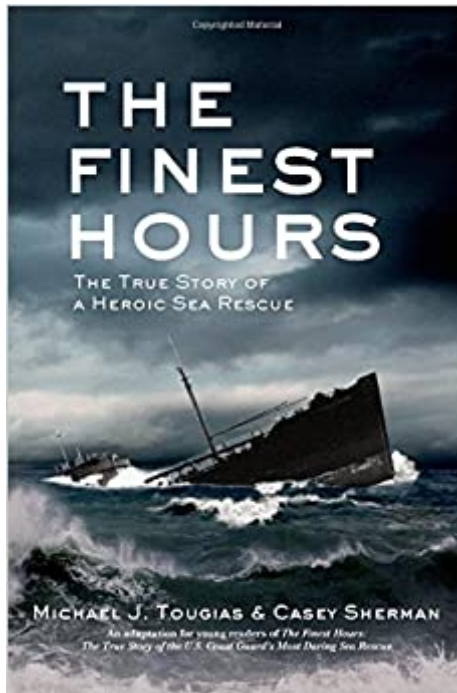




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# The Finest Hours: The True Story Of A Heroic Sea Rescue



## Synopsis

On the night of February 18, 1952, during one of the worst winter storms that New England has ever seen, two oil tankers just off the shore of Cape Cod were torn in half by the force of the storm. This middle-grade adaptation of an adult nonfiction book tells the story of the shipwreck and a harrowing Coast Guard rescue when four men in a tiny lifeboat overcame insurmountable odds and saved more than 30 stranded sailors. This is a fast-paced, uplifting story that puts young readers in the middle of the action. It's a gripping story of heroism and survival with the same intensity as the bestselling book and movie *The Perfect Storm*. A Christy Ottaviano Book

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 6 Up—This "young readers" adaptation of *The Finest Hours: The True Story of the U.S. Coast Guard's Most Daring Sea Rescue* (Scribner, 2009) tells the story of the 1952 rescue of 70 men (and the deaths of 14 more) aboard two oil tankers that were heavily damaged 20 miles apart during a fierce winter storm off Cape Cod. At times it reads as a character-driven narrative, with short, biographical sketches of many of the men; at other times, it speeds up with the pulse-pounding pace of a thriller. The authors ably capture the drama of the situation: seas at times reaching well over 50 feet, the "shudder and earsplitting crash" of a ship tossed on the waves, the pain screaming through the body of a man waiting to scramble out of the frigid water. On occasion, readers may get lost in some of the geographical details or names of crewmen that do not have a starring role. There are several pages of resources in the back matter, and a handful of them are

available online. An inset containing 20 photographs is included. This poignant history should be an easy sell to readers of adventure, seafaring, or rescue stories. A Disney film is in development. —Bob Hassett, Luther Jackson Middle School, Falls Church, VA

This young readers' adaptation of the authors' *The Finest Hours: The True Story of the U.S. Coast Guard's Most Daring Sea Rescue* (2009) was probably readied in anticipation of the upcoming Disney Studios film, and it's no wonder—it includes the long odds, multiple young characters, and triumph of the human spirit that made films like *The Perfect Storm* and *The Poseidon Adventure* blockbusters. It's perhaps a tougher job to pull off in so few pages, as most of the characters go undefined beyond their courage. But what courage it is! In February of 1952, a violent nor'easter off the Cape Cod coast ripped in half not one but two tankers, leading to three separate and practically suicidal rescue attempts. The accounts of each rescue's logistics—for example, sailors trying to time their leaps from their destroyed tanker to the rescue boat amid rocking waves—are nail-biting, and they are relayed by the authors with an effectively sober, just-the-facts terseness. It's invigorating if frustratingly abridged; those truly interested would do well to check out the original, too. Grades 6-9. —Daniel Kraus

it would be nice had indicated that this was a version of the book made for kids. There is an adult version too (and by that I don't mean Adult version, or maybe it is, I don't know since I only got this one). but come to think of it, this is probably the one to get because soon this will be a big screen movie with really good looking people in it, and the kids version is about all you need to compare to that. BUT, having read it and gotten most of the way through before I realized it was for kids, I would still say this is an excellent kids book. would recommend at around age 11 or 12 kids might find this interesting. A good gift if you are in to giving kids books for gifts.

With "The Finest Hours" Michael J. Tougias and Casey Sherman have written one of the most compelling, captivating, and fast-paced accounts in the history of maritime drama. On February 18, 1952 off Cape Cod not one but two World War Two vintage oil tankers, the "Pendleton" and the "Fort Mercer," broke in two in a tremendous storm. Depending on which of the four sections of the ships people were on greatly influenced their ability to survive in the frigid Atlantic. While the premise sounds incredible enough, the heroic battle of the US Coast Guard to rescue survivors is an amazing testament to the skill and determination to those men. I was especially impressed with

the actions in Bernie Webber's tiny and obsolete CG 36500 (fortunately now restored and on display in a museum) and the accounts of the crew's quiet heroism as related by the authors. This edition is for young readers, but is perfectly suitable for adults as well: the interview with the authors at the end clarifies what was removed from this version (largely technical information on the construction methods used in building oil tankers, etc.) As it is this version is eminently readable and thoroughly engrossing. Buy whichever version you prefer, but don't miss out on this incredible and incredibly well written tale of the sea.

My husband and I read this book together before going to see the movie that has arisen from it. The two -- book and movie -- are best when consumed as a package. The book is reasonably well organized, but is dealing with a time in which many actions are being taken at the same time. So its sequence of events is a little difficult to follow. However, having a pretty good idea of the truth helps when viewing the movie, which exaggerates the romance, but accurately dramatizes the actual rescues, which were amazing!

I am very much in the minority here, but I found this book to be more "meh" than mayhem. The actual rescue takes up about half the book. The rest is filled with one aside after another: the history of the Coast Guard; how one character met his wife; how fear raises your heart rate; a reporter driving through the blizzard to report the rescue. It all makes for a bit of a mess. There are chapters that really drag, as when the authors report on the findings of the post-rescue board of inquiry. The writing is bogged down by long sections of maritime jargon. There are continuity problems, too. On several occasions, the book mentions a nautical term, like hawser, without explaining what it is. Then later in the book, an explanation appears. Finally, the book ends on a really depressing note. The rescuers didn't really want the attention they received and in later years didn't share their exploits with their families. They just seemed to want to bury the past, but were also haunted by the experience. How unfortunate.

I loved this book but found myself wanting more. The section on the rescues themselves was well written and appeared to be well researched but I felt that the authors 'padded' the narrative for the last part of the book - including superfluous details on the history of people after the event, the public relations coup this event was for the CG, the effort to save the motor lifeboat and even a 50 year reunion of the crew and survivors. All of that material could have comprised a series of appendices; I wanted all the detail on the actual RESCUES.

I have a personal interest in *The Finest Hours* - and found it to be a true gift. Growing up I had heard a tiny bit about this unique Coast Guard rescue, but since my father never talked about it, my interest never really picqued until, as an adult, I started delving into his past. I was thrilled when I came upon two books, both written in 2010, that offered facts and stories that I might never have known without them. *The Finest Hours* is exceptional in its detail and approach to the separate simultaneous rescues of two ships' crews during a killer nor'easter on February 18 and 19, 1952 - my father's 20th birthday. My father was one of the men that went out to the Fort Mercer. The story is still very heartwrenching for him to talk about; the loss of life is something he has never gotten over. I must say, though, that this book - and the book *Two Tankers Down* - has helped him open up to my many questions - and his memory of the details reflect perfectly the story that Mr. Tougias and Mr. Sherman tell so thoroughly. Living through it, he never really knew all of the details of the Pendleton rescue and I know that he has greatly appreciated learning the specifics from this accurate account. This book is a perfect read for anyone interested in maritime history, heroism, New England storms and of course the United States Coast Guard. I grew up very proud of that branch of the military and this book reiterates the fact that always being prepared to save lives is as honorable today as it was for those brave men battling waves, wind and weather during their ultimate challenge at sea in 1952, 59 years ago. I thank both authors for documenting this amazing story; it means the world to me, personally. It is a wonderful book.

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