


The Boy Who Held Back the Sea (Picture Puffin Books)

By Lenny Hort, Thomas Locker, Mary Mapes Dodge

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From the award-winning and renowned illustrator Thomas Locker, beautiful oil-painted illustrations pair with this wonderful retelling of the traditional Dutch folktale.

Jan had never done anything more heroic than shout for the guard because he'd imagined he'd seen a sea serpent. But when Jan discovered water trickling through a desolate stretch of the dike that protected his low-lying village, he knew he had to act fast.

“Visually stunning.”—*Publishers Weekly*

"Locker's depiction of nature overpowering humanity is especially significant to the story and to the Dutch people who have spent centuries battling the sea."--*School Library Journal*

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This retelling of the traditional Dutch folktale is coupled with Locker's masterful oil paintings, which recall well-known works such as Rembrandt's "Night Watch" and several Vermeers. A little boy, Pieter, is sent to his room because he has misbehaved. So his grandmother tells him of another bad boy, Jan, who held back the sea. Pieter serves merely as the framework for the account of the legend, which distances readers from the action. The scenery is magnificent—luminous skies, light-infused landscapes, a tumultuous sea creating a chiaroscuro effect that recalls the Dutch masters. However, Jan is merely a detail in the paintings. The real thrust of the tale—Jan's mischief, his fear at the discovery of the leak, his determination, his misery through the night, the suffering and then pride of his parents—is lost in the paintings; the text is overshadowed by the grand scale of the artwork. All ages.

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From School Library Journal

Kindergarten-Grade 3 Grandmother tells Pieter, who has been sent to his room, the story of *The Boy Who Held Back the Sea*. Hort's adaptation of a story that appears in Mary Mapes Dodge's *Hans Brinker* is significantly longer with numerous changes and embellishments. More complex characters have been created, removing the story from the realm of fable and placing it into fiction. Jan is depicted as a troublemaker who tells tales about sea serpents to the dike's watchmen, plays hookey from church, and throws a rock through a school window—a complete opposite from the sunny-haired boy of gentle disposition who reads to a blind man in *Hans Brinker*. Both, however, become heroes when they observe a hole in the dike and plug it with a finger. Locker's arresting oil paintings, with their dramatic clouds, towering trees, and natural diffused lighting are suggestive of the 17th-Century Dutch landscape paintings made famous by Jacob van Ruisdael. The posed figures and the meticulously depicted objects in the opening and closing scenes are particularly reminiscent of Vermeer. Locker's depiction of nature overpowering humanity is especially significant to the story and to the Dutch people who have spent centuries battling the sea. Karen K. Radtke, Milwaukee Public Lib .

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Review

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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