

Alice and Jack Hike the Grand Canyon

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Pam Schweitzer

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Brimming with delightful information and a sense of adventure, Alice and Jack Hike the Grand Canyon is a fun, beautiful book for early readers.

In Amy Graves and Pam Schweitzer's illustrated children's book *Alice and Jack Hike the Grand Canyon*, a girl overcomes her fear of heights on an exhilarating and educational vacation.

Siblings Alice and Jack are going to Grand Canyon National Park for spring break with their parents. They have a few months to prepare, so Alice does research at the library and makes a list of the supplies they'll all need ahead of time. They go on practice hikes together as a family and with friends. However, Alice is afraid of heights, and she is worried about the cliffs they'll encounter.

When the trip finally arrives, Alice is impressed at the vast size of the Grand Canyon. She enjoys learning about how it formed, and about the native wildlife, from park rangers. While camping, hiking, and crossing bridges, she works to conquer her fear of heights and learns about respecting nature.

Alice narrates, and she is both amicable and candid. Her open-mindedness and dedication are reflected in moments as when she and her brother set up a tent on their own during a practice camping trip, and when she tells herself "you can do this" when she's nervous to cross the Colorado River on a narrow bridge. Others fade to the background because Alice is the focus; her parents are present for moral and practical support, and her brother Jack is a tagalong companion and a source of comedic relief.

The book weaves educational content into Alice's entertaining adventure, as when she discusses the practical tools of camping and comments on the flora and fauna of the area. A nod to Native Americans, and to the fact that the Grand Canyon is a sacred place for their ancestors, arises, though Alice wondering if that's why the place "feels magical" romanticizes and glosses over historical realities.

The full-page illustrations balance and complement the text, depicting the events as they're told in Alice's words. Lush green grasses and dimensional perspectives—as when Alice looks across a bridge that grows smaller in the distance—make the settings idyllic and awe-inspiring by turn. The characters' smiling faces are cute, and minute details, like the red cross of a first aid kit in Alice's luggage, connect the educational material to the story well.

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AIMEE JODOIN (May 26, 2022)

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