdated textbooks. —• Booklist Online

Arguably the most egregious defilement of civilized behavior, slavery and its attendant cruelties and violence has been part of human history long before we knew how to write about it. Inexcusably it continues to exist around the world in the 21st century, though now usually stripped of most official state sanction. But America's shameful tolerance if not endorsement of slavery was challenged even before a bloody war helped bring it to an end. Slaves in pre-Civil War border and southern states sometimes escaped their bondage, often with the aid of abolitionists in the north. One such incident is the subject of a new book by veteran author Winifred Conkling, who previously penned the award-winning book *Sylvia & Ali* involving a true account about America's shameful internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Again in *Passenger on the Pearl: The True Story of Emily Edmonson's Flight from Slavery* the author uses meticulous research of real people and events to relate a tale of fortitude in the face of outrageous denial of freedom to innocent victims. And as before, Ms. Conkling shines a spotlight on a part of our history that must not be forgotten lest we be doomed to repeat it in some form or degree. Aimed at younger readers around the teenage years, *Passenger on the Pearl* is nevertheless a recommended read for those of any age who treasure individual liberty and take heart in those who refused to accept less. Part adventure story and part morality play, this well-crafted work takes readers on a fascinating voyage into a past from which our current history emerged. Even those who believed ourselves to be reasonably-well informed about antebellum life in the mid-19th century likely will gain new information and insights into conditions and practices then, and may feel a renewed anger and anguish by these revelations. *Passenger on the Pearl* will inform, inspire and perhaps properly inflame indignation.

This history book is written for young adults or older teens. It deals realistically but sensitively with its subject.

Very good book.

My daughter loved this book

On April 15, 1848, 13-year-old Emily Edmonson, her sister Mary, four of her brothers and 70 other people board a schooner called the Pearl for one purpose --- to escape slavery. Unfortunately, salvation lasts less than 24 hours before slave owners catch up with the boat. Returning to captivity,

Emily goes from a Virginia slave pen to the New Orleans slave market and back again. Although Emily never ceases to pray for release from her enslaved situations, she has no idea that it will take the efforts of a well-known New York preacher to answer her freedom cry. In her first nonfiction book for young readers, award-winning author Winifred Conkling recreates a piece of unconscionable American history that has a powerfully optimistic ending. Conkling's homey storytelling skillfully captures the incredible story of Emily's trials and tribulations as a slave, her transition into freedom through Henry Ward Beecher and beyond. *PASSANGER ON THE PEARL* not only zeroes in on Emily's life, but also on what becomes of her parents and siblings, pre and post slavery. High on that familial list is Emily's relationship with Mary --- the sisters remain constant companions. (On a personal note, my interest peaked when I read that Mary Edmonson was buried in Westwood Cemetery, which is walking distance from my home!) Obviously, Conkling's narrative is not limited to Emily's manumission --- she also writes about Emily's continued educational opportunities, her anti-slavery activism and her eventual marriage to another freed slave. Additionally, Conkling incorporates another fascinating Edmonson account regarding two of Emily's younger siblings who were also allocated for the slave trade. This situation leads Emily to Beecher's sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, who miraculously comes to the siblings' aid. Conkling includes other peripheral pieces to the Edmonson account, such as the men involved in the Pearl escape plans and their trials. Amid the various aspects of Emily's story, Conkling interweaves significant information about topics like slavery, literacy and the second middle passage that further explain what life was like back then. Replete with a plethora of wonderful primary sources, a time line, family tree and additional information for further reading/research, *PASSENGER ON THE PEARL* is not only an essential addition to the African American history collection, but is also guaranteed to be another award-winning book. Reviewed by Anita Lock

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