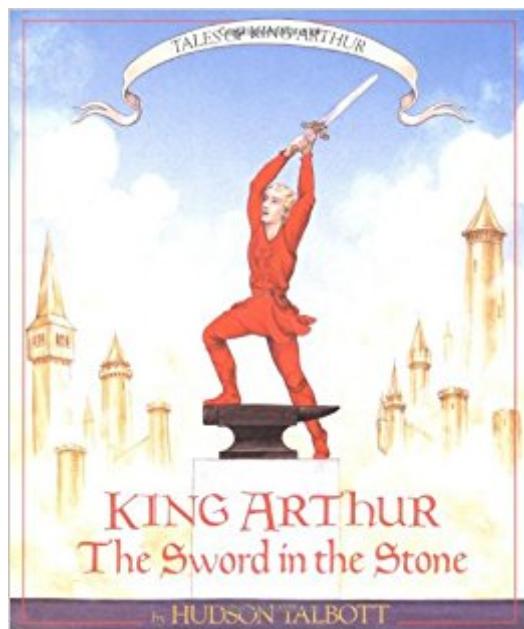


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Tales Of King Arthur: The Sword In The Stone (Books Of Wonder)



Synopsis

Except for the dragon-shaped constellation that appeared at his birth, there was nothing that suggested Arthur was destined for greatness. Raised by the gentle Sir Ector, Arthur spends his boyhood exploring the Welsh woodlands, until one day a messenger arrives announcing a grand tournament to be held in London. Arthur's older brother, Sir Kay, insists they must attend with Arthur as his squire. After traveling the long road to London on horseback, Kay performs brilliantly in the contest, but it's young Arthur himself who ultimately wins the day. The first volume of the Tales of King Arthur series introduces younger readers to the classic story known for over one hundred years as "The Sword in the Stone." Hudson Talbott has faithfully retold this heroic tale with humor and warmth, showing a human side to Arthur rarely glimpsed before. His vivid, richly colored paintings capture a crowded London at Christmastime and magnificent knights jousting on the field of battle, as well as the legendary sorcerer Merlin and the magical sword that reveals Arthur's destiny. Alive with the drama of medieval England, this book will awaken young readers' interest in the legendary king who set new ideals for knightly valor.

Book Information

Series: Books of Wonder

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Customer Reviews

The classic story of Arthur's discovery of his noble birthright under Merlin the sorcerer's watchful eye receives some contemporary touches in this attractive volume. The author/illustrator of We're Back! A Dinosaur's Story presents young Arthur as unprepossessing, content to attend to his duties as his knighted brother's squire, dazzled when he is brought to London, reluctant to forsake his

adoptive father for the throne of England. The illustrations encompass a range of styles--street scenes bustle; pictures of tournaments surge with energy; depictions of public assemblies suggest the anonymity of crowds. A bit less successfully, a few ethereal or studiously reverent illustrations herald the future glory of Arthur. On the whole, however, the drama in Arthur's feat of removing the famous sword from the stone on Christmas Day is not merely preserved but heightened. All ages.

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Grade 3-5-- The highlight of this adaptation of the coming of Arthur is the illustrations--vivid watercolors ranging from small vignettes to richly detailed double-page spreads. Costumes, armaments, and crowd scenes are especially eye-catching. Unfortunately, the text is less impressive. For some reason, Talbott strays from Malory's original from time to time, as when Arthur goes in search of a sword for his brother Kay, and later when Kay tries to claim Excalibur for his own. Instead of Kay's having left his sword behind and sending Arthur grumbling back to locked lodgings to look for it, here it is Arthur's error. Later, Kay yields the magic sword because he fails to return it to the stone, not, as Malory tells us, because he refuses to lie to his father under oath. Kay's basic honesty is here reduced to petulance--a minor point, but puzzling all the same. Acceptable because of the high quality of the art and the dearth of other versions for this age level, but otherwise not a first purchase. --Barbara Hutcheson, Greater Victoria Public Library, B.C., Canada

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My children love the stories of King Arthur, Camelot, and his Knights. Hudson Talbott's writing and the gorgeous illustrations which accompany each story are remarkable. His "Tales of King Arthur" stories have quickly become story time favorites at our home. My son has asked to use the illustrations in these stories as a basis to reprint his room, so that it looks "like Camelot and Avalon look". If you like King Arthur, and want to see those legends told in a truly remarkable way, you need to get the three "Tales of King Arthur" books (King Arthur and the Round Table, Excalibur, and The Sword in the Stone), as well as the accompanying book, "Lancelot".

I like this because I enjoy King Arthur stories/books.

Artwork is good and not so long. the story held the interest of my 6 year old.

great

Great book. I enjoyed it too. Now off to find additional tales that will be equally spell-binding for our son.

My son (7 yo) really enjoyed this book - the whole series is terrific.

Hudson Talbott has brought the Arthur legend to life in his illustrated books for middle grades. This book conveys the peril and danger of the wars and invasions in medieval England in a way that is not too terrifying, but definitely shows the need for courage. My boys love it. Arthur's childhood in the loving home of Sir Ector comes through in this book, and this shows a relationship between Arthur and Kay that is mostly devoid of rivalry. Kay does try to lie about how he got the sword, but Ector encourages him to be truthful, and not to fear the truth. It points out that Merlin and the Archbishop of Canterbury were of different faiths - nice! Hudson Talbott seems like he is fulfilling his life's purpose with this series of books - treasure them. It is very hard to find picture books for boys that are this good, demonstrate such good values and character, and have illustrations that are detailed, captivating, and heroic. This book is a winner.

Although the language is a little advanced for early readers, the story is very tellable. There are many threads to this story that come to life through the illustrations. The story is told in an interesting, dynamic way that gives pause for wonder, such as the conversation between Sir Ector and his son Sir Kay. Their personalities come through and we can appreciate the types of men they are. Another moment is when Merlin plans the timing for Arthur to draw the sword from the stone. When, asks Arthur. "After all have tried and failed, whenever that may be," replies Merlin. A dynamic painting of a tournament with thundering hooves, flying pennants, and lances at the ready illustrates perfectly our idea of a medieval joust. The illustrations seem cinematic in that they always shift the viewpoint. Now we see the action from street level; in the next picture we view a crowd scene from above. We are comfortable with such shifts from movies and TV. The illustrations evoke "chivalrous" ideas. The son, grieving that he has to leave his father's house, rises bravely to Merlin's bidding in a sequence that culminates in the "Youth Triumphant" painting, when the young Arthur raises the sword over his head. The idea of "chivalry", respect for one's elders, telling the truth, and being brave is well interwoven and are excellent topics to discuss with children. The final picture, the crowned Arthur dressed in white and gold, holding the sword in his hands under the white blossoms of a tree, is such an archetype of the young, white hero that it verges on the comical. But I have to

remember that this is a children's book, and mine will get enough of my cynical views when he's ready for it, later. I recommend this book for 6 and up. The young ones will love to be read to, and the older ones will enjoy reading it.

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