

How The Sphinx Got To The Museum (How The . . . Got To The Museum)



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Synopsis

Within New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art, the sphinx of the Pharaoh Hatshepsut holds court. But how did this ancient artifact get to the museum? Acclaimed author and illustrator Jessie Hartland beautifully presents this informative and fascinating history of the Hatshepsut sphinx, from its carving in ancient Egypt to its arrival in the hallowed halls of this world-famous museum. This is essential reading for junior Egyptologists!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 1-4 • Lively artwork and rhythmic text highlight this unique picture book that tells the story of how one particular piece of Egyptian sculpture ended up in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Hartland begins with a brief description of Hatshepsut and her significance as a female pharaoh in ancient Egypt, as well as explaining how most pharaohs had many pieces of statuary created in their honor. The story continues to build as Hatshepsut orders the creation of the sphinx, the sculptor secures the granite, the priests admire it, the stepson destroys it, and then the real fun begins after an archaeologist discovers it 3000 years later in a pit and begins the process of acquisition for the museum. The cadenced writing is simultaneously predictable and unexpected, making it a joy to read aloud, inviting listeners to join in.

It also includes vocabulary such as curator, rigger, and registrar, providing the opportunity to delve into discussions of unusual career choices, as well as fun verb choices that will intrigue children. The accompanying illustrations are animated and detailed, from an archaeologist's tools to a curator's cluttered office—plenty for young eyes to discover and share. Brilliantly simple and effective, this is an excellent addition to any elementary collection. —Jody Kopple, Shady Hill School, Cambridge, MA (c) Copyright 2011. — Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Starred Review At some point every visitor to a museum wonders the same thing: How did that get here? With exhaustive, dizzying, yet crystal clear detail, Hartland answers that question in regard to a seven-ton sphinx from ancient Egypt. The opening illustration introduces a museum docent and a gaggle of curious students, but then we backtrack to the reign of Pharaoh Hatshepsut, who requests from a sculptor six granite sphinxes. Priests observe the finished works; years later, Pharaoh Thutmose III destroys them; 3,000 years later, an archaeologist discovers the ruins. This is just the beginning—before it—, we—, all meet art movers, curators, conservators, riggers, registrars, retouchers, and more, and the increasing lineup is featured on each right-hand page in —“house-that-Jack-built— —stair-steps: —“The SPHINX that was documented by the PHOTOGRAPHER, painted and restored by the ARTIST, officially numbered by the REGISTRAR,— and so on. Eye-openers abound (the movers, for example, avoid —“bumpy roads and tight turns— —); while Hartland—, is cheery, childlike paintings effortlessly shift from desert to city to museum. Closing historical notes are also great. The overall elicited emotion is awe— —both for the passage of time and for the steps required to bring a simple hunk of stone to the fifteenth person: you. Grades 2-4. --Daniel Kraus

Shipped quickly. Grandson Loved it.

I bought this book for my six year old who has been obsessed with everything Egyptian lately. It is a cute look into where pieces of history come from and how they end up in the museum. It focuses on one mummy, a woman pharaoh named Hatshepsut and her journey from being pharaoh to ending up in the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art.

One of the most frequent requests I get from parents in my library is a desire for books on "community workers". Which is to say, their children have been given an assignment in school on

writing about the people who work in their neighborhood, and so we are charged with coming up with books about sanitation workers, doctors, bus drivers, etc. This being New York City, I always kind of wish that I'd get a request for a community worker a little out of the ordinary. How about a request for a book on a conservator? Or a museum registrar? Why do docents always end up with the short end of the stick? Of course, even if I did get a request for one of these, I'd actually have to produce a book that says what such museum folks actually do. Still, that's no problem since the publication of "How the Sphinx Got to the Museum". Basically author/illustrator Jessie Hartland came up with a radical notion. Why not combine a book that explains the jobs people do with a real life mystery (how a busted sphinx was returned to its full splendor for display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art) and then present it in a cumulative tale format? Why that's so crazy it just might work. And work it does in a story that satisfies a child's need for story while also working in some pretty cool details about why museums are full of statues from other countries far far away. A group of kids visit The Metropolitan Museum of Art and are told a strange fact. Before their eyes sits a sphinx created for the Pharaoh Hatshepsut. The kicker? That same statue was destroyed a mere twenty years after its creation on orders from Hatshepsut's successor and stepson. So how on earth has it come to reside fully intact in a museum in America? To answer that you have to begin at the beginning. And so the docent recounts the many steps and people who contributed to the sphinx's story. Hatshepsut commissioned, the sculptors sculpted, the priests admired it, and the stepson had it destroyed. From there the story takes a turn, rediscovered centuries later in a pit by an archaeologist, brought to America, and restored. As each piece of the puzzle falls into place we are consistently reminded of the people who came before, until at long last we reach the present day. A section called "More History" at the end clarifies many of the details and gives kids additional information on the real statue and its current location. The real trick here, as it is with any cumulative tale, is to know how to tell a story with a lot of repetition without making it boring. I should clarify what a cumulative tale is by this point, yes? Basically what I'm talking about is a book that tells a story the same way you would in a classic like "This is the House that Jack Built". It's where you introduce an element and then build on it, always returning for a kind of chorus. The books that are successful at this (like "The Apple Pie That Papa Baked") know how to keep a reader interested, even as the same information is conjured up time and time again. In the case of "How the Sphinx Got to the Museum", Hartland has the advantage of telling a true story. As a result, the more you repeat what happened to the sphinx (it was . . . "secured by the Art Movers, supervised by the Department of Antiquities, found in a pit by the Archaeologist") not only are you bringing up the true story of its travels, you're also teaching kids about certain jobs by having them repeat the wordy

occupations over and over again. Teachable moments! Woot! The fact that the book is mostly factual places it in a funny position in libraries. Where do you put it? It kind of looks like a picture book, and indeed might be interesting there, but in the end it tends to end up in the Ancient Egypt section of nonfiction. Interesting since there are some details that were stretched a bit to fit the telling. At the end of the book Hartland admits freely that "The part of this book when Hatshepsut orders several statues from the sculptor is somewhat made up." I trust her as an author, but when I read that I kind of want to know how many other details were true. Did the Sphinx really get sent to America on a ship called The Cingalese Prince? I mean, it had to, right? Who would make that kind of thing up? A little Bibliography or section at the end recommending websites or books for further reading would not have been out of place here. I liked the "More History" but found myself wanting more for the interested kids out there. Hartland has a bit of a Maira Kalman style about her. That incredibly flat, near two-dimensional quality of her art. The book offers no hints on her style or what medium she uses, and her website is equally mum on the subject. What's kind of cool is that she has in her short picture book career already created books for Candlewick, Penguin, Chronicle, Bloomsbury, and now Big Apple Books. In the case of this particular book, Hartland has chosen to set many of the images here against relatively uncluttered backgrounds. There's always adequate room for her text, which doesn't sound impressive until you realize how long the cumulative collection of folks involved with the statue really are. After a while, you also begin to notice that each person's designation ("Department of Antiquities", "Egyptian Priests", etc.) is granted its own distinctive font. That's a detail that keeps the book visually stimulating, even if you don't notice it right off the bat. Of course the best news to leave you with is the fact that this is not Hartland's sole journey into this kind of nonfiction cumulative fare. Following up this title will be a similar book about how a dinosaur got to what I believe will be The Smithsonian, as well as a third title about how a painting (to be determined) got from artist to permanent gallery display. Clearly this is a fun concept with a lot of different applications one can work with and the first in the series is a true keeper. If you, like myself, are a bit sick of the endless identical Ancient Egypt children's fare out there and would like to see something original, Hartland has your number. Consider this a great way to bridge the past and the present for your kids. Ages 4-8.

This book helped me and my children to love the Met even more. The Sphinx is a beautiful statue but it is overshadowed by the huge Temple of Dendur looming over it. Now that we have read this book my kids love finding the little red numbers that identify it, and examine the parts of the statue that are real vs plaster. Did you know they intentionally make the plaster look different from the

original so it's easier to tell the two apart? Because the Met has a room dedicated to Hatshepsut statues, this book helped us to value all of those works of art as well (this Sphinx is not in that room). It brings an ancient statue to life, helping us feel it's colorful history and understand it's significance. How often is a masterpiece broken to boxes and boxes of pieces, buried in a pit for thousands of years, discovered, shipped to New York, and put back together again for the world to admire once more? It's uncommon to find a book that covers an object's history as well as it's preservation. It helped us appreciate all the work gone into acquiring the many masterpieces that make the Met the amazing museum that it is. This is a really great book.

How the sphinx arrived at the Metropolitan Museum of Art is incredible and ordinarily complicated to explain to children ages 4-8, but Jessie Hartland uses repetition to help children learn and memorize the steps taken in the sphinx's great journey. That's what makes this story most unique and interesting. As the young reader learns about curators, conservators, riggers, archaeologists and more, Hartland makes it all quite possible to grasp. The targeted reading age level is 4-8, but I think 9-12 will appreciate this book as well. - Biblio Reads Children's Book Review

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