

ForeWord Reviews

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Drake's Quest

Pat Croce

Adam Slutsky

Brighter Books

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Charlie Drake has hit the high seas. A mere teenager, his family has fallen apart and he's on a quest to find out what he can about his real father. On board the Churchill, swabbing the deck in exchange for room and board, he meets Mac, another young sea dog, and they prove themselves useful as more than scullery workers when the crew get in a jam. Thankfully that happens with some regularity, keeping *Drake's Quest* exciting throughout.

Plundering enemy ships and making new friends in port can only take a story so far, though. This appears to be the start of a trilogy, with Charlie's actual quest involving a triple-locked chest from his real father and the search for the keys. He finds one in this volume, along with a freed slave connected to his father's past who now wants to serve Charlie and be reunited with his own family. There are definite echoes of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn here, but with the Bahamas and Atlantic Ocean standing in for the mighty Mississippi.

Authors Croce and Slutsky collaborate well. There's no new life breathed into the concept of high-seas adventure here, but the bond between Mac and Charlie feels realistic, and their separate adventures while apart make for a broad canvas studded with multiple plots and outside characters.

Drake's Quest will be a strong motivator for reluctant readers of both sexes, but boys in particular will appreciate the violence, gross-out humor, and some sexually suggestive and scatological references, while soaking up facts about Leonardo da Vinci, world history, and nautical terminology. Mac has an elite pedigree and talks like it, while the rest of the crew struggle to understand him. There's a generous glossary at the end of the book, though, so we can all say "Shiver me timbers" with confidence.

Heather Seggel