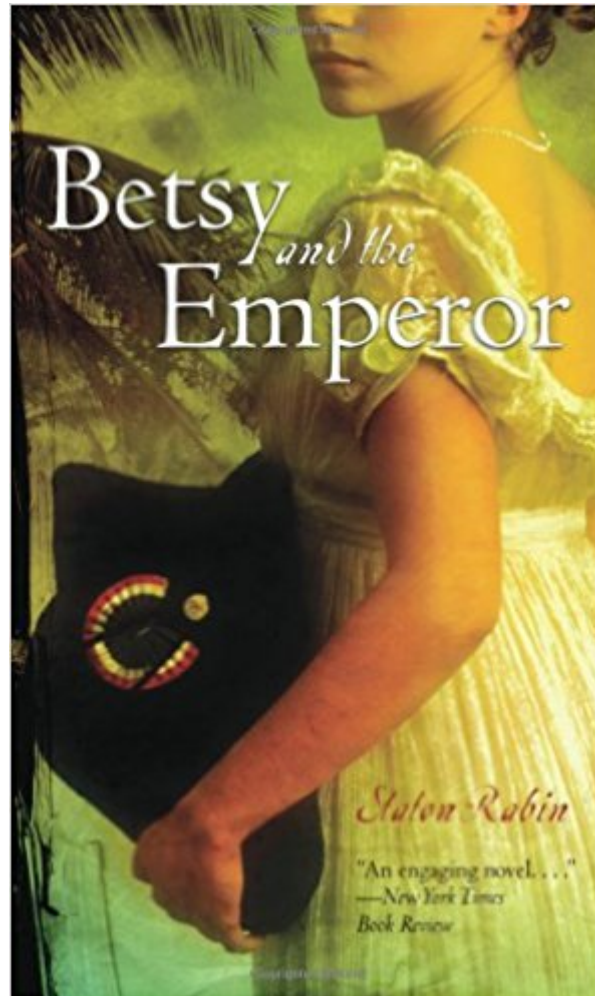




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Betsy And The Emperor



Synopsis

"Think, my dear -- just think what it will be like, to be known as the girl who freed the great Napoleon Bonaparte!" Fourteen-year-old English girl Betsy Balcombe and her family have an unusual houseguest: Napoleon Bonaparte, former emperor of France and the most feared man on earth. Once lord and master to eighty-two million souls, now, in 1815, Napoleon is a captive of the British people. Stripped of his empire and robbed of his young family and freedom, he is confined to the forbidding, rat-infested island of St. Helena. The one bright star in Napoleon's black sky is Betsy, a blazingly rebellious teenager whose family is reluctantly housing the notorious prisoner. Betsy is the only foreigner Napoleon's ever met who is not impressed by him -- and Napoleon is more than intrigued. An unexpected alliance is formed. And a remarkable friendship between emperor and girl spawns gossip, and inspires Betsy to hatch a daring and dangerous scheme that could threaten both their lives and shake entire empires to their foundations. --This text refers to the Mass Market Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

Grade 5-9
Betsy Balcombe has just returned to her remote island home of St. Helena from boarding school in London. At 14, she is a headstrong, adventure-seeking young lady. She gamely faces the challenge of playing host to Napoleon Bonaparte, who is exiled on the forbidding island after his capture at Waterloo. The only member of her family who is not timid around the former emperor of France, Betsy strikes up an unlikely friendship with "Boney" that surprises both of them. Rabin presents an interesting and intimate look at the life of one of history's most famous

men. The relationship between Betsy and Napoleon is well captured and satisfying, and the historical details are well researched. However, some of the plot seems improbable, such as when Betsy watches her brothers' tutor die in a horrible accident that is partly her fault, only to be dancing and flirting at a ball a few days later. Still, this daredevil protagonist engages in many thrilling escapades, from a hot-air balloon flight to a horserace. An author's note fills in some of the details about the real Betsy Balcombe. —œAnna M. Nelson, Seabrook Library, NH Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 6-9. Fourteen-year-old Betsy Balcombe feels as much a prisoner of remote, rocky St. Helena as Napoleon Bonaparte, who spends part of his island exile quartered in the Balcombe family's guesthouse. Napoleon instantly recognizes a kindred spirit in the restless Betsy, and soon the unlikely companions are racing horses, playing whist, and practicing waltz steps. All this is pure embroidery, right? Au contraire, says first-time novelist Rabin; the friendship is documented. Unfortunately, the story's invented dramatic center is far-fetched, and how and why the protagonists forged such an unusual bond, one that flew in the face of not only nationalistic inclinations but also nineteenth-century propriety (though Rabin pointedly keeps things platonic), never becomes clear. Readers will almost certainly find themselves trolling the library and the Internet for more information and seeking out Betsy's autobiography, which curiously Rabin says she did not read. Devotees of Ann Rinaldi's novels and series such as the Royal Diaries, which offer a similar mix of facts and girl-powered fiction, will find Betsy's brush with a historical leviathan especially appealing. Jennifer Mattson Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

I purchased this book at the recommendation of Sonlight Curriculum for my kids to read. I read the book in a couple of evenings and learned a bit about Napoleon myself. I found the book one I would recommend more for high school aged girls than any aged boy as it had some details that I wouldn't want my son reading about-things that don't bother girls as much. I wish the author had read Betsey's diary before writing so she could be as accurate as possible in the presentation, but the book did succeed in putting Napoleon in an interesting light for young readers.

Most enjoyable story and I have it on good authority that there is quite a lot of truth to it.

I love good historical fiction and this was very good being mainly historical with very little fiction but still keeping my 12 year old's attention.

an okay book but if your looking for a clean book for your teen look somewhere else. some swearing and a little innuendo. if your looking for a historical fiction on napoleon however this is great. i really love napoleon now.

This new young adult (YA) novel is a historical fantasy based on Napoleon's earliest years on St. Helena. Ms. Rabin has reimagined Napoleon's exile through the eyes of fourteen-year-old Betsy Balcombe, the tomboyish daughter of a British official living on the distant South Atlantic island. Freshly returned to St. Helena from a boarding school in England, Betsy, while on one of her adventures, sees the arrival of a ship in the island's port of Jamestown. Investigating the commotion -Are pirates raiding the port? -Is the island being invaded? -Betsy discovers that, in a way, there is an invasion. Napoleon has landed, but as a prisoner of the British; isolated on a tiny, rocky island in the back of beyond and guarded by more than 2000 British troops and a small fleet of warships. Betsy discovers that Napoleon has come to the Balcombe's home, known as The Briars, to live. Betsy and General Bonaparte, as the British insist on calling him, are about to find their lives intersecting. Eventually they will enter into a sort of conspiracy together. From the first Napoleon plays both the ogre-a role Napoleon, at times, seems to revel in-and the aggrieved ex-Emperor. Betsy, recently released from her own prison of a English boarding school, finds herself, in a sense, in just a bigger prison formed of both the size of the an island that Napoleon once described as "petit" and by the expectations of those around her towards a girl entering into young womanhood. As Betsy says, she was "not at all aspiring to proper young ladyhood." Betsy, at first, is unimpressed by the former conqueror, but Napoleon, employing the charm he was reported of being capable of, eventually wins Betsy over. Betsy is unimpressed with Napoleon's glory, considering him as a "man who had brought so much misery upon the world. Who never did anything of value, nor gave a thought to anyone but himself." To Betsy, whose fellow students at school had lost fathers and brothers in the wars, Napoleon is little more than a "professional murderer." As Betsy spends more time with the new arrival and learns more about Napoleon her opinion of her fellow prisoner begins to change. For his part, Napoleon at first teases the teenaged girl, calling her "monsieur" when he catches her riding astride rather than the sidesaddle proper for a young woman. But Napoleon sees Betsy (perhaps as he saw himself around Betsy's age) as someone who is "trapped... like a good actress in a very bad play. You dream [he tells her] of doing great things, but no one expects it of you. Your heart aches to break free-and write your own destiny on the wind... someday they will see what they have missed in you-you will make them see. And they will be sorry." Gradually the

rebellious Betsy, whose older sister is one of those who Betsy wants to make sorry, begins to have some grudging admiration for the rebellious general. Under the influence of the Balcombe family's half-mad, half-French tutor, Huff, Betsy enters into an ambitious conspiracy to free her new friend-unbeknownst to Napoleon. In a way Napoleon's escape from his prison would be an escape of Betsy from her own confinement. "But risk my life," she vows, "I would do again -and again- if it would help set him free." At the same time Napoleon conspires to assist Betsy in her first tentative steps into adult social life, as Betsy experiences her first crush on a handsome British officer. The arrival of the island's new governor -and Napoleon's new jailer- Hudson Lowe marks the appearance in the plot of a villain who disrupts the lives of both Betsy and Napoleon. Rabin presents her heroine as a tomboyish girl struggling with her approaching adulthood. Betsy is lively, independent and adventurous. Napoleon is presented as a complicated mixture of playfulness and ruthlessness. He enjoys teasing Betsy and playing games with Betsy's little brothers, but also is involved in a much more serious game with his British captors. Rabin has not tried to recreate the actual events of Napoleon's captivity, though most of the characters are historical. Rabin admits in the "Source Notes" that she avoided reading the real Betsy Balcombe's memoir of her life on St. Helena before finishing the novel. Instead Rabin has created a historical fantasy of adventure narrated by a teenaged Betsy of her own imagining. Rabin includes, besides the "Source Notes," a "Geographical Note" on the island of St. Helena and historical notes on the Code Napoleon and on French anthem, La Marseillaise. A contemporary map of St. Helena and portraits of Napoleon and of Betsy as an adult are also included. Staton Rabin is an author of young adult books, as well as screenwriter, so it is no surprise that Betsy and the Emperor has been option for a movie, with Al Pacino mentioned in the role of Napoleon.

Betsy Balcombe, a 13 year old, curious girl, gets back from a boarding school in London. When Betsy gets back, the Emperor from France, Napoleon Bonaparte, is kept as a prisoner in the Balcombe house temporarily in the St. Helena islands. At first, Bonaparte came off as a rude and evil man that had to stay in the Balcombes house as a prisoner. Once the Emperor moved in the house, he talked more and Betsy and he bonded. They became inseparable, they were best friends and they talked about everything. Napoleon told Betsy about his "twin", well, that's what he refers to himself as. Napoleon told Betsy that he and his twin were also everything alike, they even looked alike. Not long while after, Betsy runs into her old friend, Huff, an elder man, while showing Bonaparte her secret cave that her and Huff owned. In the cave, was a laboratory. While it was good to see Huff, it soon got boring to Betsy because, he gave Betsy a lot of facts about Bonaparte. Meanwhile, Betsy

had to leave the cave, and Betsy and Napoleon went off on their horses heading home. Later that night, there was a young soldier, Carstairs that Betsy thought she had fell in love with, but really Carstairs turned out to be a cheater. Soon, Huff and Betsy planned to make a hot air balloon for Napoleon Bonaparte so he could go back to France, and wouldn't have to move islands, and be kept as a prisoner much longer. When it came time to test the balloon out on a stormy night, something bad happens, the balloon breaks, and Betsy was the only person who came out alive, but hurt badly. In a short while, it was time for the emperor to move, and then soon Betsy had to leave the St. Helena islands. After Napoleon moved, Betsy saw Napoleon twice after that. Once when Betsy snuck her way over to the island to see him, because Napoleon was terribly sick, and once when Betsy was leaving. They shared words, tears, and words and they were tore apart. Later, Betsy had received news that Bonaparte had passed and Betsy knew exactly why. Quite a few years later, Betsy was a grown woman and she bumped into Bonaparte's twin and knew exactly who he was. Written by: Cara H.

I highly suggest this book, Betsy and the Emperor. It shows that two opposite people can have a strong compassion for each other. Characters have tension between each other that they must overcome, such as being free of the vast mountains and valleys of ST. Helena, or being stuck there with the one you love. After someone important dies Boney doesn't have a very good chance of escaping. Stricter Laws and Rules are then set on what the Emperor Boney can do. Out side her house when she got back from boarding school she recognized a sickly-sweet smell. Betsy has to make tough decisions and she doesn't always make the right choices. Now it is up to you to find out what happens to the Emperor Boney and Betsy. By: Taylor Farley (6th grade)

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