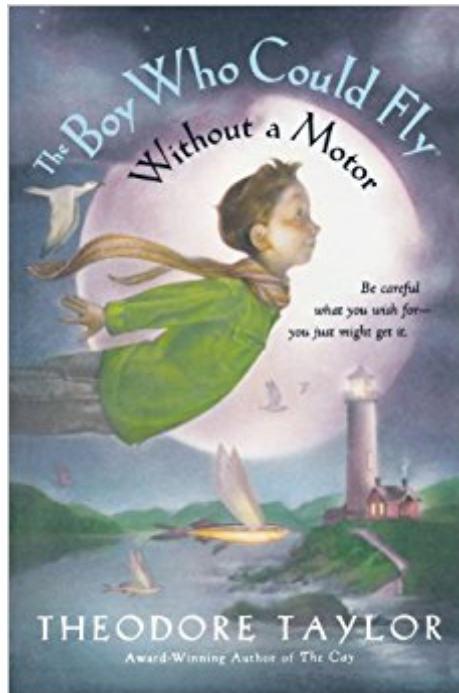




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# The Boy Who Could Fly Without A Motor



## Synopsis

Jon Jeffers is the loneliest nine-year-old on earth. It's 1935, and he's stuck on a tiny rocky island off the coast of San Francisco with his mother and his lighthouse-keeper father. So when the ghost of an ancient magician appears and offers to teach him to fly, Jon seizes the chance for adventure. But then he flies into serious trouble. . . .

## Book Information

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Age Range: 7 - 10 years

Grade Level: 2 - 5

## Customer Reviews

Set in 1935, Taylor's (The Cay) slim yet whimsical tale introduces lonely nine-year-old Jon, the son of the lighthouse keeper on remote Clementine Rock off the California coast. Possessing "an imagination as broad as the sweep of the light," the lad sometimes hears the moaning of ghosts of passengers who died when their ships allegedly crashed on the rock, among them the Clementine, a vessel carrying Chinese laborers to San Francisco in 1850. To combat his loneliness, the boy begins to practice telepathy after reading about it in Popular Science, beseeching anyone listening to send him "advice on how to body fly" so he can escape the tiny island. Ling Wu, the pompous ghost of a magician aboard the Clementine, sent by the Manchu dynasty to entertain the laborers, answers his call. He teaches Jon how to use his brain cells to levitate yet makes him promise he will never reveal the secret "on threat of being boiled in dragon's bile." Though the child initially practices within the confines of his room, one night he flies out over the ocean, where he's spotted

by the shocked crew of a fishing trawler. This sighting precipitates a government investigation, culminating in Jon demonstrating his skill to FDR, other officials and the media at the White House. A facile denouement brings the narrative down to earth a bit abruptly. But Taylor's tight writing and flair for the fanciful otherwise keeps this caper agreeably airborne. Ages 8-12. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Grade 3-6-Taylor spins a fantasy about Jon Jeffers, a lonely nine-year-old who lives with his parents in a lighthouse on an island 19 miles off the San Francisco coast. Anxious to break the tedium of his isolated life and fascinated by a parapsychology article in Popular Science, he summons Ling Wu, the ancient ghost of a Chinese magician, who teaches the boy to fly. Jon ignores his warning to levitate only "where no one will see," nearly provoking an international incident involving the Army, the Coast Guard, and the FBI. Finally Jon confesses that he, and not a "scout for Martian invaders," is responsible. He becomes so famous that he is invited to the White House to meet President and Mrs. Roosevelt. However, his joy in flying is short-lived because carrying heavy cans of paint becomes the only way he can stop from levitating and he wearies of the Coast Guard patrolling to ensure that communist Russians don't kidnap him. Jon eventually resummons Ling Wu, who cures him of his special skill, leaving the child earthbound but happy to play with his dog. The many references to world events-Lindbergh, the invention of radio, Communism, and J. Edgar Hoover-firmly ground the book in 1935. Although some of the dialogue strains credulity, the plot, the large-size font, and the many references to the paranormal will appeal to many children. Ellen Fader, Multnomah County Library, Portland, OR Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

The Kindle addition of this book is terrible. There are a million typos. For instance the word "faces" is misspelled as "feces". Ugh, big difference. I was reading this for an Author presentation on Theodore Taylor for a fifth grade class. The Cay is a wonderful book written by this author, The Boy Who Could Fly Without a Motor was definitely a miss for T.T.

The year is 1935. The setting: a small, rocky island off the coast of California , home to a lighthouse, a family of three, a dog named Smacks. The main character, Jon Jeffers, is nine, stuck on the island with his mother, Mabel, and his father, James, a member of the U.S. Coast Guard and temporary lighthouse keeper. Jon is lonely-so lonely that he attempts to contact someone (using telepathy) who can help him learn to "body fly." That way he could fly across the waves and visit the mainland

anytime he wanted. What he ends up doing is attracting the attention of a grumpy, long-dead Chinese magician named Ling Wu. Jon asks Ling Wu to teach him how to levitate. Ling Wu agrees, but makes Jon promise that he won't tell anyone the secret (and threatens to boil Jon in dragon's bile, stuff flaming straw up his nose, turn his ears into goat's horns, and nail his toes to a shark's back) if he does. Jon promises. After much trial and error--and a crash into his bedroom furniture---Jon learns to soar. He disobeys Ling Wu's orders not to fly a far distance at first and almost ends up in the ocean. His disobedience also causes his powers of levitation to go haywire. He begins to levitate at odd moments---and in front of his parents. Eventually the truth comes out. Jon is suddenly thrust into the lime light. The military becomes involved, as does President Roosevelt. Jon is a worldwide flying sensation. The problem is, he can't control it, and must walk around weighted down with paint buckets lest he fly into the atmosphere. The solution, thanks to Ling Wu, brings this touching, funny, satisfying, story full circle. Jon is a likeable character that upper elementary and middle grade readers will readily identify with. The story is ripe with ideas to explore: Jon's loneliness, his tenacious efforts to make his dream come true, his attempts to keep his word despite tremendous pressure not to. Reviewed by the Education Oasis Staff

I like to read books about people who can fly. :) This one sucked, though. It had kid-book logic that adults think is good for kids, but is actually just sort of the literary equivalent of baby talk.

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