



Once On This Island

Gloria Whelan

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When war erupts between England and America in 1812, it brings change and uncertainty—even to Michigan's remote Mackinac Island. For young Mary O'Shea, the hardest change is the departure of her father, who leaves Mackinac to join the American Army. With her sister and brother, Mary must tend the farm, deal with the hardships of British occupation, and hope for the safe return of their father.

Once On This Island Details

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From Reader Review Once On This Island for online ebook

Shirley says

My 3rd grader read this in relation to her history on the War of 1812 and her narrations were so interesting I had to read it too. My read was not quite as satisfying as I hoped. I think she told me all the good parts so I should have quit there. But it was a good story of resiliency of a young girl during the war. Neat setting in the Great Lakes. One grievous and incredibly minor note at the end in terms of animal husbandry was that the cow had a bull calf and they were going to keep it to breed back with the mother. Uh, no! I think they would have known that in the early 1800s.

Tara says

THIS IS AN AMAZING BOOK!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I really love this type of book.

Anne Miguel says

A fun quick historical fiction read. I enjoy reading Gloria Whelan's books.

Eden says

It's the summer of 1812 and Mary lives on an island with her father, brother and sister. Things are nice enough. Mary loves the island where she has lived all her life, but news comes that war has broken out between America and England.

Feeling a duty to his country and to island which the British have now taken over, Mary's father decides to join the war and fight for America. Mary, her brother and sister are left behind to care for the farm until the war is over.

I think the book was a little slow to start, but it's a very good story of family, love and even learning to accept those who are supposedly enemies.

I liked Mary, who I thought was a strong character. She is the youngest of her siblings, but it often doesn't seem that way. She seems to be really mature and responsible. Although the war and her father being away does get to her after a while, which is expected.

I really enjoyed this book. I like the story, the characters and the lessons it taught. I'd really like to read the next book in this trilogy.

Amanda says

gr 4-7 184pgs

1812 Mackinac Island. When the British invade the island, the greatly outnumbered American forces surrender. Mary's father refuses to take an oath of allegiance to England, so he leaves to join the American forces in Detroit. 12 year old Mary, her brother Jacques (15 year old) and sister Angelique (16 year old) are left to run the farm while they are away. Unlike Mary who loves the farm, Angelique wishes to be a lady and flirts with the British soldiers. Jacques is eager to leave the farm too working as a fur trapper or fighting for the Americans. It is up to Mary to keep the farm running and her family together until her father returns.

I haven't read a lot of books set in during the war of 1812, so I found it very interesting especially the interactions between the British and the islanders. I would recommend the story to someone who was interested in the time period.

Ebookwormy1 says

A wholesome historical fiction story set on Mackinac Island during the War of 1812. Using concrete language accessible to elementary and dialectic readers, Whelan illuminates the beauties and struggles of life on a frontier island. Also featured are the conflicted loyalties of Americans, Britishers, Indians and traders as the relationship between England and the United States continues to be defined. Especially delightful for those familiar with Mackinac Island. Recommended.

Kori Johnson says

To be quite honest, I found this book slightly disappointing. I learned a great deal from it about the war of 1812, which I am ashamed to say I knew pretty much nothing about.

The characters were interesting enough, though I honestly found Mary's sister extremely annoying and was slightly aggravated that she married a British soldier in the end and even got her dad's blessing. I wasn't annoyed because he was the enemy. I was more annoyed because her dad specifically asked her to not associate with the British soldiers. And then she married one with his blessing.

Her brother was slightly better, but when he broke his promise to his father and nothing bad really came of it--he got off scott free and his father didn't even really scold him much, I was almost angry.

Gavin was extremely confusing to me and though I liked him well enough, I felt unsure of him for most of the book. Unsure of what his real personality was and to how the author wanted me to perceive him.

Mary was a good character. I liked her. This book is part of a trilogy and if I read the next books, it will be to find out what happened to her, though I can probably tell you right off she'll marry Gavin.

I was also put off by the writing style. There was nothing inherently bad about it, it is just a style that I don't particularly like. It seemed that there was not nearly enough dialogue.

Samantha (Nicky's Mom) says

This book is much better if you've actually visited its setting. Mackinac Island is one of the most beautiful places in the world. Getting a piece of its history, which is also displayed all over the island (including the Fort atop an enormous hill), just adds to being there even if it's only in your mind. I read this a long time ago, but I remember loving it because of the main character's strength and the fact that I've actually been there.

Jackie says

As with many historical fiction novels, the events and time period written about spur a reader on to research the event more closely. This is as it was for me when I read *Once On This Island*, a story written about a family living through the hardships, battles, and worries during the War of 1812.

In this novel, we are introduced to the O'Shea family who lives on Mackinac Island in Michigan. Mr. O'Shea feels the need to leave the family, his three children, and join the war. Angelique, Jacques, and Mary must somehow, someway manage the farm, crops, animals, and daily chores, and somehow they manage, though brutal winters, exhausting summer, and living with uncertainty. What becomes interesting is how some townspeople fraternize with the enemy, while others are true and loyal to the Americans fighting in the war. Native Americans are hoping to retain the land and dignity that was lost long ago when settlers first came to this nation. Clearly, there are many competing forces and factions.

Sometimes called "America's Second Independence", the War of 1812 is a fascinating look at this time period, although *Once On This Island* surely does not adequately depict all the struggles that came. A good introduction for young readers into the time period though.

Audrey says

****Review may contain spoilers**** I loved this! Like most books, it was a little hard for me to get into a first, but once I did I really enjoyed it. I love a good pioneer/settler story! The ways they prepared for winter and the description of the snow, sky, water, trees, and everything else made me feel very cozy. One of my favorite scenes in the book is when Mary encounters the wolf. Something about it was just very winter-y and magical. Whelan seems to do a lot of her books in first person narrative. I like it! I also like the fact that the family is Catholic, and the priest (Pere Mercier) was portrayed in a positive light. There's not a lot of Catholic stuff, but it pops up here and there. The story with Gavin/White Hawk was really interesting and I look forward to watching it progress as the series goes on. I like how Mary loves animals, and overall I find her to be a very agreeable heroine. I am really looking forward to rereading the next two books. P.S. Don't let the cover throw you; it's not really a romance.

Katie says

Especially for Michiganders, this is another great historical-fiction novel for young adults. My copy is so well-loved that it is falling apart, and although the subsequent installments of the trilogy don't quite live up to the first book, they are all fun and informative reads.

Sophia Heyn says

Some of the best books ever!

Jeanette says

I picked this up at the Island Bookstore on Mackinac Island while I was visiting there. I thought it would be fun to read a book set on the island while I was actually on the island. It is historical fiction so I did pick up a bit of Mackinac Island's history and was able to have a good picture in my mind of what the author was describing while reading this slim novel.

The actual story fell flat for me though. The writing lacked good character development. There was too much telling me how a character felt instead of good character development.

Amy Wilson says

Great read for people who have been to Macinack Island, MI.

Esther May says

Gloria Whelan is an author not to miss. Her books are riveting, full of action, history and things to think about. This book did not disappoint. It is set on an Island in Lake Michigan during the war of 1812. There are lovable characters, beautiful descriptions and a great story. All of Gloria Whelan's books make you think. Questions that come to mind are : is this fair? Is this right? What would I do? What should I do? What is the difference between acting out of courage and acting out of impulse/stupidity? I loved this book and I love this author.
