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Old Abe, Eagle Hero: The Civil War's Most Famous Mascot



Synopsis

The true story of an eagle that spent three years with a Union regiment fighting in the states bordering the southern Mississippi River and his activities after the war.

Book Information

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Age Range: 5 and up

Grade Level: Kindergarten and up

Customer Reviews

Civil War regiments sometimes marched into battle with animal mascots; the most famous of these was a bald eagle dubbed "Old Abe" by the soldiers of the 8th Wisconsin Infantry. This "biography" of Old Abe starts with his early days, when he was hand raised by an Indian village and then traded to a farmer named Dan McCann. The eagle became a family pet, and when McCann's neighbors marched off to fight in the Civil War, McCann, who couldn't fight himself because of a bad leg, sent the eagle off to war instead. The soldiers constructed a special perch trimmed with American flags for the bird to sit on, and off he went. Old Abe turned out to be very courageous in battle, and was an inspiration to his regiment, so much so that Southern soldiers tried to capture him. As he made his escape, Old Abe was injured, but survived the battle, flying away behind the Northern lines. The press loved the story, and soon Old Abe and his adventures were famous all over the country. Old Abe had a distinguished military career, participating in twenty-five major battles before being sent home to safety, where he was given a place of honor at the Wisconsin Capitol building. P.T. Barnum even tried to buy him, but Old Abe stayed put, visiting with the soldiers from his regiment who came

to see him as well as the general public, as well as making an appearance at the Chicago World's fair. The author, Patrick Young, is a descendent of the commander of Old Abe's regiment, and grew up hearing family stories about the eagle from his grandmother and mother. His book was originally published with different illustrations in 1965, but the text is not at all dated and offers a lively narrative, well-suited for reading aloud.

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