



The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle by Avi

Subject: Sea stories—Juvenile literature

Awards: Newbery Honor Book, Boston Globe–Horn Book Honor Book, Horn Book Fanfare, Sunshine State Young Reader’s Award

Book Lists: Gifted, Grade 6, Middle School, Reluctant Readers

Props: Jacket, dagger



It’s 1832, Charlotte Doyle is 13-years-old. She is traveling on the Seahawk, a sailing vessel, from England to Rhode Island. She came on the ship as a passenger but now she is locked in the brig, that means jail, like a common criminal. This is her story.

(Put on jacket and as Charlotte pace while wringing hands) How I was sentenced to death and placed in this dark, small hole of a jail at the bottom of the ship among the rats and who knows what else, I cannot understand. How could I have been accused of murder and imprisoned like this?

Why did I get on board this forsaken vessel in the first place? I should have known something was wrong right from the beginning. Two different porters that I hired to carry my trunk onto the ship, dropped it and ran when they heard I was sailing on the Seahawk. And then, when I got on board, one of the seamen stopped me and told me to get off the ship, that it wasn’t safe. He explained that although my father had arranged for 2 other families to cross the ocean with me on the Seahawk, they had cancelled. I was now to be the only passenger.

How I wished my father had been with me to give me guidance. But my father, mother and siblings had sailed to America ahead of me, leaving me behind to finish

out the school year in England, leaving me behind to sail on the Seahawk alone. If I knew then what I know now, I would have jumped overboard and taken my chances swimming back to the dock. But I didn’t. I just went to my cabin and cried myself to sleep, hoping that everything would be OK in the morning.

But when I awoke, things were no better. The ship’s cook, Zechariah, tried to give me a dagger for my protection. *(Show dagger. Hold it gingerly with one hand)* Me. I have been taught how to curtsy and speak politely, not how to handle a weapon. *(As you continue to speak hold the dagger with two hands and hold it more and more fiercely.)* Then the dirty, uneducated seamen on board the ship began to whisper and look at me suspiciously. Finally, the Captain, who at first seemed like a gentleman, began to act strangely. I was forced to witness horrible things and make choices I did not want to make. I could no longer be a helpless little girl. I had to stand up for myself. I had to. *(Pull out dagger with one hand as if to strike someone)* But, believe me, I have done nothing to deserve jail. *(Return dagger to its case)* I have done nothing that you wouldn’t have done in my place. *(Take off jacket)* What will become of Charlotte Doyle? Will she survive or will she perish, lost at sea? Find out Charlotte’s fate by reading *(Hold up book)* *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* by Avi.

