

*Avi* Winner of the Newbery Medal

*The True Confessions of  
Charlotte Doyle*



Reader's  
Guide  
• INSIDE •



## Chapter 1



JUST BEFORE DUSK in the late afternoon of June 16, 1832, I found myself walking along the crowded docks of Liverpool, England, following a man by the name of Grummage. Though a business associate of my father, Mr. Grummage was, like my father, a gentleman. It was he my father delegated to make the final arrangements for my passage to America. He was also to meet me when I came down from school on the coach, then see me safely stowed aboard the ship that my father had previously selected.

Mr. Grummage was dressed in a black frock coat with a stove pipe hat that added to his considerable height. His somber, sallow face registered no emotion. His eyes might have been those of a dead fish.

“Miss Doyle?” he said as I stepped from the Liverpool coach.

“Yes, sir. Are you Mr. Grummage?”

“I am.”



"Pleased to meet you," I said, dipping a curtsy.

"Quite," he returned. "Now, Miss Doyle, if you would be so good as to indicate which is your trunk, I have a man here to carry it. Next, please oblige me by following, and everything shall be as it is meant to be."

"Might I say good-bye to my chaperon?"

"Is that necessary?"

"She's been very kind."

"Make haste then."

In a flutter of nervousness I identified my trunk, threw my arms about Miss Emerson (my sweet companion for the trip down), and bid her a tearful farewell. Then I rushed after Mr. Grummage, who had already begun to move on. A rough-looking porter, laboring behind, carried my trunk upon his back.

Our little parade reached dockside in good order. There I became instantly agog at the mass of ships that lay before us, masts and spars thick as the bristles on a brush. Everywhere I looked I saw mountains of rare goods piled high. Bales of silk and tobacco! Chests of tea! A parrot! A monkey! Oh yes, the smell of the sea was intoxicating to one who knew little more than the smell of the trim cut lawns and the fields of the Barrington School. Then too, the surging crowds of workers, sailors, and merchants—all rough-hewn, brawny men—

created an exotic late afternoon hubbub. All in all it was a most delicious chaos, which, while mildly menacing, was no less exciting because of that. Indeed, in some vague way I had the feeling that it was all there for me.

“Mr. Grummage, sir,” I called over the din. “What is the *name* of the ship I’m to sail on?”

Mr. Grummage paused briefly to look at me as though surprised I was there, to say nothing of asking a question. Then from one of his pockets he drew a screw of paper. Squinting at it he pronounced, “The *Seahawk*.”

“Is she British or American?”

“American.”

“A merchant ship?”

“To be sure.”

“How many masts?”

“I don’t know.”

“Will the other families already be on board?”

“I should think so,” he answered, exasperation in his voice. “For your information, Miss Doyle, I received word that departure was being put off, but when I checked with the captain directly he informed me that there must have been some misunderstanding. The ship is scheduled to leave with the first tide tomorrow morning. So there can be *no* delay.”

To prove the point he turned to move again. I,



*An ocean voyage of  
unimaginable consequences*

**N**OT EVERY THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL is accused of murder, brought to trial, and found guilty. But I was just such a girl, and my story is worth relating even if it did happen years ago. Be warned, however: If strong ideas and action offend you, read no more. Find another companion to share your idle hours. For my part I intend to tell the truth as *I* lived it.



“A thrilling tale, tautly plotted, vividly narrated, carefully researched.”

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)


“Riveting. Nonstop action on the high seas. A story hard to forget.”

—*ALA Booklist* (starred review)

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Cover art © 2003 by Douglas Smith, Cover design by Hilary Zarycky  
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**US \$6.99 / \$8.99 CAN**

ISBN-13: 978-0-380-71475-9

ISBN-10: 0-380-71475-2



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