

Press Release and Onix Information



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Author – Felicity Sidnell Reid **Illustrator** – Jiřina Marton

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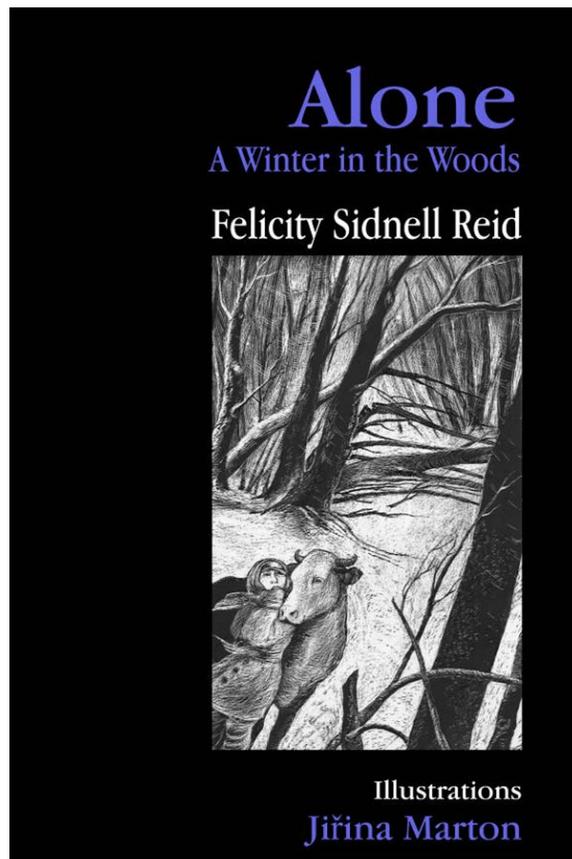
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Blurbs:

48 words:

This is a young reader spell-binding pioneer life story of survival. Girls and boys of any age will be captivated by vivid descriptions of the Canadian northern landscape and the historically accurate story of endurance. This story will quickly engage the reader in thirteen year-old John Turner's adventures.

50 Words:

This spell-binding tale about pioneer life and survival follows the adventures of John Turner (13) left alone in the bush with the family's cattle and his dog. He faces devastating isolation, loneliness and other dangers. Adopted Joséphine journals about the family and her own adventures while waiting to rejoin John.

71 words:

Alone: a Winter in the Woods is written in the spirit and quality of Fredrick Philip Grove's, Governor General Award winning novel, "Settlers of the Marsh". Felicity Sidnell Reid brings the young reader a spell-binding pioneer life story of survival. Girls and boys of any age will be captivated by vivid descriptions of the northern landscape and the historically accurate story of endurance.

192 words:

A story for all ages, **Alone: a Winter in the Woods** quickly engages the reader in thirteen year-old John Turner's adventures. Forced to grow up quickly, while left alone on the family's land grant in a virtually unsettled township, in the winter of 1797, John has to overcome devastating isolation and loneliness. With only a couple of oxen, a pregnant cow, a handful of chickens and his dog to keep him company, everyday tasks become ten times more difficult than they were while Pa was still with him, building their tiny cabin. Meanwhile John's mother has adopted the orphaned Joséphine, who keeps a journal recording the life of the Turners and her own experiences, while the family waits for Pa to return to Adolphustown to escort his wife and young children up the lake to the new settlement once spring allows water traffic to start up again. This tale explores the differences between family life and expectations in the eighteenth century and the present, as John and Joséphine reflect on what home, family, and friendship mean to them and struggle to find the courage, determination and faith needed to face the future.

Blog and Online Postings of Reviews: *(cut and past the URL into your browser.)*

1 – <http://www.sunshineinajar.com/meet-felicity-sidnell-reid/>

2 – <http://copperfieldreview.com/?p=2825>

Current Reviews:

Felicity Sidnell Reid delivers a compelling, at times harrowing, adventure story that will be enjoyed by readers of any age. There is so much information here that the book belongs in every Ontario classroom studying the lives of the Loyalist settlers. The book is filled with such vivid descriptions of the forest of Upper Canada, the rivers and marshes, the glimpses of Lake Ontario in the distance, and the changing seasons that the reader easily imagines sharing these surroundings. The author's use of actual place names adds authenticity to this historically accurate story. Highly Recommended.

*Reviewed by Peggy Dymond Leavey,
author of Laura Secord, Mary Pickford,
and nine novels for young readers.*

In the winter of 1797, John Turner and his father Elias, Loyalists originally from New York, arrive at their 200-acre grant of land in Newcastle District in Upper Canada. They've travelled on foot through deep snow and over frozen bays and inlets to make the seventy-mile trek from Adolphustown. With them on the journey are two oxen, hauling a sled laden with supplies; Milly, the cow; and in a coop buried deep in the bottom of the sled, a rooster and three hens. These will be the start of the farm the Turners plan to create, after they first clear some of the land and build a log cabin and a shelter for the animals.

When the time comes for his father to return to Adolphustown to fetch the rest of the family, thirteen-year-old John will be left on his own to fend for himself in their little clearing in the wilderness. The adventure that follows illustrates the strength of the human spirit.

Will John be up to the challenge? Does he have the courage and tenacity to survive alone for three months? It's a fearful proposition, but John recalls his grandfather's saying that if you've never been afraid, then you cannot be brave.

Because the Turners' is the first land grant in the new township, there will be no neighbours for John to call on for assistance. He does meet one other traveller, a Methodist preacher named William Black, whose circuit is Quinte's Isle. The kindly circuit rider gives John a New Testament, a quill and a bottle of ink, and some paper that John folds into a small book. Here he will record the important events in his solitary life and keep a tally of the days until he is no longer alone. Best of all, Brother Black brings John a year-old pup he calls Bonnie. She is company for John, and they keep each other warm at night under the bear skin covering on the bed.

From the time his father leaves at the end of February, John is responsible for keeping himself and the animals alive. "Depend on the Lord and rely on your good sense," Pa tells the boy.

Buoyed by his father's faith in him, John still has to face the fact that now, except for Pa and Brother Black, no one knows where he is, or even that he still exists.

The book is filled with such vivid descriptions of the forest of Upper Canada, the rivers and marshes, the glimpses of Lake Ontario in the distance, and the changing seasons that the reader easily imagines sharing John's surroundings.

Besides the daily routine of caring for the animals, collecting water for cooking and drinking, keeping the fire going that burns in a pit in the middle of the cabin's earth floor, and gathering moss to fill the cracks between the logs, John must use all his ingenuity to come up with solutions to the challenges he faces at every turn, and he has to make careful decisions.

When Bonnie has a painful encounter with a porcupine John must extract the barbed quills from its face or risk losing his only companion. He helps birth Milly's calf and then keeps a vigil all night to protect the newborn from the hungry wolves that appear at the edge of the clearing.

Felicity Sidnell Reid details many of the tasks John undertakes, making birch bark tiles for the cabin roof, preparing simple meals for himself from a few dried beans and ships biscuits, deciding how to tap the maple trees when the sap begins to run and fashion a bucket to collect it. There is so much information here that the book belongs in every Ontario classroom studying the lives of the Loyalist settlers. The author's use of actual place names adds authenticity to the story.

Between some of the chapters in John Turner's narrative are diary excerpts written by Josephine Fontaine, a French-speaking girl from Montreal who lives with the Turner family in Adolphustown. These entries give the reader insight into what is happening back home, while the family awaits the father's return and then as they prepare for the journey to the new homestead.

When spring finally comes to John's tiny clearing in the woods, and the ice leaves the creek, Bonnie unexpectedly runs away. Distraught, John ignores his father's warning not to go after her if this happens and thus neglect his responsibilities at the homestead.

Eventually, he finds the dog stranded on the opposite side of the flooded river, and in his attempt to rescue her, comes close to drowning himself. While he struggles against the strong current he is struck by a large tree branch and dragged out into the deep water.

With *Alone*, Canadian author Felicity Sidnell Reid delivers a compelling, at times harrowing, adventure story that will be enjoyed by readers of any age. Highly recommended.

***Reviewed by Peggy Dymond Leavey,
author of Laura Secord, Mary Pickford,
and nine novels for young readers.***

Sidnell Reid recreates, with meticulous detail and authenticity, the atmosphere and the daunting challenge that existed for the first pioneers, struggling to carve out a life in the remote, vibrant and spectacular Canadian outback that existed back in 1797. This delightfully descriptive book tells the 'pioneer story' through the eyes of two young people, a thirteen year old teenager, John, and a young lady from Montreal, Josephine Fontaine, who is trying to make a fresh start in Upper Canada.

This book will draw you in and bond you to the characters, their animals and their surroundings. It is a wonderful expression of the life that existed for the early settlers and native peoples of the time. From pioneer log cabin construction to maple syrup making, livestock care, dogs, wolves, chickens, cows, calves, porcupines, geese, carpetbaggers and hustlers— this story is a gem for understanding the early history of the pioneers and the important role the Native Peoples played in helping them survive.

Mary Norton
CEO and librarian Cramahe Public Libraries

Reading about John Turner, the young hero of *Alone*, is the perfect antidote to Holden Caulfield, the cynical protagonist of *Catcher in the Rye*. In this engaging novel, set in 19th century Ontario, a thirteen-year old goes through the rites of passage, guarding the homestead. Alone in the bush, while his father fetches the rest of the family, John fends off a pack of wolves, a thievish peddler, and a dangerous fever. He makes friends with an Ojibway boy, learns to spear-fish salmon, and delivers a calf. John has what it takes to survive in the bush – spunk, skill and determination. He shows the quintessential pioneer spirit of courage, perseverance, and industry. While John takes care of the homestead newly carved out of the bush, the rest of the Turner family makes preparations to leave the relative comfort of a small town on the shores of Lake Ontario and join him at their allotment. We see them through the eyes of Josephine, an orphan who has been taken in by the family. In her diary Josephine tells of their labours and of her own difficulties warding off the unwanted attentions of a young lout. *Alone* introduces us to a panoply of characters – homesteaders, Loyalist refugees, a young woman from Quebec, a family of Ojibwas, a Methodist circuit rider. They made up the cultural patchwork of Canada then and foreshadow the multiculturalism of Canada today. *Alone* is a coming-of-age story crowded with life and youthful derring-do. It is a ripping tale of adventure as well as a compelling lesson in history.

Erika Rummel
**Author of *Head Games* and two other novels,
a prize winning novella and many academic titles.**

“Driving along 401 today, it’s almost impossible to imagine what the countryside near Brighton, Ontario looked like in 1797 when Empire Loyalists began carving their farms and villages from the intractable wilderness. In her story, ***Alone: A Winter in the Woods***, Felicity Sidnell Reid succeeds admirably in taking us back to that time. John Turner, a young teen, travels with his father and their livestock in the dead of winter to their government grant on the shores of Lake Ontario. They set about clearing trees and erecting a rudimentary log shelter. Then his father leaves, tasking him with guarding their land and protecting their livestock until he returns with the rest of the family. John is left alone there and faces months of loneliness and danger relieved only by the visit of a friendly Chippewa family. The story is salted by excerpts from the diary of a young French woman, a possible love interest, who stays with the family back east in Adolphustown. Many writers fail to mention the matter of faith in their historical stories. In this

novel, the visit of the circuit rider, reading the Bible and saying one's prayers all illustrate the role played by faith in the lives of our pioneers. With its fascinating details of the perils John faces alone and the innovations he must invent to survive, Sidnell Reid's story reminds me of Robinson Crusoe."

Eric E. Wright,
*author of thrillers **The Captives of Minara and Riptide,**
as well as many non-fiction titles.*

"I loved the book. It had lots of excitement and thrills, also very descriptive language. My favorite character is John because he is most like me."

Aidan Comes, 10 years old

"Excellent...well written, with vivid storytelling. A charming, authentic and brave book that recreates an important time in our history..."

Cynthia Reyes
*Author of **A Good Home (BPS Books, 2014)**
and a regular contributor to **Arabella***

"Felicity Sidnell Reid uses vivid description of southern Ontario in the late 1700s in *Alone: A Winter in the Woods*. Thirteen year old John shows resiliency, responsibility, and self-reliance during his ten weeks of solitude. Reid's story transports the reader to a time in early Canada where nothing came easily—a sharp contrast to today's convenience. John's story could offer students and teachers an entry point to discussions about local history, character education, and our relationship with nature. I highly recommend *Alone: A Winter in the Woods*. A valuable asset to any school library or classroom!

Jessica Outram
Author and publisher of:
From the Cottage Porch and The Writing Spiral.
Teacher of writing,
School Principal for the Kawartha Pine Ridge School Board

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About the Author:

Felicity Sidnell Reid is a writer, editor and broadcaster who lives in Northumberland County, ON. Her poems have been published in anthologies, on-line journals and newspapers. Her short stories and non-fiction have also been anthologized. She, with several colleagues from the Spirit of the Hills Writers' Group, has edited two collections of writing by members of this group. The latest Hill Spirits II (Blue Denim Press) was released in 2015.

She and Gwynn Scheltema co-host a radio series broadcast on Northumberland 89.7 called "Word on the Hills". The programmes are archived on the website, www.wordonthehills.com.

In these programmes the co-hosts give the local and regional writers interviewed an opportunity to discuss and read their work.

About the Illustrator:

Jiřina Marton began her artistic career studying wood sculpture in her native Prague. She later moved to Paris to study painting and worked as a layout artist of children's books at a large publishing house. Soon after she moved to Canada in 1985, she illustrated her first book, Nicole's Boat, by Allen Morgan. Since then her medium has changed from oil pastel, to acrylic, to watercolour and her artwork has been exhibited throughout Europe, Canada and Japan.

She was a finalist for the The **Governor General's Awards 2007** and a winner of the **Governor General's Award in the 2009**. She has won many other awards, including the 1995 Grand Prize of the **Itabashi Picture book Contest** (Japan) and **Japan Foundation Fellowship** in 1998. Jirina Marton lives in Colborne, Ontario.

See the last page for some of the images from the book.

