ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

The Tales of the Walrus
Richard Sharkey
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Two Stars (out of Five)

"Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it." So says the Duchess in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. It's an appropriate guideline for readers of Richard Sharkey's *The Tales of the Walrus*, with its enticing cover art and excerpt from *The Walrus and the Carpenter*, Carroll's often-quoted poem. On the other hand, a major problem with Sharkey's work is his failure to help his readers find the moral in "this literary work recounting a world history as it relates to the United States in America."

Like Carroll's *Walrus*, Sharkey attempts to "talk of many things" in the twenty-one jam-packed chapters of his text. He writes, for example, about the New Mexico Zuni Indians' concept of the "four cave-wombs of the world." He refers to the geological eras of the earth and the formation of continents and countries. He analyzes both the biblical account of Noah and the ark and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. He expounds upon the Danaids and traces their worldwide infiltrations. He describes the historical contributions of Hermes, Prometheus, Beowulf, Abraham, Columbus, and Pizarro, as well as the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and others. He ends with an account of the discovery of America and the formation of the United States.

Unfortunately, Sharkey's book fails to include elements that readers normally expect to find in a nonfiction volume of this nature. Absent are a foreword, preface, introduction, conclusion, glossary, bibliography, and index. Additionally, he omits his own credentials and gives no list of any interviews he held with authorities on archaeology, geography, geology, ethnicity, linguistics, mythology, history, or any other fields he touches on in his book.

The three pages of endnotes are of some assistance, but the formatting is inconsistent because there are no corresponding page numbers given to identify where the notes occur in the text. Also, there are passages quoted in the text for which no source is cited other than a reference like this one: "Such is the tradition told by the world's oldest historians, America's Zuni tribal ancestors:"

Furthermore, when statements are made that are not universally agreed upon, such as the

claim that Amerigo Vespucci sailed aboard Christopher Columbus's vessel as a shipbuilder on Columbus's third trip to the New World, an attribution should be provided. Sharkey also omits the historically significant Siege of Lima in his recounting of the Spaniard Francisco Pizarro's encounter with the Incas of Peru. As well, although the chapter headed "Pizarro" is eight pages long, only the last two paragraphs actually concern him.

Sharkey writes succinctly and recasts secondary research with some ability, but his book lacks the supporting components required to assist readers in finding the moral in *The Tales of the Walrus*.

Wayne Cunningham