

# Jackie Tempo Adventure Stories by Suzanne Litrel

Review by Charlie Gifford

*Jackie Tempo and the Emperor's Seal* (iUniverse, 2007) is an easy read that is full of fun and adventure. Jackie Tempo is a lonely teenager who lives with her eclectic Aunt Isobel after the sudden death of her parents. I like this book for teenagers because it has the drama and adventure that kids like. Jackie has trouble in school and at home and she does not make friends easily. She wants to escape reality and of course she has experienced tragedy. Teenagers feel many of these things on a daily basis and they can relate to Jackie. Then there is Jon Durie, a popular and very cool boy. Why would he ever even pay attention to someone like Jackie? However, suddenly he is in her living room to tutor her! Jackie's life is turned upside down. Then Jackie is given a mysterious book that transports her and Jon back in time to Ming China in the year 1521. This is the type of drama teenager's love. Litrel captivates her readers so they want to read more. They get transported to 16th century China along with Jackie.

Jackie and Jon meet Mei Li, a run-a-way, and travel through Ming China with her. They realize that the book gives them clues to get home by following the middle passage. Jackie starts her adventure on a Portuguese caravel and discovers her father is the ship's doctor! She and Jon encounter a Buddhist monk, a concubine, and a runaway girl who has been accused of stealing the Emperor's seal. They soon realize they need to find the Emperor's seal in order to get back home.

This story is a fun time travel book combined with history. Readers learn about filial piety, Chinese government, how the Chinese viewed foreigners, family structure, and the traditional role of women in 16th century China. The book is filled with historical vocabulary and quotations without being overwhelming.

Suzanne Litrel's second book, *Jackie Tempo and the Ghost of Zumbi* (iUniverse, 2009) includes the same likable teenagers. We are instantly drawn into the problems of Jon and his personal struggles. Jon Devine's mother is being treated for cancer and Jon and his brother are taking care of her, the house, and each other. This time Jackie is transported back in time alone to 18th century Brazil by one of the three mysterious ancient books. Jackie is once again faced with the evil villain Devon Mark Smyth, III, who stole one of the ancient texts from Jackie's father and is traveling through time and space wreaking havoc on ancient civilizations while trying to change history.

Jackie finds herself a captive on a slave ship. She experiences the inhumane conditions of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. After being freed from the slave ship, she travels through the jungles of Brazil to a run-away slave community where she finds her long lost mother. Readers are captivated by the storyline and educated through the artful weaving of historical facts with the story.

On Suzanne Litrel's website (<http://www.jackietempo.com>) educators can find questions to use with their Advanced Placement Global History classes. These questions are definitely higher-level questions and would not be appropriate for all classes. I would love to see resources from these books for regular world history classes. The site does say that there is an educator's book for teachers.

The books themselves are easy reads and can be read by average high school student in ninth or tenth grade. Teachers could ask student to do fact checks on the history they find in the books, looking for historical accuracy. These books would be perfect in schools that offer ELA/SS co-curricular classes.

