

Professional Awards, Recognition, & Reviews

2011

*Wall Street Journal, Review: *The Bravest Woman in America*
**"In Marissa Moss's telling, and with Andrea U'Ren's rich, color-soaked illustrations, Ida's good cheer, moxie and resourcefulness evoke the work ethic of her time as much as her own intrepidity."

*New York Times Sunday Book Review: *Daphne's Diary of Daily Disasters, The Name Game and Daphne's Diary of Daily Disasters, The Vampire Dare*
**"Unconventionally designed books appeal as well -- say an ersatz journal filled with just the sorts of notes and sketches the young reader could imagine making herself. . . The young diarist is highly opinionated and readers will enjoy her impressions of everything from bad teachers to eccentric flavors of ice cream."

*Pennsylvania School Librarian Association's Top 40 List: *The Pharaoh's Secret*

*Junior Library Guild Selection: *The Bravest Woman in America*

*Junior Library Guild Selection: *Nurse, Soldier, Spy*

*Starred Review, Publisher's Weekly: *Nurse, Soldier, Spy*
**"In one of two noteworthy picture-book biographies of this Civil War figure out this spring (the other being Carrie Jones's *Sarah Emma Edmonds Was a Great Pretender*), Moss and Hendrix focus on Edmonds' life as a young adult, as she assumes the identity of Frank Thompson and volunteers to join the army as a private. Disguised as a man, Edmonds fought at the Battle of Bull Run and elsewhere, and eventually further disguised herself as a black slave in order to spy on Confederate forces. Hendrix's (*John Brown: His Fight for Freedom*) artwork is, as usual, a showstopper, and his bold caricatures, dominated by midnight blues and sunset golds, convey Edmonds's strength and determination; brief quotations in massive type streak across certain spreads, delivering emotional wallops ("You there, boy! Who do you belong to?" booms a Confederate soldier, upon finding Edmonds in her slave disguise). For her part, Moss (*Sky High: The True Story of Maggie Gee*) delivers a riveting narrative, making it clear that Edmonds was fighting for more than one kind of freedom. Ages 8-12."

*New York Times Book Review: *Nurse, Soldier, Spy*

** "Nurse, Soldier, Spy" tells the fascinating story of another nonconformist, the cross-dressing Civil War hero Sarah Emma

Edmonds, who, under the name Frank Thompson, joined the Union Army at age 19, becoming a battlefield nurse (“something only men with the strongest stomachs did”) and later a spy. Moss, best known for her winning middle-grade series, *Amelia’s Notebook*, is a lively prose writer, and Hendrix’s illustrations inject humor into what is actually a serious, if somewhat improbable, subject.

Edmonds’s life story (described in an 1865 memoir, “Unsexed; Or, the Female Soldier”) will appeal to a wide range of readers — girls hungry for heroines, Civil War buffs, adventure story lovers. The only question is for what age. Moss treats Edmonds almost as a transgendered man, calling her “Frank” throughout the story — though still using the feminine pronoun. It’s a decision that may confuse less sophisticated readers (and perhaps merits the publisher’s recommended age range of 9 to 12, though the book would otherwise work well for 7-year-olds). Refreshingly, however, “*Nurse, Soldier, Spy*” doesn’t shy from historical specificity, naming battles and addressing issues like desertion and treason.”

*Fuse #8 Review of the Day: *Nurse, Soldier, Spy*

**” If I want to depress myself on a given day I’ll compare the list of biographical subjects that kids in school are handed to pick and choose from with the biographical subjects that I had to pick and choose from when I was a kid some twenty odd years ago. It’s disheartening. Essentially, it’s the same list. Teachers always include Edison, Einstein, Washington, Tubman, Keller, etc. Once in a while someone will fall out of favor (Benjamin Banneker) to be replaced with someone new (Matthew Henson) but that’s just the way of things. How I long for the day when the core biographical subjects are thrown out the window and kids can take full advantage of the range of amazing stories in their libraries’ biography sections. That’ll be the day when a kid has an assignment to find a historical female hero who fought in a war and I can hand them *Nurse, Soldier, Spy: The Story of Sarah Edmonds, a Civil War Hero*. Until then, I’ll just have to hawk the book on its own merits. Fortunately, this is not too terribly difficult to do.

I’m sure you’ve all heard stories of those women who cut their hair, donned men’s clothes, and joined the armed forces during the Civil War. Many a woman did this, but few were as brave and inventive as Sarah Edmonds. Having run away from home at the age of sixteen to escape an arranged marriage, Sarah had been living as a man for three years when she returned to Michigan to join the Union cause. On the field she proved a brave nurse, soldier, and eventual spy. When told to spy on the enemy, Sarah became a believable black male slave and managed to extract some much needed information across enemy lines. An Author’s Note at the end explains how the rest of Sarah’s life went and how she became “the only woman invited to join the Grand

Army of the Republic (GAR), the association for Civil War veterans of the Union Army.”

Marissa Moss is best known for her Amelia’s Notebook series, an early chapter book grouping of titles that served as the precursor to the current Diary of a Wimpy Kid journal boom we’re now in. I was under the distinct impression that fiction was Ms. Moss’s one and only bag, and this feeling was helped in no small part by the biographical sketch of her that appears on this title’s bookflap. Dig a little deeper, however, and you see that Ms. Moss has a longstanding appreciation of history that has manifested itself in a variety of different ways over the years. Penning everything from historical novels like *Galen: My Life in Imperial Rome* to a journal series of different young American girls to other picture book biographies of too little lauded souls like Ida Lewis, Maggie Gee, Jackie Mitchell, and Harriet Quimby, it’s clear that Sarah Edmonds is just the latest in Moss’s series of discoveries.

As any author of picture book biographies knows, you have decide right from the start how much of your subject you’re willing to reveal. Do you want to encompass a person’s entire life from birth to death or would you rather take a slice of their life and blow it up as representative of who they really were? Both techniques have their advantages and disadvantages, but in the case of Ms. Edmonds, Moss took the road less traveled. Though Edmonds had a hugely exciting life that ended with her burial in a cemetery reserved for Civil War veterans (the only woman to have that honor) Moss pinpoints the moment in the woman’s life that contains the greatest dramatic flair. So it is that we see Edmonds enlist, fight, rescue, spy, and save the day in the end. Along the way she uses sources like Edmonds’ own diary to allow her to say what Sarah feels or thinks at one moment or another. I’ve a real pet peeve of children’s biographies that just assume that they know what their subjects were thinking from one moment to the next. However, if you’ve that person’s diary in hand then you’re clearly not making up those emotions. You’re merely quoting what they say they felt.

I’ve seen a lot of picture book biographies of too little known heroes in my day, but I’m fairly certain that this title marks the first time I’ve ever seen a Bibliography equally split between the author’s sources and the illustrator’s. In fact, the endmatter of *Nurse, Soldier, Spy* is remarkable in and of itself. Between the Author’s Note, the Artist’s Note, the Glossary, the two Bibliographies, photographs of the real Sarah Edmonds, and the Index, it seems petulant to ask for more. Still, I was a little surprised not to see a rudimentary Timeline anywhere in the front or back. School assignments where kids have to select their subjects and write about them usually ask that the kids refer to the

Timelines of their subjects. Not having one in this book may, unfortunately, limit its school use, which is a crying shame because unless a kid knows to check the tiny type on the publication page, there's no other way for them to figure out facts like the one stating that Sarah Edmonds was born in 1841.

John Hendrix is the kind of illustrator you don't forget easily. He started out slowly, illustrating books like *Abe Lincoln Crosses a Creek* then sort of burst full-throttle onto the scene with his infinitely gutsy *John Brown: His Fight for Freedom*. With this, his third Civil War nonfiction picture book, Hendrix's challenge was not dissimilar from that of Ms. Moss. He needed to figure out how much to show, in addition to WHAT to show. For Sarah herself he only had a couple photographs to work off of. On top of that, he explains in his Artist's Note that every detail, from the soldier uniforms to the split-rail log fences had to be accurate to the times. Working with pen and ink and fluid acrylic washes, Hendrix fills his pages not just with images of the action, but also with an eclectic typography that's worth a second and third glance. Some of Ms. Moss's words sit lank upon the page, but other times Hendrix takes particular care to make them pop. Not even the lettering was allowed to be out of synch with the times, though. Nope, Hendrix takes his hand-drawn letters from the illustrated letterforms found on broadside posters from that era. So in a sense, Hendrix is utilizing the same method of advertising and promoting of the war effort to advertise and promote Sarah Edmonds herself. I love watching how Hendrix uses these words too. Sometime a person's sentences will burst out behind them, trailing off the page, as with a confederate soldier who challenges Sarah at the start. Other times they float above in space, drawing attention to themselves. Whatever the case, they're eye-popping, imaginative, and necessary.

The universe likes to present unique children's books in pairs. That is why you'll see two picture book biographies of Jane Goodall come out at the same time or two about Althea Gibson. In the case of Ms. Edmonds, hitherto unknown to schoolchildren nationwide, this book by Ms. Moss comes out in tandem with the Carrie Jones title *Sarah Emma Edmonds Was a Great Pretender: The True Story of a Civil War Spy*. So should you wish to bulk up your knowledge of this fine and outstanding individual, you have multiple options with which to do so. Regardless of what other books exist out there on the subject, however, this Moss/Hendrix title is a must-read and a must-add to any biographical collection. It's got war. It's got guts. It's got heroism. And it's got a woman that boys and girls alike will find fascinating."

2010

*TriState Young Adult Review Group Books of Note 2010: *The Pharaoh's Secret*

*School Library Journal Review: *The Pharaoh's Secret*

Gr 5-8—From the moment they arrive in Cairo, 14-year-old Talibah and her 10-year-old brother, Adom, feel connected to the land of their Egyptian ancestors and are swept up in an ancient mystery involving the disappearance of the pharaoh Hatshepsut's chief architect, Senenmut. Talibah even hears a voice saying "Find him!" But is it the voice of the ancient queen or the voice of her mother, who died mysteriously five years earlier? With a sinister "old family friend," they travel to Luxor and explore tombs and temples. Talibah receives a variety of messages, and her brother buys her an antique bracelet with magically protective powers. Talibah's sketches are included—pictures of carvings, tomb paintings, and hieroglyphs. Moss has a good sense for what might interest middle school readers about Egyptian culture, and her protagonists are believable. Their improbable adventure will leave readers with the feeling they have toured the Valley of Kings themselves, with an able and patient guide*.—//Kathleen Isaacs, Children's Literature Specialist, Pasadena, MD

*Publishers Weekly Review: *The Pharaoh's Secret*

"Moss fills the Egyptian setting with evocative imagery. The family dynamics between Talibah, her younger brother and her grieving scholarly father prove to be one of the most compelling aspects of the story. Talibah's b&w sketches support the narrative with pen-and-ink images of obelisks, hieroglyphics, maps and family trees"

*School Library Journal Review: *Sky High: The True Story of Maggie Gee*

"This biographical picture book, based on the life of a Chinese-American pilot, has a first-person narrative. Gee describes her love of airplanes as a small child and of sharing with her siblings her dreams of someday flying over places such as the Eiffel Tower and the pyramids. Several years later, when World War II started, she learned about the Women Airforce Service Pilots and knew that she wanted to join them. After attending flight school, she was one of the few chosen to train as a WASP. The work was "hard and tiring and wonderful, all at once" and Gee soon earned her wings. She flew several missions, some of which were fun (training exercises were "like playing tag in the air") and some of which were frightening. Rendered in acrylics and colored pencil, the colorful double-page illustrations are filled with detail and vibrantly depict the settings and events. An author's note provides more information along with photographs of Gee and her family members. This story should serve as inspiration for children that

they can achieve whatever they put their minds to.”

*MultiCultural Review, Summer Issue: *The Pharaoh's Secret*
“With its emphasis on both history and fantasy, “The Pharaoh’s Secret’ will appeal to many middle school readers.”

*Booklist Top Ten Biography in 2010: *Sky High: The True Story of Maggie Gee*

*Amelia Bloomer Project Selection: *Sky High: The True Story of Maggie Gee*

*Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People: *Sky High: The True Story of Maggie Gee*

2009

*Starred Review, Booklist, *Sky High: The True Story of Maggie Gee*
“Prejudice is an issue that might have been the underpinnings of the story, but instead it’s a subject that never overshadows Maggie’s love of flight. Based on interviews with Gee, this has a lovely, personal feel to it. “

*Publishers Weekly Review: *Sky High: The True Story of Maggie Gee*
“An intimate first-person narrative carries this story of Gee, who, as a child, dreamed of becoming a pilot, and went on to become one of just two Chinese-Americans in the Women Airforce Service Pilots. Radiant acrylic and colored pencil illustrations convey Maggie’s desire to take to the sky, as well as her cultural heritage. While serving, Gee is once even mistaken for an enemy pilot (“I felt like an exhibit at the county fair... the amazing Chinese American WASP”), and the book ends with her plane soaring above sherbet clouds: “Now I tell these stories to my children and grandchildren, and my tales must seem as far away to them as China.” A triumphant story of determination.” Ages 9–12. (Aug.)

*Sacramento Bee: Six books that teach, inspire and give kids courage: *Sky High: The True Story of Maggie Gee*

*Publishers Weekly Review: *Max Disaster #1: Alien Eraser to the Rescue* “Launching the Max Disaster series, Moss (the Amelia's Notebook series) again narrates through a journal, but this time with a decidedly male POV. Max, who plans to be a scientist like his parents, starts a notebook to record his inventions and sketch cartoons, including the exploits of an alien pencil-top eraser. Max's mishmash includes stories about his schooldays, cartoons, minicomics, asides and experiments (readers will learn how to make “Godzilla puffs” by

microwaving marshmallows). But weaving together this funny, kid-savvy montage is the story of Max's parents' separation. Raw emotion is leavened by humor: Max worries, 'If you take apart a family, can you put it back together in a way that makes sense?' and at one point he sketches a trio of 'Happy-Marriages-R-Us Robots,' one of which features a last-resort tranquilizer dart, strong enough to put ten elephants to sleep (or one raging parent).. Moss is a master at verbalizing kids' anxieties and channeling their astute observations of family life 9both as it breaks apart and begins to mend. Also out: Max Disaster #2: Alien Eraser Unravels the Mystery of the Pyramids. Ages 8-12. (May)

*School Library Journal Review: *Max Disaster #1:A*

"These eye-catching transitional readers pack a lot into each slim volume: comics, humor, common childhood problems, science experiments, history, science fiction, and more. Flip-flopping between a comic and notebook format, the narratives follow the everyday life of an elementary school student and the supposedly real comic adventures of an alien eraser that claims to have taken over his brain. The alien's plan is to inspire Max to draw comics about his "glorious deeds," which include such feats as building the ancient Egyptian pyramids. Besides having his brain controlled by an alien, Max has an assortment of other things to deal with: a moody teenage brother, a boring teacher who confiscates his favorite belongings, and parents who have recently separated. He expresses and illustrates these everyday troubles with humorous, colorful drawings and diagrams of imaginative inventions, such as the "referee robot," designed to control fighting parents; and the "Book-to-Brain Zapper," which translates books into one's own words, creating a "report [that] miraculously writes itself with NO spelling mistakes." These books are full of fun, facts, and adventures that are sure to capture the interest of both reluctant and avid readers."/-Melinda Piehler, Sawgrass Elementary School, Sunrise, FL

2006

*International Reading Association Teachers' Choices for 2005-2006:
Mighty Jackie: the Strike-out Queen

*Selected as a nominee for the 2006 Bill Martin Jr. Picture Book Award, sponsored by the Kansas Reading Association: *Mighty Jackie: the Strike-out Queen*

*Selected for the 2005-2006 Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award Master List: *Mighty Jackie: the Strike-out Queen*

*Placed on the Chickadee Award Master List for 2005-2006 in the state

of Maine: *Mighty Jackie: the Strike-out Queen*

*Selected for the 2006 Washington Children's Choice Picture Book Award Master List: *Mighty Jackie: the Strike-out Queen*

2004

*ALA Notable: *Mighty Jackie: the Strike-out Queen*

*Starred Review, Publishers Weekly: *Mighty Jackie: the Strike-out Queen*

* Starred Review, Booklist: *Mighty Jackie: the Strike-out Queen*

* Top Ten Sports Books of the Year, Booklist 2004: *Mighty Jackie: the Strike-out Queen*

2003

* Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, CBC: *Galen, My Life in Imperial Rome*

* LA Times Bestseller List: *Max's Log Book*

2002

* Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People: National Council for the Social Studies -- CBC Joint Committee: *Brave Harriet*, (Simon & Schuster), *Rose's Journal* (Harcourt)

* Starred Review, Booklist: *Brave Harriet*

* Books for Youth Top Ten Women's History Booklist: *Brave Harriet*

* Children's Choices, Children's Book Council: *Oh Boy, Amelia*

2001

* Society of School Librarians International Honor Books: *Hannah's Journal*

* Best Children's Books of the Year, Bank St. College: *Hannah's*

Journal

* Sugarman Family Award for Jewish Children's Literature: *Hannah's Journal*

- * National Parenting Publications Gold Award: *Amelia's Moving Pictures* (Video)
- * Parent's Guide Children's Media Award: *Amelia's Moving Pictures* (Video)
- * ALA Notable Video: *Amelia's Moving Pictures* (Video)
- * Starred Review, Publisher's Weekly: *Amelia's Moving Pictures* (Video)
- * Parent's Guide Fiction Award: *Oh Boy, Amelia*

1999

- * Society of School Librarians International Honor Books: *Rachel's Journal*
- * ABC Booksellers Choices: *Rachel's Journal*
- * San Francisco Chronicle Bestseller List: *Dr. Amelia's Boredom*

Survival Guide

1997

- * ABA Pick of the List: *Amelia Hits the Road*
- * San Francisco Chronicle Bestseller List: *My Notebook with Help from Amelia*

1996

- * ABC Booksellers Choices: *Amelia's Notebook*

1995

- * ABA Pick of the List: *Amelia's Notebook*
- * Starred Review, Publisher's Weekly: *Amelia's Notebook*
- * Child Study Children's Book of the Year: *In America*
- * Notable Trade Book in Field of Social Studies, Children's Book

Council: *In America*

1990

* Notable Children's Trade Book in Field of Social Studies, National Council of Teachers of Social Studies: *Regina's Big Mistake*

* Reading Rainbow Featured Book: *Regina's Big Mistake*

* Storytime Featured Book: *Regina's Big Mistake*