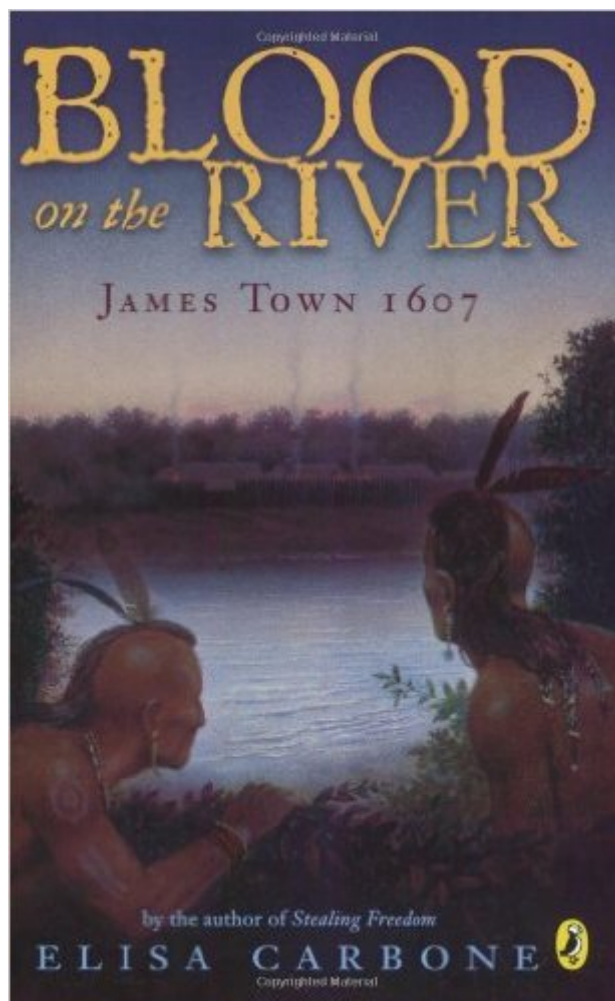


The book was found

Blood On The River: James Town, 1607



Synopsis

Twelve-year-old Samuel Collier is a lowly commoner on the streets of London. So when he becomes the page of Captain John Smith and boards the Susan Constant, bound for the New World, he can't believe his good fortune. He's heard that gold washes ashore with every tide. But beginning with the stormy journey and his first contact with the native people, he realizes that the New World is nothing like he imagined. The lush Virginia shore where they establish the colony of James Town is both beautiful and forbidding, and it's hard to know who's a friend or foe. As he learns the language of the Algonquian Indians and observes Captain Smith's wise diplomacy, Samuel begins to see that he can be whomever he wants to be in this new land.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0820 (What's this?)

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars See all reviews (191 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #9,480 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > Colonial #672 in Books > Children's Books > Action & Adventure

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

The importance and fun of historical fiction is the ability to "live" in another time and place and understand something about that point in history. As a librarian, I've purchased fiction and nonfiction books about Jamestown and I've provided educational videos on the topic. I have studied the settlement along with the kids through elementary, junior high and high school, blah-blah-blah. I have just finished Elisa Carbone's superb Blood on the River. NOW I get it. Other books have accurately and factually recounted the history of the James Town settlement but Carbone has brought it to life. Using real characters from the colony's registers, she has recreated a story that is

an absolute page turner. We smell the stench of the ships and see the frost on the ground. The distrust between the English and the Wampanoag is palpable. The gnawing hunger, the "summer sickness" and the scent of wood fires is so strong, I felt like I was within the palisade walls. Young Samuel Collier is bound as a page to Captain John Smith on the eve of his departure for Virginia. Sam's fierce temper and survival sense will be his undoing and his salvation in the new land. The perils of the voyage at sea and the political turmoil that plagued the expedition from the onset are vividly described. The useless "gentlemen" resent the common sense of John Smith and his lack of respect for his "betters." Before they even arrive on Virginia's shores, the "gentlemen" have clapped Smith in irons and plan to hang him. Sam clearly sees the issues confronting the colony but as a servant he is powerless. His loyalty to Smith serves him well. Smith teaches him to fight with a sword and how to use a musket.

An author that writes about Indian raids circa the early 1600s is setting themselves up for a monumental challenge. One, quite frankly, that I don't envy a bit. I mean, it's a bit easier if you're taking the side or point of view of the Native Americans. There's a bit of fear that your story is going to be monumentally depressing, but authors like Joseph Bruchac and Michael Dorris have found ways around that. And then some writers for kids decide to go about it in an entirely different way. Let's take the P.O.V. of the settlers. Better still, the James Town settlers. Best of all, the boy assigned to be the servant of that remarkable personal publicity machine and self-promoter, Captain John Smith himself. For what she has set out to do, author Elisa Carbone has done an admirable job. I may not agree with whether or not this was a job that needed to be done, but I can appreciate the work she's put into "Blood On the River". Samuel Collier is on a one-way street to nowhere. He's a thief, a fighter, and he doesn't trust anyone or anything. As it happens, however, this is an ideal resume for a kid who's about to be sent to the New World as the personal assistant to Captain John Smith. Samuel is cunning and ready to knock someone's teeth out should the need arise. Yet as Smith himself points up, there's no place for people of a solitary nature in Virginia. With the danger of Indian raids ever present and harsh winters ahead, Samuel must learn to trust people and, what's more, trust himself. Along the way he observes John Smith's deft hand with dealing with both Native people and frightened settlers. This is the story of James Town, Smith, Pocahontas, and Samuel Collier backed up by historical references and a whole heaping lot of written records, such as they are.

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