

Queenie: one elephant's story - Corinne Fenton

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For most people, the only opportunity to get close to an elephant is with a visit to a zoo. Meeting one of these majestic animals can be a talking point for years to come.

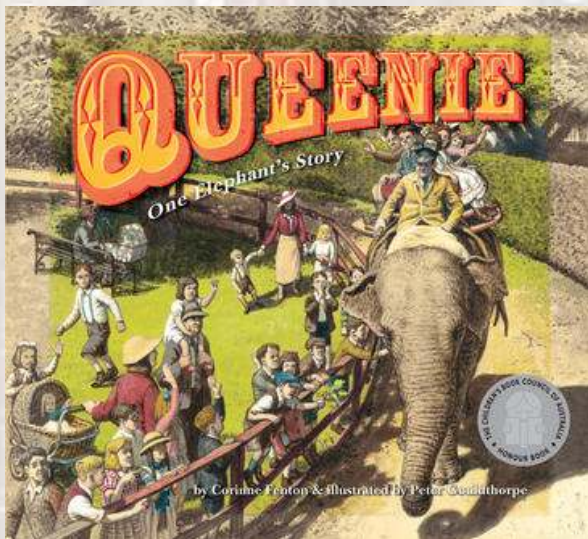
Queenie, a young Indian elephant who was brought to the Melbourne Zoo in the early 1900s, gave special memories to visitors of all ages. For more than forty years, Queenie trod the paths around the zoo carrying passengers on her back. Along the way, children left fruit for her. During her many years of service Queenie gave thousands of rides and was always careful with the people she carried.

The author weaves in recollections of Queenie's placid behaviour while going about her daily life at the zoo. Evocative illustrations by Peter Gouldthorpe show the young elephant's gentle nature and her playful side. A nostalgic sense of the past is seen through the subdued colours, formal clothing and society at that time. There's a sense of looking at a photo album of bygone family members enjoying happy times.

In September 1944, a terrible accident happened and Queenie was considered unsafe to give any more passenger rides. Although thousands of people wrote letters in support of the much-loved elephant, the following year her life was ended.

There is much debate about keeping wild animals in captivity. However, for some species, a zoo is a protective environment that gives a chance for survival. For Queenie, her presence lives on in this book written in her memory.

Reviewed by children's book author, Jean Bennett



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