

'Off to Plymouth Rock' tells Thanksgiving story in rhyme

Contributed by Geri Williams
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Off to Plymouth Rock by Dandi Daley Mackall. Illustrations by Gene Barretta. (Nashville TN: Tommy Nelson Inc, 2003. 32 pp. \$12.99, ISBN 1-4003-0473-3) Ages 4-8

A perfect book to read to the family as you gather for Thanksgiving, "Off to Plymouth Rock" will appeal to ages 4 to 8 as well as the young at heart.

Shared in rhyme to engage young minds, Mackall tells the story of the first Thanksgiving without talking down to her young audience.

The story begins with the pilgrims' flight from their European homeland:

Pilgrims flee! Sail the sea, Knowing there's no guarantee. Leaving, grieving, Still believing … Off to Plymouth Rock!

The story continues by telling the tale of their perilous voyage, the terrifying winter after their first arrival, and the compassion of Massasoit, the Indian chief, who moved by their suffering helped the pilgrims to survive.

"Off to Plymouth Rock" describes Squanto teaching the pilgrims about native crops such as corn and the joy of the first harvest. As it concludes with the first Thanksgiving we are reminded how different the first Thanksgiving was from our gatherings and yet we can see the seed with which they began.

Humble living, First Thanksgiving – Here at Plymouth Rock.

The illustrations are also particularly worth noting.

Gene Barretta engages the reader with his drawings of two young girls throughout the story. Fear, hope and wonder can be seen in their faces as their lives begin to intertwine.

The final illustration of the book shows the girls playing together under the table near the feet of immigrant pilgrims and native Americans.

One sees it is not only a look back but also a prayer for our future – that one day we may all get along and welcome one another to the table.

The edition I reviewed included a read-a-long "Activity" CD which was a disappointment, but the book is charming and will be a welcome addition to any Thanksgiving gathering.

So, what are you waiting for? Let's be on our way,

Off to Plymouth Rock!

Geri Williams is a local book fancier.