ForeWord Reviews

HISTORICAL

Shadow Fox: Sons of Liberty
Jessica Hardman
Ron Hardman
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For children, history can sometimes seem dry and boring. When they are forced to learn dates and biographies through rote memorization, it's hard to care what happened to people who lived centuries ago, and it's hard to see how their actions affect our present. But when books like *Shadow Fox: Sons of Liberty* relay these same dates and biographies via fantastic storytelling, readable characters, and edge-of-seat adventure, learning becomes a whole new experience for grade-school children.

Shadow has certain powers, even though he's a fox. He can talk and understand humans, he can make himself disappear within an electrical current, he can hold ball lightening in his paws, and he can travel through time. His unique abilities stem from an explosive encounter with the famous inventor, Nikola Tesla. One practical application of Shadow's new talents is time travel; Shadow observes key moments in history and discovers that he and two human children, twins Erin and Jacob, play important roles during such pivotal moments as Paul Revere's midnight ride.

Luckily the kids are up for adventure and willing to travel through time with a talking fox. Back in 1775, taking great care not to be seen or to change the flow of history, Erin and Jacob run around the old town of Boston filling in the "gaps" that history can't explain. How did Paul Revere and his friends make it across the river without being seen? How did they manage to avoid being captured at British checkpoints along the road? The time-traveling trio provides the answers.

Children will find this blend of entertainment and education very fun and accessible. Ron and Jessica Hardman weave into their fast-paced adventure many historical details about Boston and the men who made America free and create a story that feels authentic and full of vitality. The characters from contemporary times are naturally curious and pose many questions about the roles individuals play in history and about our inherent responsibility to civilization. The authors address big issues without any sign of a heavy, boring hand.

The education doesn't stop when the story ends. The Hardmans include notes in the back

of the book, maintaining the friendly tone found in the rest of the text. These notes offer further historical information and clear up some elements of the story that may be misleading.

Children learn best when work is fun; the Shadow Fox books may inspire a new generation of history buffs.

Andi Diehn