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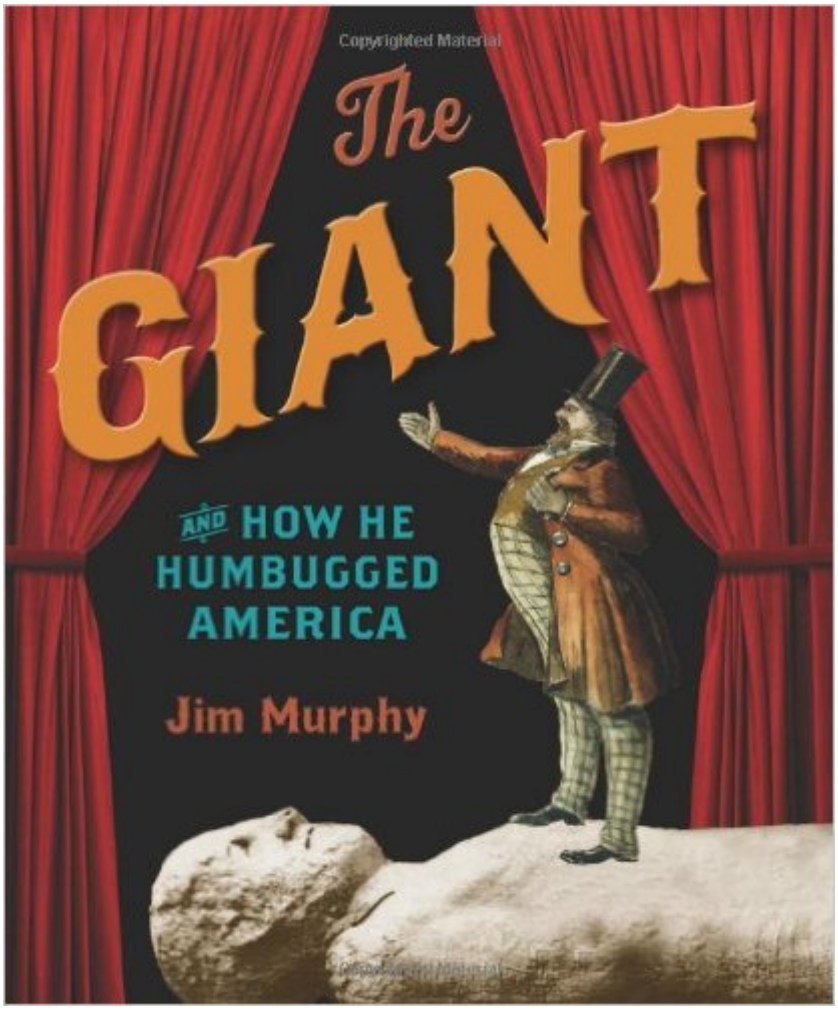
The Giant And How He Humbugged America



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Synopsis

Two-time Newbery Honor Book author has written an amazing account of one of America's most famous hoaxes!When a 10-foot tall purported "petrified man" is unearthed from a backyard in upstate New York in 1869, the discovery immediately turns into a spectacle of epic proportions. News of the giant spreads like wildfire, and well over a thousand people come to view him in the first five days alone!Everyone has their own idea of his true origin: Is he an ancient member of the local Onandaga Indian tribe? Is he a biblical giant like Goliath? Soon the interests of world-renowned scientists and people from around the globe are piqued as arguments flare over who he is, where he came from, and if he is real--or just a hoax.In a riveting account of how the Cardiff Giant mystery snowballed into one of Americaâ ™s biggest money-making spectacles--and scams--Jim Murphy masterfully explores the power of 19th-century media and the unexpected ripple effect that a single corrupt mastermind can produce when given a stage.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

What are we to make of the proliferation of true-life hoax books for children filling our library and bookstore shelves this year? Whether it's the clever ruse of The Fairy Ring scandal or the sheer number of middle grade chapter books featuring jackalopes (I've seen five so far) there's something

to be said about the natural human desire to believe in the impossible even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Into this mix drops yet another great American hoax, all but forgotten today. Author Jim Murphy has covered serious subjects like WWI Truce, An American Plague, and The Great Fire. Now he turns his attention to the seemingly lighter fare of the Giant of Cardiff, showing all of us that even in the midst of what seemed like a harmless hoax, real damage to real people erupted when folks hoped for the impossible.Nobody saw it coming. One minute some workmen were digging a rudimentary pit for a well and the next they'd unearthed a foot. And not just any foot, mind you. A giant foot. Next thing you know scientific experts were labeling the discovery of a giant stone man to be the petrified remains of a real giant and folks were flocking from miles around to catch a glimpse. Soon investors were getting involved and accusations of a gigantic hoax were leveled at those involved. The truth? They were right. Dreamed up by the mildly brilliant schemer George Hull, Murphy tracks the rise and inevitable fall of a giant that typified an America moving into the 20the century, trying to find its way.As Mr. Murphy tells us in his extended note "A Word About My Research", the impetus for this book came from none other than Bernie Madoff himself.

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