



# Luka and the Fire of Life

*Salman Rushdie*

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## **Luka and the Fire of Life** Salman Rushdie

Young Luka travels to the Magic World to steal the Fire of Life needed to bring his storytelling father out of a deep trance.

## **Luka and the Fire of Life Details**

Date : Published 2010 by Random House

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Author : Salman Rushdie

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Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Young Adult, Magical Realism, Cultural, India, Adventure

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# From Reader Review Luka and the Fire of Life for online ebook

## Tania says

Aceasta carte m-a distrat .

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## Deanna Draï Turner says

Take your grandmother's Oster blender out of the attic. Mix in:

a dash of Shel Silverstein's imagination +  
a pinch of Vyasa's circumspection +  
a tablespoon of Roald Dahl originality +  
a dollop of Joseph Campbell's mythological mastery +  
a sliver of the Dalai Lama's life wisdom...

stir it gently in a rue of John Steinbeck's fantasmagorically-simple storytelling prowess...

bake it onto a paper plate...and you get Salman Rushdie! HOLY TOLEDO what a brilliant mind.

I hardly know anything about this man. I heard tell on the wind that there is a price on his head, a contract out on him, paid assassins on his heels for one of his books...a big political/religious brouhaha. So was unsure what I was getting into when I picked up this book. Not knowing the bigger why of that issue, I set all that aside and dove in to Luka's world. WOW. I LOVED IT. It was old yet new. Unexpectedly fresh, clever, fun, but surprisingly woven with depth that beg contemplation on human relationships, including the one we have with ourselves.

This is an adventure of a young boy, painted with the flavor of an Ancient East Indian fairy tale, but referenced to our modern world. Luka enters his rite of passage into manhood by seeking the Fire of Life, in order to prevent his dear father (and best friend) from dying. Along the way he stumbles 'left' into the world of magic, with his dog named Bear and his bear named Dog...tried and true sideby's who dance and sing and have his back. It is a story of friendship and hardship. Intuition. Fear. Awe. Curiosity. Resolve. A story of a journey to the core... kind of OZ style. The landscapes are unorthodox and enchanting. Very witty. Sometimes daunting. Always interesting. Luka meets nonconformists, eccentrics, mavericks, has-beens and lost-souls...some who seek to help him and other who wish to hinder. He loses his life several dozen times, faces into the nightmarish angst that tears apart his belly yet keeps getting back on the magic carpet and flies. Add in herds of abandoned gods from Babylon, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Sumeria and the like, an 8 legged horse, bottomless pits, fanatical rats, the lake of wisdom, elephantine memory birds, paper airplanes and Angelina Jolie. HA! RIOTOUS!! Repeatedly, I could not stop laughing out loud every time the great god RA yelled at Luka in hieroglyphs. OMG so funny...we never do find out what the heck he says but my-oh-my my does he carry on vexed hexed and cross.

This is a hard book to review because it is so fertile, so juicy with so many toothsome threads, I cannot do it justice, other than to say...JUST READ IT. Not one to be missed. He gave me glee and grace and morsels of wisdom sewn inside folly. Genius mind. Thanks Sal for the monsters, the mayhem and the magic.

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## Nikki says

I've been meaning to try something by Rushdie for a while, and the idea of trying something I hadn't heard of by him sounded appealing. Especially since it's a fable-like story set mostly in a fantasy world; that's the sort of setting that most appeals to me. I actually don't know much about the plots of Rushdie's other books — just that there were a lot of objections to *The Satanic Verses*.

*Luka and the Fire of Life* is a fairly traditional fable in one way: a boy, seeing his father dying, must quest for the magical item that will restore him to life and allow him to live. But then there's also gaming — Luka finishes levels, gathers extra lives, saves his game — and modern puns like the whole section with the Respectorate of I and the Otters (and the land of OTT, where everything is, well, over the top). It's an odd juxtaposition at times, but I quite liked it — and Rushdie can certainly turn a phrase. I'm going to read more by him, but I think I'm glad I tried this first — it's relatively short and unthreatening, so it might well make a good gateway drug.

Originally posted [here](#).

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## Blake says

it was good some parts were a little long but it made u think about things like immortality

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## Birgitte Bach says

Tænk at en far kan skrive og forære sin søn, så fantastisk et eventyr som gave. Det er en historie, der kombinere den klassiske eventyrfortælling med moderne computerspil. Forfatteren er glad for at bruge sproget og historien er fyldt med kåd leg med sprog og ord. Nu kunne jeg bare rigtig godt tænke mig, at læse den anden roman "Harun og eventyrhavet", som han har skrevet til sin ældste søn.

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## Ana says

when i embarked on this, i expected to like it just as much as i did "Haroun and the Sea of Stories", which was a solid 3 stars rating, due to it being a children's book and its kind of messy absurdness. i do like things to be absurd in a book, but not chaotical. there's a difference.

so, i had an already formed opinion about this. it was going to treat on about the same subject, continuing Haroun's story with that of his brother, Luka, in a magical world of their father's creation. Rashid is a storyteller, albeit a very good one, the only man who can make you live in his stories, and he stands for a simple principle: no matter what, tales shouldn't disappear from our world.

in here, Rashid is going to be taken away by Death, unless Luka, the smaller brother (he's 12, compared with Haroun, who is now about 30), manages to steal the Fire of Life and bring it back to his father. the only

problem is - the Fire of Life is probably the best kept thing in the entire magical world, and its guardians are no normal powers, but the controllers of time themselves, Past, Present and Future.

let's move away from the plot, because it really is no more than that, and focus on the writing and the setting.

first of all, it felt different than "Haroun"... did. it was much more compact and sorted out, and a lot more appealing to a more mature reader. i can see the first one as a children's book more than i can consider the latter to be a part of the same category. there's a stylistic discrepancy that makes Luka stand out as a better crafted character and it affects on the world-building in better rather than worse ways. where in the first one you see Haroun motivated by the idea of saving the world by retrieving the stories, Luka here is firstly motivated by saving his father, so it reasons on a much more personal level with the reader.

for Haroun's world, i had a discussion with my history teacher if it would fit into the fantasy genre and i still stand strong behind the opinion that it does not. fantasy doesn't mean just weird creatures and other worlds, it means much more than that; it requires imitation, real-ness, personality and a ton of other traits that i was frankly unable to find in Haroun. just because it's a children's book with a few other wordly monsters in it, doesn't make it a fantasy story, is what i'm trying to say.

no, Luka got closer. not just from the register point of view, but as a whole. it was much easier to consider him a typical fantasy protagonist, as he was much more believable as a whole. or it might just be me reasoning with him differently, idk.

there's one more thing that i have to talk about, and it's the exact detail that made me give this book four stars and propelled it into the "i really like this" cloud. mythology!

i am in love with anything that's connected with ancient gods and their meanings, with their rise and fall and with their importance for a population at a certain time. i look at them with respect, not because i personally worship them, but because they are our own creations meant to redeem ourselves. i'm more bored with the single God that Christianity had than with the tens of Gods Ancient Greece had, or Egypt, or the Aztecs. they fascinate me because of their ... yes, absurdness! they are a product of imagination and interpretation and i think that's what makes them special.

during his quest to find the Fire of Life, Luka had to pass through a very different place in the magical world where all the forgotten Gods of our world resided, after humans discarded of them. you won't find no christian God, nor Al'Lah, nor Buddha, nor any other deity that is currently worshipped. instead, in this mistycal land, you might bump into Hermes, or Vulcan, you might get scared by Ra, who speaks in hieroglyphs, or have a nice chat with one of the Japanese wind Gods. i mean, let's be clear, Luka meets with some of the only beings that managed to steal the fire from the Gods (they differ from culture to culture), the most important being the Elder, the Titan Prometheus, who stole fire for humans and suffered an eternity for it. (i'm still not sure how he got out of his chains on the mountain to come help Luka, but i was very happy and pleased when he showed up). that was, for me, the best part of the story. i believed it. no, actually. not only that i believed it on paper, i wished it were true. the sheer amount of mythological creatures involved in this little work is astounding and i think, gives it the special flare that separates it from "Haroun...".

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**Nabilah Firdaus says**

Although I'm not a fan of fantasy genre, I think Luka and the Fire of Life is a well written novel with highly

creative language and it is full of puns! (omg who doesnt love puns!) A very creative and dreamlike piece.

This book may appeal kids because it's some sort of video games, where Luka embarks on a journey to the magical world in order to save his father's life. However, how childish and imaginative this may seem, it is also kind of heavy as the author weaves the story together with philosophy, politics, social critics, folklore and ancient myths. Rushdie has created an entirely new take on the stereotypical child's journey by weaving it in diversities from cultures around the world. Simply amazing.

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## **Marika says**

Luka and the Fire of Life, written for Rushdie's second child, is an adventure for the Shah of Blah's second child. Again, we follow a classic journey into lands of the unknown and through a series of trials our protagonist comes of age. Like Haroun, Luka is aided throughout the book by an afflicted version of his father, in this case his father's death, Nobodaddy. But unlike Haroun, this book resonates more strongly for children than adults, having references to current culture and following the form of a video game.

The World of Magic is a world of Luka's father, Rashid Khalifa's, creation. It is the stories he has told that populate this world, from characters of Egyptian mythology to Doctor Who. As such, Luka recognizes aspects of it and is able to navigate it based on his interactions with his father. But no child knows all the secrets of his parents and Luka faces the unknown as well (otherwise it wouldn't be an adventure).

At the same time, this is very much Luka's adventure. A child of the twenty-first century, video games are a part of Luka's life. His adventure takes the form of a video game with literal levels for each stage of the hero's journey. Lives can be accumulated and are tracked in a counter at the edge of Luka's vision. Additionally, there are saving points at the ends of levels, and, like a video game, saving allows one to return to the same point upon obliteration. While this format may be awkward for some adults, I think it will resonate with middle grade readers, for whom such a structure is commonplace.

Yet the old myths and stories are utilized by Rushdie as well. The one strong female character in the World of Magic is a young woman named Soraya, the same name as Rashid's wife and Luka's mother. Being the most important woman in the lives of both Rashid and Luka, she naturally is the woman in Rashid's world. In a classic nod to Oedipus, Luka is not only in awe of this woman, but slightly attracted to her as well. This nod to Greek tragedy may well pass over the heads of middle readers while jumping out at adults. It is this duality, this melding of both old and new tales, that allows Rushdie's work to resonate with both adults and children. However, I wonder at the choice to publish this novel as an adult book.

Unlike Haroun, which can be read on many levels, Luka and the Fire of Life doesn't push as far. There is less word play, less struggle between good versus bad and the eventual discovery of grey, things that are associated with classic crossover stories. Luka's initial curse, and the resulting counter-curse, are a classic way to begin a story and his companions, Dog the bear and Bear the dog, are the sort of things you know you've read before. But when Luka enters the World of Magic, his experiences, and the video-game format of them, feel more easily accessible to middle-grade readers than adults. This may also be attributed to the number of references thrown together in the World of Magic and the segmentation the levels bring to them; giving the book a slightly episodic feel that doesn't follow as smooth an arc as Haroun.

Like many books primarily classified as middle-grade, Harry Potter and A Series of Unfortunate Events coming immediately to mind, Luka and the Fire of Life is also an enjoyable read for adults. But now that

adults are getting more used to venturing into the children's department for their novels, *Luka and the Fire of Life* may find a more comfortable home in the middle-grade section. After all, who can resist "the World of Magic" with "Elephant Birds, and Respecto-Rats, and a real, honest-to-goodness Flying Carpet, and then there was the little matter of becoming a Fire Thief" (ARC, pg 216).

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### **Rajat Ubhaykar says**

I couldn't put this one away for long. Soon, my mind would begin to wander, curiosity would get the better of me and I simply had to know how far and in what direction Rushdie would choose to take this hyper-imaginative exercise in children's fantasy.

The book is set in a video-gamesque alternate reality (Luka can see the number of lives he has left in the form of a running counter in his field of vision and has to save his progress after clearing every level, for God's sake) interspersed with witty pop culture references and veiled mythological potshots. The entire setting is an allegory for life (The River of Time, Mount Knowledge) where our hero learns important life lessons at every level, about the nature of time and that potential dead-end called knowledge. The characters are lovable and original, instructive in getting the deeper sense of the story Rushdie is hinting at.

*Luka and the Fire of Life* will truly appeal to all ages and temperaments, excepting the unimaginative.

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### **Crystal King says**

Beautiful, wondrous and joy-filled, this is such a fun and fantastical book. It straddles the line between a book for children and a book for adults but if I had kids, this would be a wonderful, extra long read aloud.

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### **Steven says**

*Luka and the Fire of Life* was disappointing. Clearly Rushdie loves words. It is full of puns. Clearly he knows his myths and theology. There are all kinds of god and minor deities across many societies and races.

So Luka is off on a quest to save his father. As I read I was reminded of *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Hobbit*, and even the *Percy Jackson* series. The quest is loosely structured around a gaming paradigm.

Doesn't all of that sound like it should be great fun? It is for a while. But after a bit, it becomes a giant hodge podge. Rushdie is trying to juggle too many balls. And like juggling, all you have to do is drop one and they are all likely to come down.

Far too often, *deus ex machina*, both literally and figuratively, the answer to a plot problem. The plot itself is too episodic. Finishing the book was a chore, not a joy. I recognize the literary fun. I'm not sure a young teen would. But the literary fun is not in itself enough to drive the book.

So here I am having to recommend that a person not read the book despite the writer's skill.

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## **Megan Baxter says**

I know I have written before about books that just fit. Books that snuggle into crooks and crevices of your mind, that nest as though they had been born there. Books that hit themes and subjects and loves in just the right ways. This is one of those books. In *Luka and the Fire of Life*, Rushdie has created a modern fairytale, weaving together myths modern and ancient in a glorious mishmash of energy, shot through with meditations on mortality and storytelling.

Note: The rest of this review has been withheld due to the recent changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision [here](#).

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at [Smorgasbook](#)

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## **Zoe's Human says**

Neither quite as magical nor child-appropriate as the first one. It is, in truth, a bit long-winded at times. Instead of being entranced by the prose as with *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, I found myself rather adrift in it.

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## **Daren says**

The second of Rushdie's childrens fantasy stories, set in an alternative reality in a video-gamesque style.

Luka is the younger brother of Haroun (of *Haroun And The Sea Of Stories* fame), and the son of Rashid Khalifa - famous story-teller. He harbours some jealousy that his brother had an adventure, and now his opportunity is here.

With his friends Bear the dog, and Dog the bear, recently escaped from a circus, Luka crosses the frontier into the World of magic. His task - to steal the fire of life, and return with it to save his father.

Joined by a host of unlikely helpers, and set against equally unlikely foes, Luka has to complete levels, like a video game.

Set in a world of forgotten gods and the like, Rushdie demonstrates a vast knowledge of mythology - from the obvious Greek and Roman Gods, the Egyptian, Central and South American, Chinese, Japanese, Polynesian, Korean, Taiwanese, American Indian, African, Indian, Caribbean, Norse, Armenian and more. And not just gods, goddesses, demons, titans, and more.

I enjoyed the fairytale nature of the book, the many pop-culture references (there are a lot, most of them passing mentions), the puns, and the nods towards other literary works.

3.5 stars rounded up.

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## Le Matt says

A feel-good Disneyesque romp that is replete with witticisms and wordplay, this book is as different from *Midnight's Children* as night and day in terms of content and delivery. More importantly, it lacks the depth of an adult novel and the levity of a children book. Where is the character development? While it's meant to be an adventure into a magical world, you never quite feel the peril or excitement that accompanies it - everything flashes and dances like a video game on fast forward. One almost gets the feeling that this is a form of literary fast food, meant to be readily consumed with no real sustenance.

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## Sheri says

I had NO IDEA this was a kid's book until I opened it. Hah. Very Allegorical with a capital A...all Passage of Time and taking the correct Path; everything is a Proper Noun and all the Gods come to life. Clearly follows the heroic quest paradigm. Rushdie reminds me of Jester's Phantom Tollbooth at times and the ending felt Gaiman American Gods. Overall it was fine, but a bit wordy at times. He loves his lists.

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## Mayra Nakamura says

Let me start by saying I came to this book after rediscovering my love for fantasy because of Neil Gaiman (who coincidentally reviewed this book, too) and Mariana Enríquez. It is because of fantasy that I think Rushdie did not disappoint. He managed to create a fabulous magical world that exists alongside the "real world" ("our" world). The alluring thing about this particular magical universe is that it concentrates elements ranging from mythology to pop culture in a contemporary setting that owes everything to video games. The narrator delights in storytelling as much as Luka's father and, with it, allows the reader to become engaged with this fantasy. This is not a book about the "deeper meaning of the human condition" (if such a thing even exists), but it is a book that relishes in stories and the art of telling them, which is something we tend to forget but is essential to our being human. For that, I think Rushdie did make an important point in "Luka and the Fire of Life."

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## Neeraja S says

Since I loved reading *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, I began reading its sequel, which is also Rushdie's latest book, *Luka and the Fire of Life*. This book is a sequel in that it has the same core characters and settings, but is not an extension of the story of Haroun's adventure. Luka is Haroun's younger brother and is the apple of his parent's eyes (especially his father's), as his birth seemed to have stilled the notion of Time for the aged couple. Luka yearns to go on a magical adventure similar to Haroun's and eagerly awaits such an opportunity. Little did he realize that he had to be careful of what he wished for. When his dad, the famed

story-teller Rashid, falls ill, the onus of reviving him falls on Luka's shoulders. Luka desperately races into the World of Magic to steal the Fire of Life for his father.

This is again a fun, fantastical adventure on the surface. Salman Rushdie creatively incorporates the notion of virtual reality in this adventure, as Luka's quest for the Fire of Life is represented as a game he has to play in the World of Magic. In this age, most of us have gone through several vicarious experiences of traveling in magical/dangerous lands, taking the avatar of heroic princes, intrepid warriors and ruthless soldiers and battling our way to win the precious gem, treasure or the beautiful princess! The real-to-life experiences are sometimes so vivid, it becomes hard to separate our real identity from that of the virtual avatar. I got the sense that Rushdie was hinting at the possibilities of Life if we started focusing on the virtual platform as being more real than our "real" lives. If so, we would start viewing most things in our "real" life in terms of virtual-symbols and elements of fantasy, thus causing our perception of reality to be colored by magical/fantastical hues. Luka's adventure to save his father seems to be a combination of Luka's and his fathers' vivid imagination, since the boy is an avid gamer, and the dad is a brilliant story-teller.

However, the core theme of this story is not as straightforward as I found its prequels' to be. Perhaps, there is no new theme other than the importance of story-telling and imagination (just as its prequels'), and this is meant primarily for young adults (as some reviews seem to say). But I find it hard to agree...if it's magical realism, I am bent on finding the abstractions to "realism". If anything, this book has a lot more convoluted and deep references to reality than the previous book. And I don't think they are mere word plays on Rushdie's part.

My hypothesis is that the Fire of Life is the symbol for the ephemeral spark within us that defines our unique Life. A certain crackle of spark and fire within us fuels our drive to live, and keeps us alive. When Rashid's fire (and life) was receding, his son tries to bring back that fire. But where is that fire located? Is it in the depths of our mind? Or locked at the bottom of our heart? Perhaps we can learn about this fire only during that defining moment in the past when we came to life? If so, can we travel back the River of Time to get to that moment? Our memories get us only so far into the past... beyond that we get stuck in oblivion. How do we cross that chasm? Luka seems to travel into that point of Infinity beyond the realms of memory, to fetch the Fire of Life. And this entire journey happens within Rashid's mind (at least that's what made the most sense to me). Rashid's mind wills him to fight through his illness by imagining a magical adventure that takes place in a world he created in his mind. The adventure makes him focus on the aspect that matters most to him, and that energizes his will to survive. To Rashid, the Fire of his Life is Luka himself - the apple of his eyes, who seemed to have coagulated Time for him. It can also be argued that in addition to Luka, Rashid's unparalleled talent to tell stories is his main goal that keeps his Fire burning.

Salman Rushdie hence applies Einstein's notion of Time, as a dimension that is relative. If we choose to not let Time hang on us and learn to live in the moment, notions of past and future don't constrict us anymore. At the end of the day, all our life's battles are against Time, aren't they? All of Rushdie's word plays are quite a treat as he explores the various phenomenon of our mind - the source of knowledge, wisdom, creativity, imagination, dreams, memory, identity and ego. I am not sure if I'm viewing everything as related to the mind and the psyche, but the last two books of Rushdie's definitely seem to explore the depths of the human psyche. Again, I may have read too very much between the lines, as always.

Digested Thoughts: Although I'm giving this book the same rating as Haroun and The Sea of Stories (due to the obvious limitation of employing a rating heuristic), I enjoyed the latter much much more than this book. I liked the simplicity of Haroun's adventure. While Luka's was interesting as well, I found it a little more murkier to decipher. I still am not sure if my understanding of the book and its themes are anywhere close to Rushdie's intentions! But according to me, it sends an optimistic message that we can conquer our fate, and

win the battle against Time, if we can keep our inner Fire fueled.

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### **Mobyskine says**

Imaginative and so magical. I love the alternate, dreamy tale with video game story like. Luka and his adventure, all those characters that he encountered throughout his journey to save his father who is unwell at home-- so intriguing and thrilling. I'm quite fascinated with all philosophical and historical pinch inside the narrative, making it more entertaining. Though it was such a simple story line, wording and plot was an attention grabber, all the wordplay-- humorous and fun. I love it very much. I should get Haroun and the Sea of Stories next (although I think I should have read that one first)!

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### **Regina Ibrahim says**

A fun read. Salman has his way of creating stories. Nobodaddy, bear, dog and awkward places. This book was read each time i completed my exercise at Armenian garden early March. I can see it turned into feature film after Harun and....

Rasa macam tokwan tokwan dok cerita bila baca. Binatang bercakap dan lokasi lokasi fiksyen seperti filem kartun yang ganas....bolehlah sebagai bacaan sengang waktu.

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