

In The Wake of the Mary Celeste
(Hachette Livre Australia)
Crew, Gary

Research Background

In The Wake of the Mary Celeste is an illustrated narrative based on research into long mythologised discovery of the abandoned brigantine, Mary Celeste, in the Atlantic in 1872. Given the reams of nonsense written about the fate of the passengers and crew of this vessel (from mass murder to abduction by aliens) the author sought to use bona fide historical research to unravel the mystery and present his findings in a narrative based on fact. While many sources (including the salvage documents) were investigated, it was established that the vessel had been carry alcohol which leaked into the hold thus presenting a fire hazard and the necessary abandonment of the vessel.

Research Contribution

Given that the missing captain of the Mary Celeste left a son in boarding school in the United States, the innovation of Dr Crew's In The Wake of the Marie Celeste is that the narrative is presented from the point of view of that orphaned child writing the account of his father's disappearance in adulthood as he seeks to discover the truth about the fate of the vessel and thus exonerate his father from blame. In The Wake of the Mary Celeste is therefore adding a personal point of view (based on fact) to an episode that has been belaboured with pseudo-historical accounts for more than a century.

Research Significance

In The Wake of the Mary Celeste was awarded a Children's Book Council of Australia Notable Australian Book. (2004)

Dr Gary Crew is four times winner of the Children's Book Council of Australia Children's Book of the Year Award - twice for his novels and twice for his illustrated books. Crew has also won the New South Wales Premier's Award for Children's Literature (the Patricia Wrightson Award), the Victorian Premier's Award for Children's Literature (The Alan Marshall Award) and been short listed for both the Queensland Premier's Award and the Western Australian Premier's Awards. Crew has been twice short listed for the Crime Writers of America Edgar Allan Poe Mystery Fiction Award.