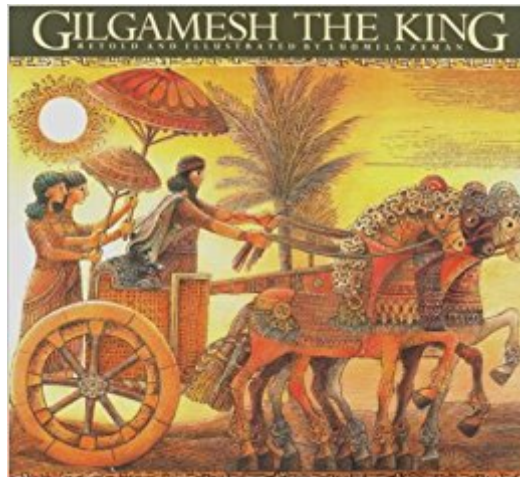




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Gilgamesh The King (The Gilgamesh Trilogy)



Synopsis

Gilgamesh, half-god and half-man, in his loneliness and isolation becomes a cruel tyrant over the citizens of Uruk. To impress them forever he orders a great wall to be built, driving his people to exhaustion and despair so that they cry to the Sun God for help. In answer, another kind of man, Enkidu, is sent to earth to live among the animals and learn kindness from them. He falls in love with Shamhat, a singer from the temple, and he follows her back to Uruk. There, Enkidu, the “uncivilized” beast from the forest, shows the evil Gilgamesh through friendship what it means to be human.

Book Information

Series: The Gilgamesh Trilogy (Book 1)

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 32 customer reviews

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Age Range: 7 - 9 years

Grade Level: 2 - 4

Customer Reviews

The Mesopotamian epic about a tyrannical king who finds his humanity and embarks on a quest for immortality here takes shape as a trio of books: Gilgamesh the King, The Revenge of Ishtar and The Last Quest of Gilgamesh. All three are illustrated with vivid pastels on black paper. Ages 8-up. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 3-6-- This picture book account of the first part of the ancient epic retains the main characters and events of the story that is Mesopotamia's claim to literary fame. The god-king Gilgamesh rules oppressively over the city of Uruk. The people cry to the gods for relief, which comes in the form of a

wild man named Enkidu. Gilgamesh sends a temple woman, Shamhat, to lure Enkidu from the wilderness. He returns with her to the city, where he fights Gilgamesh and the two men become best friends. There are alterations (e.g., Shamhat is no longer a courtesan who seduces Enkidu, but a city favorite who falls in love with him, Gilgamesh no longer subdues Enkidu but falls off a wall and is saved by him) as well as additions and deletions. Granted, there are several versions of the story, but the reteller does not note that this is a rather free adaptation of the "standard" text. Though padding the Shamhat role seems more than a little anachronistic, the dramatic choices usually work well, setting up the rivalry/friendship that propels the rest of the epic (to be continued in two future volumes). Unfortunately, the telling lacks the feel of the ancient poetry; the cadences of oral tradition with its repetition and vivid description needn't have been sacrificed. The full-color illustrations, however, capture that ancient aura wonderfully well. Spreading horizontally and dominating the page, they incorporate elements from Sumerian, Assyrian, and Babylonian art. They remain rich and lively--sometimes almost cartoonlike--imparting a sense of personality and landscape. Bernarda Bryson's *Gilgamesh* (Harcourt, 1967; o.p.) retells the complete epic in more evocative language, but the ratio of text to illustrations is much greater, making it less accessible. In spite of its playing a bit fast and loose with history, this makes an attractive introduction to one of the world's oldest stories.

--Nancy Palmer, The Little School, Bellevue, WA Junior High UpCopyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Age Recommendation: 8 - up; Around eight children start to develop a taste in historical books, such as legends. Gilgamesh is a not as well-known epic about the Mesopotamia region. The picture book is also part of a three book series.

Summary: Gilgamesh was sent by the Sun God to rule over the city of Uruk. He was part god, and part man. He did not have any friends, and was a cruel king. He decided to build a wall around his city. The people in his city originally supported his wall, but eventually grew tired and frustrated. His people prayed to the Sun God, and the sun god sent Enkidu. Enkidu lived with the animals, and was a good man. Enkidu prevented a man from killing an animal with his god-like strength. The man told Gilgamesh about Enkidu's strength, and Gilgamesh was furious. Gilgamesh sends a beautiful singer to the woods to lure Enkidu to the city. Gilgamesh wanted to kill him in front of the city to reinforce his reputation. The beautiful singer and Enkidu fell in love. Enkidu left the forest and his animal friends, and went to the city to challenge Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh and Enkidu fought, but were equal in strength. Gilgamesh tripped, and would have died if Enkidu did not save him. After Enkidu saved Gilgamesh, they became friends. Once Gilgamesh had a friend, he stopped work on the wall, and there was peace in the city.

Critical Review:

Gilgamesh the King is written and illustrated by Ludmila Zeman. Zeman begins the picture book in the expected, "Long ago in the land of..." which sets the stage for a traditional folktale (p. 1). The illustrations also support the folktale, by using 'ancient' looking images. The colors also look gold based, which makes the images look older. The images bring the words to life. For example, when the story is talking about all the men in the city building a giant wall around the city. You can see the magnitude of people, and the height of the huge wall (p. 3-4). Without any words, it would still be very easy to tell the epic of Gilgamesh based on the pictures. Although this story is part of a trilogy, it can stand alone. It has closure, and tells a complete story. Also, some historical information about the epic of Gilgamesh is included after the story. I appreciate the use of rhetorical questions throughout the text. For example, after Enkidu sees a man killing an animal, he asks himself, "Why would anyone want to do that?" (p. 6). The text includes both more complex sentences. For example, "The earth shook and lightning flashed across the sky, as if the gods themselves were fighting for control of the world" (p. 16). The text also includes short, simple sentences. For example, "He was no longer alone. He had found a friend" (p. 19). The longer sentences tell an elaborate story, while the shorter sentences focus on the meaning of the sentences. The book kept me engaged as a college student, and I think an intermediate reader would definitely be interested in the historical significance of one of the first epics ever written down, and the action of the folktale itself.

First, a review of this book, then a comment about the series. We ran into this book about twelve years ago. We were doing a homeschool unit on the Sumerians, and this was a very welcome addition to our curriculum. The kids loved the beautiful pictures, well-researched detail, and delightful story. At the time I thought "too bad this artist doesn't do the rest of the epic". Foolish us -- it would have taken just a little digging to find that she did! So don't stop here, get the rest of the series. This is a masterpiece of both art and boiling a long story down to its essence.

Re "Gilgamesh the King": My long attention span 3 year old is smitten with this book and has requested it twice a day for a week. She loves the illustrations which are charming and not dark. This volume ends on a happy note -- good transforms evil thru the power of generosity and love. If this doesn't sound like the epic as you remember it, well, technically it is not, but the liberties the author has taken with the story make for better reading for the preschool set! I think age appropriate versions are an excellent way to introduce materials which can become increasingly complex over time. If you are aiming for a telling which is close to the original, this is not the book for you. THIS

volume succeeds in reaching listeners who can tolerate a couple paragraphs of text per page with an uplifting message and visual imagery consistent with the art of the region. Quite an accomplishment!

I bought the Ludmila Zeman Gilgamesh trilogy for my six year old daughter. The art is spectacular, and she was riveted to the story. I highly recommend these books to introduce the Gilgamesh story in an accessible way. As other reviewers note, the themes are mature, so be cautious and pre-read, depending on your child's developmental level. These are books we can return to when my daughter is older, and I think she'll appreciate the universal themes even more, but we have enjoyed the art and the basic, exciting storyline as a good start.

A wonderful bedtime story my son has asked to hear again and again. The story is slightly different from the orthodox version (here Enkidu saves Gilgamesh at the top of Uruk's wall, rather than Gilgamesh winning the fight), but it doesn't matter. My son loves it, and I like the way the author changed that bit to make it a sweeter story.

Zeman's presentation in The Gilgamesh Trilogy is faithful to the Epic. The story and its illustrations hold our children's sustained interest, and stimulates much discussion. This is a fun way to learn ancient history, customs, and mythical entities. We highly recommend all three volumes.

Great story for adults and young. Basis of a lot of modern stories. Awesome depiction of the characters.

Very attractive artwork -- a great introduction to the epic for kids.

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