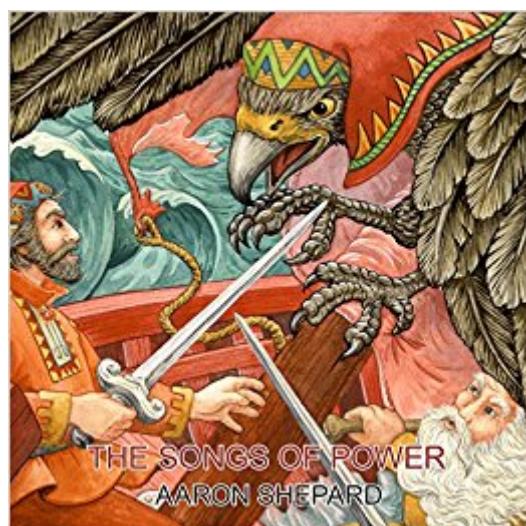


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The Songs Of Power: A Northern Tale Of Magic, Retold From The Kalevala (Ancient Fantasy)



Synopsis

Not so long ago, in the tiny, isolated villages of Finland, where prolonged summer days gave way to endless winter nights, people would pass the time by singing the many adventures of their favorite heroes: the mighty, magical men and women of ancient days. They sang of old Vainamoinen, greatest of sages and magicians, who helped create the world but never could find a woman to wed him. They sang of his friend and ally Ilmarinen, first among craftsmen, the blacksmith who forged the dome of the heavens. They sang of Louhi, the ancient lady of Northland, whose crafty wit and magical powers made her a worthy opponent for Vainamoinen himself. And they sang of Aila, Louhi's lovely daughter, who captured the hopes of the two old friends and drew them as rivals to the shores of Northland. And while these songs could still be heard, there came along a rural doctor, a scholar, who gathered and wove them together in a book he called the *Kalevala*. And so he created for Finns a national epic, and for the rest of the world, a work of wonder. The songs endure, the heroes live. . . . For ages 10 and up. Not illustrated! Aaron Shepard is the award-winning author of "The Baker's Dozen," "The Sea King's Daughter," "Lady White Snake," and many more children's books. His stories have appeared often in *Cricket* magazine, while his Web site is known internationally as a prime resource for folktales, storytelling, and reader's theater. Once a professional storyteller, Aaron specializes in lively retellings of folktales and other traditional literature, which have won him honors from the American Library Association, the New York Public Library, the Bank Street College of Education, the National Council for the Social Studies, and the American Folklore Society. Cover artist Carol Schwartz is the award-winning illustrator of over 45 picture books. "Well written and valuable. . . . Shepard's use of free verse allows him more flexibility than the traditional poetic meter. [The text] retains a sense of majestic rhythm and is most effective when read aloud. Supporting information is detailed." -- Donna L. Scanlon, *School Library Journal*, Apr. 1996 (reviewing an older edition) "Shepard's free verse telling has power and sparkle." -- Glenn Giffin, *Denver Post*, May 12, 1996 (reviewing an older edition) "The language of Shepard's story, the way [the characters'] magic is performed -- all is bigger than life, as the mythic tale should be. It is a book to read aloud -- to an older child, to an appreciative adult." -- Kate Frankel, *Storyline*, Winter 1997 (reviewing an older edition) "The [free] verse reads aloud particularly well. -- Notes from the Windowsill, Dec. 15, 1996 (reviewing an older edition) SAMPLE Vainamoinen chanted and Joukahainen sank in the marshy ground, up to his waist in the swallowing earth. Cried

Joukahainen,"Reverse your words,undo your spells! I will give you a hat full of silver,a helmet full of gold." "Keep your wealth," said Vainamoinen."My coffers overflow."He chanted again, and Joukahainen sank to his chest. "Reverse your words,undo your spells! I will give you fields for plowing,meadows for pasture." "Keep your land.My farm stretches beyond sight."He chanted again, and Joukahainen sank to his chin. "Reverse your words,undo your spells! I will tell you of the fairest woman,the finest maiden." Vainamoinen stopped his chant.

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 6

Customer Reviews

"Well written and valuable. . . . Shepard's use of free verse allows him more flexibility than the traditional poetic meter. [The text] retains a sense of majestic rhythm and is most effective when read aloud. Supporting information is detailed." -- Donna L. Scanlon, School Library Journal, Apr. 1996 (reviewing an older edition) "Shepard's free verse telling has power and sparkle." -- Glenn Giffin, Denver Post, May 12, 1996 (reviewing an older edition) "The language of Shepard's story, the way [the characters'] magic is performed -- all is bigger than life, as the mythic tale should be. It is a book to read aloud -- to an older child, to an appreciative adult." -- Kate Frankel, Storyline, Winter 1997 (reviewing an older edition) "The [free] verse reads aloud particularly well. -- Notes from the Windowsill, Dec. 15, 1996 (reviewing an older

edition) Â COMMENTS ON THE ANCIENT FANTASY SERIESÂ "Shepard's Ancient Fantasy series retells portions of epic narratives sure to pique kids' interest. He cannily selects episodes likely to grab the attention of a wide range of middle-graders, [while] his storytelling voice varies to hint at the style of the original. These mini-novels would make fun classroom readalouds, too. No dumb-downs . . . Rated S for Snapped Up." -- S. C. Poe, Route 19 Writers (blog), Apr. 4, 2012Â "What a wonderful way to expose and broaden the minds of our young people and adults. To be transported to another place and time. To experience stories that have lasted for centuries . . . These books have taken my grandsons away from their video and DVD games." -- Sandra Heptinstall, Whispering Winds Book ReviewsÂ "Aaron Shepard does for folklore and epic poems what Charles and Mary Lamb did for Shakespeare in the 1800's -- produces short, exciting, plot-centered adaptations that make the originals accessible to readers young and old, and that may tempt you to dip into the real thing someday." -- Susan ChapekÂ ///////////////////////////////Â SAMPLEÂ Vainamoinen chanted and Joukahainen sank in the marshy ground, up to his waist in the swallowing earth.Â Cried Joukahainen, "Reverse your words, undo your spells! I will give you a hat full of silver, a helmet full of gold."Â "Keep your wealth," said Vainamoinen. "My coffers overflow." He chanted again, and Joukahainen sank to his chest.Â "Reverse your words, undo your spells! I will give you fields for plowing, meadows for pasture."Â "Keep your land. My farm stretches beyond sight." He chanted again, and Joukahainen sank to his chin.Â "Reverse your words, undo your spells! I will tell you of the fairest woman, the finest maiden."Â Vainamoinen stopped his chant.Â

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I have to admit that I haven't read much Finnish literature, and I knew nothing of the epic *Kalevala*. After having read Aaron Shepard's version of one of the stories, I see what I've missed. The tale of Vainamoinen and Joukahainen vying for the maiden Aila's hand, while her mother Louhi tries to get the better of the two suitors, is a great story, full of action and magic. In the end, it's about who outsmarts who, and will they live to tell the tale. The free verse format used by the author to present the story is easy to read. And don't overlook the "About the Story" at the end. It's a fascinating look at the background of the story. I noticed that the story is listed for ten-year-olds and up. "Up" definitely includes adults. I enjoyed the story very much. A very good introduction to the *Kalevala*.

This is a good translation of some of the *Kalevala*, told as a set of 7 "chapters" connected into an exciting free-verse, not prose, tale that is engaging for children. Although we are using it as part of our waldorf study at home, I would recommend it for children ages 7 to 8 and up. This version has no pictures inside--there is another version which I ordered at the same time, *The Maiden of Northland*, which is a picture book. The text in both books is identical, so, if you'd like the child form their own pictures this is a good choice. The author gives good background information and a pronunciation guide for the names of the main characters.

Finnish Tale translated extremely well, and painted a vivid picture in my mind of two rival suitors (both friends) trying to make a play for the same fair maiden whose mother was none too pleased. I'll be considering many more works from this same author as a result!

Aaron Shepard does for folklore and epic poems what Charles and Mary Lamb did for Shakespeare in the 1800's--produces short, exciting, plot-centered adaptations that make the originals accessible to readers young and old, and that may tempt you to dip into the real thing someday. Design and editing is admirable, too.

This is another almost free kindle book in which Shepard retells a foreign tale that children will enjoy. It is the story of two powerful men who court a young - under age 15 - beautiful girl whose mother states that the girl will consider the proposal of the one who is able to bring a gift that has never been seen before. The story is filled with magic.

I found this to be a simple but interesting recounting of Finnish myths. It was written for children but is not childish. I enjoyed the myths and would buy more books of similar stories

Aaron Shepard had to create a narrative from a book of Finnish epic poems, make it at a level easy for children to understand, and preserve the poetic feel of the original. He did a fine job. This book is enjoyable and, if it doesn't follow the exact structure of the poems, will be easier to grasp by children.

The telling of traditional folk tales adds insight into our historical thinking. This short piece reveals the roots of our more base nature, power, greed, lust and desire. Fulfillment may be such an illusion.

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