



Journey Across the Hidden Islands

Sarah Beth Durst

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The traditional Emperor's Journey is meant to be uneventful. But as the princesses Seika and Ji-Lin—twin sisters—travel to pay respects to their kingdom's dragon guardian, unexpected monsters appear and tremors shake the earth. The Hidden Islands face unprecedented threats, and the old rituals are failing. With only their strength, ingenuity, and flying lion to rely on, can the sisters find a new way to keep their people safe?

Journey Across the Hidden Islands Details

Date : Published April 4th 2017 by Clarion

ISBN :

Author : Sarah Beth Durst

Format : Kindle Edition 352 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Childrens, Middle Grade, Adventure, Dragons, Cultural, Asia

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From Reader Review Journey Across the Hidden Islands for online ebook

Ms. Yingling says

E ARC from Edelweiss Above the Treeline

Ji-Lin is training with her winged lion Alejan to become the protector of her sister and heir to the throne, Seika. When she successfully completes her training, she is allowed to go home for her birthday. Upon arrival, she is thrust immediately into a large celebration ritual, and she finds out that she and her sister are to be sent on the Emperor's Journey to talk to the dragon that is keeping a boundary up that makes the Hidden Islands safe from fierce monsters called koji. Along with Alejan, the sisters start on their four day journey. They run into problems along the way-- at one stop, the town has been invaded by a giant serpent koji who is making a nest in the town, there are frequent earthquakes, and they come across a pirate ship claiming to be from Zemyla, where the founder of Himitsu was born. The pirates are really explorers, but Kirro, the son of the captain, has been bitten by a beetle and might die. The Zemylans don't believe the princesses that the spit from a waterhorse will heal Kirro, because in their world, waterhorses have been hunted to extinction. The princesses know they need to hurry to the dragon, but they offer to take Kirro with them to be healed. They manage to do this, and make it to the dragon in time, but are unable to contact the dragon. The princesses' Uncle and the people in the village nearby don't seem overly worried, but the girls are not ready to give up and manage to find the dragon and uncover a plot. Will they be able to save their kingdom?

Strengths: This is a very descriptive novel with a very rich fantasy world. It reminds me of something, but I can't quite put my finger on it. It's quasi-Japanese, which is a change from quasi-Celtic, and who doesn't want to fly around on a lion and save the world from evil monsters. There is enough princessy detail to keep younger readers happy, and enough action/adventure and girl power to delight older readers. I found myself liking this one more than I thought I would. A great choice for readers who liked Hale's Princess Academy or Levine's The Two Princesses of Bamarre.

Weaknesses: Both girls seemed SUPER unprepared for their journey, but I guess their father had their reasons for sending them. It also seemed a little odd that the towns they visited were under such duress but were willing to send the girls on to talk to the dragon. Makes sense, especially given how unprepared the girls were.

What I really think: Will definitely purchase. Kind of hope it's a stand alone, though. I like to be able to imagine a second book rather than have yet another fantasy series!

Cindy Mitchell *Kiss the Book* says

Durst, Sarah Beth. Journey Across the Hidden Islands. 338 pages. Clarion Books, 2017. \$16.99. Violence: G. Sexual Content: G. Language: G.

Twin princesses, Seika and Ji-Lin must make a journey across the Hidden Islands to ask the Dragon to keep their islands cloaked from other people. Seika will one day be the empress and Ji-Lin is her protector along with her flying lion, Alejan. The girls are only twelve-years-old and they encounter earthquakes, explorers from the mainland, and a sick young boy who they help save. The trip doesn't go anything as planned and at first, they can't find the dragon. But they use their intelligence and their bravery to overcome all obstacles for a conclusion that is unexpected, but perfect.

Both sisters are very relatable characters. They are young, unsure of themselves. They don't want to disappoint their father. They want to prove that they are capable of great things. The sisters learn to trust each other and themselves. The author, Durst, creates a wonderful fantasy world that has an Chinese feel, but

it is also entirely its own. The plot moves quickly and is a perfect pick for any girl who wants to go on an adventure.

EL-ADVISABLE. Samantha Hastings, MA, MLS.

<https://kissthebook.blogspot.com/2017...>

Emma (Miss Print) says

Twins Li-Jin and Seika are the princesses of the Hundred Islands of Himitsu. Li-Jin has been training at the Temple of the Sun to become an imperial guard and be able to protect her sister Seika who remains at the imperial palace studying under their father, the Emperor.

Li-Jin is thrilled when she completes her training and is able to go home so that she and Seika can spend their twelfth birthday together. But when Li-Jin and Alejan, her winged lion companion, arrive there isn't much time for a reunion.

Instead the girls soon find themselves embarking on the Emperor's Journey to travel across the islands of Himitsu to pay respect to the kingdom's dragon guardian and renew their dragon's bargain to protect the Hundred Islands.

Nothing on the journey goes right as Li-Jin and Seika encounter earthquakes, foreigners, and monstrous creatures during their travels. Despite their inexperience and doubts, both girls know that Himitsu is relying on them. As they get closer to finding the dragon they will have to rely on each other and trust their instincts to keep their people safe in *Journey Across the Hidden Islands* (2017) by Sarah Beth Durst.

Durst's latest middle grade novel is a standalone fantasy set in a richly imagined world filled with magical creatures and unexpected dangers.

Li-Jin and Seika are strong heroines who know their potential even if they sometimes fear too much responsibility has been set on their shoulders. The sisters have a rock solid bond and both bring numerous strengths to their adventure in *Journey Across the Hidden Islands*.

The Hundred Islands of Himitsu are vividly described both from the ground and above thanks to Li-Jin's travels on the back of Alejan when he is flying. This story is imbued with Japanese-inspired culture along with inventive world building including magical creatures, ancient tales, and dramatic buildings.

Li-Jin and Seika's relationship as sisters forms the center of this story as the girls work together to protect, and potentially forever change, their kingdom. *Journey Across the Hidden Islands* is a fast-paced adventure with not one but two engaging and clever heroines. Recommended for fans of girl power fantasies, inventive worlds, and journey stories.

Possible Pairings: *The Two Princesses of Bamarre* by Gail Carson Levine, *Princess Academy* by Shannon Hale, *The Hero's Guide to Saving Your Kingdom* by Christopher Healy, *The Keeper Of the Mist* by Rachel Neumeier, *A Well-Timed Enchantment* by Vivian Vande Velde, *Dealing with Dragons* by Patricia C. Wrede

An advance copy of this title was provided for review consideration by the publisher

Becky B says

Ji-Lin is training to be a warrior and guard for her sister, the future Empress. She works closely with Alejan, a flying lion also in training. They are hoping to pass their upcoming tests so they can visit the city. Seika is training to be Empress and feels trapped in the city, but determined to be a good Empress. Seika, Ji-Lin, and Alejan are shocked to find their training cut short early and sent on the Emperor's Quest to renew the agreement with the dragon that maintains the shield protecting their islands from koji (monsters). Their journey starts off full of excitement and as planned, but the further they go, the more they realize something is not right and this quest will be more challenging than they ever expected.

This is a fun quest adventure. There are just enough surprises and questions to keep readers turning pages. The characters are engaging, and I enjoyed following all three of the main ones around watching them grow along the way. There's an interesting theme introduced about the power of stories and the way stories can change over time. The world Durst built is like a mashup of Japan and Greece with mythical creatures. The culture and geography seems like Japan, but the climate and the houses seem Mediterranean (olive trees, blue and white houses, etc.). In all, I really enjoyed it and I think it'll be immensely popular with the huge group of fantasy addicts at our school.

Notes on content: No language issues. No sexual content. Some fighting off mythical beasts which results in some scratches but nothing too serious.

Erin says

This wasn't exactly what I expected when I picked the book out, but I still ended up enjoying it. One line in the book kind of sums it up: "'The tales don't talk about the little trials amid the greater quest-the tiredness, the hunger, the fear... The storytellers don't talk about the heroes being afraid. They say, 'They journeyed, and then they were there.' They talk about battles faced, not battles avoided.'" Let me explain. I thought this was a neat take on, well, the battles avoided. I admit, I normally like the battles fought better, but this made me think about it, which I liked. There was lots of beautiful descriptions in here that prompted me into several drawing sprees. While there weren't many actual fight scenes, this still had plenty of adventure, even if it didn't quite have me reading at every spare moment. There were a couple neat twists, but one of the main things I liked about it was that it made me think. About the way different people have different interpretations of things. About how people can still show courage by avoiding a fight. About some other things, too. It really prompted some interesting thoughts for me. I like that. In all, I did enjoy this.

Emily says

Journey Across the Hidden Islands by Sarah Beth Durst

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Journey is the story of two sisters who must complete a traditional quest to re bargain with the Dragon that has protected them and their islands for two hundred years. The premise behind this book was very intriguing, and the book started out pretty strongly. Unfortunately for me it fell flat. I'm hit or miss with Ms Durst and this one was a miss. There was a very large portion of the book that was just too repetitive for me. The stories within the story were lovely and very well done, and I liked Alejan, Seika and Ji-Lin well enough, but it wasn't enough to wow me like some of her other books. I'm disappointed, as I really thought I

would like this one.

Mars says

A magnificent portrayal of a realistic coming-of-age story, made me have faith in humanity at some point in this story.

We follow a set of twins, Princess Ji-Lin and the royal heir Seika who must go on a perilous "Emperor's Journey" to talk to a dragon who protects their residence, Hidden Islands, via a barrier with the outside world and effectively protecting them from the outside world. Until now, when then face unprecedented threats and the sisters must make a final decision that will change the history of their beloved islands.

I don't read many middle-grade novels, they're not usually in my wheelhouse but I really felt like I could connect to these characters and could grasp the simplistic fantasy world of the Hidden Islands. There were delightful pet companions, a flying lion in this case that warmed the story with his humor and dedication to the bond between him and Ji-Lin.

As always there are frustrations when children that are extremely inexperienced and unprepared make stupid choices, but I actually feel like these princesses were humble enough to accept their shameful decisions and learn from their mistakes. Still, they journeyed way too young (out of necessity) and you could visibly see how sorely unprepared they were, but at least they could realize this and not hide from it with pride.

I could also admire their vast determination to "make things right" and keep their villagers as safe and happy as possible. For two twelve years olds, I almost found it unbelievably how wise these children were, although of course this could stem from their wise teachers and guiding companions that are with them along the way.

One thing that I really loved is that the author avoided including a romantic interest with the boy companion that they picked up on their journey. At first it seemed like these romantic interests may evolve, but then when I saw the author kept the storyline romance-free I truly appreciated this as non-romance book from young tweenagers.

****Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for providing me with an arc of this book in exchange for my honest review.****

Ry Herman says

I'm a big fan of Sarah Beth Durst, and this didn't disappoint. A good story, well told.

Rosie Rizk says

A very imaginative children's book set in a unique world. I enjoyed reading about the princesses' adventures. At times, their personalities were hard to distinguish, but as a children's book, it's perfect. The setting and culture are unique, with an Oriental flavor. I love the idea of a flying lion companion! His character arc was pretty good.

There are many hidden thematic messages for young readers, delivered in an excellent manner.

One point I was really happy about, was that the author didn't force the characters into a romantic relationship with the boy who joins them. This was a children's book and remained that way!

All in all, between princesses, talking flying lions, an epic adventure, a spunky lad, and of course, a dragon(!), young readers (and older!) will easily fall in love with this book. I did too!

Disclaimer: I received a free copy through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Debbie Tanner says

I really liked this fantasy adventure story about twin sisters, one who had been groomed to be a princess and the other a warrior. They live in a magical kingdom that has trouble with earthquakes and these dangerous beasts called koji. They've been separated for quite some time during their training but are reunited for a scary mission-it talk to the dragon who is protecting their island kingdom. I liked this one a lot. I love Sarah Beth Durst's style of writing which is exciting and funny. The two main characters struggle with self doubt and I think a lot of kids will identify with that.

Elaine says

I didn't really know what to expect from this...turns out it's a beautiful story about hope, courage, truth, change, and doing the right thing. On the surface, it's an adventure story in a magical world where dragons, water horses, winged lions, merfolk and other creatures exist, but it's so much more than that! Seika, Ji-Lin, and Alejan face all kinds of dangers as they embark on their journey, but beyond the physical dangers, they face their biggest enemies: fear and change. It's a thoughtful book that really looks at how we view ourselves, how people can perceive the same situation in very different ways, and how we are never quite ready to face our fears, but when we do, we're all the more stronger and life is better because of it. This is a solid book for middle grades, but I think even younger kids would enjoy this. There's enough suspense and danger to keep it interesting, but it doesn't really get violent or gory.

Some things I like about this book

- how the protagonists deal with each danger without resorting to just fighting it off
 - despite their tendencies to want to do things their way, they know what the right thing to do is, and they accept their duty to do it.
 - there's a beautiful story-telling tradition within this bigger story that just makes the world feel so rich-very reminiscent of the stories-told-within-the-story in Grace Lin's "Where the Mountain Meets the Moon," which I also loved.
 - As a parent reading this, what I gained was a warning against over-protection. Yes, there are dangers in the world, but there's also beauty and wonders. If you spend you're life isolated and hidden away, you may avoid a lot of danger, but you also miss out on so much, and some times the isolation does more damage than anything else.
-

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Full review, first posted on Fantasy Literature:

Seika and Ji-Lin are the twelve year old twin princesses of the Hidden Islands, a group of a hundred islands cut off from the rest of the world by a magical barrier created by an ancient volcano dragon. Seika is the heir to the throne, while Ji-Lin is being trained as an imperial guard, dedicated to protecting her sister from any danger. For the past year they've been separated while Ji-Lin is in training at a mountain temple, with the winged, talking lion Alejan as her partner and closest friend.

Ji-Lin's training is unexpectedly cut short when she is called to return to the imperial city. The emperor, their father, tells Seika and Ji-Lin that the next day they will begin the ritual five-day-long Emperor's Journey to visit the Dragon's Shrine. There they will renew the traditional bargain with the volcano dragon to keep the barrier around the islands, which protects their land against invaders and koji, vicious magical monsters feared by the people. Seika and Ji-Lin are mystified ? they didn't expect to take the Emperor's Journey until they were much older ? but obedient. Besides, they're thrilled to be able to spend time together again after a year apart, and they'll be flying through the air on the back of Alejan as they journey.

But their epic journey turns unexpectedly dangerous: the islands are being shaken by earthquakes, and their magical barrier is beginning to break down. As Ji-Lin, Seika, and Alejan travel from island to island, they tangle not only with flying koji monsters and some semi-piratical explorers who've slipped through the failing barrier, but also with the expectations of their strict royal father and the breaking of traditions and expectations.

Journey Across the Hidden Islands (2017) is an enchanting middle grade fantasy, a journey adventure that celebrates the bond of sisterhood and the need to take chances in life. The setting is inspired by feudal Japan, but elements of Venice, Italy, and Polynesian island culture have found their way into the mix of creating this unique fantasy world.

The two young sisters are a contrast in their characters: Seika is softer and more deliberate, careful and concerned about the people of the kingdom; Ji-Lin is more fierce, physical and adventurous. But both show great courage in their different ways, and both gain in wisdom and maturity as they deal with the trials of their journey. The girls are joined by Kirro, a ship captain's son, for most of their journey, which is initially a trial for all three of them, with Kirro's different background and occasionally abrasive personality. Ji-Lin's flying lion Alejan will charm readers with his delightful sense of humor and love of flying and adventure. Although he has a more youthful personality, he reminded me of my beloved Monster in Durst's book *The Girl Who Could Not Dream*: slyly humorous, always loyal, and wise.

Journey Across the Hidden Islands blends in some insights and life lessons with the adventures. A waterhorse (not a hippopotamus-type of animal like I first envisioned, but a magical horse literally made out of water, with whirlpool eyes and sprays of foam for his mane and tail) informs the young travelers:

Stories are how we understand who we are and who we wish to be. Heroes. Traitors. Both at once. We define ourselves by the stories we tell. We shape ourselves by the stories we hear.

The children come to realize that life can be complicated, and that others' motives and even personalities may not be as easily categorized ? good or bad, traitorous or heroic ? as they initially thought.

I recommend *Journey Across the Hidden Islands* for young readers in the 10-14 age range, as well as older readers who enjoy middle grade fantasy adventures with a coming-of-age element. It's a delightful and enchanting journey.

I received a free copy of this book from the author for review. Thank you!!

Cassie James says

Thanks to the publisher for providing an ARC in exchange for an honest review. This doesn't in any way influence my thoughts and opinion on it.

Journey Across the Hidden Lands is one of the most interesting Children's books I've read. The writing, style, characters, content is just simply amazing. The quality of this book is in the vein of other hits such as Rick Riordan's books, Neil Gaiman and Cassandra Clare.

It's about the life of two sisters (twins), Ji-Lin and Seika who go on an adventure with their majestic winged lion Alejan. Ji-Lin and Seika were separated at a young age so they can train for their various future roles. Seika is to be the emperor's heir while Li-Jin, her imperial guard. The two sisters are very unique.

I could tell their bond was going to be phenomenal right from the beginning. They had the feels of an epic sistership. Following customary tradition, Seika and Li-Jin embark on a journey across the lands so Seika can meet the great dragon, Master Shai and renew the Royal bargain that keeps the kingdom safe.

This book is so full of adventure and coupled with great writing, it is a very irresistible tale.

The year Seika and Ji-Lin spent away from each other changed them in different ways that had a unique effect on the both of them. The camaraderie between the main characters is great. There is a lot of monsters (Koji) in this book both good and bad. There's flying monkeys, winged lions, dragons etc. The imagination of the author makes the content rich and lush.

The vivid description and fresh narrative paints a clear visual picture. The characters are amazing, Seika and Ji-Lin stand out in their own ways even Alejan. The tale of the two sisters as they endure life changing events and finding out exactly what they are made of is one that is not to be missed. I eagerly recommend this book to lovers of great books that inspire.

Journey Across The Hidden Lands is filled with magic, sistership, adventure, love, great writing, and fabulous characters. Sarah Beth Durst is definitely an author whose books should be classified as a must get for everyone. I can't wait for more books from her.

P.S: That cover is so drool worthy. I need a winged lion!!!!.

The Keepers of the Books says

Ji-Lin and Seika are twin sisters. Seika is being trained to become ruler of the Hidden Islands. Her sister, Ji-Lin is being trained to be a warrior Ji-Lin's warrior training, however, is not going very well. Her partner, a talking winged lion named Alejan, and her work well together, but not as well as they're expected to. When the two fail an important exam, they somehow graduate early. Things are not going so well for Seika either. The Hidden Islands are have a lot of earthquakes caused by monsters. In order to save her islands, her and Ji-Lin will have to use tradition and rituals to renegotiate a deal with an ancient dragon. Will they succeed?

The characters in this book are well developed, realistic, and engaging. The adventure is action-packed, fast moving, and entertaining. Fans of Unwanteds, Harry Potter, and other magical fantasy adventures will enjoy reading this book. This is a must have for any library collection.

This book was featured on The Keepers of the Books' "November Weekly Reads #2" episode. For more book reviews, recommendations, or online librarian advice, please visit us at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCK3v...>

Please Note: A copy of this book was given to us in exchange for an honest review. All opinions expressed, however, are our own.

A copy of this review may also be found at kissthebook.blogspot.com

Melissa says

I don't read too many MG books, but when approached by the author to read this one I had no problems wanting to read it. First, the cover is stunning and second, I usually enjoy Sarah Beth Durst's work. This is a fun book, but also one that if you are an adult reading it, should keep the age of the characters in mind.

The story is about twin girls born hours apart. One is the heir and the other is to be her protector. Both seem suited to their roles and are loyal to their subjects but miss each other terribly. The girls are called upon to do a traditional journey which will ensure the kingdom to be safe for another generation. At 12, neither feels ready but is willing to do what is needed to be done for the sake of their people. Their father is aloof to the girls and his concern seems limited to the kingdom and the girls struggle to understand. They still want to be honorable and make their father proud so they partake on the journey which brings insight, maturity, and hard choices. It is a true hero's journey which they are all aware. If this isn't enough to make you curious, you have a winged lion, Alejan, who steals the show often. He is their perfect companion and comic relief.

My only niggles about the book really don't bother me in context. At times I found the girls, especially Ji-Lin, to be rash and whiney but put in the age context and given the task they were to perform with very little fore-knowledge, it makes sense. When they meet a boy on the journey and he became the whiney one (again context but the girls also thought he was annoying) both girls seem to grow up and learned to think before acting, or put others before themselves. The ending brings all the pieces of their journey together and it comes to a good conclusion. I really like how things were solved.

I give this book 4 stars. I think adults need to remember who this is written for and I think that they will enjoy the journey and how the girls become more mature. I think kids will be enthralled with the journey, the mythological creatures, and the dragons (okay, I liked those parts too!). I recommend it to those that want to start kids on bigger books and anyone who likes an adventure.
