



The Fo'c'sle: Henry Beston's "Outermost House"

Nan Parson Rossiter

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Most adults know, and many have read, Henry Beston's beloved account of the year he spent in a shack high on a dune overlooking the thundering surf of the Atlantic. Here, on the outer forearm of Cape Cod, looking uninterrupted due east to Portugal, he made a life in a 16 x 20' shack, simply furnished with a kitchen, a bed, a chest of drawers, a writing table, and a few chairs. He lived there, alone, through the changing seasons, the migration of birds, the howling of the winter storms, the occasional visits of surfmen from nearby Nauset Station, and the turning of the stars in the night sky. During the days, he would wander along the beach, take notes, and think. At dusk he would come home to write by lantern light. The result was his immortal record of that year on the Nauset dunes, *The Outermost House*. The house was known as "The Fo'c'sle."

Now we have a record of that year for younger readers, brilliantly retold and illustrated by Nan Parson Rossiter. Her artwork glows with the same inner light and simplicity that animated Beston's prose and amplified the natural world. And although his memorable prose is incorporated throughout the book, it is Rossiter's skill, as both an artist and an interpreter, that makes him, his year, and the little shack he so loved come convincingly, and poignantly, to life.

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