



Marco Polo: A Journey Through China; Magellan: A Voyage Around the World

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~~Editorial Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

In what looks like the beginning of a new series, these two books on explorers use their subjects to explore related topics. Thus, **Magellan** tells you not only about his life and illfated voyage, but also about 16th-century ship-building and navigation; and **Marco Polo** looks at Venetian merchants, international trade, and life in the Mongol Empire in the 13th century.

The books are dominated by their format, by the considerations of design and illustration. There are double page spreads with a single headline paragraph on the centre left hand side, a large illustration to the right of that, and then a number of smaller illustrations in boxes along the top and bottom of the spread, with the majority of the text contained in short paragraphs beneath each illustration; all enclosed by a decorative border.

The text is fragmented and Macdonald does well to hold the information together and link the narrative, particularly as the glossary and index are poor. The visual information is carried entirely by Mark Bergin's illustrations and, because no photographs of documents or artefacts are used, he has to be both historically accurate and able to draw maps, and occasionally landscape, in the manner of the time. Some of these illustrations are too small to pick out significant detail and many do no more than provide a story board or dramatic visual prompt. **Magellan** inevitably includes a number of interchangeable scenes of ships at sea.

The approach has advantages for junior and lower secondary children who might be intimidated by a continuous text and be attracted to a comic strip style. Both books also have a 'What Happened Next' postscript, which is unusual and welcome.

Running Order:

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