



Escape to Zion

Jean Holbrook Mathews

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From Reader Review Escape to Zion for online ebook

Susan says

This is an historical fiction novel that takes place in the 1840's and 1850's. It is about Maria, a German immigrant to the U.S. who became an indentured servant to pay for her parents' (who both died on the ship) and her passage. She ends up with a master who won't give her her freedom, but decides to have a baby by her. Maria escapes, but the "master" pays big money to anyone who will return her. She meets Hank who helps her and, eventually, they marry. Maria and Hank join the LDS church and come to Utah after many harrowing experiences, but the bad guy is still after them. I learned a lot about the indentured servant system, about the Mississippi saints who came to Utah, and about church history.

Susan says

History is fiction form. Enjoyed it even though, because it has a fact base, it didn't always go as I wanted it to. Maria, an indentured servant, is not released by her master who claims she is really a metif (white) slave (based on an actual trial on this issue). After he forces himself on her she runs away. Rescued from the river by Hank, a former indentured servant himself, they must travel and hide to keep her from being captured. Then the church historical part when they join the Mormon church and head west with a group from the South.

Linda says

This is a well written book that deals with many things that really happened in our history. Life in the old west was never easy and I appreciated the way Jean handled the story line. I will look for more of her books to read.

I do know not all books are enjoyed by all readers but for me this book was a "I don't want to quit reading" kind of book.

Verona says

I really enjoyed this novel! Though a pioneer story of the Mormon pioneers, it was not predictable at all. The story line took unusual turns, and led us into interesting situations. The main characters were well developed and became people you'd want to know. The ending was surprising, but satisfying. This was my first novel by Jean Holbrook Mathews, but I'd like to read more of her writing. This was an audio book, and the narrator was one we had heard before. She is excellent in both expression and accents. Her voice and inflections are very pleasant to listen to.

Lee says

What could be better than a good mystery with suspense and drama and love but no real sex or bad language. This sweet story of a young woman who came to America for freedom but lost both her parents on the voyage over and was sold into service to pay for her passage and then sold again and again and ended up a slave. Her courage and bravery as she sought her freedom and a better life and the courage and bravery of the young man who helped her were the stuff of legends. I enjoyed it all and had moments when I couldn't put it down.

Lorell says

Pretty good story. This is LDS fiction, and it was interesting to read a story based on accounts of those who left the South to come to Utah and join in with the main group of saints at that time. This novel tells us of Maria, a young woman who comes to America as an indentured servant. After serving two other families, she eventually ends up in the household of Lafayette Breaux. He is a cruel, unfeeling man who views Maria as his property, and refuses to honor the original terms of her indentured servitude. He intends to keep her as a slave forever, if he can help it. Maria eventually flees from his household after he rapes her, and she is saved by a man named Hank, who finds her floating down the river in her attempt to escape. The two of them eventually marry, join the Mormon religion and travel to Utah, or Zion, all the while being pursued by Breaux.

This book taught me things about the struggle many of indentured servants went through to obtain freedom and have a better life...it's crazy how not so long ago (and even still today, in some parts of the world), people are considered property and not full-fledged human beings. It was nice to see that Maria did eventually gain her freedom, but the ending of the book was unexpected and had its sad moments. It was still a very worthwhile read, though.

Nat Rowley says

(spoiler)

It seems most pioneer books turn out to be the same. There's a super pretty girl who keeps being assaulted by -what seems like- every male that looks upon her beauty. Of course the handsome and misunderstood and lost young man (or old... they really don't give a preference on that particular point, sometimes it just gets disgusting on their lack of preference) comes to find this poor beautiful girl and he falls immediately for her. So as to protect her from all the inappropriate behavior directed at her, they decide to marry each other out of convenience. oh how romantic. Oh but don't worry, the girl finally realizes how much she loves the man and they live happily ever after. And the man dies. Yup... that's how it goes. Am i the only one who sees the similarity between all pioneer books?

Anyways, I didn't finish it. Because first, well as i pointed out earlier, i was starting to get a feeling that i was going to travel down an all too familiar literature path; second, it was rather boring. When i get super bored with a book i kind of look ahead to see if it gets any more exciting. When i did just that with this book, i found out he died. So with that in mind, i thought, 'heck, why am i reading this.'

And that was the end.

Other than that, it was pretty good. Not bad writing style.

Rachel Robins says

Wow! This was a wonderful historical fiction book. The book draws on the southern-states Saints who were ahead of Brigham Young on the trail so they ended up wintering in Ft. Pueblo in New Mexico and happened to be there to aid the sick from the Mormon Battalion before joining the Saints in SLC. She also explores the little known fact that many early immigrants (think 1800's) came as indentured servants and had to work off their freedom. Excellent research and compelling plot. My only complaint is that she wrapped up the last half of the main character's life in a chapter or so. Wish it would have been a series but totally worth reading. It was fascinating to hear about another part of the pioneers that I had not known much about.

Kathee says

I wonder what it means that I started crying just reading the Foreword of this book? It was explaining how in the 1700 and 1800's there were so many slaves and indentured servants who were treated like slaves, and how most of those kind of servants (who never really got a free life and were treated terribly) were from Germany. It took my breath away and I started crying, then I wondered to myself, did I have ancestors that happened to? I don't know. That was only the first of many times I cried reading this book though.

Kris Irvin says

This book was just. plain. bad. How does stuff like this even get published?

Alex says

Okay. So I don't really read LDS romance novels. In all actuality, I hate them. All of them. All the mushy happily ever after blah blah blah. Ugh.

Now this story wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. But the sentiment, 'it was okay,' comes from a person who really doesn't like the genre, so I guess it could possibly be construed as, 'I really liked it,' if you were to pretend I was someone who read this stuff like my life depended on it... coughcough Anita Stansfield lovers coughcough.

The only thing that really bothered me, besides the fact that it was a romance novel, was the fact that she was 'attacked' more times than was really necessary. I mean, I think I can understand how amazingly beautiful she was without men going after her a million times... Just sayin'.

Michelle Llewellyn says

Jean Holbrook Mathews did her homework, I'll grant her that the story was well researched and she knew her history. Guess it helps having a BS and Masters in History too bad they're no help at all in telling an entertaining story.

I mean, really, how many slave owners in American History would go to so much trouble tracking one woman clear across the country even all the way to Utah? There was so much in this book that disgusted me. I quickly grew tired of every hot blooded male who looked at Maria attempted to rape her while we could always count on good old Hank to come swinging in from the rafters and save the day. Every time. Too bad it took till page 279 to kill him off.

Raslyn says

I don't think I've ever cried so hard over a book. Although I was sceptical about the book in the beginning due to some more intense elements of the story, it proved to be a good read about healing. It was also a good sweet romance novel that incorporated church history. I loved it and would recommend it to my friends (with a fair warning that they will cry).

Linnae says

Maria's perilous path away from a vicious and lecherous slave master.

Maria comes over on the boat from Germany with her parents, but when they die crossing the ocean, she is sold as an indentured servant. She serves her 10 years, the last few under a hateful master, Lafayette Breaux, only to discover upon turning 18 that he has no intentions of releasing her. In fact, he insists that she is a metif (white slave) and belongs to him.

After he rapes her, she manages to escape. She finds a hero in Hank, an unassuming man who is willing to let her ride on his boat for awhile, as he travels upriver to sell some goods. All the while, Breaux is determined to find her no matter the cost.

Maria and Hank eventually become friends and decide to join the Mormon church. They get married, fall in love, and make their way west with the Saints. Breaux continues to send bad guys to find them, some more successfully than others.

* * * * *

While there were some of the historical aspects I found interesting--the white slaves and their struggle for rights--I was less than thrilled with the overall plot. I had a hard time believing that Breaux wouldn't just cut his losses at some point--long before he did--and move on to easier prey. Their life seemed an endless loop of running away, getting found, big confrontation, running away again.

Also, it seemed like any slightly shady character with a mile of Maria thought he should assault her. Thank goodness for Hank, who would unfailingly come to the rescue. Still. It was a bit tiresome. The romance was just okay. While I could understand Hank wanting to protect Maria, I had a hard time figuring out what he saw in her on a day-to-day basis.

Content: As mentioned, Maria was raped at the beginning of the book, though it was not graphically described.

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Jodi says

Semi-interesting story and some interesting historical facts but the writing was painful to get through.
