



Hammer of Witches

Shana Mlawski

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Baltasar Infante, a bookmaker's apprentice living in 1492 Spain, can weasel out of any problem with a good story. But when he awakes one night to find a monster straight out of the stories peering at him through his window, he's in trouble that even he can't talk his way out of.

Soon Baltasar is captured by a mysterious arm of the Spanish Inquisition, the Malleus Maleficarum, that demands he reveal the whereabouts of Amir al-Katib, a legendary Moorish sorcerer who can bring myths and the creatures within them to life. Baltasar doesn't know where the man is—or that he himself has the power to summon genies and golems.

Baltasar must escape, find al-Katib, and defeat a dreadful power that may destroy the world. As Baltasar's journey takes him into uncharted lands on Columbus's voyage westward, he learns that stories are more powerful than he once believed them to be—and much more dangerous.

Hammer of Witches Details

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From Reader Review Hammer of Witches for online ebook

Sara Latta says

Magic, Monsters, and Christopher Columbus

“My uncle Diego always said there was magic in a story.”

In Shana Mlawski’s debut novel, “Hammer of Witches” (Tu Books, an imprint of Lee & Low Books, 2013), stories are magic—quite literally. Fourteen year-old Baltasar Infante has grown up listening to his bookmaker uncle’s stories—tales about imps who ruin the work of scribes, giant clay creatures that can be summoned with a word, and most of all, Amir al-Katib, the legendary Moorish sorcerer who turned traitor to Spain. But Baltasar always thought they were just that—stories—until he gets into a tight spot and accidentally summons a golem.

The creature saves his life, but he soon finds himself on the run from the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the sinister witch-hunting arm of the Spanish Inquisition. Along the way, he picks up a genie (although she doesn’t grant wishes; “[o]nly attention-starved genies do that, and I am not attention-starved!”) and pays a visit to Baba Yaga, the witch of Russian folklore, who tells him that his true mission is to find al-Katib and prevent the destruction of the world as they know it.

He finds himself on a ship named the *Santa Maria*, captained by one Cristóbal Colón (Christopher Columbus), heading into unchartered waters. Along the way, Baltasar masters his powers as a Storyteller, even summoning the Biblical Leviathan, with near-disastrous results.

Mlawski spins a terrifically entertaining tale, but her writing can sometimes be awkward and clunky (“In the middle of the room sat a large table carved from a single piece of wood, and in the corner lounged a fur-covered bed.” One can lounge on a bed, but I have never seen a bed lounge.). Baltasar can sometimes be annoyingly clueless. “So you’re saying there are spells that can make girls look like boys?” he asks one character, who responds, “Yes! In fact there are about a thousand stories that can do that. Because there are about a thousand stories about women dressing up as men to get the respect they deserve!” Well, knock me over with a feather duster.

These quibbles are distractions, but they shouldn’t be deal-breakers for most readers twelve years and older, especially if they like fast-paced historical fiction with a generous helping of fantasy. There is also a terrific author’s note at the end in which she explains which events and characters are historically accurate and which are products of her imagination (she acknowledges that while the people upon which the characters Baltasar and Pedro are based are real, they were most likely not wizards).

Sara Latta is a science writer and author of 17 books for children and young adults. You can learn more about her work and link to past reviews at <http://www.saralatta.com>. This review originally appeared in the May 19, 2013 edition of *The News-Gazette*.

Tessa Joy says

Baltasar Infante is unaware he has the gift of storytelling: the ability to physically conjure up the characters and creatures from tales. Living in 1490s Spain with this talent is dangerous because a branch of the Inquisition, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, are hunting storytellers down. The *Malleus* kidnap and torture Baltasar for information about the sorcerer Amir al-Katib. Baltasar has never met al-Katib but the *Malleus* slip that Baltasar is al-Katib’s son. Escaping the *Malleus*, Baltasar goes on a quest to find his father and stop a disastrous prophecy from being fulfilled. His journey takes him on an exploratory mission with Cristóbal Colón to find the West Indies. The voyage is filled with danger as Baltasar tests his storytelling skills and

follows the deadly trail of his father.

Hammer of Witches is an inventive story, mixing Christopher Columbus's voyage to the New World with magic. But Mlawkshi's creativity feels clumsily pasted together because she does not flesh out a strong foundation for the magic in her story. Readers might think they have a solid grasp of Mlawski's world only to have it crumble with inconsistent or random details. This plot weakness unfortunately spreads into Mlawski's character development. Baltasar's actions and thinking do not always make sense. And Baltasar's companion, half-genie Jinniyah, seems flat and irrelevant to the story. These problems may have been avoided if Mlawski spent less time being historically accurate with Columbus's voyage and more time stabilizing her world building and fleshing out her character's motives.

(See other reviews at Children's Compass Chronicle: childrenscompasschronicle.blogspot.com)

Greis says

So when I picked up this book, I hadn't read the summary or knew anything at all about it, I just really liked the cover.

The story follows a boy named Baltasar who finds out that he's a Storyteller and that he's being hunted by a secret organization. He hears of a prophecy that speaks about this dangerous force that's moving West from Spain and so Baltasar thinks that it's Amir al-Katib, his father. He sets off with his friend Jinniyah, who's half genie half human, on the voyage that the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria are set on in order to track down his father and to get away from the secret organization. Meanwhile, Amir thinks that Baltasar is the great and powerful force that's going to destroy the world so he's trying to kill Baltasar (except he doesn't know that it's Baltasar that he's trying to hurt).

And it's just a huge mess.

Now when the story started out, I thought that Baltasar was a kid because of the fact that he had his uncle tell him stories every single night before he went to sleep and the general way that he was written and acted. You can imagine how very shocked I was to find out that he was in fact a teenager. I think a lot of that had to do with the writing style.

The writing was very simple and straight-forward, which is great, but it was also choppy at times, especially at the beginning, and it didn't always flow very well. Because of the choppiness of the writing, it was always nagging at me in the back of my mind so I was always aware of the short sentences which pushed me out of the story instead of pulling me in. At times I felt like I wasn't as connected to the characters and the story as much as I would have liked so I didn't enjoy some parts of the story nearly as much as other parts.

By the middle of the novel, I felt like the author had really settled into the voice of Baltasar and it flowed a lot better. At the beginning of the story it felt like she was thinking too much about what to say and how her character should act and the descriptions. At some point it just switched and it didn't feel like she had to think about how to write the story because the author had really connected with Baltasar and she knew exactly how he worked and thought and such.

I loved the idea of Storytellers and how you could use the stories that you'd been told of or read about to create these fantastic creatures and settings. I loved how we got to explore that as the story went on and watch Baltasar gain more experience and learn more stories and tricks, even if they did backfire on him sometimes.

I loved the characters and everything that they went through and without even realising it, I'd gotten attached to these characters and their problems, I worried about them and what they went through and it felt real to me. I haven't connected to a story like this a long time so props to the author for that.

My favourite had to be Catalina because she didn't take any shit from anyone and made sure that all of the men aboard the ship knew not to mess with her and to treat her with respect. I loved the relationship that she had with Baltasar as well. She put down boundaries with Baltasar and told him what she was comfortable with and what she wasn't and he had to either take it or leave it. I loved the amount of respect that Baltasar had for Catalina, he respected her boundaries and her opinions, most of the time he didn't push her or make her feel uncomfortable, and when he was in the wrong, he acknowledged the fact that he had overstepped a line and apologised to Catalina for it.

I was satisfied with the ending, but at the same time I wasn't. The entire point of the story was that Baltasar tracked his father down and explained to him that he wasn't trying to destroy the world and to stop Amir from destroying the world himself because they thought that the prophecy was about them. And they do straighten out all of the misunderstandings and stuff but . . . what about the prophecy?

It's all nice that father and son finally get to meet and straighten things out but there's still this dark force that's going to destroy the world out there. The characters talk about how the evil force could be Admiral Colon because he and his ships did sail west from Spain, and they did take natives with them as slaves, and then it's just kind of left there. It's great that everything else is fixed and right but there's still this prophecy and it's never really solved and it doesn't come to pass and now it's just bothering me.

I need the prophecy bit to be solved in order for me to get closure from this story and now it's just eating away at me.

But, I enjoyed reading the story and I would definitely spend money on buying a copy of it from the book store.

Gianna says

Originally posted here on my blog. Actual rating **3.8 stars**. Review may contain spoilers**

Shana Mlawski's Hammer Of Witches will definitely leave its readers in awe of her impressive ability to creatively craft and intertwine mythical and biblical creatures, fairy tales and lessons on life and how no two people will interpret the same story the same way. Coupled with several relative themes of morality, truth, war and power.

I was also impressed with the author's method of layering the connections between the different cultures and religions in the narrative; both the reader and Baltasar face—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—as the story carries us from the small town of Palos in Spain all the way across the Atlantic.

Bal's character is intimately connected to all of them, having being born of a Christian mother and Muslim father, while being raised by two converted Jewish surrogate aunt and uncle. Ironically enough, I noticed that although the book is called Hammer of Witches, the story focuses more on Baltasar's internal and external quest for answers and connection, rather than on the secret society out to kill him and his father, Amir Al-Katib.

Overall, the story ended up surprising me in a lot of ways: there was a lot of great dialogue, a fun play on a

number of well-known fairy tales and openly flawed and self-aware characters. Even though Baltasar's character is the main protagonist in this book, the reader never once self-proclaims himself a hero or anything close to it. His character development throughout the book even seemed to move in the opposite direction.

There was no wisdom here in this graveyard. In the old stories, the hero would go from a child who knew nothing about the world to a warrior full of strength and insight. It wasn't supposed to happen the other way around. But now I felt more childish and useless than I had ever felt before.—Hammer of Witches, pg. 368-369

And while I liked the story and the characters in this book and the consistent edge teetering pacing of the narrative, it was the loose ending of the book that I felt indifferent to. Although it successfully tired up a few narrative questions and gives the reader (and Baltasar) some long over due answers, it was not the conclusion I was expecting.

Whats more, by the end of the story, I was left with a feeling of perplexity regarding what the intended moral of the story:

Any one tale can have multiple interpretations.

Or

No matter how hard you try to avoid a prophecy of war, (change) there will always be elements out of your control.

But as this story is a book about storytelling, magic, myths and individual interpretation, I guess there really isn't any real way of knowing. And in the words of Baltasar himself:

"And here I thought I was the main character," I thought. "Maybe I wasn't even part of the story."

Which begs the question, by the end of the book is the reader reading the story to see what lessons Baltasar learns or to learn a few lessons of his or her own?

I received this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Leslie says

I should preface this review by saying that I know the author and was very excited for this book to come out. :)

I thought this book was great! The rules of magic in the book's world are simple, but interesting. The backdrop - early Renaissance Europe and the New World - will be familiar to anyone who's had geography or world history in a U.S. classroom, but quickly moves into uncharted territory (no pun intended!). It's heavily plot-driven and fast-paced (even at sea), and I was pleasantly surprised that, even as an adult, I was still in the dark about some characters' motives and plot points until very late in the book.

In terms of the writing, I enjoyed Mlawski's obvious talent for cartoony visuals - mad dashes, bumbling

klutzes, genie bottles careening around rooms. I'm not typically a reader who "sees" the story in my mind's eye, but her visual descriptions were very evocative and quite entertaining. Of course, I also loved the lessons the book delivered in terms of understanding different/multiple perspectives, along lines of culture, class, belief, and gender, as well as the moral ambiguity allowed in the story's explorations of what makes someone a good person and what makes a choice the right choice. In particular, I think one of the female characters would have really spoken to me if I had read this at eleven or twelve, when I felt vaguely upset about my lot in life as a girl on the edge of puberty but didn't really have the tools yet to articulate or even think critically about why. One weakness on this front, however, was that some of Baltasar's revelations felt a little too didactic - a little bit, "And suddenly, I understood that girls have it really hard!" I didn't think this detracted from the story much, and could be helpful to readers at the younger end of the book's target audience.

All in all, a stellar first effort! I'm so pleased that this got published, and I would not hesitate to recommend it to any middle-grade reader interested in adventure, magic or historical fiction.

Rosa says

My review is biased because the author is a friend of mine. However, I finished this book in two sittings, both of which stretched into the wee hours of the morning because I just had to know what happened next!

Shana's invented world is an engaging mix of fantasy (wizards and witches with a literary bent) and history (I learned so much about 15th century Spain!), all wrapped up in a suspenseful adventure story. There's a hero's quest, bloodshed and warfare, magical beasts and mythical creatures, teenage angst, hints of puppy love, and, of course, Christopher Columbus. It definitely warrants a second read-through, as I certainly missed some tidbits that Shana snuck in.

My one complaint is that the ending seemed a bit abrupt and at once both tidy and unresolved. Perhaps this is because I didn't want the story to end, and it seemed like there was much more story to tell with these characters. Maybe a sequel is on the horizon?

Ms. Yingling says

Baltasar is having a difficult time in Palos de la Frontera, Spain in 1492. His parents were killed by the Inquisition, and he lives with his aunt and uncle, who make books. The local children bully him because of his Jewish heritage, but that's not as bad as it gets. One night, he is attacked by a hameh, and things get worse from there. He finds out secrets about his family, including the fact that his real father is the Moorish warrior Amir al-Katib. This fact brings the organization Maleus Malificarum down on Baltasar's case, because it turns out that he has magical powers, and is actually a Storyteller. When the organization attacks his home, his uncle gives him a necklace and lets him escape, telling him to go far from Spain. When Baltasar investigates the necklace, he releases the Ifrit Jinniyah, who is supposed to help him find his father, and consults the Baba Yaga for advice. Baltasar ends up getting hired as an interpreter by Cristobal Colon aboard the Santa Maria, with Jinniyah masquerading as Juan. His plan is to find Amir al-Katib, but there is danger everywhere he turns. His true nature as a Storyteller is known by all too many people, and this leads to him summoning magic that ends up getting him and a cabin boy, Pedro Terreros, washed overboard. Pedro turns out to be Catalina, and the two do their best to survive, and wash ashore, where they meet Arabuko, shaman of Marien, and the Taino people. Afraid that the great evil that the Baba Yaga foresaw will attack his new friends, Baltasar keeps looking for his father, who seems to keep sending monsters to kill him. But like with

all magic, in the end, everything is not as it appears, and Baltasar has difficult choices to make.

Strengths: Tu Press specializes in fantasies with cultural contexts that are NOT medieval Europe (aren't 90% of fantasies that?), so it's nice to see such a rich diversity of cultures in this book. The Spanish, Moors, Jews, and the Taino all contribute a variety of magical elements to the story. The notes at the end explain a lot of the history and tales, which is an added bonus, since many of them were unfamiliar to me.

Weaknesses: This has some elements that edge it into Young Adult territory, and the cover is a bit murky.

Fangs for the Fantasy says

Baltasar Infante is a story teller in Spain at a time when Spain has finally united and actively seeking to purge its borders of anyone who has not converted to Christianity. Being a Jew puts him and his family in a precarious position but when his father, the legendary Moor sorcerer pays him a visit one night, it brings Baltasar and his aunt and uncle to the attention of the Malleus Maleficarum. Baltasar is forced to flee the only home he has ever known and when he gets a prophecy from the Baba Yaga that a great force is traveling west to end the world as we know it, Baltasar knows what he must do - kill the great Amir al-Katib.

As much as this story is about folklore, magic and religious persecution, it's also very much about colonialisation. Much of this story takes place on Columbus's famous voyage west in 1492. When the Baba Yaga speaks of a force moving west to destroy the world, what she is talking about is how colonialisation will destroy indigenous cultures and wipe language and history completely off the map. Even if a single battle had never been waged, the diseases the Europeans brought with them alone would have been enough to start the genocide which did eventually occur. Being Spanish, Baltasar could not conceive of the fact that it was the Spanish who were the threat. This is framed as is part of his optimistic nature rather than his Eurocentric view of the world.

Mlawski drew on a lot of folklore to write this book and it is evident. There were golems, unicorns, and many other fantastical creatures from a host of mythologies. It helped to make the world Mlawski created not only diverse but absolutely engaging. To use his magic, Balthasar had to rely on his ability to synthesize folklore and take elements from it. The magic was also different according to race and gender. The Ayiti having a different belief system than Balthasar showed that even though their culture was different and perhaps not as technologically advanced that they were powerful in their own right. Then there is Catalina who uses the Joan D'arc spell to present as male because there are thousands of stories in which women must become men or appear to be men to gain a modicum of respect.

Though Balthasar is the protagonist of this story, there are two very strong women - one being Catalina a fellow sorcerer and the other Jinniyah a half human half genie being. Catalina boards the Nina to escape a marriage to a man that she does not know in order to make her own way in life. She is highly capable and challenges the sexism in the fairytale sleeping beauty. What Balthasar sees as a nice romantic tale with a happy ending, Catalina sees one revolving trap for the princess in question. Catalina constantly sets limits on Balthasar and keeps her best interest in mind at all times. She even acts when the sailors decide to kidnap and rape some indigenous women. Catalina knows how hard it is for women in this world to escape being abused and to lead independent lives and she uses magic to change that as much as possible. Though her magic is based in the same concepts as Balthasar's, her experience and her gender allow her to interpret the stories differently and create different creatures.

Jinniyah is similarly an outcast but not because of gender but because she is half ifrit and half human. She

doesn't really belong anywhere but she is smart and extremely knowledgeable. In some ways, it would be fair to say that she acts as a sort of conscience to Balthasar. She is desperate for Balthasar to reunite with his father Amir al-Katib and it's this desperation that leads to a reunion with the destruction/death of either father or son. In some ways, Jinniyah is very innocent.

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Kat says

To be honest with you, this book was the slightest bit confusing. From what I figured out, Baltasar Infante is an apprentice bookbinder who can always tell good stories. But the monsters from the stories aren't always made up in Baltasar's world. When a monster from one of Baltasar's stories is seen one night, Baltasar is in for trouble he can't smooth talk out of for the very first time. A witch hunting army called the Malleus Malificarum has captured him, and put him to question about Amir al-Katib, the infamous Moorish sorcerer who can take monsters from stories and make them appear in real life. Baltasar takes a dangerous journey to uncharted lands with Columbus, and learns some stories aren't just stories.

I couldn't connect to any characters, but I'm sure somebody can connect with them. I thought of this book as a historical-fantasy book that was more fantastical than historical. The book wasn't annoying, but I didn't adore reading it. It was an ok read. It was interesting in the beginning, but as I went on I got slightly bored. Maybe it's just me, because I get bored of historical fiction easily.

It ended with a story, and it was a good way to wrap up a book about Storytellers. I liked the ending. I might read other books from this author, maybe as an over the summer read. Hammer of Witches is written in first person, which I like, but the way it's written can be confusing at some points in the book. The flow was ok, but slightly confusing at some points in time. I might reread this when I'm a bit older, so I recommend this book to 7-9 graders.

Jessica says

The first book I ever got to read that was written by a friend! And (Shana if you're reading this I can totally gush more in person), I'm happy to say that I loved it. It is a great piece of YA historically based fantasy fiction, very much in the vein of Harry Potter... but with actual history so you can learn something too. I don't read much kid lit these days, but everything here seemed on point - the characters and the way they spoke to each other, the pacing, the exciting climax and additional events post-climax, etc. There was plenty of action, and lovely character moments too.

I think it would be appropriate for any young reader with an interest in: very early Latin American/conquest history, Columbus' famous voyage, Spain & the Inquisition under los Reyes Catolicos (and relations between Christians, Jews, and Muslims), magic & fantasy, etc. Definitely nothing objectionable, and while there were very real emotions, it didn't take any of the dark turns that unnerved me about the later Harry Potter books.

It was especially fun reading on my first cruise vacation in the Caribbean, as much of the action takes place on a big boat or in the Caribbean! And Shana was very well researched and faithful to history, I can confirm as a former Latin American studies student. The factual notes included at the end of the book were particularly useful on this front, and could help clear up any confusion about fact/fiction for young readers.

I am so proud of my friend Shana for the hard work she put into this first novel, and the great result. I hope many young people will enjoy reading it!

Rich in Color says

“My uncle Diego always said there was magic in a story. Of course, I never really believed him when he said it.” So begins this tale filled to the brim with stories. They are most often magical and overflowing with mystical creatures, adventure, and hidden, but simple truths.

Baltasar has grown up with amazing stories swirling around him. Fortunately, the stories continue throughout his adventures. They are the jewels that bring sparkle and life to this book. The plot line runs in a relatively straight line, but is peppered with all kinds of tales. The stories feature murder, revenge, demons, golems, a unicorn, and quite a few ferocious creatures that are the stuff of nightmares. Stories are powerful here regardless of their truthfulness. As Baltasar learns to his surprise— perception is often more important than fact.

Characters were also a bright spot in this tale. Baltasar, our storyteller extraordinaire, meets many friends along his journey. A few of them are female characters who definitely add depth to the story. One in particular refuses to be locked into the roles other people choose for her and she schools Baltasar quite thoroughly.

From the title and cover, I was expecting a fantasy and possibly some history, but had no idea how MUCH history. I appreciated learning about this time period and came to the realization that I have not read much about the Spanish Inquisition in the past.

The title had me puzzled initially, but that is because I had never heard of the document before. The Malleus Malificarum, or Hammer of Witches, was written in the 1400s and led to the persecution of witches or people thought to be witches. Without that base of historical knowledge, I had to read and re-read some things, but most readers will likely be able to follow the events regardless. In addition, Shanna provides a great author’s note at the conclusion which points out the relative historical accuracy of the book and where she took artistic license. She also offers many links to primary and secondary sources on her website. I find that I am always craving a bit of non-fiction with historical fiction, so this fit the bill perfectly.

Recommendation: Get it soon particularly if historical fiction is one of your favorites. This is a unique book blending fantasy and history with a diverse cast of characters.

Original review with extras: <http://richincolor.com/2013/04/review...>

Hesione says

Moorish heroes? Spanish inquisition? THE MALLEUS MALEFICARUM??? DJINNI??? AMERICAN INDIANS???? KIDS WHO GET IN TROUBLE?????the whole kit and caboodle, right here.

Steve Lao says

Even without the disclaimer that the author's a friend (Hi Shana!), this was a wonderful, engrossing read. It takes a very familiar narrative - the time of Columbus' voyage and the Spanish Renaissance - and not only adds a unique element to it (magic!), but cleverly ties it's usage into the historical context of the era. In regards to the overall tone of the book, I enjoyed Mlawski's non-child-gloves handling of the time period. As a result, I appreciated the author's assumption that you knew all these things that I obviously wasn't taught in fourth grade when we learned about Columbus. I think that a young adult me reading this would've thought it strange that Columbus was kind of a dick and wait, what's this about military alliances and kidnapping natives as slaves, and would have subsequently looked up books (pre-internet!) to learn more about the era.

In regards to the narrative itself, I basically read it in three sittings. It's fast-paced and captures your attention with the plot and character development. I did think the protagonist's internal monologues of self-realization and explanation of things right at the split second before everything is doomed was a bit "young adult-y," if that makes any sense, but it didn't really take away from the suspense. So many plot twists that I didn't see coming! My one real gripe would be that the end kind of wrapped it up in too neat of a bow (albeit knowing that the eventual conquest and colonization of the New World isn't exactly a happy ending), cramming what could've been a third of the book into the last couple chapters. But then again: three sittings, so yeah.

Kristi Bernard says

Baltasar Infante worked with his uncle, a bookmaker, in his shop and at night listened to his many stories of mystical and magical creatures. Often times, he would dream of yellow eyes watching him through his window. He would put those stories aside, unable to determine if they were real and continued to worship his favorite hero, Amir al-Katib, the moorish hero of Spain, that is until he learned that he was a traitor.

One rainy night Baltasar was captured and taken by the Malleus Maleficarum, a renegade offshoot of the Spanish Inquisition founded in Germany, a priest questioned him about Amir al-Katib. In an attempt to find Amir, the priest would try to torture Baltasar, that is until he conjured a Golem, a clay creature, to save him. Once home, Baltasar's uncle told him who he really was, the family history and that he was the son of Amir al-Katib. Most importantly, Baltasar was a witch or sorcerer. His father had been fighting to save Europe but now all of Europe was looking for him and they mean to kill him. When the King's men showed up at Baltasar's home, his uncle pleaded with him to escape. In flight, Baltasar watched his family die and his home destroyed. His sole purpose was to find his father, but first he must save himself.

With no where else to go, Baltasar remembered the tavern where a sailor was talking about setting sail. That was his chance to escape, in the mean time he paid for a room and would wait for his chance to board. Tucked away in an attic room, Baltasar recounted the night and remembered his uncle had given him a necklace that belonged to his father. It was supposed to protect him. He opened the locket and released an Ifritah, or fire genie, and friend of Amir. Together they would set out on a journey to find Amir. Along the way Baltasar would learn the power within himself as he is conquered by independence and manhood.

Young readers will enjoy the mysticism of this tale. Mlawski offers male and female heroes readers can sink their teeth into. Although the story references Christopher Columbus and the Spanish Inquisition the author makes it clear in the back of the book that her story is completely fictional and also states the history around the 1400's when the story takes place. The back of the book also is host to a glossary which helps readers understand the mystical creatures and the correct pronunciation for these characters.

Rachel says

This was an enjoyable read. I was really in love with the concept--the world and the story were quite intriguing to me. I was also interested in the characters, but found them a little underdeveloped. The writing also seemed stilted at times, and I found it difficult to engage with the characters' emotions. I can't say I loved it for those reasons, but I did enjoy myself.
