



The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont

Victoria Griffith , Eva Montanari

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While the Wright Brothers were *gliding* over Kitty Hawk, the charming Brazilian Alberto Santos-Dumont was making his own mark on the history of flight.

Alberto loved floating over Paris in his personal flying machine called a dirigible. He would tie it to a post, climb down, and spend the day shopping or meeting friends for coffee. But he wanted to make his invention even better. By 1906, Alberto had transformed his balloon into a box with wings! But now there was competition. Another inventor challenged Alberto to see who would be the first in flight. Alberto's hard work paid off, and his airplane successfully soared into the air, making him the first pilot to lift off and land a completely self-propelled plane.

The book includes an author's note about Santos-Dumont, a bibliography, an index, and photographs of his flying machines.

Praise for *Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont*

"At the turn of the last century, all sorts of ambitious and eccentric men were competing furiously to get the first airplane into the sky. One of the most famous of these was a dashing Brazilian who lived in Paris and, to wide admiration, did his errands by airship. Victoria Griffith tells his story...which is illustrated with panache in rich, smudgy oils and pastels by Italian artist Eva Montanari." –*Wall Street Journal*

"An excellent read-aloud, this picture book is a must when studying the history of flight and can be used as a resource for research, a book for all your reading needs!" –*Library Media Connection*

"Montanari's chalky illustrations are distinguished by a strong sense of motion, and the story's suspense (rival pilots! harrowing landings!) and surprise cameos (Louis Cartier!) make this an elegant tribute to a hero of early aviation." –*Publishers Weekly*

"Strong vertical trim and layout, which one would expect to exploit sweeping skylines, are instead cleverly deployed to put viewers among the earthbound spectators, most often glimpsing the aviator in the distance. A bibliography and brief index round out the title, which will be a first choice for aviation enthusiasts." –*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

"A generous spirit and penchant for grand gestures make him [Santos-Dumont] all the more worth knowing—particularly for American audiences unaware that there is any question about who was the first to fly. –*Kirkus Reviews*

"Montanari captures the look, dress, and formality of the era in her splendid, impressionistic pastel, chalk, and oil paintings. The endnotes add details and facts about the life of this charismatic, adventurous man and mark his place in aviation history." –*School Library Journal*

"Even if you've never heard of Santos-Dumont, you'll be delighted to meet this real-life historical figure in Victoria Griffith's vivid debut picture book. This fine picture book resurrects his story in lively prose and

large-scale illustrations rendered in pastels, chalks, oil pastels and oil paint, perfectly capturing the drama of the events. The fuzzy lines lend a feeling of history to the illustrations, and gestures and humorous touches, such as a dog holding the dirigible's tether or Alberto racing horse-drawn carriages, make Alberto Santos-Dumont and his times come alive." *–BookPage*

The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont Details

Date : Published September 1st 2011 by Harry N. Abrams

ISBN : 9781419700118

Author : Victoria Griffith , Eva Montanari

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Biography, Childrens, Picture Books, History, Nonfiction, Science, Cultural, France, Aeroplanes, Aviation

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From Reader Review The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont for online ebook

Isabel says

My mom's book!

TaraLynn says

* I received a free signed copy of this book from the author through goodreads giveaways*

This book is so informative! I found myself wondering how I never knew or heard the story of Alberto Santos-Dumont! It is very well written and I enjoyed the background history provided in the author's note section at the end of the book. The author, Victoria Griffith has done a fabulous job of promoting Alberto Santos-Dumont's story. Through his friendship with the legendary jeweler, Louis Cartier, the invention of the wristwatch is also discussed. She has peaked my curiosity and makes me want to find out more!

The illustrations in the book are also absolutely beautiful. Very well done and a book I would definately recommend to adults and children alike.

Videoclimber(AKA)MTsLilSis says

This is a wonderful book for children. The writing is interesting and the pictures are wonderful. This will be especially enjoyed by those interested in history, science, and of course flight. There are many little known facts contained here. I enjoyed reading the author's notes. It is sad that Santos-Dumont did not get the credit he richly deserved. This would make a wonderful book for a child to do a report on Santos-Dumont. This is a great one to read with your children. Even adults can learn much from this one! I would read more by this author! Bravo Ms. Griffith!! I am interested to see who you will let me discover in your next book!

Heidi says

Like most Americans, I've always believed that the Wright Brothers were the first to really and truly fly. I mean I knew that there there many others who came before these two who helped develop theories and ideas, some experimenters even died in the process. I had never heard of Alberto Santos-Dumont, which after reading this book, I find very unfortunate. Santos-Dumont's story is a very interesting one. I mean riding a dirigible to run errands?! How cool is that! I was also impressed with his unselfishness and generosity in using the money he received from his inventions. Allowing the other inventor to try to fly his plane first is no small gesture. What I found sad was how quickly the world forgot him. Just goes to show how fleeting fame can be.

This is the kind of story that I like best. Instead of just sharing the facts, the author has taken the time to let

the reader get to know her character through the stories about him. I appreciated the additional information and actual photographs of Santos-Dumont at the end of the book. There is also a short bibliography and index (as all good nonfiction books should have). The writing flows well and makes this book a good choice for a read-a-loud. The only concern I have is the dialogue. This is a concern with all biographies, children's or adult's. How much is it permissible to invent based on research versus using only words the person had spoken that had been recorded? A question to which there is no one right answer. This could make for a good discussion with children about the subjective nature of most history.

The illustrations by Montanari did not really appeal to me very much on the first run through. But they have grown on me as I've looked back through the book. I think they suit the story. The only real problem I had was the horses, being a horse fan, I found their strangeness somewhat irritating. Otherwise the illustrations provide a nice glimpse of another time and place.

I highly recommend this book both for curricular purposes (inventors/inventions, biographies, etc.) but also for pleasure reading.

Valerie says

I won *The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont*, told by Victoria Griffith and illustrated by Eva Montanari, in a GoodReads Giveaway. I received a large hardbound illustrated storybook with a beautifully illustrated jacket cover and 30 full-page illustrations overlaid with large, easily-read Times Roman font.

We learn as we grow older that many of the inventions that we were taught in childhood to attribute to just one person were actually races by many to be recognized as the first to implement an idea whose time had come. The telescope, the telephone, the light bulb - just to present a few examples - are all inventions attributed to men that didn't necessarily solely invent them but were first to patent them or mass-produce them, or raise their visibility to mainstream levels through critical use or introduction.

And thus we arrive at *The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont*, told by Victoria Griffith and illustrated by Eva Montanari. A wonderfully illustrated story-book of the true story of a Brazilian man in Paris who built and flew the first self-propelled airplane while wearing the first men's wristwatch.

To explain any further would be to steal from the thunder of this wonderful story told so nobly by Victoria Griffith and brought to life with the timely and well-suited impressionistic illustrations of Artist Eva Montanari.

If I have any small critique it is with the small lack of artistry with which the text has been laid upon the page. With Montanari's spot-on illustration and the large storybook's otherwise high-production value, I would have expected a little more flair and design in the typesetting and layout.

The feeling of Paris at the turn of the Twentieth Century rendered so well in the illustrations, the somberness and humility of the moment in history intoned so concisely in the voice of the narrative, *The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont* is the perfect injection of real-world knowledge in the book collection of any well-read child, young or old alike. A recommended must-read for anyone wanting to know more than just what they were told.

katsok says

Excellent story about Alberto Santos-Dumont that taught me a thing or two. And I followed Elizabeth Bird's advice and am paring it with The Glorious Flight to note how different authors portray the same character. Great lessons in the classroom.

Sara says

I received a copy of this book as a part of the First Reads program

A delightful story! I appreciate the history and research that went into it, as well as the way it is related to kids. It is beautifully illustrated, which only adds to the appeal. This is a good read for all ages, as everyone will learn something - and kids may even learn something about innovation and thinking 'outside the box'.

I can't wait to share it with my nephews!

Ann says

You probably know that the Wright Brothers were the inventors of the airplane...but were they really? Alberto Santos-Dumont, a Brazilian man living in Paris, was the inventor of the first self-propelled plane to take off and land of its own power! But more than that, he's an interesting character who is perfect for a picture book! He regularly runs routine errands in his personal flying machine, the dirigible. He also finds himself in the haberdashery quite frequently because the dirigible has a tendency to set fire to his hats!

This lovely picture book is full of information about Santos and his flying machines, and gives an interesting look at Paris at the turn of the century. Victoria Griffith does a wonderful job distilling the life of Santos-Dumont into an interesting story that is sure to captivate children (who wouldn't want to ride to school in their own personal flying machine?) I also found the illustrations by Eva Montanari to be perfect. They're mostly oil pastels and chalk, and remind me of French impressionist painters. They're light and airy and bright.

This would be an enjoyable book for any child, and it would also be great in the classroom as part of a unit on inventors or airplanes. I always find that biographies are the best way to learn history! I appreciate the index and selected bibliography at the end so young scholars can do more reading! Great book - highly recommend it!

Mymcbooks says

My Review: This is an excellent story about Alberto Santos-Dumont who designed, built and flew one of the

first practical dirigibles. It was great to know that Alberto went everywhere in his controllable balloon. The author tells how Alberto needed a watch that would help him mark the time that he is in the air as he was unable to do so while his hands were on the controls.

Alberto complained to his good friend Louis Cartier who was an inventor of the pocket watches and jewelry. He told him about the difficulty of checking his pocket watch while flying. So Cartier came up with an alternative that would allow Alberto keep both hands on the controls and check time, he made a watch with a leather band.

Author Griffith did a great job in providing readers with not only the facts about Alberto Santos-Dumont, but also introducing readers to another inventor Louis Cartier and Orville and Wilbur Wright who were credited with inventing and building the world's first successful airplane.

The author did a great job in connecting the story of Alberto with his love of flying, to needing a watch and his love of hats which he used often to put out flames as his airship float had a tendency of catching on fire.

The beautiful illustrations by Eva Montanari not only tell the story but helps brings the story to life. The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont is a recipient of the prestigious Mom's Choice Award. I highly recommend this book for classroom reading.

Fact: Although Patek Phillipe created the first wristwatch in 1868, Louis Cartier is responsible for helping to popularize it over the traditional pocket watch.

Disclaimer: As per FTC guidelines, I received a copy of this book from the author in exchange for my honest review. I received no monetary compensation. All opinions expressed here are mine and mine alone.

Holly Letson says

This was a fun, quick read. I enjoyed it, especially the part about Cartier giving Santos a wristwatch, and Santos wearing said watch, when he was the first man to successfully fly an airplane.

I won this from Goodreads First Reads. Thanks for the chance to read and review this book.

Sophia says

This book was written by my mom!

It's a fabulous picture book that tells the story of who really invented the airplane. The illustrations are gorgeous, and is good for plenty of ages. One of my own personal favorite picture books. It comes out on September first, 2011.

Bree says

Notes:

great for teaching the entire history of flight
must include with study of Wright Brothers

Emily Beasley says

Fiction "Twin Text":

The Amazing Adventures of Bumblebee Boy, by David Soman and Jacky Davis copyright 2011.

Rationale for Selection:

I chose to use this book in connection with the non-fiction title because they both focus on people seeking adventure and facing obstacles with others. In *The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont* we find a biography of an inventor who chased adventure yet freely shared his knowledge and experiences with others. He is described as one who would often offer rides to complete strangers and even gave a chance to his rival to become the first man to invent the airplane. In *The Amazing Adventures of Bumblebee Boy* we meet a young superhero who is struggling with his younger brother butting in on all his adventures. I think reading both books to students and discussing how naturally we want to act like Bumblebee Boy will help students not only learn about sharing with others but also gain a deeper appreciation for the character of Alberto Santos-Dumont.

Text Structure and Strategy Application:

The text structure of *The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont* is very chronological. It is a biography told in the form of a story with a beginning, middle, and end. My strategy application for these twin texts is Venn Diagram. I plan to first read *The Amazing Adventures of Bumblebee Boy* and ask students to describe how the main character reacts to his brother. With this description we will create one side of the diagram. Then I will read *The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont* and ask students to compare and contrast the attitude of Alberto with Bumblebee Boy to complete the Venn Diagram. The good news is they will find similarities to Alberto's good character once Bumblebee Boy learns a lesson. Hopefully they will learn a lesson about sharing and working with others as well.

Adapted Book Review Citation

(2012, August 1). *School Library Journal*. <http://www.booksinprint.com/DetailedV...>

Betsy says

The American publishing industry is good at a lot of things. They produce some pretty delightful fare for children on a variety of different topics. If you want vampires or stories of cute puppies or twists on fairy tales then you are in luck. If, however, you're looking for something about people who are famous in countries other than America, I have bad news. We're not that great at highlighting other nations' heroes. Oh, you'll see such a biography once in a rare while but unless they're a world figure (Gandhi, Leonardo da Vinci, etc.) we're not usually going to hear much about them. Maybe that's part of the reason I get so excited when I see books that buck the trend. Books like Victoria Griffith's *The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont*. The other reason is that in a greedy way I get to learn about new historical figures along with the child readers. Alberto Santos-Dumont, for all his charms, is not exactly a household name

here in the States. Credit where credit is due, then since author Victoria Griffith is doing what she can to remedy that problem.

If you were a resident of Paris, France in the early 20th century you might have glanced up into the sky to see one Alberto Santos-Dumont in his handy dandy dirigible. A transplanted Brazilian and fan of the power of flight, Alberto was friends with Louis Cartier who bestowed upon him a wrist-based alternative to the pocket watch. Now he could time himself in the sky! Determined to create an official flying machine, Alberto announces the date and location that he intends to use one to take to the sky. But when sneaky Louis Bleriot arrives with the intention of stealing Alberto's thunder, the question of who will go down in the history books is (ha ha) up in the air.

I'm having a bit of difficulty believing that this is Victoria Griffith's first book for children. To my mind, writing nonfiction picture books for young readers is enormously difficult. You sit in front of a plate of facts with the goal of working them into something simultaneously honest and compelling for kids. Taken one way, the book's a dud. Taken another, it does its subject justice. Griffith, for her part, takes to the form like a duck to water. The first sentence is "Alberto Santos-Dumont loved floating over Paris in his own personal flying machine." After the first few pages don't be too surprised if the kids you're reading this book with start wondering why exactly it is that we don't have our *own* personal dirigibles (this question is promptly answered when we learn that Alberto's preferred mode of transportation had a tendency to .. um... catch on fire). Deftly weaving together the invention of the Cartier watch with Alberto's moment in history, Griffith manages to create compelling characters and a situation that lets kids understand what was at stake in this story.

She also places Alberto squarely within his context in history. In the book we learn that while the Wright Brothers did fly at Kitty Hawk before Santos-Dumont, because their flight needed assistance then it wasn't *really* flying. Griffith prefers to explain this not in the text but in the Author's Note, but I think that's fair. As long as you make clear to kids that there can be two different opinions on a moment in history, I don't think you need to bog down the story with this detail. And if you're committed to driving the idea home that history is subjective, maybe the best use of this book would be to read it to a class alongside the 1984 Caldecott Award winning picture book *The Glorious Flight: Across the Channel with Louis Bleriot*. Rarely will you find two nonfiction picture books that show such different sides of a character. If you've ever felt inclined to show kids how nonfiction works pick and choose their facts, this is a gift.

Adults who read Griffith's Author's Note and discover that she got the idea for the book when her Brazilian husband discovered to his horror that Americans believe that the Wright Brothers invented the airplane will be intrigued. Learning through him of Santos-Dumont's life she went out and did what so many grown-ups merely think to themselves from time to time. She wrote a children's book biography. Well played, madam. I might have cut down the book's Author's Note a bit (knowing where his father got his fortune isn't strictly necessary) but the images and additional info about his life are grand.

Now the art is a bit of a pickle. Italian resident Eva Montanari is perhaps best known for her work on the picture book *Chasing Degas* though she has created other works like *A Very Full Morning* and *Tiff Taff and Lulu*. I'll confess that Montanari's pastels didn't really grab me at first. To be fair, I'm not a pastel fan. They're so light and ephemeral that for a work of historical truth I'm reluctant to enjoy them. The first two-page spread of Alberto in his dirigible doesn't grab you right away. Nor, for that matter, does the cover. But as I read through the book and enjoyed the language the pictures began to grow on me. The pretty girl lingering behind Alberto as he tries on a new hat. The nosy onlookers taking a gander at his new watch. The nasty look Bleriot shoots Alberto when his own plane crashes. I came around to Montanari as I read but I think the trick is getting through the first few pages. The fact of the matter is that the cover does not grab

readers. It's going to be up to parents, teachers, and librarians to discover it on their own and push it into the hands of the child audience.

When I started this review by saying that America doesn't tend to highlight famous folks from other nations, I didn't mean to suggest that it doesn't happen. Once in a while you'll find a *The Strongest Man in the World*: Louis Cyr or *Dark Fiddler: The Life and Legend of Nicolo Paganini*. But the bulk of what's out there is pretty repetitive at times. That's why it's so great to discover books like Griffith's on this Brazilian in France. They say history is written by the winners. It's also written, a lot of the time, by the Americans. Now you get a different point of view in a slim little picture book and that, suffice to say, is delightful.

For ages 6-10.

Jessica Bustard says

3.5/5 stars (You really should be able to give half stars... take note Goodreads!)

I received a copy of this book as a part of the First Reads program

The art

The cover art is beautiful and intriguing, my son wanted to read it as soon as he saw the airplane. Throughout the book the same level illustration continues and the pictures are very well done. I was worried my 4 year old wouldn't enjoy it as it didn't have the cartoon-y aspect that so many children's books have today but he really liked the illustrations and sometimes even flips through the book on his own telling the story back to himself with the pictures as a guide.

The writing

Story wise I was a bit less impressed. While I appreciated the author's wish to educate as well as entertain, there wasn't really a clear story that carried the book from beginning to end, rather it seemed there were three separate events (hat shopping, meeting with a friend, flying the airplane) that were only loosely connected. I also found that the sentence structure and word choice was a bit difficult when reading out loud and felt a bit halting rather than a smooth easy read.

I really liked the back section of the book which is a mini biography of Dumont and his dirigibles. Because of this section I think this book could be a great resource for a child in grade 2 or 3 that is doing a report on flying or airplanes.

While I have my misgivings about the book my son *has* asked me to read it to him a few more times which I see as a good sign. Because of the awkwardness in reading it out loud I'd recommend this book for any 5 - 8 year old who is interested in flying and airplanes and can read it to themselves.
