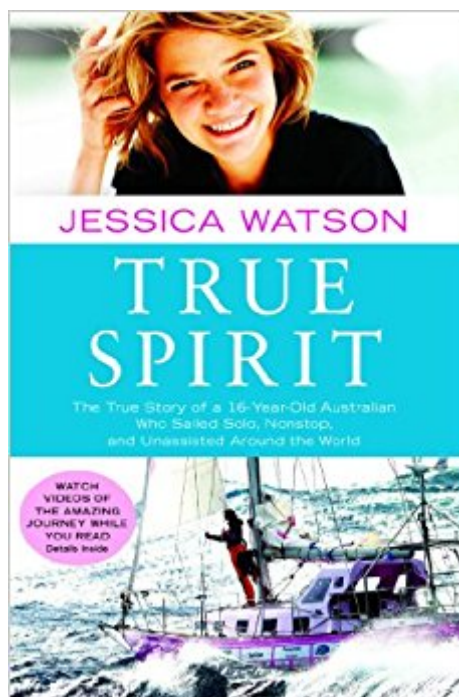




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True Spirit: The True Story Of A 16-Year-Old Australian Who Sailed Solo, Nonstop, And Unassisted Around The World



Synopsis

On May 15, 2010, after 210 days at sea and more than 22,000 nautical miles, 16-year-old Jessica Watson sailed her 33-foot boat triumphantly back to land. She had done it. She was the youngest person to sail solo, unassisted, and nonstop around the world. Jessica spent years preparing for this moment, years focused on achieving her dream. Yet only eight months before, she collided with a 63,000-ton freighter. It seemed to many that she'd failed before she'd even begun, but Jessica brushed herself off, held her head high, and kept going. Told in Jessica's own words, *True Spirit* is the story of her epic voyage. It tells how a young girl, once afraid of everything, decided to test herself on an extraordinary adventure that included gale-force winds, mountainous waves, hazardous icebergs, and extreme loneliness on a vast sea, with no land in sight and no help close at hand. *True Spirit* is an inspiring story of risk, guts, determination, and achievement that ultimately proves we all have the power to live our dreams no matter how big or small.

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Customer Reviews

Jessica Watson was born on May 18th, 1993 on the Gold Coast of Australia. On May 15, 2010, at just sixteen, she became the youngest person to have ever sail solo, unassisted and non-stop around the globe.

A note from the author
Thanks to all the people who have followed my blog. When I was putting this book together with my publisher, I started to rewrite the story of the voyage in a more traditional

way, but it didn't work. I lost something doing this. Instead, I decided to include the blogs, though they have been edited sometimes, and then expand on them to reveal things I wasn't quite ready to talk about when I was at sea and to share things I have learned since. I hope you enjoy reading about my whole journey, not just my 210 days on the ocean. It can get a bit confusing but throughout this book I have used miles to measure distances on land, and nautical miles to measure distances at sea. 1 nautical mile = 1.15 miles All temperatures are given in degrees Fahrenheit. I've tried to explain the sailing terms as I go, but I have also included a glossary at the back of the book. I hope you find it helpful.

Jessica Watson, 2010

Chart of Jessica's circumnavigation

1. Departed from Sydney, October 18, 2009
2. Crossed the equator, November 19, 2009
3. Caught my first (and only) fish, November 23, 2009
4. Christmas at Point Nemo – the farthest point from any land
5. Rounded Cape Horn, January 13, 2010
6. Experienced four knockdowns in the South Atlantic Ocean, January 23, 2010
7. Passed south of Cape Town and Cape Agulhas, February 23, 2010
8. Roughly halfway between Cape Agulhas and Cape Leeuwin, March 19, 2010
9. Sailed under Cape Leeuwin, back in Australian waters, April 11, 2010
10. Wild seas rounding Tasmania, May 2, 2010
11. Arrived back in Sydney Harbour, May 15, 2010

What is it in the sea life which is so powerful in its influence? It whispers in the wind of the veldt, it hums in the music of the tropical night above all it is there to the man who holds the nightwatch alone at sea. It is the sense of things done, of things endured, of meanings not understood; the secret of the Deep Silence, which is of eternity, which the heart cannot speak.

From *Mast and Sail in Europe and Asia* by H. Warrington Smyth (1867–1943)

Preface

A half-moon had risen, giving the sea a silvery sheen above the darkness below. After sunset, the still, glassy conditions of the afternoon had been blown away by a light wind from the west, and *Ella's Pink Lady* was making good time under full sail with the mainsail, staysail, and headsail set. I couldn't have asked for better conditions for my first night out. Watching *Ella's Pink Lady* sail along at a steady 4 knots, I felt extremely proud of my cute little pink yacht. I contemplated the next few days before my circumnavigation. It was a beautiful night, and the thought of something going wrong was the farthest thing from my mind. I'd left Mooloolaba with an escort of boats and helicopters at around ten that morning, and after fifteen hours at sea and weeks of full-time preparation I was feeling tired and slightly queasy. It normally took me a few days to find my sea legs. Confident that everything was fine, I decided to put my head down for a few minutes and have a catnap. *Ella's Pink Lady* and I were about 15 nautical miles east of North Stradbroke Island by this point. I'd have liked to have been farther offshore, away from the local fishing fleets and possible shipping. However, the current and earlier light winds

meant I hadn't sailed very far since leaving. After scanning the horizon, checking the radar and AIS (alarm indication system), and setting my alarms, I climbed into my bunk, still wearing my life jacket and harness. A horrible bone-shuddering explosion of noise woke me as Ella's Pink Lady was suddenly stopped in her tracks and violently spun around. I jumped up as the awful grinding noise continued, and a quick glance up through the companionway told me that we'd collided with something huge: a ship. The sky was a wall of black steel, towering over me and obscuring the stars. The roar of engines filled my head and my whole world. Leaning out into the cockpit, I grabbed at the tiller, flicked off the autopilot, and tried to steer us. It was hopeless. There was nowhere to go, nothing I could do. Shuddering and screeching, we were being swept down the ship's hull. Another glance told me that the ship's stern, with its bridges protruding, was fast approaching. The noises were getting louder and, knowing that my mast and rigging were about to come down, I rushed back below hoping for some protection. With my hands over my head, I sat on my bunk as a whole new and far more terrible set of noises began. A few seconds passed, but to me they felt like hours. The cupboard next to me ripped apart as the chainplate behind the bulkhead splintered it into a million pieces. The boat heeled to one side, then sprang upright with the loudest explosion yet as the entangled rigging suddenly freed itself and crashed to the deck. When the boat steadied and the roar of the engines started to fade, I went back on deck. It was a mess. There was rigging, lines, and huge rusty flakes of black paint and slivers of metal from the ship's hull everywhere. Beyond Ella's Pink Lady I could see the dark outline of the huge ship's stern slipping away unaffected, leaving us at a stop in the foaming white slipstream. Shocked and disbelieving, my head still reeling, I desperately tried to come to grips with what had happened while checking the bilges for water and the hull for damage. All I could think was, "my poor boat" and while I flicked switches to see what equipment still worked, it became a sort of chant "my poor boat, my poor, poor boat. I was numb and still shaking off the last remnants of sleep; being scared hadn't crossed my mind. My only thoughts were for Ella's Pink Lady. Taking deep breaths to calm my shaking hands, I picked up the radio to call the ship and then grabbed the phone to tell Dad what had happened. "I'm okay," I told him. "I'm fine, perfectly okay, but we've been hit by a ship, we've been dismantled." I finished in a rush. Back on deck, alone and miles from land, it took me more than two hours to slowly clear the deck, lash the broken rigging in place, and cut away the tangled headsail. I had to pause frequently to lean over the side and throw up, as my earlier queasiness had turned into full-blown seasickness. Finally, I turned on the engine to motor the six hours to the Gold Coast. How

quickly everything had changed. Ahead of me lay at least 23,000 nautical miles of empty ocean, furious gales, and the threat of multiple knockdowns as I sailed around the world. But on that day, I doubted that anything I was to face in my months alone at sea would be as difficult as holding my head high as I steered a crippled Ella's Pink Lady between the Gold Coast breakwaters and saw the crowds lining the river, the fleet of spectator boats, and the scrum of waiting media. I didn't know if the crowd was there to show their support or to witness what many thought was my early defeat. I had to force myself to ignore negative thoughts and to concentrate only on guiding us up the river, throwing the occasional wave and half-hearted smile to nearby boats. I knew that in one horrifying incident I had given fuel to anyone who had criticized me and my parents for what I was trying to do. In their eyes, I had proved exactly why I shouldn't ever be permitted to sail alone. However, in that same moment, I had proved to myself that I had the ability to achieve my dream. Any doubts about whether I could cope mentally vanished. I realized my inner strength. In the coming months, when Ella's Pink Lady was thrown violently about by the wind and waves, or when home felt a million miles away as we drifted, becalmed, and the days ran into each other in slow motion, I was able to look back on that day after the collision with the 63,000-ton bulk carrier Silver Yang and draw strength from knowing I'd held myself together when all I really wanted to do was fall apart. As the saying goes, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. That tanker could have killed me, but it didn't. And in its wake I was stronger, more determined, and ready for whatever came my way almost. Â© 2010 Jessica Watson

Every once in a blue moon someone comes along and has a different take on how to live life. All of us, when we were young, read about people doing amazing things, but how many of us, when the book was put down, said to themselves, "I could do that " and then went about doing it! Imagine what chain of events would have had to occur for a teenager who was washing dishes to pay for sailing experience, with no boat and only a dream, to become the girl who two years later would sail into Sydney harbor to the rapturous welcome of tens of thousands of fans, the public praise of the Prime Minister, and international sailing stardom! Written, first person, in an engaging and understated style, the book "True Spirit" is the story of how a young girl from an adventurous family was taken by the dream of sailing around the world, solo, nonstop and unassisted after hearing a book by Jesse Martin. Martin, who had circumnavigated ten years before, had written how he was just an average person with a dream. Through hard work and dogged perseverance, Jessica replicates his achievement a few days short of her seventeenth birthday. Jess's charming

personality really comes through in the book, as it did in the captivating blogs she wrote during the voyage. "True Spirit" starts with Jessica's life before the dream takes hold at age eleven. Jessica gives some background of her unusual childhood living on a boat, and on the development of her taste for adventure. Following, is a description of how all the various pieces came together, from preparing the boat, to the sponsorships and public debate over her age, and the wisdom of someone so young undertaking such a difficult and possibly deadly voyage. The events surrounding her dramatic ship collision at night during a practice run, as well as the resulting public debate are covered. The book really takes off as she leaves Sydney harbor and into the unknown. As part of the voyage narrative, the blogs that Jessica sent from sea are included and elaborated on, giving the reader an insight into Jess's emotional highs and lows while solo voyaging. All was not smooth sailing. In the South Atlantic the yacht suffered four serious knockdowns. The blogs are the heart of the book, and give the reader a sense of what it is like to be at sea, with its vast sky, sealife, and raw nature. The daily rhythm of life at sea is captured, with its routines, reflective times, and constantly changing weather conditions. Jessica becomes one with the sea and her boat, Ella's Pink Lady. The last part of the book chronicles the incredible welcome that Jessica received after completing her record breaking voyage, as a country stopped to welcome home one of its own who dared to carry on in the face of adversity, and fulfill her ambition. Upon finishing the book I was struck by how absolutely amazing Jessica is, and how much she accomplished in a very short time. A humble soul, Jessica insists she is an average person. Her message to the world is that we all have the ability to do remarkable things, we just have to dream, plan and work hard! Jessica Watson is an inspiration, and I'm sure we haven't heard the last from this very special person. Thomas

I followed Jessica's voyage 'round the world through her blogs and so when the book True Spirit came out I just had to buy it. A large portion of the book contains all her blogs written during the voyage. In this section of the book Jessica sprinkles in a lot of notes elaborating on her condition, thoughts and fears at the time. In some cases she admits that her realtime blogs were more upbeat than she was feeling, her honesty in this book is enchanting. She had some seriously dark moods during her voyage but Jessica wanted her parents and supporters to keep a positive attitude and she later shows how insightful that strategy was after she found herself on shore fretting over Abby Sutherland's disappearance. Jessica realized that while being alone on a boat in the middle of a raging ocean can be frightening, it can be even more frightening to be sitting on shore worrying about someone on a boat in the middle of a raging ocean. Most of all this book can serve as an

inspiration to young people everywhere. Not everyone has a dream to sail around the world, but almost everyone has a dream, and in this book Jessica explains how she made her dream a reality. Sure, some adults helped her but Jessica makes it clear that she had to PROVE to them that she was dedicated enough to follow through, especially after crashing her boat into a freighter just before departure. She also explains that the biggest thing her parents did for her was to stand out of the way and allow her to live her dream. Good advice for all parents.

Although she denies it, Jessica Watson is a true hero adventurer, as Australia confirmed last week by naming her Young Australian of the Year. This book tells the story of her trip around the world, solo, non-stop and unassisted. This means that she was not allowed to land anywhere or receive physical help from anyone. She did have telephone and internet contact with friends and a whole support team to give her sophisticated weather reports and advice on how to fix broken equipment. She had to do it all--from sailing under very difficult conditions to repairing a broken diesel engine and other equipment. This book is the story of Jessica's odyssey, beginning with a young girl's incredible dream and ending with thousands of Australians cheering her arrival in Sydney harbour at journey's end. The book is written around her blog, on which she gave almost daily reports of her trip. When she arrived home, Jessica wove her retrospective thoughts around the blog narrative, giving the reader insight into what she was feeling and how she kept herself going emotionally, telling some of the things she did not want to put in the blog. It is a saga that moves from long periods of boredom to sheer terror as sudden storms toss her boat around and even upside down. Sometimes all she could do was go into the cabin strap herself in and wait for it to be over. Above all, Jessica is a gifted writer, even without an editor. She did not have one when writing her blogs. The Kindle addition has hotlinks along the way to video blogs that Jessica posted on her journey. It was a life changing experience. Jessica left Australia as a girl and returned several months later as a young woman. Her story should be an inspiration for any young person that you can live your dream and make a difference in the world. One of the reasons Jessica wanted to take on this adventure was that as a teenage girl people did not take seriously her skills as a sailor. In fact, before she left, many were questioning the wisdom of letting her attempt this trip. At her welcome home, they were silent. If she has accomplished nothing else, she knows that no one will ever dismiss her as a silly girl again! I hope this book will inspire other young people to take up sailing. Being a solo sailor teaches you to use the wind and your boat. It expands your knowledge of both what you can do and what you can't. For those of us that are older, it is an exciting story and an encouraging bit of inspiration in times when most of the news is troubling.

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