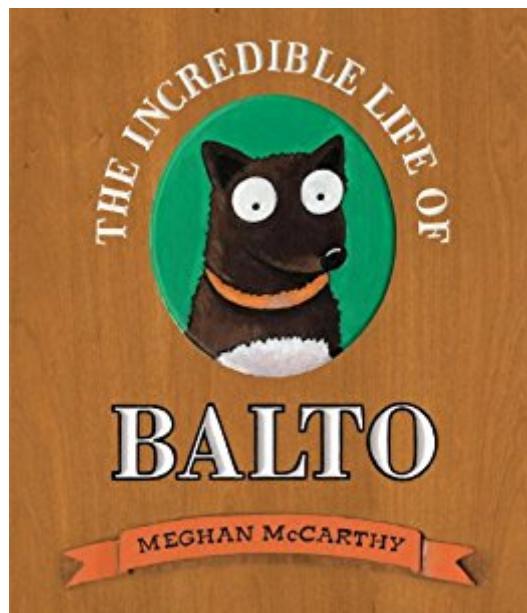


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The Incredible Life Of Balto



Synopsis

Most people know the story of Balto, the world famous dog who led his dogsled team through a blizzard to deliver a lifesaving serum to the stricken people of Nome, Alaska, in 1925. Balto shot to instant stardom—“a company named dog food after him, a famous sculptor erected a statue of him that stands in Central Park to this day, and the dog even starred in his own Hollywood movie. But what happened to Balto after the hoopla died down? With a lively, informative text and humorous, vibrant illustrations, Meghan McCarthy captures the extraordinary life of Balto beyond his days as a celebrity.

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Customer Reviews

I'm not a dog person. Like 'em fine. Don't see much particular need to interact with them on a regular basis. Sometimes, though, I'll feel like my life as a children's librarian would have been easier if I had been a canine fanatic. A large swath of children's literature each year is dedicated to man's best friend. This year alone I've seen dogs traveling vast distances to be reunited with their loved ones (A Dog's Way Home), convince kids that they are transformed accountants (The Ogre of Oglefort), and even appear as gallons of orange juice (When Life Gives You O.J.). Nonfiction

doggies proliferate as well but I can usually steer clear of them. Unless Meghan McCarthy is involved, of course. Then I'm going to have to see what all the fuss is about. In this particular case, Ms. McCarthy has taken what at first appears to be a well-known story then finds the lesser known tales lurking inside of it. The result is a biography that's bound to please dog lovers and dog neutrals (like myself) alike. The year: 1925. The place: Nome, Alaska. The problem: An epidemic of diphtheria was imminent and yet a horrible blizzard was preventing all incoming planes from delivering the much needed serum. The solution: Balto. Sled dogs, you see, were dispatched with the serum on board and Balto was at the head of one of these teams. When Balto's group missed the next team at the next checkpoint, they were lead onward by Balto until they got to Nome themselves. That's the story lots of people know. What is less well known is what happened next. Balto was celebrated throughout the States, appearing in movies, on dog food cans, and even earning a statue in Central Park. Sadly, he and his team went on the vaudeville circuit and ended up underfed and neglected.

Any dog or man willing to risk life and limb to trek through snow and ice to bring medicine to the town of Nome Alaska that has fallen to a case of diphtheria, deserves praise and honor of all sorts! That's what this book is about, specifically the lead dog Balto of all (or part) of just such an expedition that occurred in 1925. But, this book is more about the "what happened after" than the actual event. We learn about Balto's rise to fame, his fall from it, and what happens thereafter. I appreciate that McCarthy wanted to highlight the amazing adventure **after** the amazing adventure -- the incredible things that happened to Balto after the trek to Nome, and the effect his heroism had on people all over the country. But, I really do think there needed to be more emphasis on the actual trek to Nome - it felt too glossed over and I wanted more to learn just how brave these wonderful dogs and men really were. Plus, I think it would have made the "what came after" all the more powerful. In reading the interesting and informative back matter, McCarthy explains how she does research (akin to being "a detective") and how she discovered so many contradicting reports of the actual trek, the dogs and men that took part, and who deserved the credit. Because of this I wonder if that's one of the reasons she didn't spend much time on the actual adventure to Nome, but then, too, I wonder if there shouldn't have been more mention of the other dogs and men that were a part of it, too. I really liked McCarthy's inclusion of how muddied reports can get, and her ideas for fun activities kids can do to try it out -- a great introduction for kids to learn to analyze everything, and to know that everything is told through someone's perceptions.

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