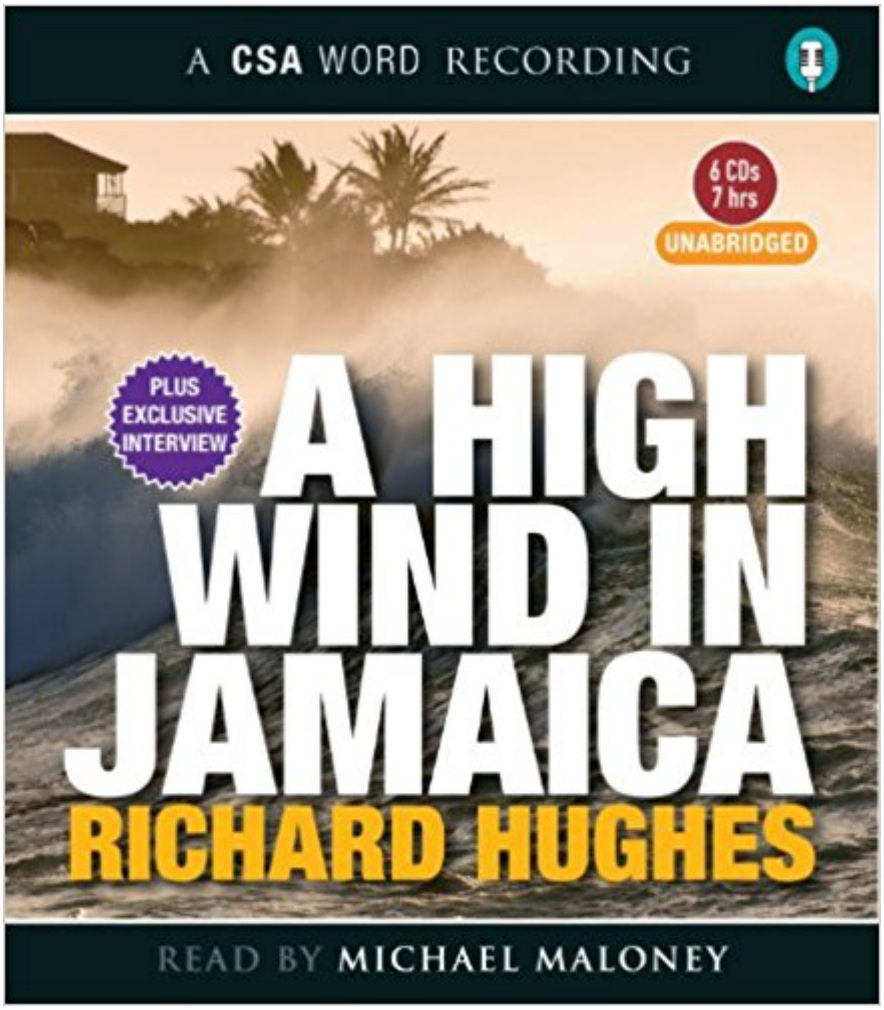
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A High Wind In Jamaica (CSA Word Recording)



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Synopsis

A daring classic tale of childhood adventure on the high seasÃ Â Written in 1929, this is the story of the Bas-Thornton children, whose parents send them to safety in England following a hurricane in the post-colonial Jamaica they call home. Their voyage turns from a peaceful farewell to their idyllic carefree lives to a perilous adventure when their ship is captured by pirates. The novel is often called one of the best of the 20th Century. Hughes was praised for his portrayal of children; they are subject to violence and not beyond committing terrible acts themselves, and in writing children without emotional reduction he paved the way for later masterworks such as Lord Of The Flies. This recording also includes an originalÃ Â recorded interview with Richard Graves, the only biographer of Richard Hughes. Unabridged.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A High Wind in Jamaica is not so much a book as a curious object, like a piece of driftwood torqued into an alarming shape from years at sea. And like driftwood, it seems not to have been made, exactly, but simply to have come into being, so perfectly is its form married to its content. The five Bas-Thornton children must leave their parents in Jamaica after a terrible hurricane blows down their family home. Accompanied by their Creole friends, the Fernandez children, they board a ship that is almost immediately set upon by pirates. The children take to corsair life coolly and matter-of-factly; just as coolly do they commit horrible deeds, and have horrible deeds visited upon them. First published in 1929, A High Wind in Jamaica has been compared to Lord of the Flies in its

unflinching portrayal of innocence corrupted, but Richard Hughes is the supreme ironist William Golding never was. He possesses the ability to be one moment thoroughly inside a character's head, and the next outside of it altogether, hilariously commenting. Irony finds a happy home indeed in the book's mixture of the macabre and the adorable. The baby girl, Rachel, "could even sum up maternal feelings for a marline-spike, and would sit up aloft rocking it in her arms and crooning. The sailors avoided walking underneath: for such an infant, if dropped from a height, will find its way through the thickest skull (an accident which sometimes befalls unpopular captains)." In that "such an infant" lies a world of mordant wit. In fact, throughout, Hughes's wildly eccentric punctuation and startling syntax make just the right verbal vehicle for this dark-hearted pirate story for grownups. Hughes enjoys some coy riffing on the child mind, as with this description of the way Emily handles an uncomfortable social situation: "Much the best way of escaping from an embarrassing rencontre, when to walk away would be an impossible strain on the nerves, is to retire in a series of somersaults. Emily immediately started turning head over heels up the deck." Even so, Hughes never sentimentalizes his subject: "Babies of course are not human--they are animals, and have a very ancient and ramified culture, as cats have, and fishes, and even snakes." Children, as a race, are given rough treatment: "their minds are not just more ignorant and stupider than ours, but differ in kind of thinking (are mad, in fact)." That madness is here isolated, prodded, and poked to chilling effect. But Hughes never loses sight of his ultimate objective: A High Wind in Jamaica is, above all, a cracking good yarn. --Claire Dederer --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Never once has he struck a false note."Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •Vita Sackville-West

This little book exceeded my expectations and made me wonder how many other books, unsung or forgotten, are living out there on library shelves. The New York Review of books has opened a door into this lost world of words. This is the second book I have recently read from the NYRB collection. If you've grown tired of hunting for good reads in recently published fiction you might be interested in their selections.A High Wind in Jamaica describes children and their thinking as they actually might be. When one is too young to understand the workings of the adult world, one actually has a strange advantage. The action takes place in the mid-19th century. Briefly and without spoilers, seven children are sent by their parents from Jamaica to England to attend school. Early on, their ship is seized by pirates, the children with it. This is when the fun begins.If you have a fixed image of pirates and one of children as well, A High Wind in Jamaica will forever change that. As a retired

teacher, I have been very aware of what children are capable of, both good and bad. Richard Hughes provides a playing field where all manner of fantastic adventure can take place. This book is compared to Lord of the a Flies, but I don't see the similarity other than both books focus on the actions and perceptions of children freed from the safety and care of responsible adults. It is all a little weird and horrifying. By all means read this book.

The plot is a child's fantasy gone very wrong: a bunch of British children are accidentally kidnapped by a group of incompetent pirates. But despite the author's often whimsical and gently ironic voice, there's nothing magical about the adventure. Instead, death, violence and imminent danger weave in and out of the story. Its vaguely fantastical atmosphere is enhanced by Hughes's uncanny ability to peer into the heads of small children of varying ages and present exactly what he finds there; these are among the most genuine kids in literature, and their peculiar strength, self-assurance and sheer vapidity endow them with a strange power that they exert on their surroundings. Hughes' prose could have been written with cut glass, it's that sharp. Strange, eerie and beautifully written, this is no Treasure Island or Peter Pan - it's going for far bigger game.

This review will be short and read about as fast as this excellent book. I'm so glad I found it, late in life as it is - when I can appreciate language and character-study. The other reviews reveal the thread of the story, but none seem to mention Hughes' craft in juxtapoisng the characters with fate. Not their particular fates, fate in the large sense. Mr. Hughes presents situations more comfortable in reality, not fiction - but, of course, that is what good authors delight in. There are children and adults here, but they mix like oil and water. Natural disaster (applied to loss and human suffering), the physical properties of water, wind, and the motion of ships all clash with character options - what we call happenstance. These options prove just as fallable after everyone is safely ashore, where old and young struggle to co-operate in a conclusion to the adventures of chance, which fate controls there as it blindly condemed and saved on the sea. Justice and maturity might be the overriding theme of High Wind in Jamaica - a teriffic novel that shouldn't be compared to Lord of the Flies, which explores another path (absence of adults among boys facing adversity). How Hughes convincingly represents the reasoning of pirates, court officials and children of both sexes is why this novel is a gem.

Rousseau once said that man is born with a clean slate, the picture of innocence, and that, as children, he "learns" evil at the hands of adults, of society, of experience and life. Voltaire, his

intellectual counterpoint, saw it otherwise. His notion was that man is born soiled, that the evil seed, so to speak, is firmly in place in every child at the moment of birth. It is natural, wild, unpredictable, and capable of wreaking havoc without the least coaching from the world.Richard Hughes, author of A HIGH WIND IN JAMAICA, is clearly a proponent of Voltaire's outlook, and you will be too after reading his odd little study on two "crews," one a band of children "kidnapped" accidentally en route from Jamaica to England, and the other a band of pirates who meet their match at the hands of these not-so-noble little savages.Captain Jonsen and his first mate Otto treat Emily, Rachel, Laura, John, Edward, and Harold with the greatest respect, but the children's imaginations and boredom itself bring about strange events on the pirates' ship they occupy. Yes, it's a bit like the Stockholm Syndrome perhaps, but there are undercurrents, too, of Henry James classic THE TURN OF THE SCREW. You would guess that children this small could be nothing but harmless, and, with Hughes casual tone, they might appear every bit so. But the casual tone cannot deny that fact that acts of violence occur and that streaks of very adult and psychological meanness and love interact in the minds of little ones.First published in 1929, A HIGH WIND IN JAMAICA does not show its age. From the opening storm in Jamaica to the final courtroom scenes in London, you will see children "through a glass darkly" and realize that stereotypical notions of childhood innocence are just that.

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