



Henry Hikes to Fitchburg

By D.B. Johnson

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Inspired by a passage from Henry David Thoreau's *WALDEN*, this wonderfully appealing story follows two friends who have very different approaches to life. When the two agree to meet one evening in Fitchburg, which is thirty miles away, each decides to get there in his own way and have surprisingly different days.

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Henry Hikes to Fitchburg By D.B. Johnson Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

When Henry and his friend agree to go to Fitchburg to see the country, they each choose very different methods of travel, based on their very different approaches to life. This charming little story illustrates through minimal text and fantastically stylized paintings the concepts Henry David Thoreau spent his life trying out. While Henry (the storybook Henry is a bear) collects flowers to press, strolls on stone walls, finds bird nests, and gathers blackberries, his friend toils and sweats to earn enough money for the train fare to Fitchburg.

With subtle nods at Thoreau and his real-life pals Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne (Henry's friend cleans out Mrs. Thoreau's chicken house, moves the bookcases in Mr. Emerson's study, and pulls weeds in Mr. Hawthorne's garden), D.B. Johnson cleverly introduces young readers to these important historical figures. No moralizing here, just a gentle, humorous look at the different paths each person may choose in life. Johnson chose a passage in Thoreau's *Walden* (the passage is included in the informative author's note) as inspiration for this delightful picture book, which Thoreau himself would probably be proud to read. (Ages 5 to 8) --*Emilie Coulter*

From Publishers Weekly

Freelance illustrator Johnson models his striking debut on a passage from *Walden*, in which Thoreau advocates journeying on foot over buying a ticket to ride. Henry, a brown bear attired in a brick-red duster and wide-brimmed sun hat, is a kinder, gentler fellow than his cantankerous inspiration. His ursine friend, wearing town clothes and conspicuously toting a pocket watch, makes plans to meet him in Fitchburg, a town 30 miles distant. Spreads contrast the pair's respective travel strategies: on the left, Henry's friend does chores for unseen Mrs. Alcott, Mr. Hawthorne and Mr. Emerson to earn train fare; right-handed pages picture a leisurely Henry examining flora and fauna, admiring the view and excavating a honey tree as he strides toward his destination. At the end of the summer day, "His friend sat on the train in a tangle of people./ Henry ate his way through a blackberry patch." Johnson inventively demonstrates Thoreau's advice with kaleidoscopic illustrations in variegated colors and gently skewed perspectives that weigh fast-paced urban existence against an unmaterialistic life in the woods. Both bears make it to Fitchburg, but Henry's friend wears a blank stare, in contrast to Henry's bright-eyed, curious gaze. Johnson implies what money can and cannot buy, and encourages slowing down to experience nature. With graceful understatement, he presents some complicated ideas assuredly and accessibly. Ages 4-8.

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From School Library Journal

Kindergarten-Grade 4-A nicely realized retelling of a short passage from Henry Thoreau's *Walden*. Henry and his friend decide to go to Fitchburg, a town 30 miles away. "I'll walk," says Henry, but his friend decides to work for the money for a train ticket and see who gets there first. Each subsequent spread marks their progress: "Henry's friend cleaned out Mrs. Thoreau's chicken house. 10 cents./Henry crossed a swamp and found a bird's nest in the grass. 12 miles to Fitchburg." The friend arrives first, barely. "'The train was faster,' he said." "I know," Henry smiled, "I stopped for blackberries." Johnson makes this philosophical musing accessible to children, who will recognize a structural parallel to "The Tortoise and the Hare." The author quotes Thoreau's original anecdote in his endnote. The two friends are depicted as 19th-century bears in the geometric, warm-toned, pencil-and-paint illustrations. Each picture is solidly composed, and although the perspectives may seem somewhat stiff and distracting up close, they work remarkably better from a short distance. The layout and steady pace, as well, make this suitable for storytime. The somewhat open-ended

resolution could allow for classroom debate, and is also simply a good ending to a good story.

Nina Lindsay, Oakland Public Library, CA

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Darrell Fowler:

Book is to be different for each and every grade. Book for children right up until adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important for people. The book Henry Hikes to Fitchburg ended up being making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is very advantages for you. The guide Henry Hikes to Fitchburg is not only giving you more new information but also to get your friend when you really feel bored. You can spend your current spend time to read your book. Try to make relationship while using book Henry Hikes to Fitchburg. You never truly feel lose out for everything when you read some books.

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Dewayne Campbell:

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