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Patalosh: The Time Travelers

Z Altug
Tracy Gensler
CreateSpace (Feb 29, 2012)
Softcover $8.99 (360pp)
978-1-4635-2133-2

Authors create a fun sci-fi world with a young hero, time travel and, of course, proper diet and exercise.

Fiction can bring history and geography to life, especially for kids who are bored by the often rote memorizations of school lessons. *Patalosh: The Time Travelers*, by Z Altug and Tracy Gensler, creates a rich science fiction setting, with characters who visit foreign and ancient cultures via time travel.

The time traveling is pursuant to a separate goal—Orion, the ten-year-old hero of the book, is trying to rescue his parents from the evil Emperor Daaggerd. To do so, he needs to collect several keys that have been hidden in space and time. In the process, he meets or reunites with other children from different Earth eras and locations, who assist him with his quest. The book's final chapters also offer a nice moral about choosing one's own path, as a would-be villain decides to reject Daaggerd and join Orion and his friends.

Authors Altug and Gensler have written several nonfiction books relating to diet, exercise, and health. *Patalosh: The Time Travelers* includes some of these elements, as Orion exercises daily and is exposed to well-balanced meals from the various cultures he visits. But Altug and Gensler successfully stretch their writing wings by forming a complete science fiction world.

There are political and social differences to be managed, anthropomorphic animals, and magic spells whose functions have a distinguishing color. It's enough for any young reader to sink his or her teeth into, yet it's also a light and fun book that doesn't get hung up on time travel paradoxes and other sci-fi tropes. Orion narrates as he and his companions encounter just about every adventure that a young reader could imagine: "It felt as if we'd been shot out of a cannon and into the time of the dinosaurs. The ship stopped spinning and leveled off. The pirates were still chasing us."

The book is divided into seventy-six generally short chapters, which might make the reading easier for kids. The authors have a tendency to try to end every chapter with a cliffhanger of some kind, which can feel forced at times. But *Patalosh: The Time Travelers* reads clearly and compellingly, and the book's overall presentation is gorgeous, with maps, family trees, time lines, and even a few illustrations.

There's a satisfying ending as Orion completes one part of his mission, but it's also a clear lead-in to another installment of the story. Assuming Altug and Gensler continue their *Patalosh* saga, readers will look forward to seeing what Orion Spence gets into next.

PETER DABBENE (April 16, 2013)

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