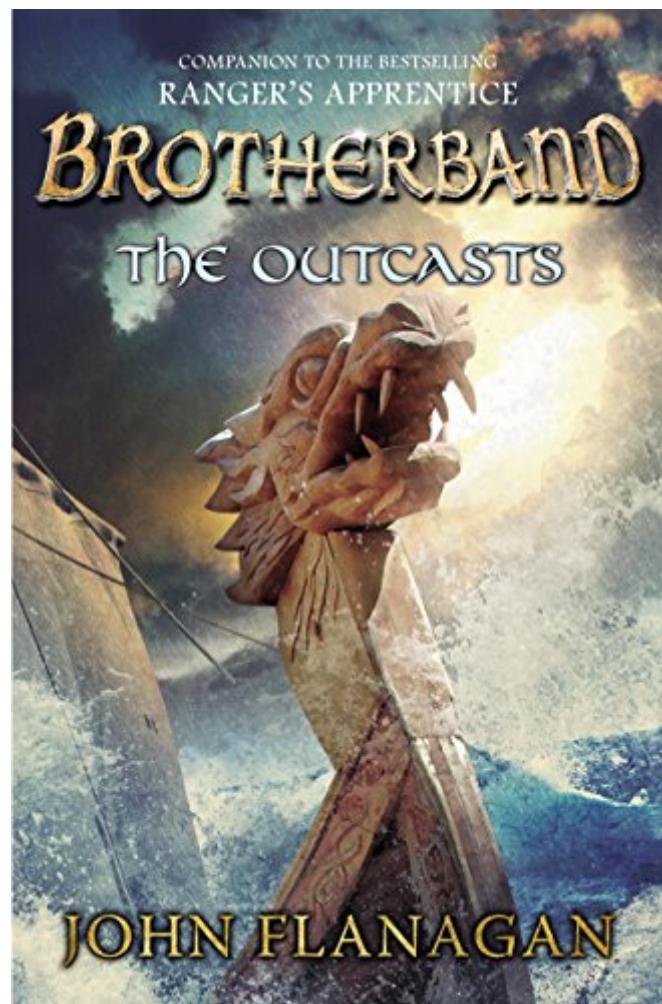


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The Outcasts: Brotherband Chronicles, Book 1



Synopsis

From the author of the global phenomenon Ranger's Apprentice! They are outcasts. Hal, Stig, and the others - they are the boys the others want no part of. Skandians, as any reader of Ranger's Apprentice could tell you, are known for their size and strength. Not these boys. Yet that doesn't mean they don't have skills. And courage - which they will need every ounce of to do battle at sea against the other bands, the Wolves and the Sharks, in the ultimate race. The icy waters make for a treacherous playing field . . . especially when not everyone thinks of it as playing. John Flanagan, author of the international phenomenon Ranger's Apprentice, creates a new cast of characters to populate his world of Skandians and Araluens, a world millions of young readers around the world have come to know and admire. Full of seafaring adventures and epic battles, Book 1 of The Brotherband Chronicles is sure to thrill readers of Ranger's Apprentice while enticing a whole new generation just now discovering the books. Perfect for fans of J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, T.H. White's The Sword in the Stone, Christopher Paolini's Eragon series, and George R. R. Martin's Game of Thrones/A Song of Ice and Fire series.

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Customer Reviews

John Flanagan ended his "Lost Stories" collection by hinting at a new hero we hadn't yet seen -- a half-Skandian, half-Araluen boy. And he makes good on those hints with "The Brotherband Chronicles: The Outcasts," the first part of a new series about a "brotherband" of oddball teenagers whom nobody else wants. Flanagan really shows how he's grown as a writer in this book -- while it has lots of training sequences and competitions between the brotherbands, he weaves in a darker tale about very sneaky pirates. Hal has never fit in with the other boys in Hallashom, due to his mother being an ex-slave from Araluen. So he isn't happy to be starting out the brotherband training that all Skandian boys go through. He's especially concerned because the arrogant, cruel Tursgud -- who particularly hates Hal -- will be competing against him. Hal has gotten some training in fighting from the one-armed tramp Thorn, but it might not be enough to keep him safe. And on the day when the three brotherbands will be chosen, Hal finds himself the leader of one group -- a group of outcasts that nobody else wants. However, Hal has ingenuity, charisma and a lot of guts, and his buddies have their own unique qualities -- hot-tempered Stig, half-blind but strong Ingvar, pickpocket Jesper, quarrelsome twins Wulf and Ulf, sharp-tongued Stefan and the quiet Edvin. And as the boys struggle through the training, a mysterious ship filled with Magyaran pirates is plotting to infiltrate Hallashom and steal its greatest treasure... "The Brotherband Chronicles - The Outcasts" is a thoroughly solid beginning to John Flanagan's new series, especially since it builds on the world he began with in the Ranger's Apprentice series.

I'd loved John Flanagan's Ranger Apprentice series and had high hopes for the first book in his new series, The Outcasts. This time, Flanagan tells the story of Skanians, a race and culture similar to the Vikings, through the point of view of Hal. Hal's father, Mikkel, was a renowned warrior who had traveled with Erak and was killed in battle while Hal was a very young child. Mikkel's best friend Thorn promises to look after Mikkel's son and wife. Hal grew up with his Araluen mother, always a bit of a stranger in his home. Until he somehow saves the life of Stig, another outsider of sorts. Stig and Hal become fast friends. Stig is hotheaded, loyal, and natural athlete. Hal is innovative, meticulous, and a careful planner. Together, they make a strong team. They make friends with other boys. By the time that the boys are of age for the Brotherband training, they're excited and eager to prove themselves. For Skanians, Brotherband training is a rite of passage and a chance to make a name for themselves. The year that Hal and Stig participate, there is an unusual number of boys. Instead of two teams, Erak agrees to create three teams. The last team is made up of the boys that we're selected by the other leaders - much like those last chosen during gym class but with much higher stakes. Stig is Hal's loyal lieutenant and Hal agrees to lead the group. It becomes clear

through his carefully thought out decisions that Hal has both the mind and personality to lead by example. Though their group, the Herons, face groups with greater strength and skill, the competition teaches the boys the power of teamwork and loyalty. In The Outcasts, John Flanagan gives us another set of heroes to root for and adventures to enjoy.

Hal doesn't really fit into the typical mold of a Skandian nor does he really fit in well anywhere for that matter since his mother is an ex-slave from Araluen. So when he comes of age and begins brotherband training he's a bit worried, especially about Tursgud who makes Hal's life miserable every chance he gets....and is bound to be one of the leaders of the brotherbands. So its with a just a wee bit of surprise and trepidation that Hal finds himself a leader of a brotherband, a brotherband of other outcasts. Like him. No one takes this brotherband seriously, yet each of the boys has their own unique talents and bit by bit they begin to show the others what they're really made of. Meanwhile a mysterious ship filled with Magyaran pirates has made landfall...what have they come for? And what role with Hal and his brotherband play? I loved Flangan's Ranger Apprentice series so I approached this new one with both glee and a bit of trepidation. After reading the description of the book I was a bit worried that Flangan was recreating Will Treaty (the main character in the Ranger Apprentice series) just in a different nation. I mean Hal sounds a good bit like him--an outcast, an Araluen, smart and quick on his feet, a leader...but he's much more as well. He's an inventor always seeking to improve things, a shipbuilder, and a swordsman like his dad. And even though some of the characters, such as Steig, have some traits similar to other Ranger Apprentice characters they stand on their own. My worries were clearly unfounded as Flangan has once again crafted a fantastic tale of adventure and intrigue. It's clear that Flangan has grown as a writer as this book jam packed with action, adventure, and humor--such as Erak's storeroom of treasure.

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