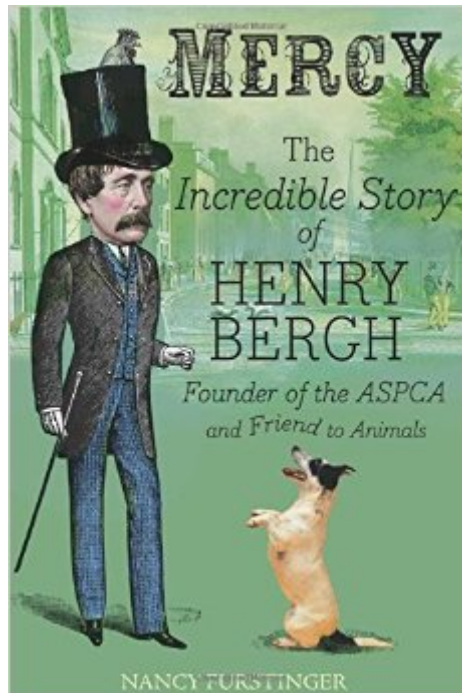


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# Mercy: The Incredible Story Of Henry Bergh, Founder Of The ASPCA And Friend To Animals



## Synopsis

Only 150 years ago, most animals in America were subject to horrific treatment. They needed a champion to protect them from abject cruelty, and that person was Henry Bergh. After witnessing the beating of a horse in the streets of New York and attending a bullfight in Spain, Bergh found his calling. He became an enforcer of animal rights and founded the ASPCA, as well as created many animal cruelty laws. He even expanded his advocacy to children. When Bergh died in 1888, the idea that children and animals should be protected from cruelty was widely accepted: "Mercy to animals means mercy to mankind."

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (23 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

## Customer Reviews

I knew, going into this, that reading this book for CHILDREN still might make me angry. And it did. And that's a "Good Thing." Because, with Henry Bergh being even ANGRIER and more INCENSED over the treatment of horses, dogs, cats, pigs, chickens and "All Creatures Great and Small" than I was, we have the ASPCA. The most stomach-turning and life changing book that I had ever read was Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle" and I was hoping that THIS book was a wee bit PG in it's stories of animal abuse. And....it is. But still, if you are empathetic with ANY kind of animal, reading these PG stories of how a "Lazy and Spoiled Layabout" could become the champion of Animal Welfare, you WILL become angry!! I found the book absolutely FASCINATING and was very appreciative of

the candid portrayal of Henry Bergh that the author Nancy Furstinger gave her readers. No, it's not "Ripped From The Headlines" tabloid fodder, but she so easily could have gone down that route. But, she does lay it out there that Henry didn't begin to find himself, and his cause, until he returns from Russia as the secretary and acting vice-consul to the American legation....at the age of FIFTY!!!!We need to remember that in the those days, 50 was NOT 'the new 20'----it was more like the "new 80", back then. So, for this exceedingly wealthy heir to a shipping fortune to quit gallivanting about the globe for years at a time and taking up such a radical cause....all I can say, is that I now have a NEW "Personal Hero.I did a Wiki search on Henry and they did a real "gloss over" job on him. Nancy reveals all this Warts and Faults, which makes me appreciate even more what he accomplished. If you are a fan of 'Downton Abbey', you've seen those incredibly wealth dandy's, as they float from party to hunting party to globe trotting, never accomplishing anything with their life but pumping out an "heir and a spare." It would have been SO easy for Henry to turn a blind eye to the cruelties that he and his wife witnessed, but he didn't.And the world is a better place for it and millions of animals who don't vote and have no say are now protected.The illustrations are very unique: they look like Pen & Ink renderings with water colour. I enjoyed the detail, immensely and they reminded me of illustrations that I would have seen in my Grandmother's books from the 1920's-1940's.Is this suitable for children? Yes. Over the age of 10+, for sure. And be prepared for some really tough discussions when your child reads this book. But, if we don't learn from our past, we're doomed to repeat it, so this book is necessary reading to see how far we've come, as a species.I don't care WHAT subject you are writing about that even puts a toe into an atrocity: slavery, child abuse, animal abuse, the destruction of the environment or sex trafficking....there is NO WAY that you can not become enraged by the past. But, Nancy did an upstanding job of being as light handed as she could about the animal abuse, while still telling Henry's story.What a great book! What a great author! What great illustrations! I rarely buy Paper books any longer, preferring to read from my Kindle. But, this book was very, very worth my going "Old School" with an actual real book.

I'm not a pet handler/owner now though I had a dog when I was a child. A lot of my friends have pets and one of them is very engaged in the local pet sheltering and adoption program. I've heard of the ASPCA but I don't much about it, particularly its history until I read this book.Written for children but this has a lot of information that would be important for many of us adults to learn, too. The tone is engaging but honest, if your child is very sensitive about the treatment of animals you'll want to read this book with them. It has color pictures by Vincent Desjardins, a fairly new illustrator who

shows great promise if this book is even a small hint of what he can do. Throughout the book there are 13 historical notes that vary in length but which all provided very interesting context for what ASPCA founder Henry Bergh had to contend with as he fought for animal protections. We learn more details about cultural practices, legal regulations, and individuals who helped or hindered Bergh. These historical details would drag down the story so I think they are well placed as they are. I'm so glad that Nancy Furstinger's birthday connection to Henry Bergh inspired her to research his life and write this book. I learned a lot!

I am a big fan of Nancy Furstinger's and was anxious to read her new book, "Mercy"! I was not disappointed. As a child, "Black Beauty" was one of my very favorite books although it had me in tears at times - I was a little concerned that "Mercy" might affect me this way too. However, Nancy writes so well and does such a wonderful job of telling the story of Henry Bergh's life that she never elaborated on the terrible cruelty he encountered, but concentrated more on him working to prevent it. This is a must read for anyone at any age - but especially for children because it is a true story that will teach them how animals feel pain just like we do and that cruelty to animals is unacceptable. The art work in this book was perfect, especially for that time period. Pictures and illustrations are very much a part of a child's imagination as the written word - and this book combines both beautifully.

I really liked this book kind of to my surprise. My partner is an animals right attorney and I have to admit I got it more for her than me. But I was totally drawn into the story. Or perhaps more precisely I was drawn into the history. The author does a great job of setting the time period through her writing and especially through historical side bars. She does a good job of giving the social and political contexts through them. And facts like what life would be in an urban area with thousands of horses was brought to life in her writing. The life of Henry Bergh seemed almost like a thread just in place to string one amazing fact after another. Facts like people used to bet on a famous dog killing a gibbon and the first sonar to the SPCA believed he was going to be reincarnated as a horse so he wanted a better world for horses. You can't make stuff like that up and those are the types of trivia I live for. I did have some concern about the book getting gratuitously gory, like some PETA shock video, but it was not too bad. The topic of animal abuse is heavy, and many of the scenes described are painful to read. I guess I'm not a big fan of my youngest reading these seems but tweets and up should be fine. The writing is decent and it reads well and fast. It seemed a little repetitive in parts and perhaps could have been a little shorter, but a great educational book.

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