



The Jaguar Princess

Clare Bell

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Mysticism, shape-changing, art and brutal religiosity are melded in this vivid tale of a seldom-plumbed time and place--the Aztec Empire at its height, before the arrival of European invaders. Drawing on unusual and powerful symbols, Bell brings a vanished civilization to life in this unusual fantasy.--Publishers Weekly.

The Jaguar Princess Details

Date : Published September 1st 1994 by Tor Books (first published 1993)

ISBN : 9780812515169

Author : Clare Bell

Format : Paperback 443 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction

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From Reader Review The Jaguar Princess for online ebook

Bre says

I read this book in middle school and could not put it down. To my 12 year old self, this was the most amazing book ever.

Abra says

This book is so brilliant. Whenever I read it, I always think it would be great for my seventh grade history students, as a way of seeing the Aztec world, with reference to earlier Olmec civilizations. The descriptions of glyph painting, bark-paper, the calendar and sacred round, the naming system, the religion and the gods -- and sacrifices -- are all fantastic. Then I remember that a) the fantastic elements (a race of were-jaguars descended from the Olmecs) and the b) the length, preclude its use as a text we could read together. I wish I could boil it down and make a poster-book of it, Japanese style.

Corinne says

One of the best fantasy books I read in a long time. Why? Because it's a quite atypical story set in the Aztec world in South America! Mixcatl is not a beautiful girl, who embraces her magical shapeshifting powers of her heritage and wants to rule the Aztec kingdom, but instead - a disfigured girl (compared to the Aztec view on beauty), who just wants to find her people and is very afraid of her magical powers and to lose herself when she transforms. The true force behind the war of power is Wise Coyote, tlatoani (Speaker King) of the client state Texcoco, who fears that if he doesn't take on the power, his people will be destroyed and he needs Mixcatl and her powers in order to exchange the ruling god, the bloodthirsty Hummingbird, for Mixcatl as a semi-goddess, the Jaguar. If you're looking for action and a lot of fighting in a fantasy novel, this one will not suit your taste, because most of the plot is playing in the character's mind's and concerns their feelings and thoughts. I don't want to tell you too much what happens and if they succeed - just get a hand on a copy of this extraordinary fantasy tale!

Jaime Contreras says

I mostly liked this uneven blend of fantasy and history. It is the mystical tale of Mixcatl, an Olmec princess and high priestess of the 'shape-changers who dominated the spiritual world before the Spanish Conquest. The majority of the takes place in the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan into which Mixcatl travels. She is revered and also feared. It is soon divulged that there is a plot to kill her and her kind. Mixcatl must devise a way to survive. Combining parts of an epic poem and a historical account of the religion of pre-Columbian Mexico, The Jaguar Princess will pull you into this mysterious and mystifying lost world.

Xarah says

I first read this back in late middle or early high school. I remember really, really liking it. After re-reading it, I still enjoyed it, but not as much as I had originally did. It's funny, I didn't really remember that much about the book either, just a basic plot line.

It's a good look at the Aztec nation before the arrival of the Spanish. The Aztec were extremely bloody, performed human sacrifices, and, on occasion, ate part of the remains from those sacrifices (though it was limited to the wealthy and the priests). While the ending is hopeful in the fact that a new, less bloody way, may come about, there does not appear to be any real archaeological/historical evidence of this (unfortunately).

Despite this, it was still an enjoyable book. I **SO** wish I could turn into a jaguar!!!

Kari says

Not a bad book. I liked reading something set in Aztec times (before Cortes, long before) for something different, but it also felt lacking, like there wasn't enough focus on the setting all the time for it to be engrossing. The main character was fun, and different, but there were so many men! It would have been nice to see other females in the book besides the main character. The descriptions of the cities were good, though not engrossing, like I said before, and the book went by really fast, in a good way.

AJNels says

This was the very first book I borrowed via Inter-Library Loan when I was in middle school. It was my introduction to Aztec and Olmec religious traditions, plus I was totally on board for a tween girl being able to transform into a jungle cat. It held up pretty well.

Laura says

May be more exciting if a bit of the book is cut out. It tends to drag on and some of the content is NOT for kids.

Tristan Naraine says

When I saw this book, I thought it was really ancient with a really ancient, boring story. However when I actually stopped judging the book by the cover and back-cover synopsis, I became somewhat interested on how a slave became a demigod. Right?!

When I saw this book, I thought it was really ancient with a really ancient, boring story. However when I actually stopped judging the book by the cover and back-cover synopsis, I became somewhat interested on

how a slave became a demigod. Right?! Also, the fact that I had nothing else to read for class (LOL). Anyway, so the first 200 pages of this book is about who this girl is. We are introduced to the protagonist of the book whose name is under wraps for the time being. We don't find out her name until about chapter ten of the story. Meanwhile (before chapter ten), we are told that the protagonist is a slave who has been traded more times than she can count. She has been taken from her grandmother and been separated from her once again. We learn that no one finds her attractive & portrays her as incapable of work as she is being sold in the market. We also learned that she is a short-tempered, smell-sensitive child who expresses these rather trouble-making traits via her attack of one of the customers as well as an animal. The third person omniscient narrator informs the reader that she didn't know how that happened implying that she does not know that she maybe related to a jaguar (or being the jaguar princess). In addition to the protagonist, we are also introduced to the second protagonist. The formatting of the book is that each chapter is divided into two- one for the slave-girl and one for Telatoni. Telatoni is a leader and warrior whose wisdom is the reason why he gets into situations following. The situation of this protagonist can be easily described as man vs. himself type of plot/story. Telatoni questions the religion of those who live among the Aztec land and questions his way of life. His modern wisdom and conception is not accepted by anyone which is something he knows for a fact. In spite of this, his conception brings him to the advancement of his religious childhood learning/knowledge of the Jaguar People of a previous (long ago) era. Meanwhile, we learn that the slave girl draws a highly despised symbol from the religious handbook of the people soon after the death of the head priest of the school she works at. She is then made aware of the bad symbol she made and is notified that she had hidden talents that she was never taught. The symbol she drew was a production of glyph writing. She is then given a spot at the glyph writing house and given the once-stripped education she was suppose to receive. Around chapter ten or a little after, these two characters (the two protagonists) meet up or clash. This is like the climax to the book in my own opinion. He brought her to his land and place with the lead glyph-writer to assist in writing a story for another leader affiliated with Telatoni. The other reason why he brought her here not that she knows but the reason is that she is the descendant of the Jaguar people which may be the answer to his religious mishaps and resistance. However, he meets her finding somewhat of a sexual appeal or intimacy (only one way) towards her but endeavors to ignore it. Long after, he exposes to her his secret the real reason for bringing her and tries to expose the creature in her instead of her trying to tame it. This book is an extremely excellent book so far. I am especially fond of the part where she tries to resist something truly self-overwhelming, unknown, hazardous, and extreme trait in her but is forced to do the opposite. That for me was an excellent part of the book and the way she (now Seven- Flower Mixcatl) handled the situation. She is extremely courageous and a character worth reading about also Telatoni. SO far: 5 stars out of 5. BTW: I think I like historical fiction. I see a trend. :)

Jose Torres says

Good read. This is a historic fantasy novel. Set in the Aztec timeline. Primarily follows a young lady named Mixcatl, and a king inside one of the Aztec nation Wise Coyotes. From slave to Demigod indeed. Very intriguing and detailed as to how the lifestyle must have been in those times, the story follows her being sold as a slave cleaning piss pots to eventually getting directly involved in the higher tiers political environment. She had an uncanny and special unidentified powers always known to her self. Without spoiling much Clare left me with an itch to see it used more often as there was a lot of teasing. The novel transfers from Mixcatl and Wise Coyotes perspective full off political games and day to day experiences. The book is well written and the story above average that it kept my interest but it did leave me desiring for more!

Megan says

3.5* I guess it was fine. Some parts were slow, when the main characters endlessly rehashed things that had already happened, or talked about taking action rather than taking action. But the parts about glyphs and art were interesting and I enjoyed reading the book as I was reading it.

Joey Brockert says

Set in pre-Columbian Mexico, Mixcatl was enslaved, taken from her family to serve in the capital when she was six or so. She hates what is happening to her, she has not had the spunk beaten out of her yet. She sees a fellow fingering a Jaguar claw, enchants it to scratch him. She is sold in the market, resold, etc., she eventually settles in at the priest's school. She does her work, but one day she finds herself in the middle of a class, learns what they are teaching and starts to learn how to paint.

The story winds around about how she grows up and into herself, and how there is a political struggle between the king and a co-king. Mixcatl turns out to be one who can change into a Jaguar, but she has to learn about this by herself, and it scares her. She does find compatible souls around her who help her and she helps them

J'aime says

I picked this up at a used book store for a dollar because the cover attracted me. And it turned out to be one of the best shapeshifter novels I have ever read!

The Jaguar Princess melds shapeshifter fantasy with historical fiction set during the Aztec Empire. Mixcatl is a young girl stolen from her jungle village to become a slave in the capital city. Her artistic talents soon come to light and she becomes a scribe. But, she another talent even more rare. She is one of the jaguar people; descended from ancient rulers of this land. Will she be the one to free her people from the cruel Aztec king whose sacrifices grow more and more demanding?

I enjoyed the story so much because I immediately identified with the protagonist. She is spirited, intelligent and curious. One of my favorite scenes is at the beginning when, upon arriving in the city, she hears the rumor that if a slave touches the walls of the palace, they are freed. Naturally, she makes a run for it! She doesn't succeed, yet after she becomes a scribe she doesn't try again. The author shows that a person can change as they grow. Mixcatl has been indoctrinated to her new society - readying her to remain here and fulfill her destiny.

An exciting adventure, a great heroine and even a love story all work to make this a fantastic novel. There is a lot of humor, and very good character development. Though the actual shapeshifting doesn't occur until the end, the book is a real page turner. I would have loved a sequel. But, if you enjoy shapeshifter stories, or historical fiction, do yourself a favor and find a copy.

Christine says

3+

Jennifer says

Slow start but definitely worth the read. What a wonderful storyline and depiction of ancient cultures.
