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Bound



Synopsis

YOUNG XING XING IS BOUND. Bound to her late father's second wife and daughter. Bound to a life of servitude as a young girl in ancient China, where a woman is valued less than livestock. Bound to be alone, with no parents to arrange for a suitable husband. Xing Xing spends her days taking care of her half sister, Wei Ping, who cannot walk because of her foot bindings, the painful tradition for girls who are fit to be married. Even so, Xing Xing is content to practice her gift for poetry and calligraphy, and to dream of a life unbound by the laws of family and society. But all of this is about to change as Stepmother, who has spent nearly all of the family's money, grows desperate to find a husband for Wei Ping. Xing Xing soon realizes that this greed and desperation may threaten not only her memories of the past, but also her dreams for the future.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 57 customer reviews

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 5-9—Napoli takes the elements of the traditional Chinese version of "Cinderella" and creates a powerful and moving story. Xing Xing is left to the mercy of her stepmother after the death of her father. Focusing on a good marriage for her own big-footed daughter, the woman binds the poor girl's feet even though she is past the usual age for this painful procedure. Xing Xing's only pleasure is her daily contact with a beautiful white carp in the pond

where she draws water. To her, the fish seems to be the spirit of her mother helping her endure her difficult life. When the stepmother kills it, the girl is devastated, but she retrieves the bones from the garbage heap and, in the process of hiding them, discovers a green silk gown and gold slippers that belonged to her mother. Dressed in this rich garb, Xing Xing goes to the festival where she loses one slipper in her effort to escape detection. The slipper is eventually bought by an unconventional prince; when he finally finds its owner, Xing Xing considers her options and decides to marry him. Napoli retains the pattern of the traditional Chinese tale with only a few minor changes: she sets the story in the northern province of Shaanxi during the Ming dynasty rather than in a minority community in southern China. She fleshes out and enriches the story with well-rounded characters and with accurate information about a specific time and place in Chinese history; the result is a dramatic and masterful retelling. — Barbara Scotto, Michael Driscoll School, Brookline, MA
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Starred Review Gr. 7-12. Drawing from traditional Chinese Cinderella stories, Napoli sets this tale in a small village during China's Ming period. Since her beloved father's death, Xing Xing has become "hardly more than a slave," serving her acrimonious stepmother and pitiable stepsister, Wei Ping, whose botched, bloody foot binding has left her perilously unwell. A dangerous trip in search of medicine for Wei Ping brings Xing Xing into the wider world, but she returns to find home more treacherous than before. Napoli creates strong, unforgettable characters--particularly talented, sympathetic Xing Xing--and her haunting, sometimes violent tale amplifies themes from well-known Western Cinderella stories, making them fascinating questions: Could ancestors serve as "fairy godmothers"? In a society that so grossly undervalues females, what does "happily ever after" really mean? Teens and teachers will want to discuss the layered themes of freedom, captivity, love, human rights, and creative endeavor within this powerful survival story, which, like the yin and yang forces Xing Xing thinks about, balances between terror and tenderness, and is both subversive and rooted in tradition. Gillian Engberg
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This is a classic and you WILL fall in love with this novel if you are into reading fluid, picturesque tales, that while containing a hint of romance, end up pulling you into a world beyond your own. I honestly cannot think of any cons, besides the fact that when the novel ends, you will be incredibly saddened that the short journey to a different time is over. DJN's writing style is so...perfect for

writing a reimagined 'Cinderella' story, I can't recommend it enough.

Beautifully written book about overcoming incredibly difficult life situations through the strength of your spirit and your soul! I love all of Donna Jo Napoli's books for young adults, but this one stands out as an A+++ among A's! Wonderful, realistic female lead character!

"Bound" is the story of Xing Xing living with her Stepmother and half-sister, Wei Ping. It is an ancient Chinese spin on the Cinderella tale we all know and love. After Xing Xing's father dies, her Stepmother and Wei Ping manipulate and mistreat her, but in the end she comes out on top with her golden slipper and marries the Prince. It's a great story of a young girl finding herself and going against the norms of ancient Chinese society. I would recommend this book for middle school students, especially concerning how much they will learn about ancient Chinese culture and religion - it's a very enlightening tale.

The book club my daughter attends chose this book to read. My daughter really enjoyed reading this. Of course the main character is a female, which is always a positive for our daughters to read instead of books so concentrated on male characters. I believe this book did a good job opening my daughters eyes to the ways of other cultures which is also another positive. She told me it was a good book. Recommended for grades 5 and up

The words gracefully paint the images necessary to see through the eyes of the once cherished Xing Xing. A glimpse into Chinese history, of binding feet, of superstition, of prayer, and tradition, makes this read even more worthwhile. Artistic and academic, I recommend this to all readers 5th grade and above.

I really enjoyed this book until the last few pages, it seemed rushed.

Interesting interweaving of story elements, cultural traditions, language lessons, practices to represent a variation of Cinderella most pleasing to read.

Many cultures have their own versions of Cinderella; Bound is set in China. This version is different from others because so much of it is realistic. A very interesting read for young and not-so-young adults!

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