



The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg by Rodman Philbrick

Subjects: Orphans; Brothers; United States—History—Civil War, 1861–1865

Award: Newbery Honor Book

Book List: North America

Props: Things Uncle Hates List

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Mr. Brewster says me and Harold are like tourmaline (too r-muh-lin). We come in dirty but we wash up shiny. See tourmaline is a semi-precious stone that comes in a variety of pretty colors. It was him, Mr. Brewster, that suggested I write down my true adventures, so if you hate this book put the blame on Jebediah Brewster, not on me. My name is Homer P. Figg, and these are my true adventures. I mean to write them down, every one, including all the heroes and cowards, and the saints and the scalawags, and them stained with the blood of innocents, and them touched by glory, and them that was lifted into Heaven, and them that went to the Other Place.

I say my “true” adventures because truth don’t come easy to me, but I will try, even if old Truth ain’t nearly as useful as a fib sometimes. So, let’s start at the beginning. My mother perished of fever and my father died of a felled tree leaving me and Harold under the care of mother’s late sister’s husband, Squinton Leach, the meanest man in the entire state of Maine. Oops, I tell a lie—there was a meaner man in Bangor once, that poisoned cats for fun, but old Squint was the hardest man in Somerset County. Just writing down his name gives me the shivers. Once I made a list of the things Squint can’t abide.

(Show list Things Uncle Hates from pg 8-9)

Now, as to my adventures. It all began cause of a predicament Harold and I found ourselves in one day. You see, Uncle didn’t feed us much. We’d be half starved most the time. Fact is, he fed his hogs better than he fed us. Well one day I was feeding the hogs and Squint catches me chawing on a scrap of stale bread he throwed

in with the slops. He gets real mad saying he intended that for the hogs not the likes of me. He raises his fist to strike me, but Harold catches him by the wrist. Squint’s face swells up red and bloated. He curses and makes to hit both of us, but he can’t get freed of Harold, who is scrawny but strong. Finally Squint trips over his own two feet and ends up face down in the hog pen, covered with mud an worse. That’s when he really gets mad. Me an Harold don’t wait around to see what happens next. We hightail it into the barn and bolt the door from the inside. Long story short, Squint and a crew of men including the county magistrate and a man in a blue uniform break down the barn door and comes for us. It turns out that Squint had conscripted Harold into the Union Army. I’m only 12-years-old and Harold only 17. You can’t get drafted into the army until you’re 18. But Squints had made him an arrangement and there wasn’t nuthin me or Harold could do about it. They took Harold away that night and he was bound for the army. I fussed and kicked and demanded to be conscripted just like Harold. They just grabbed me and dragged me to the root cellar.

But don’t you worry none. That wasn’t the end. Humph, this wouldn’t be much of an adventure if it ended in a root cellar. Naw, that’s just the beginning. You see, I took it upon myself to go after Harold. I aimed to find him, prove he’s underage, and bring him home. Read my story, you will see that the 1860s, rural Maine, the Civil War, and the Battle of Gettysburg is a moment in history that is filled with adventure, humor, and danger. And I promise to tell it exactly as it happened, well mostly. *(Hold up book) The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg* by Rodman Philbrick.