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One Small Step



Synopsis

It's 1969 and thirteen-year-old Scott is your typical teenage boy—except for the fact that he is flying airplanes with his air force flight instructor father. When Scott successfully crash-lands a plane, he grabs the attention of NASA, which recruits him for its top-secret test launch to the moon. Scott finds himself at the NASA training facility, where he realizes the chimps that will help pilot the craft are just as clever as the astronauts—and things are not what they seem at NASA. Full of nonstop action and adventure, this is the story of a courageous boy who follows his dreams.

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Age Range: 8 - 14 years

Grade Level: 3 - 9

Customer Reviews

Grade 7—Thirteen-year-old Scott MacLeod has been an underage pilot since his dad, a Korean War-era ace and flight instructor for Vietnam War jet pilots, secretly let him take the stick of his Cessna at age 12. Now, dad's letting him take occasional control of a "Tweet," the two-engine jet trainer he uses to ready "fresh meat" for duty in beefier aircraft. Though Scott, a quick study, handles the airborne aircraft well, he's never had to do the most difficult thing—land a jet aircraft. That changes suddenly when a fluke occurrence forces him to land a damaged plane himself, possibly ending his father's career. The incident arouses the interests of NASA officials

who, in a top-secret program, have been sending chimps into space as a rehearsal for manned Apollo missions. The agency thinks that the diminutive Scott would be a perfect candidate to accompany two trained chimpanzees on a scaled-down test mission to orbit the moon in preparation for the upcoming Apollo 11 moon landing. In order to save his dad's career and to satisfy his own thirst for adventure, Scott convinces his reluctant father to allow him to serve as the first tween-aged astronaut. Accompanied by two endearing primates, he will do everything the adult astronauts are scheduled to do except actually land on the moon. Unless, that is, he decides to go the distance and take the mission into his own hands. Allusions to things like sneaking cigarettes, beer, and peeks at Playboy magazine are authentic and realistic. This is a gripping and well-researched piece of space-age historical fiction. Jeffrey Hastings, Highlander Way Middle School, Howell, MI Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In the late 1960s, 13-year-old Scott doesn't know much about Martin Luther King or Vietnam, but he does know flying. His father, a flight instructor in the air force, secretly takes his son on training missions, and when they experience a midair disaster, it is Scott who takes the controls and lands their damaged jet. Folks at the nearby NASA facility take notice and recruit Scott to pilot, along with two chimpanonauts, a clandestine mission to the moon to test a landing before the real astronauts attempt the historic feat. The absurdity of sending a boy into space to make sure it's safe for grown, trained astronauts likely won't be lost on readers, but Kerr does out just enough plausibility, plenty of exciting space adventure, and an interesting primate-human friendship to help gloss over that little problem. When the story veers from The Right Stuff fueled action into somewhat weirder 2001: A Space Odyssey territory, it loses a good deal of its momentum, but it gains a surprising metaphysical touch. Grades 6-9. --Ian Chipman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

While I am not the intended audience for this book, I enjoyed it. My 12 year old received this book as a birthday gift. I have always been a fan of the space program, plus we really like the "Children of the Lamp" books written by the author. The author did a wonderful job using historically accurate facts to build this fictional story. As someone who always wondered what it would be like to be an astronaut, it was easy to get caught up in the story. I only give the book four stars because towards the end of the book, the story takes a very bizarre turn. The main character, Scott, who confesses

earlier in the book to not really believe in God, has what could be describe as a "conversation" with a higher power. Is it a hallucination, aliens or God? It wasn't necessarily the questioning of God's existents that turned me off, but I found this section rambling and just plain odd. Some parents might find this "conversation" and Scott's lack of faith objectionable. Also, Scott and his friend look at his Dad's "Playboy Magazines" (with minor comments about such) and make typical 13 yr old boy comments about girls, etc. I would personally not let a child younger then 12 read this book and you still might find yourself explaining a few things. All in all, a good book. I will wait a year or so for my son to read it though. He'll enjoy the book more when he is in that 13 yr old boy just starting to really like girls and becoming independent state of mind.

Brilliant book. I gave this book to my son who was difficulty with physics and was impressed by Philip Kerr and the way he gets the hero to appreciate physics, and we like apes.. We have read other books by him like "Esau" and "Gridiron" and this book, for younger minds is very refreshing

It had a depressing feeling, for my 10 year old, after the mention of suicide, the teacher falling to his death and the fact that the boy declares that he does not believe in God & disrespects prayer. Then when the cuss words G-- D---- appear a few times and the teacher compares the age of the school to the last time he had s e x ual relationship and the boys find and read Playboy magazines and young boys smoking and peeping toms I realized that my 10 year old is much better off reading Michael Vey. Beware and preview what your kids are reading!!!

Philip Kerr's "One Small Step" deals with the fictional scenario of NASA running test missions during the 1960s era of Gemini, Mercury & Apollo with chimps prior to the actual humans making the trip. This is the story of Scott MacLeod a 13 y/o who by a twist of fate and an safe landing of a plane his father is teaching him to fly who gets recruited into NASA to replace an chimp who is not co-operating on a mission that will take place prior to the actual launch of Apollo 11 in July 1969. Kerr's story is an easy read & is primarily gauged for the middle school aged reader & above & offers a plausible enough story that makes this seem entirely possible. The attention to detail from the planes, to the locations, to the launch is done with great accuracy & we the reader experience the excitement of Scott's journey with chimps in tow to the moon. Overall an enjoyable read that captures an innocence lost at times in the race for the moon some 44 years ago.

I can only give the highest of praises to this outstanding young adult adventure book that could only

be destined for a movie and possible Newberry Award. This incredible story packs it in with nonstop riveting pages not allowing the reader to put it down for one second. The reader will experience the whole gambit of action, adventure, science, faith, trust, love, friendship, betrayal, humor, sadness, life, and death. I found myself cheering, frightened, laughing, crying. Our young hero Scott Macleod, a feisty 13 year old flying spitfire, is one hell of a kid and fearless hero you will simply never forget. To get into any description of what the story entails, I believe will totally ruin it for others so I think readers should trust and have faith that this is Kerr's best yet and one should just up and go buy it! The author's Children of the Lamp books are good, and his adult books are too, but this is just the best yet! I can't see how any reader of any age would find disappointment in this novel for boys and men ages 10-100. When I turned the last page I felt like standing up and clapping.

Scott MacLeod is about to become the youngest astronaut in NASA, only no one is supposed to know about it. His mission is a secret one that not even NASA will talk about or the other astronauts know about. It all started when Scott's dad, who is an Air Force pilot, started teaching Scott to fly. Scott is only twelve, so when he is able to crash land an Air Force plane, one he shouldn't have even known how to fly, NASA takes notice. NASA is trying to land a man on the moon, but many things could go wrong and there are still lots of questions that need to be answered before that ambition can really take off. So, before the real astronauts left on the Apollo missions, NASA had been sending secret test missions into space. These missions, which used chimps as astronauts, were called Caliban. When the chimp pilot for the latest Caliban mission goes crazy, NASA recruits Scott to fly the shuttle. The shuttles are made smaller, so who better to pilot them than a twelve-year-old boy? But, NASA has secrets about the training of the chimps and Scott isn't sure he can go along with the mission as planned. Several times during the reading of this book, I had to remind myself that this was fiction and not a true story. There is a lot of adventure, from Scott's Air Force flying to the space program. There is a lot of technical jargon as well, dealing with Scott's training and then his mission in space, which might turn off some readers. If you're a fan of space exploration this book provides an interesting perspective on the 1960's space race. Reviewed by: Sarah Bean the Green Bean Teen Queen

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