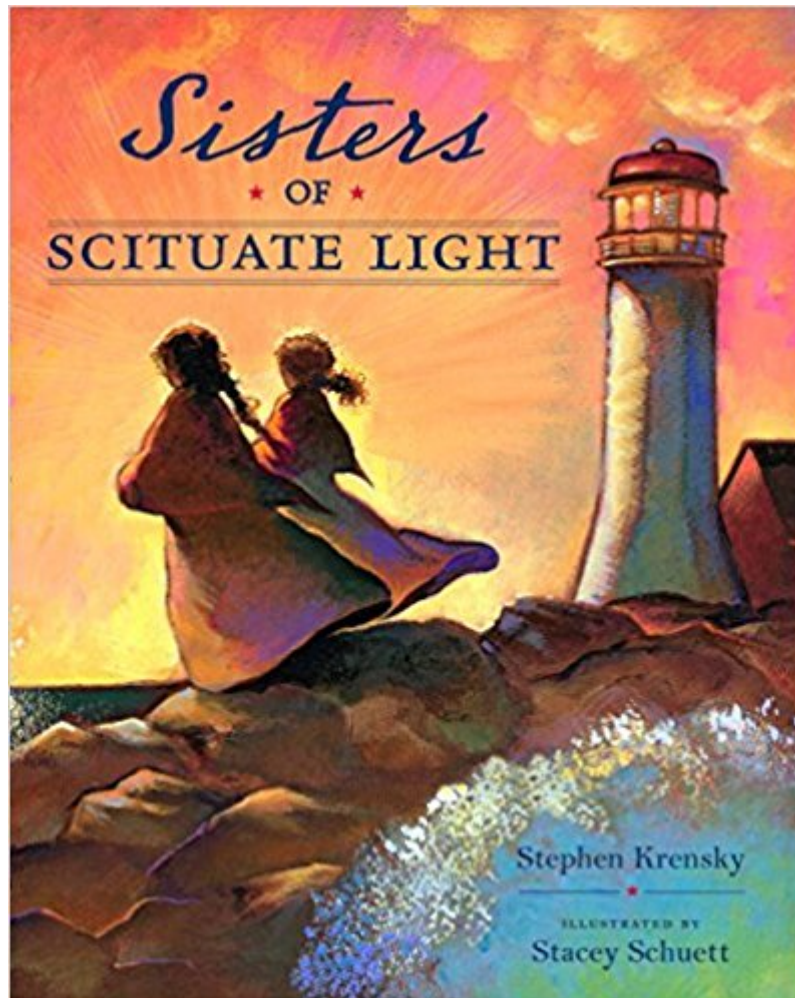




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Sisters Of Scituate Light



Book Information

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Hardcover: 32 pages

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Age Range: 6 - 8 years

Grade Level: 1 - 3

Customer Reviews

Kindergarten-Grade 4 • The detail and rich colors of Schuett's paintings lend an appropriately realistic tone to this tale of two girls, a lighthouse keeper's daughters, who outwit British sailors during the War of 1812. Although fictionalized, Krensky's account is based on Rebecca and Abigail Bates, teenage sisters who later attained local fame for their successful ploy. Alone at the Scituate light, they are able to convince an approaching enemy vessel that there is danger on shore by suggesting the presence of marching soldiers. By hiding in the woods and playing "Yankee Doodle" on their fife and drum, they trick the British into retreating. With its wartime background, brisk plot, and crisp sentences, this original and suspenseful hero tale will engage independent readers and also captivate the storytime crowd. Use it with Emily Arnold McCully's *The Battle for St. Michaels* (HarperCollins, 2002) and Susan Bartoletti's *The Flag Maker* (Houghton, 2004) or with Peter Roop's *Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie* (Carolrhoda, 1985) or Deborah Hopkinson's *Birdie's Lighthouse* (S & S, 1997). • Gloria Koster, West School, New Canaan, CT Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

The Scituate Lighthouse looked over the shoreline south of Boston. During the War of 1812, the

lighthouse keeper was Simon, who lived next door with his family. Daughters Rebecca and Abbie – polished the windows and fittings and listened to their father’s stories about ships and storms. One day, when the girls are left alone, they see a British warship on the prowl. Scared and unsure what to do if the soldiers come ashore, Rebecca comes up with a radical plan: she will play “Yankee Doodle Dandy” on her flute, while Abbie pounds the drum. The music, usually played at the beginning of a skirmish, convinces the soldiers that troops are waiting, causing them to turn tail and run. Krensky’s fine telling is well matched by Schuett’s illustrations, which are especially effective in capturing the colors of the sea and sky. Slightly less successful are Schuett’s figures, particularly the soldiers, who look almost comical. Overall, an appealing slice of American history and a tribute to everyday heroes. Grades 1-3. --Ilene Cooper

It is actually a book for children. I was interested in reading it, because I have visited that lighthouse. One of my sisters lives in Scituate, and I was visiting one time when the town was observing Heritage Days. We toured some of the historical places, including the lighthouse.

Krensky spins an interesting tale of sisters Rebecca and Abbie Bates during the War of 1812: alone in the lighthouse when a British warship, intent on raiding Scituate harbor a second time, crept into the bay and put forth its silent rowboats. The girls, frightened because they are the only ones who see the approach, hide themselves and play Yankee Doodle as loudly as they can on fife and drum (while remaining hidden) to spoof the Brits into thinking there are troops of American soldiers anticipating a skirmish, and the invaders turn away. The illustrations which are colorful and attractive, and sinister where they need to be, enhance the story. It’s empowering for young people to hear an account where kids act as heroes to ‘save the day’. As a bonus, we learn something about the history and importance of lighthouses, and the hard work and dedication involved running one.

This true story is a natural for a kids’ book. During the War of 1812, when the British Navy was raiding the American coast, Abigail and Rebecca, the daughters of the keeper of Scituate Light in Massachusetts, successfully scared off a British warship by playing “Yankee Doodle” on fife and drum, making the British think the Home Guard was on its way. Krensky, who has written many fine children’s books, does a great job with the text, using the sisters’ own later account of the event as

the source of their dialogue. Schuett is an excellent illustrator (I particularly like her Spring Thaw and Come and See), and the art is engaging, dramatic and pleasing to the eye. (My only quarrel is with the slightly too cartoony depiction of the British sailors.) A far cry from the run-of-the-mill illustrations you get in children's historical nonfiction. The story has been done before as a children's book, but this book is far and away the best version. If you want the perfect audio accompaniment to the book for your class or at-home use, get the CD "Airs from who knows where" by the Gloucester Hornpipe & Clog Society: on it Diane Taraz sings the terrific, catchy song she co-wrote, "An American Army of Two," which tells the same story. We play it every Fourth of July.

During the War of 1812, sisters Abbie and Rebecca Bates are tending Scituate Light while their father makes a brief trip to shore. When a British warship arrives in the harbor, the girls must think quickly to protect their home. Armed with only a fife and drum, the girls play "Yankee Doodle Dandy". The British, fearing what they assume is the imminent approach of American soldiers, retreat and never return to Scituate Light. Abbie and Rebecca are later hailed as heroines in the community. Krensky uses the sisters' own words (gleaned from later accounts of the incident) for the book's dialogue. Vibrant illustrations enrich the retelling of this classic lighthouse legend, although the depiction of the British soldiers as sneering villains is too stereotypical and does not match the style of the rest of the art.

This one came later but I knew it would. But it also a very good story. Thanks again

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