High Seas Adventure (and so much more)!

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based on the true story of Manjiro Nakahama

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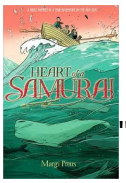
ISBN:

Heart of a samurai : based on the true story of Manjiro Nakahama



"An action packed historical novel set on the high seas!" claims the book jacket for *Heart of a Samurai* [2] by Margi Preus. Normally these aren't quite the descriptors I am looking for in a good book, but this Young Adult novel has amazing visual appeal and lying underneath the "high seas adventure" is a true heart of gold.

Preus tells a fictional account of a true story: Manjiro, a young man from a small fishing village, becomes the first Japanese person to set foot in America. Japan at the time had closed borders and a deep distrust for anything foreign. When Manjiro is rescued with his friends after being shipwrecked on an island by an American whaling ship, his life is changed forever. Captain Whitfield sees that Manjiro is a quick study, both in language and sailing and takes him under his wing. The more Manjiro sees outside Japan, the more he wants to learn and explore eventually ending up attending school in New Bedford, Massachusetts living with the Whitfields.

While the settings are exotic and unusual, the conflicts Manjiro faces are universal. He has to deal with both bullies and prejudices. He longs to return to Japan, but also is called to the sea, and loves living with the Whitfields. Trying to find his place in the world is complicated and not always tidy. I can imagine that many people struggle with the comfortable pull of home and the wild call of dreams.

Filling out the easy to read and fast paced story are illustrations and pictures of Captain Whitfield and Manjiro. An epilogue tells the true story of Manjiro and also included is a note about the environmental aspects of whaling and a glossary of sailing and Japanese terms.

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Posted by Sarah B. on Jul 12, 2012

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Links:
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