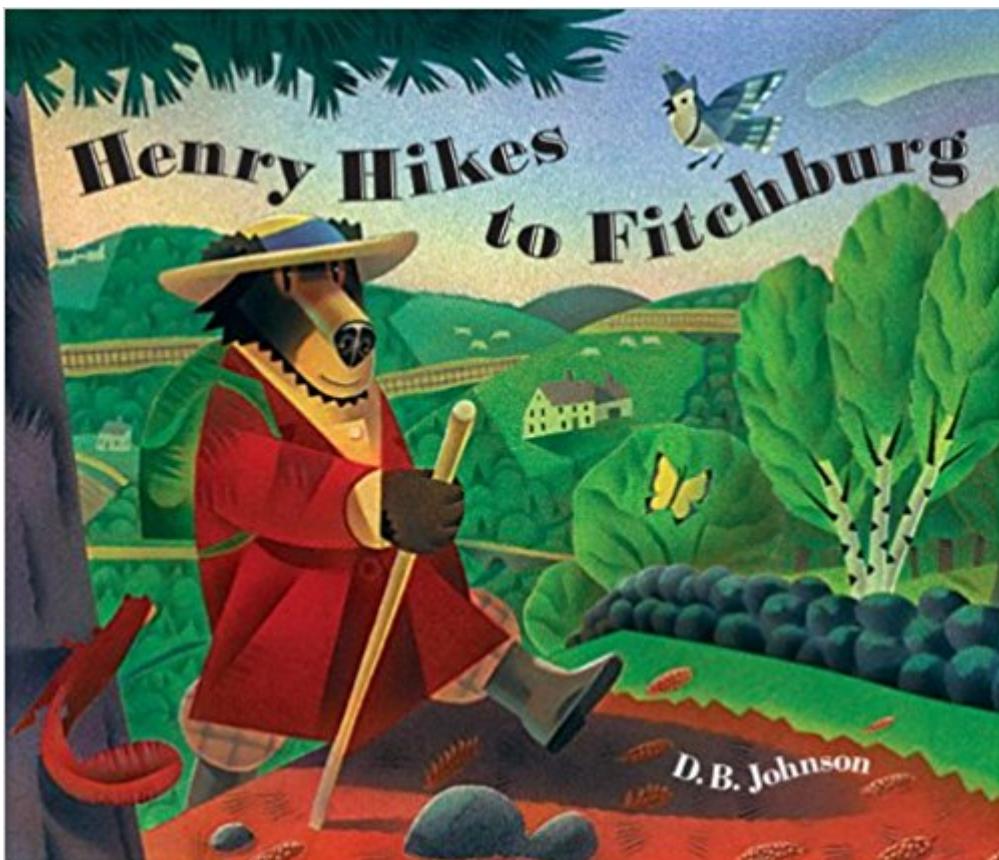


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Henry Hikes To Fitchburg



Synopsis

Inspired by a passage from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, the wonderfully appealing *Henry Hikes to Fitchburg* follows two friends who have very different approaches to life. When the two agree to meet one evening in Fitchburg, which is thirty miles away, each decides to get there in his own way, and the two have surprisingly different days.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 500 (What's this?)

Paperback: 32 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (October 30, 2006)

Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 10.5 x 0.1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 67 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #329,823 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #166 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > United States #781 in Books > Children's Books > Animals > Bears #2016 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Nature

Age Range: 4 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

When Henry and his friend agree to go to Fitchburg to see the country, they each choose very different methods of travel, based on their very different approaches to life. This charming little story illustrates through minimal text and fantastically stylized paintings the concepts Henry David Thoreau spent his life trying out. While Henry (the storybook Henry is a bear) collects flowers to press, strolls on stone walls, finds bird nests, and gathers blackberries, his friend toils and sweats to earn enough money for the train fare to Fitchburg. With subtle nods at Thoreau and his real-life pals Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne (Henry's friend cleans out Mrs. Thoreau's chicken house, moves the bookcases in Mr. Emerson's study, and pulls weeds in Mr. Hawthorne's garden), D.B. Johnson cleverly introduces young readers to these important historical figures. No moralizing here, just a gentle, humorous look at the different paths each person may choose in life. Johnson chose a passage in Thoreau's *Walden* (the passage is included in the informative author's note) as

inspiration for this delightful picture book, which Thoreau himself would probably be proud to read.

(Ages 5 to 8) --Emilie Coulter --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Freelance illustrator Johnson models his striking debut on a passage from *Walden*, in which Thoreau advocates journeying on foot over buying a ticket to ride. Henry, a brown bear attired in a brick-red duster and wide-brimmed sun hat, is a kinder, gentler fellow than his cantankerous inspiration. His ursine friend, wearing town clothes and conspicuously toting a pocket watch, makes plans to meet him in Fitchburg, a town 30 miles distant. Spreads contrast the pair's respective travel strategies: on the left, Henry's friend does chores for unseen Mrs. Alcott, Mr. Hawthorne and Mr. Emerson to earn train fare; right-handed pages picture a leisurely Henry examining flora and fauna, admiring the view and excavating a honey tree as he strides toward his destination. At the end of the summer day, "His friend sat on the train in a tangle of people./ Henry ate his way through a blackberry patch." Johnson inventively demonstrates Thoreau's advice with kaleidoscopic illustrations in variegated colors and gently skewed perspectives that weigh fast-paced urban existence against an unmaterialistic life in the woods. Both bears make it to Fitchburg, but Henry's friend wears a blank stare, in contrast to Henry's bright-eyed, curious gaze. Johnson implies what money can and cannot buy, and encourages slowing down to experience nature. With graceful understatement, he presents some complicated ideas assuredly and accessibly. Ages 4-8.

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Best children's book to introduce the ideas of a great American author, Henry David Thoreau.

This is a fantastic book, based on the writings of Henry David Thoreau. Great for kids and adults alike.

I've loved the writings of Henry David Thoreau since I was in my late teens, so I was very excited to read about Henry Hikes to Fitchburg when it was published in 2000. I bought the book immediately and read it as soon as it arrived. Not only was I not disappointed, I felt as if I had been given a chance to re-experience parts of *Walden* in a new way. D.B. Johnson takes a one-paragraph passage from *Walden* and extrapolates it into a beautifully illustrated story that brings to life Thoreau's point -- the journey is its own reward. In this picture book Henry and his friend are both bears, dressed in 1840s New England clothing. The illustrations tell the story of the tedium of working for wages versus the enjoyment of nature. I especially like the illustration which shows

Henry crossing the Sudbury River. Highly Recommended.

Don Johnson's clever book contrasting Henry's smell-the-roses approach to life with his friend's more conventional idea about the value of efficiency would make a good addition to any child or school's library. Based on a quote by Henry David Thoreau, the book is a welcome antidote to the plethora of books aimed at the aspiring "Tiger Mom" market. The illustrations in the author's distinctive cubistic style lend an almost otherworldly and inviting element to the story. My wish for every child of high-pressure, well-meaning helicopter parents is that they have a relative or friend who will read "Henry Hikes to Fitchburg" to them at an early and impressionable age.

My grandson, who is six, especially enjoyed the arithmetic lesson in this book, as Henry's friend adds up his earnings steadily. He was also interested in seeing which bear got to Fitchburg first. The illustrations are charming, and the story wears well for repeated reading. As for the references to the Alcotts and Emerson and Henry the Bear's likemindedness with Henry David Thoreau, that's just an extra for adults.

I'm simple-minded and easily addled, so Henry's simple approach to getting to Fitchburg reminds me that it's not all bad to leave some of the technical complexities to solve themselves, and to travel light, examining the rewarding beauties and curiosities of nature along the way, instead of speeding headlong to a prosaic goal, where we'll likely spend at least 10% of our time waiting for something or someone.

I find this book to have a good solid moral foundation and a decent flow to the overall story. The illustration in this book is top-notch and love looking at it. My son loves it as well. I wasn't sure if the story would be boring to him, but it is not. He asks me to read this to him for bedtime. Whether you read Henry David Thoreau back in the day, or not, it is still a good book and I would recommend it to a friend.

All my grand children love this book. Enough said.

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