

Parents' Choice Awards : Books : Historical Fiction



I Survived #8: The Japanese Tsunami, 2011

Fall 2013 Historical Fiction

AGES: 7-10 YRS.

AUTHOR: LAUREN TARSHIS

PUBLISHER: SCHOLASTIC

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REVIEW:

Back in the day there was the I Was There... series of children's first-person books that delivered young readers into the midst of major historic moments through the eyes of a youngster experiencing them. It was a remarkably effective way to connect kids with history, to make them feel events and not just learn facts. With its excellent I Survived... series, Scholastic accomplishes similar ends-but with the added twist of surviving disasters, ranging from the San Francisco earthquake in 1906 and the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

The latest in the series pits a young American boy, Ben Kudo, against the travesty of the Japanese Tsunami

of 2011. While visiting his dad's coastal hometown and relatives in Japan four months after this father's death, Ben first endures a massive earthquake that sets off the terrifying, suddenly-rising ocean waters of a tsunami that sweeps his father's family away. Now he's truly alone and must survive. Written with the fast-paced urgency the disaster requires, the narrative is gripping and the simply sketched images speak volumes. Kids who pick up this book will face nothing like the disaster Ben faces in its pages, but they are asked the series' critical question: "Do you have what it takes to survive?" In these times, when there are more than enough calamities to go around, it's a good question to contemplate at any age.

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