



The Book of Wonders

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Magic, Djinn, Ogres, and Sorcerers. Thirteen-year-old Zardi loves to hear stories about fantastical beings, long banned from the kingdom of Arribitha. But anyone caught whispering of their powers will feel the rage of the sultan—a terrifying usurper who, even with his eyes closed, can see all.

When her own beloved sister is captured by the evil ruler, Zardi knows that she must go to any lengths to rescue her. Along with her best friend, Ridhan—a silver-haired, violet-eyed boy of mysterious origins—and an unlikely crew of sailors led by the infamous Captain Sinbad, Zardi ventures forth into strange and wondrous territory with a seemingly impossible mission: to bring magic back to Arribitha and defeat the sultan once and for all.

The Book of Wonders Details

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From Reader Review The Book of Wonders for online ebook

Ms. Yingling says

Zardi enjoys her life in Arribithia with her grandmother, older sister Zubeyda and her friend Rhidan, a foreign orphan being raised by her family. Rhidan doesn't know his part, but when the two run into the sailor Sinbad in the port, he mentions that Rhidan looks like the people of the Black Isle. Zardi's father is an advisor for the sultan, who has banned magic from the kingdom, but not even this keeps the family safe--Zubeyda is chosen to be the sultan's next "praisemaker" which will result in her being imprisoned and then hunted to the death. Zardi thinks that Sinbad would be able to help both with getting Rhidan back to his people and in overturning the sultan, so they hop a boat in search of him. They end up having many adventures, finding out about Rhidan's past, fighting magical creatures, and eventually getting back to the kingdom just as Zubeyda is being hunted. While things may be okay at home, Rhidan is still interested in the Black Isle, so the book ends with an elipsis...

Strengths: The setting and stories reminiscent of the Arabian Nights lends a fresh twist to this fantasy quest. Getting very weary of typical Celtic fantasy, but I can't think of anything with Sinbad, and this is quite well done.

Weaknesses: I felt that I was missing many of the Arabian Nights references.

Vivien says

I received this as apart of the Once Upon a Twilight ARC Book Tours.

Zardi lives in a world with Magic, Djinn, Ogres, and Sorcerers. However, the Sultan has banned magic in the kingdom of Arribitha. Even speaking of magic, could get you arrested. Ironic.

Zardi has a mysterious companion in Rhidan, who was abandoned as a baby. When given a clue about his past, by Sinbad the sailor, he is compelled to find the answers.

In Arribitha the Sultan forces young girls in the position of 'praisemaker'. The young girls are held captive and eventually executed. When Zardi's sister is captured by the evil Sultan, she knows she must go to any length to rescue her.

Together, Zardi and Rhidan set off on a journey that will forever change them. Though sometimes their journey will separate them, they will battle through the trials.

A great new middle grade fantasy novel. I loved the world it was set in. I only wish that there had been more revealed about Aladdin. I only hope there is more from this series to further develop that aspect. A page turner from the start, I was hooked from the beginning and think fans of this genre will surely enjoy!

Kailey (BooksforMKs) says

I'm so disappointed in this book. The cover made it look wonderful, but the characters are two-dimensional, the story is trite, and the dialogue is boring. I read it all the way through, but it never really captured my attention or my emotions.

The only thing I liked was the magical world setting. The setting is from the Arabian Nights, with many characters, like Scheherzade, Aladdin, and Sinbad the Sailor, being reimaged.

Many of the plot points were difficult to believe, too coincidental, or downright stupid. When you name a roc (mythical bird), do you really have to name it "Roco"? Seriously?

The writing is stiff and has too many boring descriptors, not to mention mixed metaphors.

I'm not impressed with this one.

Cynthia Varady says

For the duel, visit [Dueling Librarians](#)

Let me begin by saying that it pains me to write this review. I begin all books with the anticipation and zest of a child awakening on Christmas morning, bursting to see what all those glossy packages might contain. This is perhaps a faulty way to begin a book because my expectation can fall short, leaving me less than happy by the tale's end. Sadly, that is what happened with Jasmine Richards first novel, *The Book of Wonders*.

A victim of circumstance, I found *Wonders* to be tedious. I think part of the problem is having just completed a book I found so amazing, that almost anything that came directly after would have been lacking in the Wow Department. I really wanted *Wonders* to knock my socks off, but instead I was left mildly irritated.

Wonders follows the tradition of *1,001 Arabian Nights*. In Richards' adaptation of the famous collection of folk tales, we find some familiar characters. Scheherazade is our brave and noble heroine, who sets out to rescue her sister Zubeyda from the clutches of the evil sultan, Shahry?r. With her is Rhidan, the silver haired foundling who is searching for his people. Along the way the youngsters meet Sinbad the sailor and his motley crew of pirates.

The bulk of *Wonders* retells the second voyage in the Sinbad series, which shares some of the same elements as Homer's *Odyssey*, another story I always found tedious. Scheherazade, Rhidan, and Sinbad, and his crew become shipwrecked on Desolation Island where giant rocs rule the skies, and demon-like serpents lurk beneath the earth in a maze of tunnels. It was this part of the story that really began to bog down for me. I felt like I was trapped on the island with them, which from an artistic point of view is great, but from a trying-to-get-through-this-book angle, not so good.

In addition to some of the same characters as *1,001 Nights*, *Wonders* follows ending format as well. For those of you not familiar with the original folk collection, here's a quick recap. Scheherazade is married to king Shahry?r who has a penchant for marrying virgins only to kill them the following morning before they can cheat on him. To avoid the fate of her predecessors, Scheherazade tells the king a story which she doesn't finish until the following night, only to begin a new tale which she fails to complete. This goes on for, you

guessed it, 1,001 nights. Much like Shahry?r, Richards left me with a cliff hanger ending, yet unlike Shahry?r, I don't feel compelled to know more.

I respect what Richards is doing in *The Book of Wonders*, it just wasn't for me. I think this is a great book for young readers. It provides amazing imagery, lots of drama and action, and it will introduce them to a classic with a new twist. Plus Scheherazade and Rhidan are accessible characters that many tweens and early teens will be able to relate to.

For the duel, visit [Dueling Librarians](#)

Jessica Harrison says

Review via [Cracking the Cover](#)
Sinbad. Aladdin. Scheherazade.

They're names that evoke exotic locales and swashbuckling adventures. Now you can add another name to that list — Zardi.

Zardi is the main character in Jasmine Richards' "The Book of Wonders," an exciting new adventure for middle readers.

In the kingdom of Arribitha, magic is taboo. Fantastical beings have long been banned. Thirteen-year-old Zardi loves to hear stories of these things, but even those can call the rage of the sultan, who rules with an iron fist.

When the sultan captures Zardi's sister, Zardi sets out on a quest to save her. Accompanied by her best friend, Rhidan, Zardi finds herself in the company of the infamous Sinbad. Together they travel to a strange land to bring back and restore magic to Arribitha.

"The Book of Wonders" is a magical novel. It transports readers to far-off lands that inspire creativity and spark imagination. In Zardi, Jasmine has created a strong, intelligent young woman who isn't afraid to take risks or ask for help when needed.

Jasmine plays to her strengths — her writing is clean and her pacing strong. However, her real strength lies in her descriptions. She skillfully sets a scene without going overboard, giving readers just enough information to complete the full picture on their own.

Though the main character in "The Book of Wonders" is a girl, it is by no means gender specific. The inclusion of pirates and magicians helps make it appealing to everyone. "The Book of Wonders" is a great new option for readers of all ages.

Read [Cracking the Cover's](#) interview with Jasmine Richards.

Rebecca says

Thirteen-year-old Zardi lives in the kingdom of Arribitha, where the sultan has banned magic, and anyone even heard talking about magic can be arrested. Her best friend is Rhidan, a mysterious foreigner who was found abandoned as a baby and raised by Zardi's family. Rhidan longs to know of his origins, and receives a clue from Sinbad the Sailor, but he must flee before Rhidan can get more answers.

The sultan of Arribitha is cruel and evil, and forces young girls to be take the position of "Praisemaker" - they are forced to announce executions and are eventually killed. Zardi's parents try to have her and her sister married off so they cannot be chosen, but before they can do that, her older sister is picked to be the next Praisemaker. Zardi and Rhidan must then go on a journey to save Zardi's sister and discover the truth about Rhidan's origins.

Book of Wonders is an enjoyable middle grade fantasy inspired by the Arabian Nights stories. The main characters were very likable and I enjoyed the author's descriptions of all the exotic places they visited. This book is very different from anything I have read recently, and since I am sick of urban fantasy I am always looking for fantasy with a more historical or magical setting. If you are like me and enjoy fantasy with unusual settings, I think you would enjoy Book of Wonders.

Disclosure: Review copy provided by publisher.

Heather says

It took me until the end of chapter 3 to get interested in the story and the characters, but chapter 4 really set things up well and I was anticipating quite an adventure. Unfortunately, although I really wanted to like this one, it just didn't do it for me. The premise is clever, but I found myself with so many questions, particularly the character motivations. My favorite character in the book - and the only one whose motivation I totally get - was Nonna (Zardi's grandmother) and we don't see her again after Zardi and Ridhan begin their adventure. As for the rest, I never understood what drove the sultan, Sinbad, the various djinnis, and most of the other characters. I really wanted to know why. Why is the sultan so cruel? Why don't the people rebel? Why are the soldiers loyal to the sultan? Why did magicians trap the djinnis? Why was Ridhan left in this country? Why was magic forbidden? Unfortunately, none of the questions were answered, and the book's conclusion feels awfully abrupt and unfinished. Maybe there will be a sequel?

For some readers, this will be a magical experience. Unfortunately, I was just not one of them. Still, I would read a sequel if it came out, as I really want to know where the author intended this one to go.

Kristen says

First Impression: Just reading the description of The Book of Wonders gives me a sense of adventure. When I heard the name Sinbad, it brought me to think about Aladdin and the other tales of Arabian Nights and made me more excited to read this book.

While Reading: I was drawn in from the beginning. Richards sets up a rich world, full of an evil sultan, a deadly hunt, and a boy with a mysterious past. Zardi sees her own sister and father captured before her and decides to embark on a journey to find a group of people opposed to the sultan. If she can find them, she can

stop her family from dying at the sultan's hands. Her adopted brother Rhidan follows her, curious about his origins and together they set off to sea. Their journey takes them far, as Rhidan discovers his magic and blows them to an unknown land filled with huge birds and snakes at war with one another, along with a Cyclops and a djinni.

The Book of Wonders captured my attention from page one, but I found that when they weren't in the middle of an adventure or in danger, the book started to drag on a bit. The main characters were colorful, but the side characters sometimes I couldn't really remember - mostly the sailors. Even with its flaws, this book has laid a solid foundation for the next book while still resolving some of the plot by the end, which made me happy. I was hoping not to have to wait that long to see what would happen.

Verdict: A solid fantasy novel, full of adventure, colorful villains and characters, and lots of magic.

Betsy says

One Sentence Review: Enjoyable enough but maybe one of the most forgettable little middle grade novels I've ever read.

Abby says

I read The Book of Wonders in manuscript form a little while ago. It is a page turning and gripping adventure that pulls the reader in. The young Scheherazade is a brilliant heroine and the plot is filled with twists and turns right to the very end.

I finished it in one sitting and can't wait to read the next installment in the trilogy.

Madeline J. Rose says

Re-read 2018: Still love it as much as I did when I was younger. <3

Initial Response

This book...oh goodness...

Literally left me in the dust.

A_M_A_Z_I_N_G.

"Magic, Djinn, Ogres, and Sorcerers. Thirteen-year-old Zardi loves to hear stories about fantastical beings, long banned from the kingdom of Arribitha. But anyone caught whispering of their powers will feel the rage of the sultan—a terrifying usurper who, even with his eyes closed, can see all.

When her own beloved sister is captured by the evil ruler, Zardi knows that she must go to any lengths to rescue her. Along with her best friend, Ridhan—a silver-haired, violet-eyed boy of mysterious origins—and an unlikely crew of sailors led by the infamous Captain Sinbad, Zardi ventures forth into strange and wondrous territory with a seemingly impossible mission: to bring magic back to Arribitha and defeat the sultan once and for all."

High Lights

- COMPLEXITY. And...and complicated and....just CRAZY!
- All the main characters!
- Zardi is so brave and daring, but also sweet and curious.
- Rhidan is a mysterious, funny boy who knows nothing about his past or who his parents are.
- Sinbad is a total cutie...*blush* What? What? HE IS! He's kinda of rough and tough at the beginning, but he softens up to Zardi when... You'll just have to read it! DO IT. *fangirls* I LOVES IT.
- 400 PAGES OF AWESOME. Oh yeah.
- Just everything about it pretty much.

Low Lights

- There are some pretty intense parts and I found myself twisting my hair and fumbling my fingers.
- THE MAGIC. Lots and lots of magic. And that kinda of ruined it for me. Don't get me wrong, I loved this book so much, but, the magic made me bump the rating down to 4.5/5 stars. Some of it's scary. Some is weird. Some is fun. Some is just crazy.

Favorite Quote

"Let it hurt, Zardi," Rhidan said. "Take the pain and make it something else. Let it make you stronger and smarter."

Conclusion

I really love this book, I do, but I recommend this book for older kids such as 12 and up. The story is riveting and there are no curse words that I can remember. Nothing gory. But the magic at times made me feel a little uncomfortable.

Other than that, I definitely recommend this book!

4.5/5.

Michael Fitzgerald says

Pretty good story, using the Arabian Nights world as a basis. The dialogue, however, is disappointingly juvenile. There are no anachronisms, but it has the feel of modern day kids - which doesn't work so well with the ancient setting. And what kind of person names a roc (bird) "Roco" - just dumb. I don't think the bird even needs a name. It doesn't say, but I guess this is the first of a series? Not overly excited about that.

Grady McCallie says

I'm a fan of (much of) the Arabian Nights, and was delighted to run across this middle grade novel, which repurposes elements from the tales -- Sinbad, djinnis, the roc, mistaken identities, wishes governed by complicated rules -- but without the racism and misogyny that permeates the original tales. So far, so good. But, the book's writing leaves much to be desired. Rather than the characters' personalities driving the plot, the plot (and author's need to work in exposition) drives the characterization completely - in a given scene, the heroine goes from disgusted at the thought of the evil sultan, to grumbling about having to help with dinner, to tearing up at how infrequently she sees her father, to 'happy but guilty' when her grandmother praises her skills with a kitchen knife. That's in roughly two pages. It's like watching a train pass by: here's a boxcar, oh look, now a tanker, now two more box cars, a hopper, and so on - with no obvious reason for the order of the cars, and only a rough coupling between each of them.

In looking at other reviews, I see that this is labelled 'middle grade' rather than 'young adult'. I guess that's younger than young adult, and I can see why an author would tailor the plot and characters for the audience. But surely these readers can handle - and would thrive on - better characterization than this.

Chrissy says

I'm never quite sure how I'm going to feel about a Middle Grade book. Clearly, I love YA, but Middle Grades are hit or miss for me. I get nervous when Middle Grade is paired with other aspects that make me second guess whether I'll like a book, such as being high fantasy or longer than I expected (again, hit or miss mentality). I need not have worried. *The Book of Wonders* by Jasmine Richards is a solid hit.

As soon as I started the first chapter, I was eager to continue. There is an ease of storytelling present that makes the whole book flow seamlessly. Readers young and old will enjoy the epic adventure, energetic characters, smooth writing, and wonderful storytelling. This high fantasy tale is full of action. The main character, Zardi, loves stories of adventure with scary monsters and incredible feats of heroism. *The Book of Wonders* has all this, much to Zardi's delight and horror (it's a little different to face the scary monsters yourself than to hear about them from others).

Also, it was a fairly complex story. There were multiple story lines and paths the characters could have taken, but everything came together very well. Little side missions were carried out without losing sight of the overall goal, to save Zardi's sister.

In addition to the fantasy, this book was multicultural. I always love reading books set in different cultures, so this fact was a bonus for me. Richards merged multicultural aspects with the fantasy very well. These merged aspects completely transported me to Arribitha while I was reading. Well done.

Overall rating: Worth the buy. Borrow it if you're not as into Middle Grade.

Cesya says

I'd like to thank Once Upon a Twilight for giving me the opportunity to be on this book review tour.

Now, on with the show . . . er . . . review!

I have to admit that I was a little leery about reading this book because of the age range but I trudged along and slowly got swept away in Zardi's adventures. I have to say, she was very brave for only being thirteen and I admired her for that. She was a little firecracker and when she set her mind to doing something, she followed through until it was finished. I think back to when I was thirteen and though my life was nothing like Zardi's, I don't think I would have followed through with anything. At that age, I was all talk and a big pile of—excuse my French—chicken shit. Another thing I really like about Zardi is that family and friends were her main priority. She'd make sure they were protected instead of worrying about herself.

Next, we have Ridhan. He was a very mysterious boy and I loved how his mysteriousness grew when they boarded Sinbad's ship. (Side note: I failed to mention Sinbad was in this story. Surprise! We're introduced to him in the beginning of the story in Arribitha where Zardi and Ridhan and listening to his stories as he tells

them to the crowds. When Zardi and Ridhan speak to him after the crowd begins to scatter, Sinbad mentions a land where Ridhan's people are said to live. This piques his interest and he's determined to get aboard Sinbad's ship so they can sail to his home land.)

I could go on and on about this story but then you'd never want to read it because I'd probably end up ruining the whole thing for you so I'm going to leave it at that. If you have children in that age range at home or you want to jump into a different genre for a day, I suggest picking up *The Book of Wonders* because of the wonderful mysteries written on its pages.
