

Orion Poe and the Lost Explorer

Will Summerhouse

Pritesh Rane, Illustrator

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Orion, a bit of a scamp who tells it like it is, can hold his own as the narrator of any future sequels to this fun adventure.

Under bizarre and unsettling circumstances, eleven-year-old Orion Poe comes to possess a map detailing the last known location of a famous lost British shipping expedition. This regular, everyday kid soon finds himself sailing to the top of the world with a renowned professor in the search for answers in Will Summerhouse's fast-paced, richly detailed adventure, *Orion Poe and the Lost Explorer*.

Living on the coast of Maine, Orion has fun trading superhero cards and exploring the woods around the lighthouse his grandfather cares for until the night the fog rolls in and a tremendous storm dumps a strange man on the beach. That's the start of Orion's adventure, which involves sailing north with Professor Meriwether, the indomitable crew of the *Sea Leopard*, and the less-than-reliable and not-to-be trusted Peerless Jones, a *Crocodile Dundee* wannabe.

With nods to and shades of the books *Treasure Island* and *Oliver Twist*, and even the *The Goonies* and *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies, the author has created a story line that will appeal to even the most jaded young reader. Orion is a bit of a scamp; he doesn't always listen to the adults around him, but at heart, he's a good-natured, honest boy who doesn't mince words or lack a sense of humor when telling his story in first person.

After surviving one of the many twists and turns of the plot, he thinks it would be nice to be back home with his "grampa" and friends: "After what I'd just been through, school wouldn't seem so bad, either; I might get picked on, but at least nothing there would try to eat me."

Locations shift from the ship to the cold, ice, and snow to a fantastical city called New London, hidden from the rest of the world, from where Orion and his shipmates must escape a despotic ruler and his many guards.

The book is comprised of thirty-six chapters, each with a compass drawing above such fun titles as "Marooned," "In the Devil's Graveyard," and "Busted!" The book's captivating cover depicts Orion at the forefront, with several other characters—Peerless Jones, red-haired orphan Rosie Collins, and the maniacal man in charge of New London, John Franklin the Fifth.

The story is a unique one, with only a couple questions left unanswered at the end. And while Orion is anxious to help his shipmates by carrying a weapon, several deaths do occur on the trip. These are not glossed over, however, but rather recounted solemnly by the boy.

The author's prose is straightforward and engrossing, and he makes Orion's voice authentic, as when he's describing a prosecutor in court: "Shanks was his name, Silas Q. Shanks; and you never in your life saw a sneakier, slicker, shiftier character—except Peerless, maybe."

This book will be highly regarded by its intended audience—preteen readers who enjoy adventure, mystery, a little

blood and gore, and a protagonist who takes on and beats the bad guys. Orion Poe has a solid future in any sequels the author might create.

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (May 19, 2014)

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