



The Arkadians

Lloyd Alexander

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To escape the wrath of the king and his wicked soothsayers, an honest young man joins forces with a poet-turned-jackass and a young girl with mystical powers as they embark on a series of epic adventures through the land of Arkadia.

The Arkadians Details

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Author : Lloyd Alexander

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From Reader Review The Arkadians for online ebook

Pandora says

Re reading this book again. I can't believe I didn't add this to my books. As great a read as I remembered.

Couldn't I give it six stars? No, really couldn't I?

Summary: The Woman Who Talks To Snakes splits the kingdom when she gives the Bear King a prophecy he didn't like. Lucian is on the run for being too good at counting things. Fronto a poet is has turned himself into a jackass and is desperate to find a cure. Add in some other zany characters and a variety of Greek mythology and you have a delightful fun adventure.

Review: Every so often you find that book that you just don't want to end. I finised two other books while reading this one so I could savor this book. It is a magical book of greek mythology, the power of storytelling, love, adventure, humor, and an occasional nugget of Truth. This has been about my third reading of the book and it was still fresh as if was my first reading.

Biggest merit I could say is that it managed to implant an new vision of Garden of Eden story. I later use that idea for a service. It was only reading the story again that I realized where the seed of the idea had come from.

The book also had a perfect A++ ending.

For those who read the book:

In the course of the reading I counted 13 references to Greek mythology. I probably missed some though. Did anyone see more?

The references I got were:

Pandora's Box, Narracius, Altana, Helen of Troy, Trojan Horse, Odyessus, Jason, Hercules, Golden Fleece, Theseus, Cyclopse, Mouitaur, and of course the Oracle.

Quotes:

Opening "This is a tale of a jackass and a young bean counter, a girl of marvels and mysteries, horsemen swift as the wind, Goat Folk, Daughters of Morning, voyages, tempests, terrors, disasters. And the occasional rainbow."

Seize the day, whatever's in it to seize, before something comes along and seizes you."

"If a storyteller worried about the facts-my dear Lucian, how could he ever get to the truth."

"It's rather like having a tame bear for a pet." Fronto observed. "You can't help being fond of him, but you keep wishing he was a cat."

Emily says

"Then all the tales that I've heard from Oudeis, Gold-Horse, Buckthorn -- someday I want to write them down so they won't be forgotten. Those and everything that's happened to me, as well. Sometimes they all get mixed up together in my head, as if the tales were my life and my life was a tale."

I came back to *The Arkadians* because I read Lauren Groff's *Arcadia* earlier this year. They are absolutely nothing alike.

The Arkadians draws heavily on Greek mythology. Lucian, bean-counter in the palace of King Bromios, accidentally gets on the wrong side of the court soothsayers. In his escape, he liberates a poet who has been turned into a donkey, and the two go on a quest to find a way to change the poet back into a man. Along the way, they add several companions, including a saucy young pythoness, Joy-in-the-Dance.

Lloyd Alexander's wry humor is visible in every story he adds. When the band is shipwrecked on the island of Tauros, they're thrown into the bull-fighting ring of Borysthenes (Minos), but Joy-in-the-Dance is able to calm down the bull by talking to it. The shipbuilder Oudeis tells them about his seven-year journey home to his sweetheart Mirina, who is running a tavern in his absence. The Pandora's box myth in this story features a male protagonist named Think-Too-Late. All of it is charming and incredibly fun to read.

I also have to admit that I came back to this book because, at the age of nine, I wrote a heavily derivative story based entirely on the idea of a bunch of random people wandering around some mystical fantasy land that was partially based on ancient Greece. I'm too afraid to open this document up (what if my best work is all behind me??!?! etc etc), but perhaps I'll have some wine later this week and see how embarrassing it really is. I'll report back.

Margot says

The Arkadians follows the typical Hero's Journey plot. The boy Lucian sets out on a journey with a talking donkey companion, meets lots of new friends, and ultimately returns home a changed young man.

I have probably more than a dozen Lloyd Alexander books on my to-read list, for the random reason that we happened to have a Lloyd Alexander box set, in print, that I let go of during a big printed book purge a couple of years ago (bought for my little bro decades ago). So, I knew nothing about this book other than it was for children. And this is my first venture into reading Alexander.

My rating without any other consideration would be two stars. But I've given it three because, well, I'm not a child. I probably shouldn't be reading children's books anymore...until I'm reading them to children. I listened to the "dramatic" audio book edition, that involved about a dozen actors speaking the voices for all the different characters. Again, not really up my alley. Made me realize how much I like just having *one* narrator or *maybe* two at the most. But probably great to keep kids entertained on a long car ride.

I did find one part of this book very cute and funny -- the nickname "Eye Ouch". Made me laugh the first

couple of times one of the characters used it. So some good stuff. Just not complex enough for me (no surprise, considering the target audience).

Christine Wills says

The Arkadians was about a young man by the name of Lucian. Lucian seems to be a young looking man that struggles with being honest and because of this, he flees to the place of King Bromios. Along the way, he comes in contact with other creatures that helps him. His whole plan was to escape where he comes from. This book tells of Lucian's adventures he has with his new found "friends."

This book is not one I would want to read for fun. I say this because I am not into the fantasy aspect this book portrays. You must like or have an interest in mystical creatures in order to like this book. It was interesting in the effect that it tells the story of how this boy met his creature type looking friends.

Content Warnings:

- Fantasy Creatures
- adventure

Aelvana says

Lucian is on the run from the soothsayers that run the country in all but name when he figures out they're embezzling funds from the palace. On the way out, he stumbles across Fronto, a poet-turned-donkey, who wants nothing more than to be human again. Without a plan of his own, Lucian agrees to help Fronto. Their group grows as they journey, and along the way Lucian finds within himself more of a hero than he ever thought possible.

This is a book about stories, primarily. Nearly everyone has one, whether about the creation of the world or the tragic circumstances of his own life. The majority of the book consists of one character telling all the rest a particular story. It was an interesting narrative technique that focuses not nearly as much on the plot of the current event. All the same, it almost irritated me in places. In a fantasy like this, I had hoped for more than twisted retellings of various familiar myths. Helen of Troy, Odysseus, Theseus, Jason, Narcissus, and other prominent Greek legends appear here, along with a smattering of myths from other cultures. In the end the book became more of a spot-the-myth than a story I could enjoy in its own right.

Fronto put me on the fence. Every now and then, the subtle and not-so-subtle jackass references fit well and added to the humor. Most of the time, I just wanted to smack him upside the head. The other characters were not quite as annoying, but everyone was rather predictable. I could tell exactly where everyone was going as soon as they stepped onto the page. Perhaps that's because this is more of a children's book, but I've been able to read children's books with more surprise.

I bought this because I've got a bunch of stuff by Lloyd Alexander, and it was cheap. It's not a bad story, and I'll probably appreciate it more the second go around because I'll know what to expect. My biggest annoyance was that Alexander didn't craft new myths for his world, so it comes off very Greek. Even the map looks like Greece. Neutral.

Michelle says

The *Arkadians* is a fun read about a boy's journey to discover what he should do in life, a girl's journey to save her culture, and a donkey's journey to return to being a poet. If those aren't enough journeys, trust me there are plenty of sub-journeys within the pages. Lloyd Alexander puts his own fun spin on how some of the most famous myths in Greece got started, each myth having a perfectly reasonable explanation (with the exception of the donkey-poet, that's a little more Shakespearean). The *odyssey*, The Trojan war, and Pythoness prophesies are all included in this book about perspective and growth. The only problem I had with this book was its length: it felt incredibly short to me. The characters are well rounded and interesting, the plot is adventurous and fun. There is no offensive content whatsoever in the book; it's a very lighthearted and fast read. I enjoyed it immensely and would recommend it to anyone.

Bernadette says

This book was a fun adventure the whole way through; a pure Lloyd Alexander classic from beginning to end. It's full of references to Greek myths, which Alexander twists with playful humor, while giving a nod at those ancient adventures which gave birth to all fantasy. The characters are lovable and magical in all their own little ways. With great lessons of seeking peace over contention and recognizing the need for a union of men and women, the story is a joy to read. Lloyd Alexander never fails to delight his readers with an absolute pleasure!

Julianne says

I've been on a Lloyd Alexander kick recently. I re-read *Westmark* for the heck of it, and then while I was tracking down and waiting for its sequel, *The Kestrel*, I read every other Lloyd Alexander book on my shelves.

The Arkadians (published 1995), alas, brought me to the realization that Mr. Alexander, like many YA authors (L.M. Montgomery also falls into this category.), deals in types. What I mean is, although his characters and settings change, they are all, in some ways, very much the same. His protagonists (usually male) are all very similar: not unskilled, fairly well-educated, outwardly competent, inwardly bumbling, frequently bewildered, even bemused, often disappointed. His "leading ladies" (really quite secondary characters) are unflappable, resourceful, wise, practical, wry, forthright, rather mercurial, and often just downright darling (if you like stubbornness). Here, as in the *Chronicles of Prydain*, we have the trusty "animal" sidekick, or the animal who isn't really an animal--in this case, Fronto, a poet turned by magic into a jackass. We also have a charming urchin: no Weasel this time, but rather Catch-a-Tick, an incorrigible mischief-maker and hero-worshipper. There's also Bromios, the king-who-isn't very kingly (cf. Constantine IX and the Prince of Mona); the king's villainous advisors, Calchas and Phobos (cf. Carabbus and Magg), the all-too-fallible wisewoman, The Lady of Wild Things (cf. Queen Caroline and Queen Achren), and her somewhat tolerant, admirable consort or almost-consort (cf. Dr. Torrens and Gwydion). There's also that member of the misfit band that I like to call "the wildcard," in this case Argeus Ops (cf. Flewddur Fflam and Florian...yes, Florian. If you think about it, it will make sense).

Now, while all this gives us more analytical readers a fun game to play (a game I might call "Who is Like Whom?"), it doesn't really say great things about the author. In many ways, *The Arkadians* feels like a re-

tread, the same story in a different iteration, this time in Greece. No, Taran is not exactly like Theo, who is not exactly like Lucian. Dialogue from Eilonwy can't be transferred verbatim to Joy-in-the-Dance or Mickle and still make sense. And there is no animal sidekick in the Westmark series. But the abundance of similarities between this and many others of Alexander's works leads me to believe that at least in *The Arkadians*, he's not exactly going for the gold, reaching for the stars, plumbing the depths, or whatever phrase you want to use to mean he's going all-out (or is it "all-in?").

Cheryl says

Ok, I don't particularly like most of the Greek myths & legends, and only have a limited knowledge of them. And yet it does help to know them to fully appreciate this. It's both a tribute and a gentle spoof. Much quest, heroism... and discussion of what makes a good story. Some mild adventure, but much humor and joy. I don't know how to say what I liked about or why I'm recommending it (and I am) except to say that I was grinning the whole time that I was reading it.

I'm not sure which young readers would like it. I think a child would have to have read either Percy Jackson or other collections of Greek stories. And would have to be at least 9 or 10 years old, as most of the characters are adults and there is some mushy stuff. They'd also have to be patient, as the book starts out with an overly strong feminist message. That message does get tempered by the time we get to the happy ending, but it is a journey.

"If a storyteller worried about the facts... how could he ever get at the truth?"

Alexander's other works have been in my awareness for decades... maybe now that I know I can enjoy him, I'll try something else.

(Hyman's art on cover and of author the only, but still worth viewing if you get a chance. Though I'm not entirely sure I agree with her interpretation of each character... it seems she was given suggestions of characters instead of reading the book.)

N. P. says

The *Arkadians* is an fantastical, action-packed book full of both suspense and witty humor. The tale starts with the main character, Lucian a bean counter in the royal palace, threatened with death, after accidentally discovering a plot to steal money from the kingdom. While escaping he comes across a poet-turned-talking-jackass who is also looking for a way to escape his murderous handler. On the road, Lucian and the talking donkey meet Joy-In-The-Dance, a young prophetess. The trio adventure across Arkadia, stirring up trouble everywhere they go. With all of this action you would think this would considered the best book ever but there is one downside. The only bad thing about the *Arkadians* is that the beginning starts off slow, unlike the rest of the book which is fast paced. If you don't like this book because it starts off slow, don't stop, it will be great. I give this book four stars for almost overall excellence.

Gwendolyn Grace says

Probably deserves 3.5 stars as opposed to just 3. It was good, but not great.

A highly enjoyable tale, blending many different elements and stories of Greek mythology, with occasionally other fairy-tale bits. The characters were fun, if their patterns slightly familiar to those who have read other books by Lloyd Alexander, and the story had a number of twists. As per usual, the writing was excellent. However, the pacing seemed a bit off, as if there were no pauses, and everything happened quite fast. Over all, a fun book, but not Alexander's best.

Peter says

Lloyd Alexander is best known for his outstanding *Chronicles of Prydain* fantasy series. And deservedly so; it's a great series, charming, unique, and with a powerful and moving sense of morality to it. It is, in many ways, a *Lord of the Rings* for the young-teen set.

For those who aren't familiar with Alexander, I should emphasize that he wrote most of his work **before** the modern craze for huge fantasy series and juvenile fantasy series (in both senses of the word "juvenile"). His work is far superior to most of the trash that's published as fantasy for young adults (or even full-fledged adults) today.

Alexander has a very strong and unmistakable writing style. This is, generally a strength. But in some - not all, but **some** of his other books, the style doesn't fit the story as well as it does in *The Chronicles of Prydain*. Put simply, while I'd rate that series as a "5" overall, most of his other works would be a "4" or "3" (I have yet to run across a book by Alexander that I'd rate *less* than a "3").

I picked up a copy of *The Arkadians* at the permanent book sale at our library. I didn't expect much; it's a stand-alone book, and the blurb on the back showed that it was based at least partly on Greek mythology, rather than the Welsh mythology which is Alexander's strongest suit.

I was pleasantly surprised. *The Arkadians* is strongly influenced by Greek mythology, yes, but with an enjoyable skew. The adventures of Lucian the one-time accountant on the run for his life, and of the friends he meets along the way - particularly Fronto, the poet who has been transformed into an ass, and Joy-In-The-Dance, a strong-willed young woman with unusual abilities - echo many elements of Greek mythology, but throughout Fronto and Lucian discuss "improving" them into forms much closer to the classic Greek tales.

But that's beside the point. The point is that the story is well-told, and exciting, and funny, and touching, all at the right moments and in the right places. The *one* place where it might fall down, slightly, is the last few paragraphs; the story draws to a close surprisingly quickly, and somehow with less **emotion** than I expected. But this is a minor point. All in all, *The Arkadians* is a *very* enjoyable story that reads easily and well, a strong four. I will certainly read it again.

Kirstin says

I'm glad I found this book again! I read it many years ago and couldn't remember the name. I recommend this book to anyone looking for a charming and fun read. Especially young readers will enjoy this book in

my opinion.

Rachel says

This book reads a lot like The Chronicles of Narnia. The story itself reminded me some of The Horse and His Boy, except this was based mostly on ideas of Mythology where the Narnia books were based on ideas from Christianity. The only "caution" I would give is the continuous use of the "jack***" referencing the man-turned-donkey character. I do highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoyed the Narnia series - young or young at heart!

Lou Anders says

My first Lloyd Alexander, I read The Arkadians in almost one sitting, having read most of it on a long flight (and the final chapter the next day). Hugely enjoyable, nicely plotted, if somewhat meandering fantasy set in a Greek-inspired secondary world. Quick, fun read.
