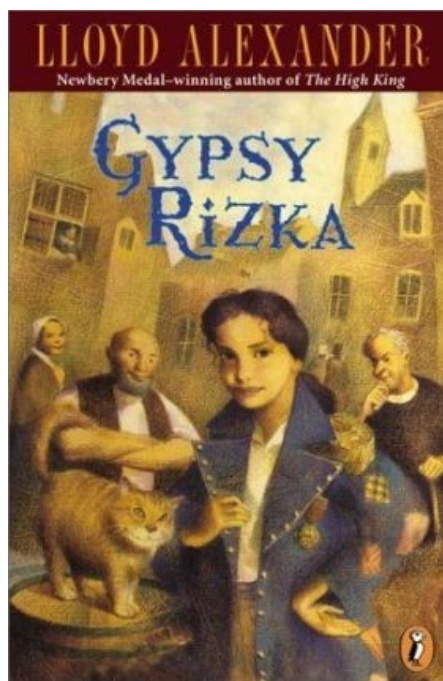




## Gypsy Rizka

*Lloyd Alexander*

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# Gypsy Rizka

*Lloyd Alexander*

## Gypsy Rizka Lloyd Alexander

Living alone in her wagon on the outskirts of a small town while waiting for her father's return, Rizka, a Gypsy and a trickster, exposes the ridiculous foibles of some of the townspeople. High comedy as much as a celebration of Rizka's brains and brassiness, her flouting of conventions, and her own brand of magic, this book is infused with Alexander's recognition and respect for the rich and good heart of its main character and the human truth of accepting others' differences.

## Gypsy Rizka Details

Date : Published November 1st 2000 by Puffin Books (first published January 1st 1999)

ISBN : 9780141309804

Author : Lloyd Alexander

Format : Paperback 195 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Young Adult, Adventure, Childrens, Historical, Historical Fiction

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## From Reader Review Gypsy Rizka for online ebook

### Ellen says

This was pretty charming.

2017 challenge: a book with a cat on the cover

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### Robin says

Lloyd Alexander is one of those authors who wrote many books, the more of which one reads, the more one fancies oneself to be on a mission to read them all. I have already read a lot of them, but I still have a long way to go. I am happy about that, especially after reading this book, which does nothing if it doesn't spread happiness.

Rizka is a clever, spirited gypsy girl whose mother died and whose father left her alone at an early age, promising someday to return. She lives in a caravan, or vardo, on the outskirts of the backwater town of Greater Dunitza, where the main attractions are a town clock that doesn't run, a town square with a horse trough in the middle, a town council full of bickering fools, and a town hero who never really fought in a war - nobody believes he did, but they never let on even as "General" Hatvan promotes himself up the ranks and says "hup, hup" a lot.

Rizka lives by her wits, but because she has quick ones, she lives well. This book relates a whole series of her merry pranks, including the time she hoodwinked a gormless traveler into being happy the inn's bedding gave him fleas, the time she got her cat acquitted of stealing the chief councilor's chicken, and the time she tricked that same councilor - the nasty Sharpnack - into letting her stick feathers all over him. She leads the town clerk on a tour of Ali Baba's cave, where he falls head-first into a simmering pool of mud; she convinces the whole town the clock tower is haunted, then exorcises the ghost; she gives General Hatvan a hilarious cure for stupidity that results in all the village's dogs following him around; and at one point, she contrives to be appointed mayor.

Sometimes the hilarity is the result of Rizka's howlingly funny pranks. Sometimes she has to intervene in problems created by the silliness of the Greater Dunitza town fathers. Sometimes she comes to the rescue of people who cry out for help, such as lovesick couples and a litter of adorable kittens. Often she is seconded by an "apprentice demon" who is actually one of the mayor's daughters, or by a gang of rowdy youths, or by the kindly blacksmith who has watched over her since she was very small. But her biggest dilemma will roll into town with the other gypsies, who propose to take her away from all this "gorgio" foolishness - and so, silly or not, from the only family she really has.

Everything about this book pleased me, from the lighthearted episodes to the emotionally touching payoff at the end. I especially appreciated, on behalf of clever young readers, the fact that its tone never talks down to them and how it continually challenges them to build vocabulary. It has a lot of tongue-in-cheek wordplay, such as when the town constable confused the words "obsequious" and "ubiquitous" - giving kids a chance to laugh, learn, and feel smart at the same time. And of course, Rizka herself is a heroine to cherish.

This was only the 16th book I have read by Lloyd Alexander (1924-2007), an American writer whose output ranged from a translation of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea* to the Newbery Medal-winning conclusion to the Prydain Chronicles, *The High King*. If I read just the Westmark trilogy and the six-book Vesper Holly series,

that will make 25; but those aren't the only interesting titles of his that remain in store for me. For an author to keep surprising and giving pleasure after so many books, he must be onto something. Something like, maybe, a top-ten list of best American juvenile fiction writers of all time. I'm just saying.

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### **Bernadette says**

A hilarious comedy of a story, Lloyd Alexander has outdone himself with *Gypsy Rizka*! This book had me laughing out loud and I couldn't put it down until I had finished. With an awesome, independent, and clever female protagonist like Rizka, Lloyd Alexander narrates incident after incident as Rizka helps to solve and create the problems in her town.

*Gypsy Rizka* begins simply enough telling you that Rizka is a half-gypsy whose mother died and whose father left with the gypsies. Rizka lives in the old wagon left by the gypsies and patiently waits for the day when her father will return for her. In the meantime, she is the town doctor as well as the town problem-solver. Although never asked, Rizka feels the need to know everyone's business and, through her clever wit, solve the problems of the bumbling townsfolk, who are completely ridiculous and hilarious. Although living technically as an outcast, Rizka never feels alone due to the company she keeps of her big cat Petzel, and the town blacksmith Big Franko who says he would have adopted her when her mother died had she not tried to bite him. While the book is mostly a series of different adventures, it ends with such a beautiful and cute note that pulls everything together. While many of Lloyd Alexander's books focus on how boys become men, *Gypsy Rizka* celebrates the cleverness and wit of girls, giving a great story to inspire young girls.

I absolutely loved *Gypsy Rizka*. It was so funny, so well written, and Rizka was such a bold and fun character. Lloyd Alexander's subtle humor of so perfectly describing ridiculous scenes had me crying tears when I tried to explain the situation to a friend later. There was nothing to dislike in *Gypsy Rizka*: it was fun, cute, written in Lloyd Alexander's amazing style, and had such a heartwarming message at the end. 5/5.

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### **Josiphine/Tessa says**

This was my introduction to Lloyd Alexander. It was the line "Rizka lived by her wits, but since they were quick wits she lived not too badly" on the second page that made me realize that I was a Lloyd Alexander devotee for life.

**Reread: August 13 2016** I love love love this book.

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### **Jeni Enjaian says**

A review from my old blog...

Such a cute and fanciful book. I love how Alexander created such a lovable character that in the end chose to love all of those who when looking at her at first didn't love her.

Lloyd Alexander remains one of my favorite authors.

(I wish I had written a longer review...)

## Christopher says

Brilliant! Gypsy Rizka blends comedy and poignancy seamlessly--it reads like a cross between the works of Lloyd Alexander and Roald Dahl. It features a delightful cast of characters: plucky heroine Rizka, conniving councilman Sharpnack, and fatherly Big Franko, to name a few. The plot consists of various events that happen in the town of Greater Dunita and how Rizka influences the lives of the town's citizens. Most of these anecdotes are humorous, but the last chapter contains some surprising emotions. Though not one of Alexander's well-known works, Gypsy Rizka is well worth anyone's time. It's lighthearted but also knows when to pull the heartstrings.

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## Julie says

After growing up loving the Prydain Chronicles and having read only a couple of Lloyd Alexander's other stand alone books, I have been meaning to get around to reading the rest of his works.

I picked up this book and another up from the library and started it on a Sunday morning. I had to stop in the middle of the day to go to church, but when I came home I couldn't put it down and finished it before going to bed at 10:30pm.

It was totally great! Lloyd Alexander really is a genius storyteller! I wish I could tell him how impressed I am by his writing skills! This book is extremely clever, entertaining and sweet.

I was able to get into the story easily, but at the same time I would laugh so hard that I had to pull back and just marvel at Mr. Alexander's ingenuity in coming up with all the hilarious scenarios in this story, and the clever solutions that Gypsy Rizka comes up with.

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## Lola says

Gypsy Rizka was yet another book that I maybe-sort-of borrowed and never returned from one of my middle school teacher's libraries. I know, I feel bad about it, and I'm probably going to hell for it so let us move on. Somehow, it has managed to survive many of my book cleanouts. In fact, many of these "stolen" books have survived my book cleanouts. Why? Beats me. Moving on...

There's something very folksy about Gypsy Rizka. The format and the story-telling makes me think of the old quilt my mom brings out of the closet when I'm sick. It's frayed and patched together with many different fabrics. Gypsy Rizka is essentially a novel of small stories all tied together by Rizka. Everyone in town knows her. Some hate her. Some love her. Some, like Sharpnack, want her gone. My favorite character (other than our scrappy heroine) is Big Franco. He's just so nice, and he cares about her, and I know I have a soft spot for Hagrid types, okay?

Maybe Gypsy Rizka has kept its place on my shelves because it is a sweet, simple children's story I actually like. Or maybe I'm just a sentimentalist. Either way, I recommend it for younger readers. It's quick, easy to read, and fun.

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## heartwork.in.progress says

Steph's review - The Gypsy Rizka is a wonderful, humorous story and Lloyd Alexander must have had an inspiration just to write it. Rizka, who is a gypsy, is a teenager whose father that left her at a town called Greater Dunitsa. As described, she is a quick-witted, bright, and sassy character with a big, wily, mustard-colored cat named Petzel. Rizka stays in town hoping that one day her father, who left her there, will come and fetch her. But her loved friend, Big Franko, wishes for a better life for her and is a faithful, loyal friend hopes what she hopes. Chief Councilor Sharpnack, however, wishes the opposite. He hates Rizka and hopes for a chance to drive her out of town, and if not, make her life miserable. I think the book is a creative work of Lloyd Alexander's and apparently it's my favorite book of his for the present. However, the ending is a bit subtle and sad. I also think that Lloyd could have made the story more wonderful, but at least there's not much improvement he could do in the book. I would ask Lloyd why he wrote the book, how did he know what chiriklo meant, and if he would write another book about wily Rizka. It's amazing on how he managed to make Rizka have a unique character of her own, especially since he is not a gypsy girl with tattered clothes. And Sharpnack too has a sly personality. He reminds me of the corrupt politicians we have nowadays in the Philippines. Petzel reminded me of my sister's cat, Charkulit, when he stole the roasted chicken. (It made my stomach growl, too!) Fibich has trait that reminds me of the rare honest politician. Big Franko is another man whose personality that caught my eye. Beloved Rizka is very dear to him. I can tell it by the way he calls her chiriklo. Sofiya reminds me of a fangirl of a superstar these days. I had this feeling that Greater Dunitsa is not real at all. If it was, I think Lloyd was very clever to think of putting the setting there. I wish that Lloyd Alexander would make more Gypsy Rizka books, so that fans of his don't have to be sad that his book has ended. The girl Rizka also makes me ask myself if I would enjoy being a gypsy and to live an actual life in Greater Dunitsa. I'm really glad that Lloyd wrote this book. But it makes me sad that if I read it again, the suspense will be gone, like a magician revealing the secret o the trick. So, I'll read it again after a long time. Three cheers for Lloyd Alexander!!!

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## Angel says

This one was hard for me to get through. It's definitely for a younger reading audience. I think that 8 or 9 year old kids would find it fun and hilarious. About a smart sassy gypsy girl making it in an old town of quirky characters.

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## Kim says

This book was a better read, for me, than \_Time Cat\_ because it felt less "babyish," but it still is a read mainly aimed at young young-adult readers. The characters were compelling, though, and the storyline is very cute. It was an enjoyable read, if not very challenging.

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## Brittany says

This was described as one of the funniest Lloyd Alexander books, and I would have to agree. This book was delightful. Lloyd Alexander creates the most charming female protagonists, and I love it. Rizka was smart, optimistic, and spunky. You rooted for all through the book, as well as the townspeople she was always

trying to help. I definitely recommend this book.

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### **Meredith says**

Fun but predictable and forgettable.

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### **Sayali says**

I really liked this book. I thought the characters were hilarious and the writing style was great. Rizka is a witty, poor girl who twists everything to her advantage. This book was short and clever. I thought this was a funny historical fiction that is worth reading.

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### **Tawny says**

Author: Lloyd Alexander

Title: Gypsy Rizka

Genre: fantasy

Publication Info: Dutton Children's Books. New York. 1999.

Recommended Age: 9 to 13

Plot Summary: A young woman by the name of Gypsy Rizka lived in a horse-drawn wagon in the outskirts of Greater Dunitsa. Her mother died when she was young, and her father left her in the care of the townspeople in order to continue his travels as a gypsy. She had been waiting all these years for him to return. Rizka is poor and has to live off of her wits, tricking many into feeding her and her cat, Petzel. She is the town doctor and treats patients with unconventional medicine. She knows all the affairs of the townspeople and helps move things along. She explores magical caves, helps runaway lovers, concocts a ghost for a greater cause, and convinces a traveler he could start a flea circus with the fleas he got from sleeping at the inn. The town officials want to run Rizka out, but too many people like her for that to happen. One day, a traveling gypsy group comes to town. Rizka expects her father to be with them. Instead, the leader of the caravan tells her that her father died of an illness several years before. Rizka had planned to go with the gypsies, but decided that her true family was the townspeople of Greater Dunitsa. They had adopted her in a sense, and she could not turn her back on them.

Personal Notes: Rizka is a very witty girl. She is courageous, creative, and inspirational. I think adolescents would like reading this book because she is such a dynamic character. There is a hint of the Bible (Noah's Ark) and of Shakespeare (Romeo and Juliet) in the book, which also makes it fun. Although it is a bit long, this novel might be a good one to read aloud to the class, focusing on these elements.

Evaluation: This book kind of reminded me of that movie Anastasia. It had a small-town Russian feel to it. Rizka was certainly not royalty, but she did manage to become mayor for a day. I can definitely picture this book as a Disney movie. It is funny and enchanting. The only thing that might make it better is a little romance of her own. All Rizka has is her cat, a father-figure, and some younger kids who look up to her. I wondered where all her peers were.

Other Comments: I don't normally read this kind of book, which is why I decided to read it. It took me a

little while to get into it, probably because it is aimed at a much younger generation. By the middle of the book, however, I was engrossed and wanted to read the rest. I would recommend this novel to any young reader, including my children. It is a great way to get the imagination going.

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### **Susan says**

I think every girl who feels like they "do not fit in", should read this book.

Rizka, is a girl who knows who she is, knows her talents and is not shy about using them to help others, even the people who want to have her court-martialed or run out of town. She has brains and stands up for herself when no one else will.

It is a great "feel good" fantasy.

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### **Debbie says**

I love Lloyd Alexander's smart, strong, and kind female characters. These related short stories feature a clever young girl with a knack for outsmarting the annoying adults who underestimate her. Kind of reminded me of the old Brer Rabbit stories.

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### **penelopewanders says**

Checking to see if this would be useful for an EFL class with the Rom as the theme.  
Not much in terms of the Rom, but a cute story.

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### **Evelyn Mercy Price says**

This was such an enjoyable book to read!

I giggled, I chuckled, I laughed out loud; highly entertaining!

I truly wish I could let Lloyd Alexander know how much his writing has influenced me, and continues to impress me as I explore more of his works. He really is a master story teller!

I can hardly comprehend the cleverness, planning, and wit that had to have gone into the writing of this book.

I would highly recommend it to anyone! Such a fun read!

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### **Kay Iscah says**

It was okay, but I was disappointed that it didn't have much of a plot. Most of the characters were silly. There

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was enough to like and smile about that it was a quick, fairly pleasant read, but not his best work.

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