



Mimus

Lilli Thal, John Brownjohn (Translator)

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Mimus is as luminous and entertaining as Cornelia Funke's "Thief Lord" or "Inkheart," yet Lilli Thal has created a dramatic and spellbinding universe all her own. The dark Middle Ages jump to life in blazing color in this world of adventure and imagination.

Two mighty kingdoms are engaged in endless, merciless war, but change appears imminent. King Philip is meeting his archenemy, King Theodo, to sign a peace treaty. But King Philip and his men are tricked and consigned to the squalid dungeons of King Theodo's castle. Soon, his son, 12-year-old Prince Florin, is lured to the castle, where the same horror awaits him.

On a whim, King Theodo decides to make the captive crown prince his second Fool, trained by Mimus, an enigmatic, occasionally spiteful, and unpredictable court jester. To add to Florin's misery, he and Mimus are fed a daily portion of gruel, forced to live in a dark, damp tower, and required to entertain the court on demand. But events ultimately turn for Florin and the other captives. They escape and it is Mimus's intervention that helps make it possible.

Mimus is a stunning novel that will take readers in its grip and hold them until the last page is turned. Through the brilliant rhymes, jokes, and wordplay of Mimus, the unceasing action and compelling events are sprinkled with lightness and humor.

Mimus Details

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From Reader Review Mimus for online ebook

Hamster says

I'm not sure why I liked this book so much. But you know you're enjoying something when you're sad for it to end. I got to the last CD and felt a little forlorn. I actually looked forward to my commute.

The book takes place in medieval times, but has nothing of magic or fantasy. I think the real genius of this book is it's fully-developed characters and realistic details.

Be warned, the book is a little (okay a lot) depressing and has some ungodly language and a pinch of vulgarity. (I think this is the German being translated into English.) At the same time, the overt religious overtones are inspirational and quite frankly something you don't see anymore. The author makes no apologies for being a faithful Catholic and doesn't spare us the churchy stuff. While this may be annoying to those who haven't found their faith, for me it was refreshing.

Apart from being truly original, this epic has some very clever rhymes (which must've been a trick for the translator) and a fantastic climax. I'll be looking for more books by Lilli Thal.

Jiessie says

Beautiful. There is simply no other words to describe what I felt after reading this book. When it ended, I felt as if my heart was ripped out of my body, and placed into a blender on high, while I was getting methamphetamine injected into my bloodstreams. Truly beautiful.

I had finished reading this book quite some time ago, but did not- no, could not write a proper review. Nothing in my bull**** ridden mind could come together to string a proper sentence to explain this, and do the book justice. Am I doing it justice now? No, and I will never be able to. But to quote something a science teacher said, "Remember, you should be choosing the assignment based on interest, not because you want to procrastinate. There will probably be MORE work in May/June than you have now." And yes, this is the reason I am writing this review. Onward...

This story was heart-gripping from beginning to end. I had found no faults whatsoever with this tale. In fact, even if the main characters died, I would not be mad, because I know Lilli Thal would be able to pull it off. And in a way, they did die, but shh no spoilers. Lilli Thal had really outdone herself.

One thing though, the final romance was getting quite out of hand. Joking around, as dating, I get it. Engaging them though, well, that's another piece of glass shard I will have to swallow down.

As I read this book, I personally felt pained when the once prideful prince was stripped away of his dignity, and forced to grovel at his enemy's feet. It also served to remind me at how low a human can become. The harsh reality is, we would all become like the prince, shriveling, and doing whatever I can to keep on living. The prince is very real. When I had first found flaws in the prince, I had felt disappointed. He was weak, so weak, crying, begging for himself to be spared, he made me disgusted. But, would I not do the same? Heck, would my parents be any different?

Read this book. It shows you the truth of human endurance, the breaking point between fighting and breaking. It casts real people, and not fake mary-sues to hide the author's insecurities behind. Lilli Thal didn't mind making her characters flawed, some more so than others. It only made them closer to us.

Quinn says

Brief premise: The kings of Moltovia and Vinland have long hated each other, and the people passes on stories on how undesirable and repugnant the other is.

It was strange then that the King of Vinland, Theodo, invited King Philip to a peace-offering banquet in his castle. Strange, but to Prince Florin of Moltovia that meant that there will be finally peace between the neighbouring countries.

When Prince Florin receives a missive from his father to join him at the banquet, he sets off eagerly and impatiently... until King Theodo reveals his treachery upon his arrival: King Philip and his court dirty, wounded, tortured, and in chains - his army retinue dead.

Prince Florin's sharp retorts to the ridiculing jester, Mimus, earns him a place as the jester's pupil, little Mimus, and his true identity hidden from the castle's staff.

Mimus, though, is not all what he seems and help comes from the most unlikely places.

Translated from German into English by John Brownjohn.

The story is pretty engrossing (enough to make me miss my station!) and the majority of it is of Florin learning how to become a jester - much against his will, but finds that he has a knack for it (well I think so anyways).

Mimus is such a complex character... like an onion (or parfait) there are layers and layers of it. Quite like him and it kind of feels like Florin doesn't quite get Mimus and his intentions until the scene has played out.

Good pace; quite clever i thought.

Laura says

One of the best books I've read of this genre, Mimus is intense in its premise and probably one of the most engaging stories I've had the pleasure of reading. The best part about the story is, of course, the character of Mimus, the spiteful and dark-humored Fool that is the center of the story, despite not being its protagonist. The other characters actually seemed rather grey and unoriginal in comparison to him, which is the only part about this book that I found lacking.

That aside, however, the writing is engaging and intense, and I read every single page all the way through. This may seem like a rather obvious statement, but hear me out: so many novels have stories that get bogged down in uninteresting internal monologues, exposition, wordy descriptions and, worst of all, excruciatingly detailed world-building. Don't tell me you haven't read books like this. Too often, I find myself skimming through several pages of whatever book I'm reading just to get to the good part. Yes, I'm a horrible reader in these cases. But I think it's more the fault of the book than the reader when you can skip over about three pages without missing out on anything of the story.

Not so with Mimus. Its straightforward style of storytelling had me hooked, and I had a grand time of reading it from beginning to end.

Plus, you can't deny that the cover art alone is enough to draw you in. One of the few times I can say that I borrowed a book based on the cover alone. I'm not proud of it, but I certainly do not regret doing it. This was a great book.

Katja says

Mimus is a great book that contains many different elements that draw you into the story and keep you there.. Something that I found particularly enjoyable is how you can never predict what is going to happen next, and if you think you have it all figured out you are thrown a curve ball that sends the story in a completely different direction.

At the beginning of the book when Florin receives the letter supposedly sent by his father you never imagine the treachery in wait for him when he arrives at Bellingar castle. This betrayal is something totally unexpected, and even if we tried too, no one could possibly predict such an outcome. Another example is at the end of the book, when Florins father is about to be executed. At this point we know that there is a rescue mission underway to save Florin and his father but it seems like all hope is lost. King Phillip has already laid his head on the block (“...King Phillip gave a little nod, then knelt down and laid his head on the block.”) and Florin believes that everything is over (“he know knew that this was the end, and the turmoil inside him subsided. Silently he began to recite the prayer for the dead”) before Lili Thal releases the to announce that the rescue mission is underway. “...a muffled concussion shook the floor and walls and set the goblets on the table jingling...a captain came rushing in and fell on his knees before Theodo. “Your Majesty, the castle is collapsing!””

Another element that I found sets the book apart from others is how Lili Thals description of the setting is so realistic and detailed. One example of a very realistic setting is of the silver mines of Argentia. “..Instead of a mountainside green with trees and bushes, he saw bare, jutting crags and huge, black, yawning holes. It looked as if a giant had split open the mountain side with an axe... Towering glittering mountains of silver—that was how Florin had always pictured the silver mines of Argentia, not these gaping wounds in the rock.” As you can see this is a very accurate description of what actual silver mines would look like, also her use of similes and metaphors helps to describe the feeling that Florin was having while looking at the mines.

In some of the other reviews that I have read, Mimus is said to be a “dark” book. I believe that people view the book in this way simply because its characters are very realistic. For example, Theodo is not only portrayed as the vile king, but also as a loving father. This makes the character much more believable because he is a father despite his deeds, it would not be very convincing if he behaved the same way around his family as he did around his enemies, “Theodo looked peacable and relaxed at table—a sight that troubled Florin far more than the icy disdain to which the king had previously subjected him. What right had this person—this monster!—to sit with his family in the guise of an affectionate father?”

BethAnn says

Like many, mistakenly, I first had Mimus marked as fantasy. I suppose I am so used to anything set in the

Middle Ages including dragons and unicorns and such, but I had to take a step back and say HOLD ON! This book has more in common with Catherine, Called Birdy than Ella Enchanted (though I love both of those as well.) Mimus doesn't even have a Merlin-ish wizard like Camelot. The counties of Moltovia and Vinland might not have existed, but the story presents them in a realistic way and puts this book in the category of historical fiction.

However, even ardent fantasy lovers will be sucked up into this so-rich-and-epic-historical-fiction-its-ALMOST-magical period tale. It is just. that. AWESOME. I adored it. The characters (especially Mimus, the old jester) are complex, neither wholly evil nor wholly good. The story is engaging, though the book is long, and while written for teens would appeal to anyone over 11. (Well, I am 34 and loved it. And 11 year olds might like it/"get" it more as a read aloud. But still, it is fantastic and I think it would be great for a many ages!)

I only have ONE complaint, and it's not serious enough to lose even a fraction of a star. (Also, it might be the fault of the German-to-English translator.) I think I counted FIVE instances of the phrase "his heart beat a rapid tattoo" or some variation of it. Shake it up, JUST a little, okay? *SIGH* Anyway, wonderful book. SO good. Now I want to buy it. Own it. Loan it to friends.

Ashlee Willis says

What a beautiful and intriguing tale! I love medieval times, and I love stories that think out of the box...Mimus had both. One of the most original books I've read in some time. Highly recommend.

R K says

Read by the stupendous Maxwell Caulfield, Mimus is the tale of the young prince who gets subjected to the low embarrassing position of court jester.

Belonging to the kingdom of Moltovia, Florin is the young prince who has grown up on tales of the war between Moltovia and its neighboring kingdom, Vinland. One day he is told that a peace treaty has finally been made. Eager to rejoin his father he sets off only to realize that he has been betrayed by the king of Vinland and is instead sentenced to live out a short imprisonment as a jester under the current jester, Mimus.

Florin, or rather, Little Mimus is now at the lowest low. Jesters are not treated as humans and thus must eek out a living as an animal, always on the borderline of hunger and doing tricks for scraps of food. For the former prince, this is utter humiliation and his tutor, Mimus, is not exactly a warm figure, or is he????

This was a lovely story. Aimed for older children but still enjoyable by anyone of any age, Mimus reveals not only the main story of a prince who wants justice but of how jesters were treated and complexity of character.

As said before, a jester is basically an animal and thusly treated. Florin is constantly shocked at how his life must be lived and how others view him. He is baffled by the two faced nature of people and hates it. There is a strong theme throughout the book on how the view from the top is different from the view from the bottom. In other words, your class position really makes a mark on how you see the world. Mimus is not kind but nor

is he cruel. He trains Florin severely only because he knows the repercussions of not performing to expectation. By being strict, he keeps Florin out of harm while still teaching him.

The bond that form between Florin and Mimus, is very warming. Mimus is the only one that knows of Florin's position. He pities the boy and develops a fondness for him. He essentially becomes a subtle father figure for him. There was one very warming and iconic scene in the book where this softer nature of his is revealed. Yet, Mimus is a very complex human. He is essentially a prisoner in his job as a jester. He no longer knows who he is nor what he wants. All he knows is how to act the fool. Mimus was a very interesting character and I really wanted Thal to go further into his character but I guess since this was aimed for preteens and younger, that darker side wouldn't be shown.

Overall, this was a splendid read and I would highly recommend it. It's narrated by Maxwell Caulfield and the amount of dedication and passion he put into this book was astonishing. I am the type of person who really listens to a person's voice. You could say that it's the first thing I notice about a person. Caulfield impressed me beyond measure. The accents, the diverse vocal range, all were top notch and fit each character perfectly. They would have a certain type of accent or speech due to their class, world, makeup ,etc. It was amazing. My respect for voice actors is enormous and Caulfield's voice is physical proof of why my respect is justified.

Highly recommended.

Eh?Eh! says

teen fic. well written and a little more grim than I thought it would be. asks the question whether one can change emotional defenses built up over many years - in this case, no.

Alisa Kester says

We start with a pretty basic fantasy plot: One prince, captured by an evil king, who against all odds must somehow escape and save not only himself, but his father and the entire kingdom. But just when you think you've got the plot all figured out, it twists itself into something more interesting. The 'evil king' isn't actually any more evil than the prince's own father - they are simply two arrogant rulers with a history of mutual deception and dishonor. It's actually rather difficult to feel sympathy toward either king, because they are only reaping their just desserts. The prince, all unknowing, ends up at the end of a long war that should never had happened.

The problem with the prince is that he never really does lose his innocence regarding the war and his father's part in it. He floats through the book in a nimbus of self-righteous indignation, spurning the one man who is genuinely trying to give him aid and comfort. By the end, even as he is forced to acknowledge this one man's part in his eventual release, he still does not truly understand everything this man has done.

I speak, of course, of the jester Mimus. Utterly courageous and honorable (while disguising himself in his donkey's ears of scorn and sarcasm) he's one of the most fascinating characters I've found in recent fiction. The only thing I regret about this book is that we aren't given more understanding of Mimus and his motives. Why is so loyal to his king, despite the harsh treatment he receives? Why (given his loyalty to his own king)

does he attempt to protect both the prince and the prince's father from the very beginning, disguising his help as mere jester's tricks? I was eagerly awaiting the answer, and was left disappointed.

Loved the cover as well (sorry B!). It seems to be that rare thing: a near perfect representation of the contents - which after all is not truly about the prince, but about Mimus' manipulations of the prince, the kings, and even the two kingdoms.

Anna says

Mimus is now one of my favorite books of all time, and will stay as one of my favorites. (And jesters are officially the best thing ever.) Here is why:

1. The plot is unique and intriguing. And the execution was splendid.

The two kingdoms, Moltovia and Vinland are at war. To end this, King Phillip of Moltovia meets his archenemy, King Theodo, to sign a peace treaty. However, he is betrayed. King Phillip and his men find themselves whisked to Theodo's dungeons, tortured and to be executed. Phillip's son, Prince Florin, finds himself captured and forced to jest at his father's execution, to only shortly meet the same fate. He is trained for this event with Vinland's court jester, Mimus. This book explores the cruel and harsh life of a jester, the side rarely (if ever, or at least if ever accurately portrayed; Thal is credible with her masters in history) seen in fantasy novels. Can Florin find a way to get out of this mess? Read to find out!

The plot was cleverly designed, with each scene playing an important role, whether to aid with the story or the character development. I loved the witty lines and wordplay; however, if you like things sugar coated, then you won't find it in this book, which has some dark scenes and hints at some dark themes.

2. The characters are so loveable and unforgettable!

The character development was done exceptionally well. Florin, the protagonist, went through a lot, and I found him to get more likable as the story progressed. Readers can really see how this experience affected Florin and changed him. As for Mimus, he was such a complex character, and throughout the tale, bits of his character were revealed, much like peeling the layers of an onion. The relationship between him and Florin was so sweet, but had its bitter and sad moments, making it very moving. The king, Theodo, was so hateable, but Thal also lets us see the other side of him, the almost fatherly king, who displayed love, or at least care, to his people and family.

3. The world was very believable.

It was written so that I would not be surprised if these kingdoms had existed once upon a time. It sounded historically accurate, and events in the kingdoms were portrayed in a very medieval way. The vocabulary fit the context of the old age, but was also easy to understand and read.

Once I was pulled into Thal's world, I could not stop reading. 394 pages later, I was left in a state of awe. A while after that, I was everywhere telling everyone to read it! It ends perfectly for me, which many books don't do. Mimus is a book brought me rollercoasters of emotion and will stay in my mind forever. I cried, I laughed, I spluttered indecipherable sounds of fangirling delight... And I want to share that with everyone. I hope others felt this too, for the author weaves a brilliant and original tale that will change the way you look

at the Middle Ages.

Elisse says

Mimus starts out as a classic fairy tale, with a prince and a king and a war. Luckily, it soon distinguishes itself from the other oft-trodden plot lines. Unluckily, it doesn't do much after that. There's a big spot in the middle where not much happens at all and he just goes around jestering, and it gives the impression that with a bit less of that it could have made a good short story. Mimus is a fairy tale, and somewhat fun to read, with occasional action bits and funny bits, but it just doesn't have enough to make it really good. It starts off on a good path, but it doesn't make enough of itself.

Coenraad says

Lilli Thal skep met *Mimus* 'n uitstekende spanningsverhaal wat in die Middeleeue afspeel. Koning Philip van Monfiel en sy seun, kroonprins Florin, word deur 'n aartsvyand, koning Theodo van Vinland, in 'n lokval gelei en gevange geneem. Philip en belangrike adellikes van Monfiel word in die kerker aangehou, terwyl op Florin 'n besondere vernedering wag: hy word die hofnar se leerjonge. Gedurende die maande in Kasteel Bellingar leer hy dinge wat nooit van 'n seun uit die adelstand verwag sal word nie: liedjies, rympies, raaisels, akrobatiese toertjies. Ter wille van sy lewe werk hy hard om die verspottighede te bemeester, ten spyte van die haas onmenslike omstandighede van die hofnar se lewe.

Oor 'n avontuurverhaal sê 'n mens so min as moontlik om die leser se pret nie te bederf nie. Die presiese aard van die bevredigende slot moet dus verhuld bly. Thal se navorsing oor die Middeleeue verseker 'n geloofwaardige uitbeelding van die lewe in dié tydperk, al gebeur sommige dinge dark net té maklik. Sy slaag egter daarin om groot diepte aan die verhaal te verleen deur belangrike vraagstukke in te weef. Albei lande is Christelik: hoe mag 'n mens dus bid vir militêre sukses teen jou vyand? Hoe ver mag 'n mens gaan om wraak te neem weens 'n wandaad wat teen jou gepleeg is? Waar lê die kern van 'n mens se identiteit? En watter rol speel hoop in oorlewing?

Oor alles troon die grootse figuur van Mimus, die hofnar. Hy word gruwelik verneder en in aaklike omstandighede laat leef, maar hy het feitlik heeltemal vrye sê voor die koning. Hy behandel Florin net so sleg as wat hy self behandel word, maar tog ontpop hy onder die vreemdste omstandighede as 'n steunpilaar. Hy verleen 'n nuwe dimensie en selfs waardigheid aan die konsep van lojaliteit - en maak die leser bewus van die dun skeiding tussen lojaliteit en eiebelang. In hierdie figuur het Thal iets besonders geskep: 'n komplekse karakter wat die leser telkens verras.

Ten slotte is *Mimus* 'n ongewone Bildungsroman waarin Florin op ongewone wyse gedwing word tot volwassenheid. Dit het welverdiende pryse en nominasies in die Duitse jeugliteratuur ontvang. Dit is jammer dat die vertaling, naas goeie Afrikaanse vindinge en verwysings, nie sonder taalfoute uit die verf gekom het nie, maar ek is dankbaar dat hierdie roman (soos 'n ander roman van Thal, *Joran Noordewind*) in Afrikaans beskikbaar is.

Thal writes an unusual coming-of-age novel where the crown prince Florin of Monfiel is captured by the king of Vinland and forced to become the court jester's apprentice. Given the complexity of the plot and the ideas behind it, the novel grows into a powerful tale of identity, revenge, perception and nobility. The

towering figure of the court jester Mimus gives a new vision of loyalty. Unforgettable.

Kate says

I'm not sure why so many people shelled this under "fantasy" - there aren't any fantasy elements to it. The book takes place in the Middle Ages, but it's a fairly realistic Middle Ages. If you're looking for magic, elves, or witches, you won't find them here.

It's not every day that you read a complex, engaging YA historical fiction book about the Middle Ages that doesn't incorporate fantasy elements, but Mimus is just such a book - and because of its realism and its moral ambiguity, it's a book that will cross age lines very easily. I found this book extremely compelling and wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to any fan of historical fiction in their teens or older! The last 50 pages did kind of drag a bit, but I don't tend to like action sequences very much - I far preferred the time Thal spent developing the friendship between Mimus and Florin and the vast amounts of time she spent on Florin's inner life. If you like adventure-packed, action-a-page books, this won't appeal, but overall this is one of the best historical fiction YA books I've read.

Michelle Pagram says

Once you enter the world that Thal has created in Mimus, you will find it hard to leave.

The kingdoms of Moltavia and Vinland have been at war for years, but now they seem on the verge of peace that was brokered with the assistance of a neighboring kingdom. King Theodo of Vinland has invited King Philip of Moltavia and his advisors to a celebration of peace at his castle Bellingar. Florin, King Philip's son, has been summoned to the feast and is just beginning to think about a world at peace in which he may end up betrothed to King Theodo's daughter when he is cruelly betrayed. Upon his arrival to Bellingar, he is treated to a parade of his father and advisors coming from the dungeon in shackles. Florin himself is forced into the role of apprentice jester and made to live in the monkey tower. He begins to see himself and the world in a new way.

Full of elements befitting any epic, this story follows Florin's journey from a pampered and privileged prince waiting on others to do for him, to a confident and courageous young man who takes his life into his own hands.

There is a villain who is as loving a family man as he is an evil tyrant, there is a hero who becomes strong by recognizing his own weaknesses, and there is Mimus, the jester, who unseen by most, understands the world and those around him so fully that it is painful. He teaches Florin more than the role of a jester.

Appropriate for middle school and up, this book touches on loss, perseverance, courage, and empowerment. Along the way it is also fun. Watching Mimus and Florin in their escapades and seeing Florin grow is fun, humorous and painful in turns. It is well worth the read.
