



## Pirate's Passage

*William Gilkerson*

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Off the coast of Nova Scotia in 1952, fierce winds force a small boat into port. The boat's pilot, the eccentric Captain Charles Johnson, takes up residence at the small inn run by Jim and his mother. With each day, the captain's presence becomes more valuable to the family as they struggle to keep the inn open for business—and his background becomes more mysterious as Jim discovers how much he knows about the lives and battles of the old-time pirates.

Who is this man whose compelling stories bring to life in such detail the day-to-day experience of sailing on a pirate ship? And how can he possibly know so much about how it feels to grow up among the Vikings; about how Francis Drake and Queen Elizabeth plotted their victories; about the loves of Grace O'Malley, the pirate queen of Ireland?

## Pirate's Passage Details

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Author : William Gilkerson

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## From Reader Review Pirate's Passage for online ebook

### Maire Slater says

That Friday started badly, and it got worse as it went along. An early winter gale was thrashing the Nova Scotia coast, and just getting out of bed was a chilling event. Below, Meg ignored me at breakfast, and my mother was fretting over the inn's unpaid bills. For my walk to school, there was freezing rain, with a lot of slips and one hard fall into a deep puddle of muddy slush, much to the delight of some of my classmates. During morning English, I was wrongly accused and convicted of shooting a paper clip at the blackboard, and was made to sit in the cloakroom, where everything was as wet as myself. I got no lunch because my sandwich had perished in the puddle, along with my dignity, such as it was. (2)

It was like a moment of dead air at sea, soon to change. (171) - dead centre of book, in between action. funny.

"No pirates?"

"Not as a grouping. No such thing by very definition. Just them as lives in the seams and spaces between the rules...in governments, churches, academies, businesses, tennis clubs, and pub society - pirates ready to come out and ransack from the spaces between the spaces, as they properly should."

"Properly?"

"Considering nature. Sparks of life, dancing. Electric opposition of this and that; teeny-weeny particles of energy; flash of opposites and whatnot, balancing; very restless and uncomfortable. If you'll join me in a beer, we'll drink a toast to the brotherhood." I took a bottle from his little cooler.

"To the pirates," I toasted.

"Pirates are a dime a dozen, and mostly villains, but I'll drink to the brotherhood," he said, doing so. (345)

One seeks, knowing not what one might find, the treasure being hidden within the process. (350)

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### Phoebe says

Tried twice to read this. Failed twice, so it's off to paperback swap!

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### Erik says

A young adult novel in the sea-faring genre? Sounds like just the right book for my tastes, what with my having to wait for the next Thomas Kydd novel by Julian Stockwin, or – and here's keeping my fingers crossed -- the promised second book in S. Thomas Russell's nascent Charles Hayden series.

The premise of this meaty first novel by Gilkerson centers on Captain Charles Johnson (loosely based upon a true personage), whose sailing craft comes ashore Nova Scotia in the middle of this last century. He takes shelter at the nearby Admiral Anson Inn where our narrator Jim resides with his mother (the owner and proprietress), alongside a quirky cast of minor characters. What follows is Jim's education in all things privateering/piracy since late medieval/early renaissance times. We're talking the Vikings, Sir Francis Drake, Grace O'Malley, and even the fictional Blackbeard of Treasure Island.

Although I enjoyed the personage of Captain Charles Johnson and his yarn-spinning, I didn't find the main-plot of Jim working to save his mother's business all that captivating. Would that Gilkerson invested more of his literary energies in beefing up this portion of his novel, and I would have been more impressed. As it stands, the ending felt too trite and predictable. Not bad by half, yet not exactly worth going back for seconds.

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### **Lara Messersmith-Glavin says**

This was a charming two-day read, and a great example of what excellent history masquerading as children's fiction should look like: appealing characters, a gripping plot that is both engaging and easy to relate to, a wealth of information, and an underlying thread of mystery that is never fully resolved.

I appreciated Gilkerson's use of technical vocabulary - not once does he talk down to his audience or assume they are unable to handle new and unfamiliar words. He uses them naturally and in context, thus allowing readers to either absorb and wonder at fabulous terms like "mizzen," "bumpkin," "quay punt," and a dizzying litany of trivial cannon bits, or send them running to a dictionary and/or encyclopedia with labeled charts - both great options, in my mind.

He also manages to sneak in fascinating morsels of etymology, as with the rumored-excellent smoked pork produced by Tortuga's pig hunters, a delicacy which they called *boucan*, and the island hunters themselves, the original *boucaniers*, giving us, in English, both "bacon" and "buccaneer." The English word "jerky" is apparently also an adoption of the Spanish-American *charqui*, referring to the dried smoked meat that kept indefinitely without refrigeration and so was invaluable as a protein staple for ship-bound sailors. He also clarifies the origin of the phrase **Jolly Roger**, referring, of course, to the traditional skull and crossbones flag of pirate lore. Originally, pirate flags were often red to symbolize bloodshed and mercilessness, and thus were dubbed the *jolie rouge*. This slipped easily into a twisted English form, doubling its effect by echoing a folk reference to Old Roger, an alternate name for the Devil.

Lastly, the view of history taken in this text is in stark contrast to the traditional tales of the Dutch East India company and the pat glories of the Age of Exploration. It takes, instead, a critical look at the political power games involved in the onset of the colonial period, and draws into questioning light the rule of state over the realities of human organization. It uses the word "pirate" only carefully and often with irony, and shows great sympathy for anarchist principles, suggesting that the seafaring brotherhoods were, in fact, the first real democracies, as all decisions were based on collective discussions and equal votes, regardless of social standing. A great tidbit of history, and one that points the way for further reading in the author's note at the end.

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### **Holly says**

Thinly disguised as YA fiction, but this is more of a history of piracy for young lads... absolutely fascinating. Posits that the pirate brotherhood was the first true democracy. Gets a bit soggy at times.

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### **Steven Buechler says**

To have a good story one needs to build a good plot line for a reader to follow. But to turn a good story into a great story a writer should add facts to the narrative which a reader learns something new through the narrative. William Gilkerson has done that with his book *Pirate's Passage*. And that is what makes not only the book a great read but the animated film worthy to watch as well.

<http://tinyurl.com/nuwbdf>

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### **Readhead says**

I don't like this book. I'm sorry. I just don't. I think this book was intended as a nonfiction book written by someone who has written nonfiction books their whole lives. Then they suddenly decided to stick a plot onto it. I didn't like the plot. I think it's excellent for research, however boring. I had a lot of trouble dragging myself through the seemingly endless pages of this book. I skimmed the last few pages. Maybe it's just that I had to read it for school. Anyway, I would recommend it to others, but I personally didn't like this book.

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### **Chris Allen says**

This was an interesting combination of historical narrative and coming of age with a guiding mentor, and the mix worked very well. A well told story. I would gladly read more of this author's work.

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### **Wanda says**

On a dark and stormy night, a small yacht piloted by an old mariner barely makes it safely into the harbor of Grey Rocks, Nova Scotia. Young Jim watched the dangerous maneuvers from his bedroom window. Jim and his mother operate the family establishment the Admiral Anson Inn although times are bad and they are in danger of losing their home and establishment. Then Captain Charles Johnson takes residence as a paying guest and everything begins to change for the better. Mysterious as he is and not likely to share too many of the facts regarding his past, he quickly becomes a part of the village scene. His knowledge of pirates is immense and he shares it with Jim which makes for interesting reading. Throughout the course of less than a year, the Captain is there to help Jim with his coming of age trials and tribulations. A book that is entertaining and yet loaded with factual information about the brotherhood of pirates.

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### **Neill Smith says**

When Captain Charles Johnson and his encyclopedic knowledge of the history of the brotherhood of pirates arrived at Jim's families inn during the winter of 1952 in Nova Scotia the life of the family changed dramatically. Hounded by creditors that wanted the inn for themselves and bullied by the relatives of those creditors the family stalwartly tried to make their way. When the Captain arrived they had an unconventional and uncompromising ally who helped them in the spirit of the brotherhood.

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### **Patrick says**

Nominally young adult reading, but I had a great time with this, and would recommend it for history and fun.

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### **Paul says**

A couple of years ago my brother passed me a copy Gilkerson's first novel, *Ultimate Voyage*, which you could accuse of being a young adult novel intended for an adult audience. How's that? Well, the story wasn't especially challenging to read, but it was peppered with some interesting metaphors and themes that many younger readers likely would not have perceived or payed much attention to. Or to put it another way, the story had a depth more akin to *The Hobbit* than *Harry Potter*.

*Pirate's Passage* is essentially a coming of age story. Jim is a young lad who lives with his mother in a quiet sea-side village where they struggle to keep the family inn afloat. Sound familiar? Being a pirate story there are quite a few nods to Stevenson's classic *Treasure Island*. A mysterious and weather-beaten sea captain is blown ashore one afternoon and takes up residence in the inn. The old sailor soon makes himself useful by turning the Inn's fortunes around and taking young Jim under his wing. Jim embarks on a detailed course in pirate history, which ultimately culminates in a practical application of Jim's, as well as his teacher's, accumulated knowledge.

Gilkerson, who has had a long career in non-fiction writing, has spun a good yarn here, and has injected it with a wealth of fascinating maritime lore. I would say there is slightly less meat here for not-so-young adults to mull over than *Ultimate Voyage* although it will definitely keep fans of pirate stories happy.

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### **Laura (booksnob) says**

Phew! Finally finished this one. While I enjoyed the pirate history and antics, my students would have liked the book to be shorter and more concise. It jumped around from pirate to pirate and they had a hard time keeping track. Many of my students thought the ending was lame and too neatly tied up. Many also compared this book to *Sophie's World* only with pirates instead of philosophy and I think that is a fair comparison.

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### **Kathryn McCary says**

A lone man in a sailboat arrives at a seaside inn in Nova Scotia in November 1952, and befriends the innkeeper's son. Gilkerson uses material from Captain Charles Johnson's *History of the Pirates* in an interesting way to remind us that real pirates were not quite the cute characters so many children romanticize. That material is interwoven with some real life behavior by his characters that helps to illustrate both the good and the bad about the pirates in Johnson's narratives. A pleasant, engaging read, written in a very mildly 19th century style that complements the subject matter.

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## **Janet Joy says**

I read this back in 2006 and loved it! I keep suggesting to teenagers as it's a fantastic tale spun on the east coast of Canada. So I was thrilled to hear that Donald Sutherland is set to produce, write and star in an animated film for CBC-TV.

Sutherland's production company, Martin's River Ink, Inc., says work has begun on "Pirate's Passage."

The film is based on William Gilkerson's adventure novel about a 12-year-old boy who forms a tight bond with a mysterious sailor, Captain Johnson.

Sutherland will provide the voice of Johnson, while Gage Munroe ("The Immortals") plays the young Jim Hawkins, Carrie-Anne Moss ("The Matrix") is his hard-luck mother and Kim Coates ("Sons of Anarchy") is a ruthless local businessman.

The star-studded cast also includes Sutherland's son Rossif Sutherland ("Reign"), Colm Feore ("The Borgias"), Megan Follows ("Anne of Green Gables"), Paul Gross ("Passchendaele") and Gordon Pinsent ("Away From Her").

Sutherland describes the project as "a thrillingly exhilarating adventure, a glorious coming-of-age-story, rich in both imagination and history, in perception and truth."

"I couldn't put the book down," Sutherland said Monday in a statement.

"It resonated with the clearest image of the man inside every boy's being that I could imagine. It was life writ true and I knew Jim and Captain Johnson's marvellous journey had to be seen on screen."

Gilkerson's book won a Governor General's Award for children's literature in 2006.

"Pirate's Passage" is set in 1952 in Grey Rocks, N.S., a south shore town known 250 years ago as a favoured port of pirates.

Jim is reeling from the death of his father and the schoolyard bully when he meets the mysterious Captain, who quickly inserts himself as a mentor and friend.

Sutherland and his partner and co-writer, Brad Peyton, will produce the film while Peyton will co-direct with Mike Barth of PIP Animation.

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