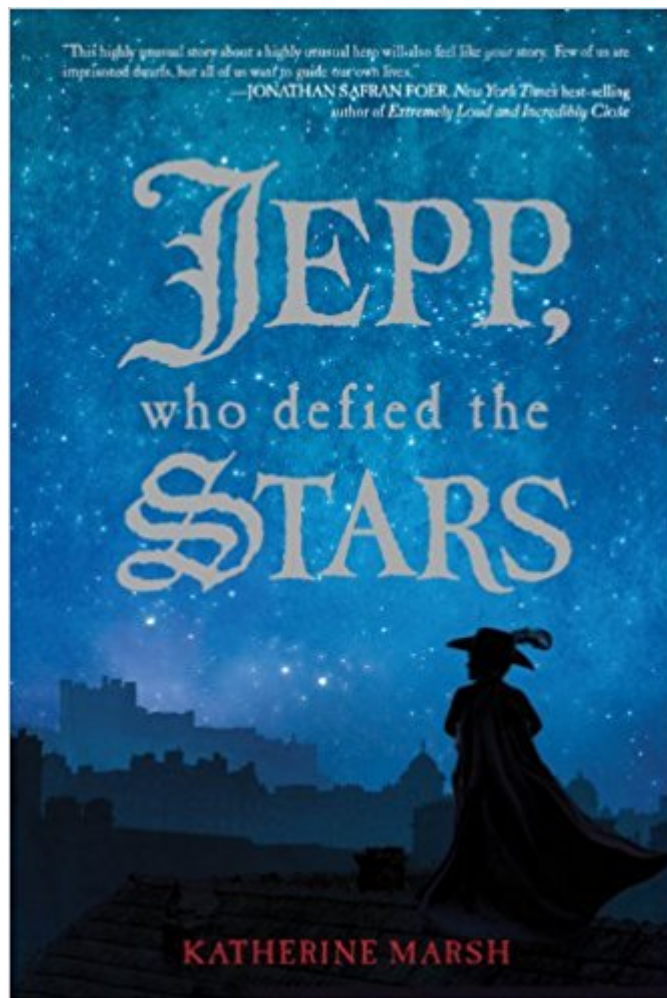


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Jepp, Who Defied The Stars



Synopsis

New York Times Notable Children's Books of 2012
The Wall Street Journal Best Children's Books of 2012
"This highly unusual story about a highly unusual hero will also feel like your story. Few of us are imprisoned dwarfs, but all of us want to guide our own lives."
Jonathan Safran Foer, New York Times best-selling author of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*
"Rich, absorbing storytelling; a terrific read in every way."
Nancy Werlin, National Book Award Finalist and author of *Impossible*
"Delightful characters, unique setting, and lovely prose. This is historical fiction at its best!"
Ruta Sepetys, New York Times best-selling author of *Between Shades of Gray*
"Fate: Is it written in the stars from the moment we are born? Or is it a bendable thing that we can shape with our own hands?"
Jepp of *Astraveld* needs to know. He left his countryside home on the empty promise of a stranger, only to become a captive in a luxurious prison: Coudenberg Palace, the royal court of the Spanish Infanta. Nobody warned Jepp that as a court dwarf, daily injustices would become his seemingly unshakable fate. If the humiliations were his alone, perhaps he could endure them; but it breaks Jepp's heart to see his friend Lia suffer. After Jepp and Lia attempt a daring escape from the palace, Jepp is imprisoned again, alone in a cage. Now, spirited across Europe in a kidnapper's carriage, Jepp fears where his unfortunate stars may lead him. But he can't even begin to imagine the brilliant and eccentric new master; a man devoted to uncovering the secrets of the stars; who awaits him. Or the girl who will help him mend his heart and unearth the long-buried secrets of his past. Masterfully written, grippingly paced, and inspired by real historical characters, Jepp, *Who Defied the Stars* is the tale of an extraordinary hero and his inspiring quest to become the master of his own destiny.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 5 - 9

Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up-Is our fate predetermined, or do we make our own fortune (or misfortune) through our actions and decisions? Marsh ponders this age-old question through the eyes of an extraordinary hero. When Jepp, a fatherless dwarf, joins the court of the Spanish Infanta, he's not prepared for the daily humiliations that become his life. He also doesn't expect to fall in love with a fellow performer, melancholy but lovely Lia. When she is raped, Jepp attempts to help her and her unborn child escape-with tragic results. As punishment for his insubordination, Jepp becomes dinnertime entertainment for the eccentric Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe. Inspired by friendship with Brahe's daughter, Magdalene, Jepp reveals his educated mind and is welcomed into the astronomer's close-knit circle of scholars. He even finds true love. But before Jepp can embrace this promising new future, he must embark on a journey of self-discovery to resolve his past. Marsh crafts a beautifully poignant coming-of-age tale of struggle, tragedy, and, finally, of triumph. Jepp's indomitable spirit is truly inspiring, and it is this rare quality that makes his character so memorable. The universal moral of self-acceptance is communicated skillfully. This shining gem is a must-have.-Alissa J. Bach, Oxford Public Library, MI (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Living in the sixteenth century, Jepp is a 15-year-old dwarf who has never known his father. Taken from his humble home to live at court in Brussels, he enjoys the comforts and education available to him there, but he chafes at his lack of freedom and the indignity of his position as a performer. After his attempt to help a young woman ends disastrously, he is sent away to the castle of Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe. There he falls in love, but lingering questions about his paternity lead Jepp back to his homeland, where he finds further adventures and, eventually, answers. The book's title refers to the ongoing question of whether people are ruled by their destinies as foretold by the stars. The novel shows a good deal of research into the period as well as Brahe's life. Divided into three distinct parts, the story sprawls a bit and its pace is uneven, but the scenes are deftly written. Readers taken with the main character will want to read on and discover his fate.

Grades 8-10. --Carolyn Phelan

Katherine Marsh can write, as I already knew from her earlier work. Her story of Jepp is longer and richer than her first novels, reaching a deeper level of storytelling skill. It touches on themes of destiny and equality and longing, all of which should resonate with the intended young adult audience. I have given the book to several others, including adults who like fantasy fiction and historical fiction, and every one of them loved it too. It's a great gift, very suitable for a teenaged reader!

At first the book moves a bit slowly, but it has an intriguing premise as well as main character. There is a little too much graphic content / difficulty in wording for a 6th grader or below, but advanced / mature 7th grade readers and above would find it manageable. A knowledge about medieval courts would make the book more interesting but not necessary. I plan on giving a book talk on it to my 7th grade Honors English class in conjunction with our medieval historical-fiction book club unit.

This was a fun little "mind-candy" read, with twists and turns, good guys and bad guys, love and loss, success and failures, taking risks, and growing up with redemption in the end. I didn't realize it was young adult fiction until after I read it. It worked for me perfectly for reading on a plane.

I first heard about this book from a feature spot on the radio and became interested. And wow, am I glad I bought this. It is a fantastic and engrossing tale of a young man trying to find his place in the world. SPOILERS: I cried when the moose died. Seriously.

I appreciated the wonderful writing and picturesque 1500s environment. Jepp's life lessons about such things as friendship, pain, young love, and appreciation for differences are important and lightly expressed. I gave it to the middle school readers in my family for Christmas.

Best book ever, even for an adult.

Katherine Marsh is showing wisdom beyond her years in this masterful story of Jepp. The characters are marvelous and memorable. The language is beautiful. I have highlighted numerous lines that I want to remember and treasure. What a beautiful way with words. It is a wonderful historical fiction work of art that is extremely relevant to today's youth and today's world. Her world

is the world I believe we live in today. A fabulous message for humankind. I loved it. Donna Barnes Retired teacher of grades k- college.

A beautiful tale of how one young 'outsider', through love, loss and healing, and determining to remain open-hearted in living out values of kindness, forgiveness and being true to oneself, makes sense of a world both cruel and beautiful.

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