Hunting for the Mississippi

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Twelve-year-old Eustache Bréman and his widowed mother, Delphine, are living in abject poverty in La Rochelle, France, when their neighbors, the Talon family, invite them to join an expedition to America to be led by René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle. The goal: to establish a colony to secure France's claim to the Louisiana Territory. On July 24, 1684, the expedition—300 people including 100 soldiers, a group of artisans, six Recollect missionaries, and ten women with their children—set sail for the New World in search of the Mississippi River. Told in the voice of Eustache, and based on historical records, this gripping fictional coming-of-age story reveals the violence and horrors of the voyage and the lusts and pride of the men who fought to survive in a strange new land.

Though told in the voice of an adolescent, the novel's disturbing subject matter, including rape and the victimization of women and Indians, makes it more appropriate for adult readers. Eustache, hardened by the brutal deaths of those he loves, is transformed from a child into a strong and capable young man who deals with the dissention, mutinies, and betrayals among the group's leaders by becoming become "the worst, the most vicious of men"—a man burning to avenge the loved ones he has lost and to protect those who remain.

KRISTINE MORRIS (Summer 2016)

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