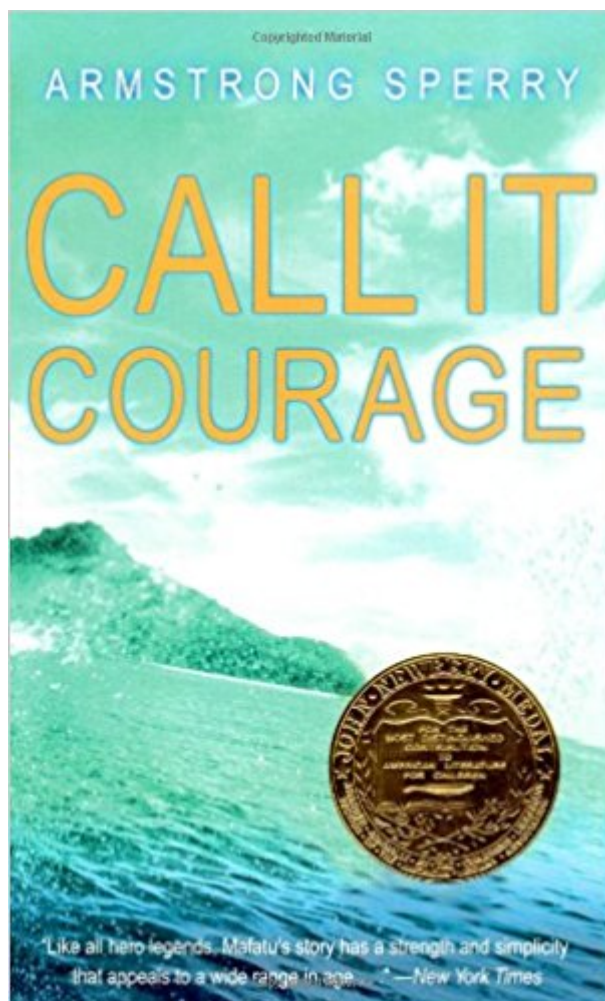


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# Call It Courage



## Synopsis

Mafatu has been afraid of the sea for as long as he can remember. Though his father is the Great Chief of Hikuero - an island whose seafaring people worship courage - Mafatu feels like an outsider. All his life he has been teased, taunted, and even blamed for storms on the sea. Then at age fifteen, no longer willing to put up with the ridicule and jibes, Mafatu decides to take his fate into his own hands. With his dog, Uri, as his companion, Mafatu paddles out to sea, ready to face his fears. What he learns on his lonesome adventure will change him forever and make him a hero in the eyes of his people.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 830L (What's this?)

Mass Market Paperback: 128 pages

Publisher: Simon Pulse; Reprint edition (January 29, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 141695368X

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Product Dimensions: 4.2 x 0.4 x 7 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 214 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #286,296 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 in [Books > Teens >](#)

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

New York Herald Tribune "A boy's character at ten years old is more often influenced by emotion than by reasoning. Something in the conduct of a hero leaps like a spark to light his own spirit. A book with a hero can sometimes bring this about. This is such a book.... It is related with unusual skill, carrying along a reader so rapidly he scarcely realizes how well it is being told... The story is wild enough to be remembered, and it cannot be remembered without doing good."The New York Times "Whether this author is telling of clipper ships, of the days of the covered wagon, of the South Sea Islands, he writes always with imagination and integrity. Like all hero legends Mafatu's story

has a strength and simplicity that appeals to a wide range in age and it is beautifully told. Mr. Sperry's fine drawings have the same spirit of adventure as the story and enhance the feeling of tropical seas and jungle given in the text. The story reads aloud well and will be useful to storytellers."

Maftu was afraid of the sea. It had taken his mother when he was a baby, and it seemed to him that the sea gods sought vengeance at having been cheated of Mafatu. So, though he was the son of the Great Chief of Hikueru, a race of Polynesians who worshipped courage, and he was named Stout Heart, he feared and avoided the sea, till everyone branded him a coward. When he could no longer bear their taunts and jibes, he determined to conquer that fear or be conquered-- so he went off in his canoe, alone except for his little dog and pet albatross. A storm gave him his first challenge. Then days on a desert island found him resourceful beyond his own expectation. This is the story of how his courage grew and how he finally returned home. This is a legend. It happened many years ago, but even today the people of Hikueru sing this story and tell it over their evening fires. END --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

I just re-read this favorite from my youth. It is just as compelling a story today as it was then, and I enjoyed it as much as when I was a boy. I expect to re-read this many more times over the years. It is a wonderful story about facing one's fears. It is a pre-adolescent coming-of-age story set on an atoll in the South Pacific. Mafatu, the Boy Who Was Afraid, decides to face his greatest fear, even if it costs him his life. Although the story is from the perspective of a boy, I expect both boys and girls would get a lot out of the story. Not only that, I suspect most adults from most cultures might enjoy it as well.

I remembered reading this book, and loving it, when I was ten. So I wanted to read it again to understand why it made such an impression on me. The rhythm of the book, the adventures and the main character's ingenuity and resilient character were as wonderful as I remembered, but I had forgotten about the somewhat disturbing ending. Also, there is one point that has not aged as well as the rest of the book: the terrifying "eaters-of-men" who pursue Mafatu are described as 'savages' and 'black', which was perhaps a common idea in 1940 but somehow does not sit well now. For those two reasons, I am not going to pass the book along to my 8 year-old nephew, but I might in a few years.

My absolute favorite book from childhood. Our teacher read it to our classroom in 4th grade and it's story has stayed with me for over 35 years. A fantastic story of courage, bravery, survival, and a respect of nature told from the perspective of an insecure Polynesian boy who had been an outcast in his tribe because of his fear of the sea. His fear manifested because of the loss of his mother in an accident while on the water. He feels compelled to conquer his fears and takes to the sea, with his pet dog and albatross, only to find himself stranded on a seemingly deserted island. He must survive and return to his home if he can. Highly recommended!

As a boy, I dreamed of adventure. I ran through the woods fighting imaginary enemies, carving bows and arrows, erecting lean-tos and tents. I loved the outdoors, with all its beauty and danger. "Call it Courage" was one of my favorite books as a preteen, capturing these dreams in exotic and hair-raising fashion. Mafatu is a 15 year old boy, whose name means "Stout Heart," and yet he is anything but courageous. After a harrowing experience in his early years, he fears the sea and endures the ridicule of his father and his island people. Determined to grow up, Mafatu sets out with his dog, Uri, and an albatross, named Tivi, to face the wild sea and all that it contains. In a canoe, he rides the waves, survives a hurricane, and finds himself on another island where the eaters-of-man seem to come for their dark dances and rituals. As Mafatu becomes a man himself, he knows his time is dwindling before the eaters-of-man return and threaten his survival. If he is to be victorious, he must conquer his old fears and despair, fighting creatures of the deep, as well as those who walk the earth. In so doing, he has the chance of being accepted by his people back home--or going down in story as the fearful one. The writing is descriptive, timeless, and beautiful. The characters are few, but rich in portrayal. The settings are unlike most we ever read of in books, and in rereading this, my heart once again raced as Mafatu faced the hammerhead shark, the wild pig, the giant octopus, and the angry ocean. This book is a classic, and for good reason.

Call it Courage is to put it simply, an amazing classic novel written by the great Armstrong Sperry, who also wrote one of my favorite short stories, The Ghost of the Lagoon, which I read back when I was a child, and unfortunately, never had the chance to read anything else by the man until recently. Well I just finished Call it Courage and I have to say I honestly enjoyed it far more than Ghost of the Lagoon, it has such a sense of wonder, adventure, heart, and warmth, that is just as relatable today as it was when it was written. How many modern day boys are often teased and bullied due to their lack of courage or bravery? While the novel is historical it's message is timeless. Call it Courage takes place "before the time of traders and missionaries" so based on that fact, it

must take place sometimes in the early 19th century or before, since that's when the traders and missionaries began arriving. It takes place in a traditional Polynesian society on the tiny coral atoll of Hikueru, which is situated in the Tuamotu Archipelago of French Polynesia in modern times. It follows an adolescent boy named Mafatu, who grew up intensely afraid of the sea due to a close brush with death from it as a baby that ended up taking the life of his mother. Being the son of a chief Tavana Nui, he is mocked and shamed by virtually the entire community due to his lack of bravery and courage when it comes to fishing or even swimming. Finally, it comes to the point where he has had enough and he sets off on a journey away from Hikueru along with his faithful dog Uri and Albatross Kivi, to prove his worth and bring his father and the community pride and joy. Call it Courage is one of the finest examples of storytelling I have ever experienced, although I never had the chance to read it as a child, I know that I would have loved it even more than I do now. Told through beautiful, poetic language, Call it Courage is a well deserved 5 stars.

I really loved this book as a child. While my son didn't enjoy it as much as I did, he did like it. He is on a "survival book" kick right now, so...

thanks

used it for migrant summer school. I have taught this novel even if it was the Newberry award winning book of 1947. 6th graders loved it.

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