

STEPPING STONES™  
a chapter book



# The Minstrel in the Tower



By Gloria  
Skurzynski

The Minstrel in the Tower, Gloria Skurzynski, Random House LLC, 2009, 0307538443, 9780307538444, . In this gripping medieval page-turner, Roger and his sister Alice are kidnapped and held for ransom in an ancient tower. To escape and find their uncle, the children must summon all their courage and imagination. "Designed as easy-reading material for middle-graders, this has the virtues of an attractive format and illustrations, a fast plot, and even a feminist fillip: Alice is the more intrepid of the siblings, Roger's gifts are for music and ventriloquism."--Bulletin, Center for Children's Books. From the Trade Paperback edition..

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The Hunted A Mystery in Glacier National Park, Gloria Skurzynski, Alane Ferguson, 2007, Juvenile Fiction, 157 pages. The Landon family travels to Glacier National Park to investigate why grizzly bear cubs are disappearing and become involved with a ten-year-old Mexican runaway boy..

Peter the Great , Diane Stanley, Aug 25, 1999, Juvenile Fiction, 32 pages. Peter the Great, crowned tsar of Russia at the age of ten, believed that whatever he wanted he should have -- and the sooner the better. What he wanted most was to bring his ....

Big help , Anna Grossnickle Hines, Apr 1, 1995, Family & Relationships, 32 pages. Sam's little sister pesters him with her offers to "help," but he finds a caring way to keep her from bothering him..

Otto of the Silver Hand , Howard Pyle, Jan 1, 2004, Fiction, . Born into a robber baron's household in medieval Germany, young Otto is caught in the middle of a violent blood feud. Nevertheless, the lad & grows up to be a gentle and loving ....

Spider's voice , Gloria Skurzynski, Mar 1, 1999, History, 200 pages. Because he is a young mute person who can hear, Aran becomes involved in the adventures of Eloise and Abelard, France's most famous lovers, who lived during the twelfth century ....

Are we alone? scientists search for life in space, Gloria Skurzynski, Oct 1, 2004, Science, 92 pages. Through a combination of captivating narrative and scientific facts, the author skillfully demonstrates how the quest for extraterrestrial life is real, widespread, and growing..

The Hunchback of Notre Dame , Marc Cerasini, Aug 31, 2011, Juvenile Fiction, 112 pages. Before the huge crowd that packed the cathedral square, La Esmeralda stood between two executioners. Suddenly Quasimodo, the hunchback of Notre Dame, rushed at the executioners ....

The Door in the Wall , Marguerite De Angeli, Jan 25, 2012, Juvenile Fiction, 128 pages. Set in the fourteenth century, the classic story of one boy's personal heroism when he loses the use of his legs. From the Paperback edition..

Waves the electromagnetic universe, Gloria Skurzynski, Aug 1, 1996, Science, 48 pages. Examines different kinds of electromagnetic waves, including radio waves, microwaves, light, x-rays and gamma rays..

The Jester of St. Timothy's , Arthur Stanwood Pier, Mar 1, 2006, Fiction, 120 pages. .

The Monster Idea , Ann Jungmann, 1996, Juvenile Fiction, 63 pages. .

Zero Gravity , Gloria Skurzynski, 1994, , 32 pages. Full-color photographs and a clear, explanatory text help young readers understand the nature of gravity, its impact on human life, and what life would be like in a zero ....

Tales of Court and Castle , Joan Bodger, Mark Lang, Nov 11, 2003, Fiction, 96 pages. Retells seven classic tales involving the nobility, including the stories of Tristan, Childe Rowland, Iron John, and Tam Lin..

Brand-New Page , Tony Davis, 2011, Juvenile Fiction, 133 pages. In 1409, aspiring knight Roland Wright joins the royal household at Twofold Castle as a new page, but his plan to impress King John and his knights quickly backfires..

Juliet Rescue at Marlehead Manor, Anna Kirwan, Lynne Marshall, 1997, History, 72 pages. In England in 1340, Juliet resents Marguerite's snooty new friend Lady Enid, but when she learns that Enid's father has been unjustly accused of treason she volunteers for a ....

In this gripping medieval page-turner, Roger and his sister Alice are kidnapped and held for ransom in an ancient tower. To escape and find their uncle, the children must summon all their courage and imagination. "Designed as easy-reading material for middle-graders, this has the virtues of an attractive format and illustrations, a fast plot, and even a feminist fillip: Alice is the more intrepid of the siblings, Roger's gifts are for music and ventriloquism."--Bulletin, Center for Children's Books.

This is what our 11 year old son had to say about this book: "This is a very exciting book! It's in a perfect mideaveal setting, in which Robert (who is cautious) and his little sister Alice (who is a lot less cautious) go on an adventure to find their mysterious Uncle Raimond, but on the way have to deal with, Hunger, theives, and biggest of all imprisonment in a tower. The only thing I dislike about this book, is that it is not longer!!"

I'm not a great fan of easy readers but I do see their place. Sadly, too many of them have stories not worth the telling or not up to speed for late readers whose minds are ahead of their reading abilities. For historical interest and general plot, this was a good book for my son. I appreciate that the author strayed away from stereotypes of boys and girls and yet made it clear that the boy was increasing in his bravery, too, even if his sister was the more naturally fearless -- and that they did so without losing historical merit.

The Minstrel in the Tower is about two children who are looking for their uncle in Bordeaux. Then they get caught by these thieves and one of them will have to climb down the tower they are trapped in. I thought that it was very adventurous and it was very awesome. I liked how they really were kind to each other and how they were friends. There was a lot of adventure and it was a very , very, very good book in a lot of ways.

I wonder whether my opinion of this was affected by knowing it was written intentionally to be an easy read for middle-school students. I would've pegged it for a much younger audience. To me, the story line seemed to be oversimplified along with the language. It's a fine little story, but there's just not much to it. In the time of the crusades, sister and brother have an urgent errand to do because their mother is desparately ill, they run afoul of some bad guys, and the reader can pretty well...more I wonder whether my opinion of this was affected by knowing it was written intentionally to be an easy read for middle-school students. I would've pegged it for a much younger audience. To me, the story line seemed to be oversimplified along with the language. It's a fine little story, but there's just not much to it. In the time of the crusades, sister and brother have an urgent errand to do because their mother is desparately ill, they run afoul of some bad guys, and the reader can pretty well predict the rest. (less)

I read this over a year ago and finally read it to the kids. I think it's a decent book, but not great. You don't learn a whole lot about the historical era (year 1195) which is one of my main reasons for seeking out historical fiction so in that aspect it fell short. The boy is portrayed as rather weak, but he does 'come into his own' later while the girl is very tom-boyish and strong. Being the mother of all boys I typically try to stay away from 'boys are weak' type books.

My parents were born just before the start of the twentieth century; my youngest grandchild arrived in this century's final decade. The years in between have been the most dynamic in the history of the human race. Technical knowledge has exploded; so has the Earth's human population. We can create almost anything, yet each day we lose parts of our planet that can never be replaced.

It is the year 1195. Roger and Alice have lost their father to the Crusades, and now their mother is terribly ill. They set off in search of their mother's long-lost brother, who is a powerful baron and might help them. But on the way, they are kidnapped by two highwaymen and locked in an ancient tower. Time is running out. Can Roger and Alice escape in time to find their uncle--and save their mother's life? Recommended for ages 7 to 10.

Author Gloria Skurzynski was born in Duquesne, Pennsylvania in 1930. She was educated at Carlow University. She writes both fiction and non-fiction books for children and young adults. She is the author of more than sixty books for young readers. In 1992, her work *Almost the Real Thing: Simulation in Your High-Tech World* won the American Institute of Physics Science Writing Award. She writes the National Geographic National Parks series and the Virtual War Chronologs series.

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