

Tuxedo Discovers Plimoth Plantation

Tara M. Autrey

CreateSpace

978-1-4537-6624-8

Cats are known for their nine lives and curiosity, so what better way to travel back in time than to follow Tuxedo, the family feline in Tara M. Autrey's *Tuxedo Discovers Plimoth Plantation*.

When siblings Luke and Abby are bored on a rainy day, Tuxedo has the perfect solution. He takes them back to 1627, delivering them to the Plimoth Plantation, where colonists settled after arriving on the Mayflower. The characters' ages are unknown, but Abby is old enough to learn about the colonists in school, and Luke's questions about colonial America allow information to be imparted to young readers.

The kids' visit focuses on the English settlement at Plimoth. The children meet a woman named Sarah, who takes them to her very plain home; a stark contrast to the lifestyle they are accustomed to in their modern-day lives.

Abby and Luke learn about foods that the colonists enjoyed, such as roast duck, which appeals to Tuxedo, but not to the kids. They learn about chores that colonial youngsters would have done. Sarah's son William tends the cows, and her daughter Elizabeth fetches water. Plimoth children are taught at home, using the Bible to learn how to read and write.

Sarah explains how the colonists make and grow everything they need. Tuxedo has his own questions about colonial life. "Do you keep cats as pets?" he asks. William explains that the cats are primarily needed as "mousers." Tuxedo decides he prefers a lazier modern life.

Abby has the opportunity to try on colonial garb. Just before she returns home with her brother and Tuxedo, she gives her bright pink raincoat to Elizabeth. Back at home, warm cookies, family togetherness, and a movie make Abby happy to be living in contemporary times.

Although the story is pleasant and informative, the illustrations and page layout are problematic. The book's text is occasionally hard to read, such as on page three, where black type becomes lost within the dark area of a photograph.

The photographic illustrations would benefit from captions. For example, readers would like to know if the ship pictured on page seven is a replica of the *Mayflower* that tourists would see at Plimoth Plantation. Although the colonists and their activities are part of the story, no pictures include them. The kids envision William with the cows, but the photograph shows only cows. Additionally, the picture of a small boy on a shag rug, which appears on page sixteen, doesn't correspond to the text that is printed over it.

In *Tuxedo Discovers Plimoth Plantation*, Autrey encourages young readers to use their imaginations and to think about what it would have been like to live in a different day and time.

LINDA SALISBURY (August 31, 2011)

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