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Kevin and the Pirate Test; Smudger and the Smelly Fish; Doris's Brilliant Birthday; Captain Motley and the Pirate's Gold

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

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These four 'Motley Crew' books in the 'Rocket' series, intended for children who have just started reading independently, are tremendous fun. Forget Captain Pugwash, here we have the crew of the *Hesmerelda*, led by Captain Motley with Squawk, his rhyme-speaking parrot, eager cabin boy Kevin, scruffy first mate Smudger and the hopeless cook Doris McNorris. Each story sees the crew of the *Hesmerelda* coming up against their arch enemy Horatio Thunderguts, a maritime Dick Dastardly if ever there was one! Thunderguts rightly gets his comeuppance with Captain Motley and his crew earning brownie points from the Chief Pirate who always seems to arrive at the right moment.

Each of the *Hesmerelda's* four crew members gets a share of the spotlight. The cabin boy is the main focus in **Kevin and the Pirate Test**, which sees Kevin attempting to pass his GPSE (Good Pirate Skills Exam). There is hard work for the crew when the fastidious mother of the first mate comes on board in **Smudger and the Smelly Fish**. The ship's cook Doris, who is hopeless at making porridge, is upset when she thinks everyone has forgotten her birthday in **Doris's Brilliant Birthday**, but as the title suggests, it all ends happily, though the surprise party organised by the crew doesn't exactly go as planned! In **Captain Motley and the Pirate's Gold** the crew of the *Hesmerelda* win a huge bag of gold doubloons by being judged the smartest ship in the Pirate Fleet by the Chief Pirate, despite the concerted efforts of the nasty but completely incompetent Horatio Thunderguts.

All four stories are well written with an underlying cheeky sense of humour pervading. This is especially evident in Squawk's rhyming couplets. A successful mix of speech bubbles and traditional text is used in all four books. The cartoon illustrations work well.

Running Order:

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