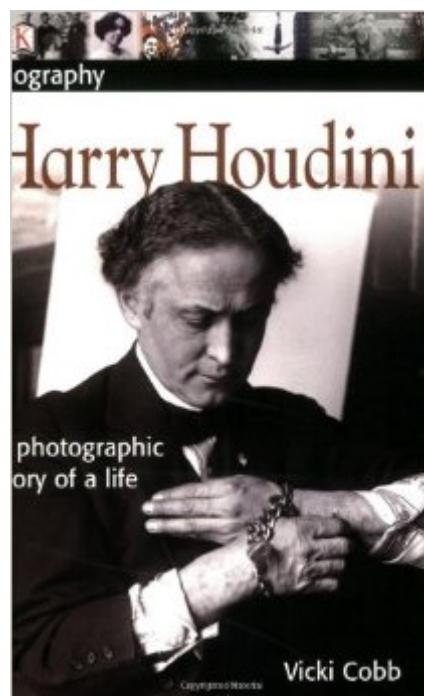


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DK Biography: Harry Houdini



Synopsis

DK's acclaimed DK Biography series tackles one of history's most colorful figures in Harry Houdini. Perfect for book reports or summer reading, the DK Biography series brings a new clarity and narrative voice to history's most colorful figures. Supports the Common Core State Standards.

Book Information

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Series: DK Biography

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (19 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #438,354 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #38 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Activities, Crafts & Games > Games > Magic #98 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Performing Arts

Age Range: 10 - 17 years

Grade Level: 5 - 12

Customer Reviews

This DK Biography of Harry Houdini is described as "A photographic story of a life," but I can tell you up front that it is not a collection of photographs with captions but an illustrated biography that is comparable to other volumes put out by this company. That means you will find over 100 photographs, artwork and artifacts, including photograph of his famous escapes, posters from throughout his career, and a look at things like his collection of handcuffs. For somebody like me who knows most of what they know about Houdini from the movie with Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh (and whatever television documentaries I might stumble across from time to time), this book is quite educational. Vicki Cobb tells about the life of Harry Houdini so it reads like an American success story. Born Ehrich Weiss, the kid who will become Harry Houdini leaves home at the age of 12, gets bored working in a factory, and starts practicing coin trips in his spare time. Eventually the son of poor immigrants would be selling out the theaters of Europe as the greatest magician and escape

artist in the world. To set the stage for Houdini's life, Cobb begins with a prologue, "Failure Means a Drowning Death," that talks about his performance in St. Louis, Missouri, on January 27, 1908. Having escaped from the local police station the day before, Houdini performs his "Death-Defying Mystery: Escape from a galvanized iron can filled with water and secured by massive locks." By the time you get to the part where you wonder how he did it, Cobb has you interested in how Houdini became the greatest magician of all time.

Harry Houdini was born on March 24, 1874 in Budapest Hungary to Samuel and his second wife Cecilia. Samuel was a rabbi who immigrated to America. Harry and his many brothers were raised in Appleton, Wisconsin where his father served for a short time as the rabbi of a Hebrew congregation. The family was poor but the children were loved and bright. One of Harry's brothers Leo became a doctor while another brother became a magician who learned tricks from Harry. Houdini's real name was Ehrich Weiss. The budding young magician changed his name to honor his memory of the great French magician Houdon. Harry had little schooling but enjoyed study and learning all he could about becoming a magician. Houdini soon hit the dime theatre and vaudeville circuits. He met his wife Bess, who was a Roman Catholic, at Coney Island. Bess was a great wife who assisted Harry in his stage act. The couple were childless. Houdini was a self promoter who always contacted the local press and police to witness his legendary escapes. He was often placed nude in a jail cell to emerge as a free minutes after he had been handcuffed and locked up! Houdin was an expert on locks, handcuffs and keys to enable him to escape. He traveled and lived in Europe starring in big shows in London, Paris, Rome and even in Russia. Houdini was a good friend of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Their friendship was frayed when Houdini exposed charlatans conducting seances approved of by the creator of the Sherlock Holmes tales. Houdini demanded honesty in his professional deals never smoking or drinking. Though short he was a superbly muscled athlete. Houdini starred in a few Hollywood films and continued to perform throughout most of his life. He died in 1926 due to a ruptured appendix.

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