



## Prisoner of the Inquisition

*Theresa Breslin*

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Zarita, only daughter of the town magistrate, lives a life of wealth and privilege. Indulged by her parents, she is free to spend her days as she pleases, enjoying herself in the company of an eligible young nobleman, horse riding, or leisurely studying the arts.

Saulo, son of a family reduced by circumstances to begging, witnesses his father wrongfully arrested and dealt with in the most horrifying way. Hauled off to be a slave at sea and pursued by pirates he encounters the ambitious mariner explorer, Christopher Columbus. Throughout his hardships Saulo is determined to survive - for he has sworn vengeance on the magistrate and his family.

As Zarita's life also undergoes harsh changes the formidable and frightening Inquisition arrives in the area, bringing menacing shadows of suspicion with acts of cruel brutality - and ultimately, amid the intrigues of the court of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand in the splendid Moorish city of Grenada, betrayal and revenge...

## Prisoner of the Inquisition Details

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Author : Theresa Breslin

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## From Reader Review Prisoner of the Inquisition for online ebook

### Vee ?Under Mountain Books? says

This historical novel, set mostly in Spain in the 15th century, follows the journey of two very different characters, whose lives are strangely connected. Zarita is a very spoilt girl who unwittingly causes the execution of Saulo's father. Saulo himself is sent away on a ship, and as he grows up he plots his revenge against Zarita's family. The story is told from both points of view, Zarita tells of the horrors of the Inquisition and Saulo's of his life at sea.

With this, the idea of the two different stories should have been really interesting to read about but I found Saulo's half rather boring, and just dragged myself through it. No offense to Saulo but I didn't really want to know about life on a ship when the other tale was of the Inquisition and public punishment, every day more terror! I think this could have quite easily been just one story - Zarita's. I definitely would have enjoyed it more if it had.

Zarita's half involves a wicked Step-Mother, the loss of her mother and of course, what it's like to be questioned by the Inquisition. Zarita, although spoilt, is a very likeable character for me because she does her best to help others, just like her Mother. When Saulo is sent away after his Father dies she goes out of her way to find his Mother and look after her in her final days. Her character just gets stronger throughout the book. Saulo, on the other hand, I can't really say much about. He's sold for some wine and then spends his next few years on a ship. It seemed like he kept forgetting that he was supposed to be blinded by revenge until it suited the author.

The last 150 pages just seemed to get sillier with some rather ridiculous plot twists and an ending that made me groan aloud, it was so cheesy and sloppily written. I felt like I'd won a 500 mile race to be rewarded with a cheese sandwich. A mouldy one.

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### Michelle (Fluttering Butterflies) says

Here's a book that completely took me by surprise. I've said for years that historical fiction just isn't my sort of thing and then *Prisoner of the Inquisition* by Theresa Breslin comes along and I'm absolutely blown over by how much I adored this story, these characters and the absolutely fascinating historical setting. I really need to rethink my stance on historical fiction from now on. Also? I need to pick up more books by Theresa Breslin because I have been won over by her style of writing.

*Prisoner of the Inquisition* takes place during the Spanish Inquisition, around the time that Christopher Columbus is gathering funds in order to make his famous trip overseas. While not only making Christopher Columbus a minor character, which was quite cool in itself, I also learned an incredible amount of the politics and some of the reasons and goals of Isabella and her justifications of the Inquisition. All of the historical aspects of the novel felt like a natural progression of the story and it didn't feel heavy or forced at all. I was learning without realising it, which I think takes great skill.

We have a dual narrative here from both Zarita, the wealthy daughter of the magistrate and from Saulo, the

son of a poor family in town. Zarita and Saulo first cross paths when Zarita falsely accuses Saulo's father of assault and as a consequence, Saulo's father is hung and Saulo sent off to become a slave on a ship. It all happens very quickly and immediately Zarita realises the grave error she has just committed that has cost someone his life. This event changes and shapes both Zarita's and Saulo's life.

Alternating between their two stories, Saulo describes what life as a slave aboard a ship is like. The hard work, the poor treatment and a life of nothing but drudgery in his future. However he is quite fortunate to be taken under the wing of the captain and is able to learn more about shipping and constellations and exploration. Saulo's whole experience was absolutely fascinating and I found myself eager to get back to it.

Zarita, on the other hand, is really struggling at home. With the loss of her mother, her whole world is thrown into turmoil as the inquisition sweeps into her town and she has this really tenuous relationship with her father and his new wife. There's so much at play in this book - it deals with growing up and becoming your own person, atoning for the mistakes in the past, forgiveness, family and love. I loved every minute of this book and can highly recommend it!

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### **Rita says**

Esperava mais, muito mais.

Romance histórico, século XV, Inquisição espanhola – todos os condimentos para ser um bom livro, mas fica muito aquém das expectativas.

Gostei da forma como nos são contadas as histórias das 2 personagens principais.

Da inquisição espanhola temos pouco e bastante superficial.

Há algumas reviravoltas na metade final do livro que acabam por torná-lo uma “história de amor” bastante açucarada.

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### **Rystal says**

I LOVED THIS BOOK!!!! i was gripped by the amazing plot and the life of zarita and saulo!!!! it was so sad which made the book very realistic as it was set in the time of the Spanish inquisition. I love historical fiction and this book had just the right balance of fact and fiction. i am defo going to read more from this author!!!! The ending did not disappoint and i was blown away it was so unpredictable but also very sad :(

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### **Sudichka says**

[image error]

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### **Libby says**

~review written for the Guardian 2010 Young Critics award~

The Prisoner Of The Inquisition is a powerful historical fiction novel. It tells the remarkable adventures of

Zarita and Saulo, switching between their narratives as the chapters change.

Within the first few pages the action begins. Zarita has made a strong claim that she was assaulted. When she discovers the consequences, she regrets it all. Meanwhile, the Holy Inquisition is arriving any day—and it seems like Zarita's family have something to hide.

Zarita is tossed into a world of religious confusion, clashing relationships, and first love. She exits to a nunnery, feeling confused and unloved.

As this is happening, Saulo is having adventures on the wild sea. He works hard, determined to earn some money before returning to Las Conchas to avenge his father's death. Sailing the ocean, Saulo is more or less oblivious to the political havoc in Spain.

When, by a mysterious turn of events, Saulo and Zarita meet at the Queen's palace, they fall in love against the background of political and religious upheaval.

Revenge ensues.

Finally, tragedy strikes and bravery emanates.

I found this book beautiful and touching. The characters leapt off the page and I was lost in the beautifully written prose

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### **Gail Thompson says**

This is a dual narrative book that tells the story from two completely different perspectives. Firstly there is Zarita, a young woman from a privileged background, and secondly Saulo, from a desperately poor family. The perspectives only really come together at the end, during the dramatic conclusion. I won't spoil it by giving details, but suffice to say that the two are forced to view things from the other's perspective, and come to a mutual understanding.

The whole story is set against the backdrop of the Spanish inquisition, and it does not shy away from the grisly reality of that, although it is not overly graphic. Breslin is successful in getting across the fear and paranoia the inquisition brought about as well as a sense of helplessness. Along with the despair felt by those affected by the officers of the inquisition, is the despair of all those forced to watch the sentences being carried out. Citizens are prepared to do anything to get attention away from themselves, often informing on others. This book conveys all of this emotion and the reader becomes invested in the characters and the outcome.

There is a side plot about Christopher Columbus and his mission to prove that the world is round and not flat. He wants to prove that you can sail all around the world. He is labelled a blasphemer, and those with the knowledge he has after, commune in secret. The inquisition is a threat to these men. Saulo becomes good friends with Columbus, and learns a great deal from him. As Saulo learns about navigation and charts with Columbus, he grows and matures as a person.

Zarita also grows and matures as a person under the tutelage of her aunt, who has founded an order of nuns. This order is progressive for the times, and tolerant of others' faiths. Nuns study educational texts from the east, and have learnt many things. The inquisition is appalled, and only the letter from Queen Isabella herself saves the nuns.

I view the whole book as a metaphor for progress in the form of knowledge and tolerance. Columbus represents knowledge that the priests of the inquisition were inadvertently suppressing. Focusing on the

narrow prescriptive world that they dictated would mean that many things would not be discovered, and knowledge would not be advanced. The priests feared that they would lose their place of power and control, and thus tried to stop this type of progress. Similarly, the nuns used their knowledge to aid others, and when forced to stop, those in desperate need were left without that help. Zarita causes hardship to Saulo, and the death of his father out of ignorance, and the way she has been taught to behave. She is later appalled by her own actions. Saulo is angry and desperate, and not looking beyond himself. When the two of them begin to talk and look at things through each others eyes, their relationship becomes positive, bringing friendship and even love.

In short, the inquisition represents narrow intolerant thinking, and this gets in the way of knowledge, trust, respect, tolerance, and genuine understanding. When the inquisition is winning, all these values suffer, halt, or disappear completely. When the characters are free to act outside of the inquisition's influence, all these values abound, and progress is made. Negative outcomes are seen to arise from inquisition thinking, and positive outcomes from independent thought and action. At no point does Breslin indicate that being Catholic is bad, in fact the opposite is true. It is only the inquisition that engenders that negativity.

This book is very clever, and the setting of the story in such a troubled period in history gives the characters plenty of scope. Breslin has produced well-rounded characters that have human fears and foibles, making them all the more appealing. I wanted to find out what happened to these two young people, and I was swept away on the tide of their journey. I was hooked right from the prologue, a short one page entry that has a woman being burnt at the stake. It is a very dramatic opening, and hooks the reader in. There is no way that I could put the book down and not find out what happened in the end.

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### **Sabaha says**

Actual rating- 3.5 ?

Lovely little historical fiction book.

Definitely recommend as a quick, good paced read.

Got me out of my reading slump ❤

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### **Sita says**

I really enjoyed this one. I recommend it to anyone that is a fan of the genre, it was a good book. I like how the narration was told from two totally different people, from totally different backgrounds. A good read, I read it in a couple of days.

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### **Becky says**

Prisoner of the Inquisition confirms my suspicions that Theresa Breslin is a superb writer of historical young adult fiction. She weaves a tale that has you hanging on the characters' every word, every pause for thought. Breslin has a gift to make you feel like you lived in times gone past. It is quite remarkable. Thankfully, I live in the twenty-first century and not in fifteenth century Spain though because the atrocities that Breslin describes are unbearably dark.

Zarita is a young naive girl at the beginning of the story. Her head is turned by the handsome nobleman Ramon Salazar. She rushes to the church to pray for her mother who is experiencing a difficult childbirth. Whilst she is in the church, she is approached by a beggar. The poor man's wife is slowly dying and he has no money to buy medicine or feed his child. The man reaches out to Zarita. In her shock and embarrassment she cries that he touched her. Ramon Salazar who was waiting outside the church chases down the beggar man and with the help of two soldiers drags him to the home of the magistrate (Zarita's father). He condemns the beggar to death and the man is hanged. Unbeknown to everyone the scene has unfolded before the eyes of the beggar man's son – Saulo. In his anger he steps forth and challenges the magistrate. The magistrate condemns him to death too but Zarita begs for his life and the magistrate spares him. He orders the soldiers to give him over as a slave on a boat and thus Saulo begins a hard life at sea.

Saulo spends his days planning his revenge on the magistrate and his family. He knows that his father never harmed the girl (Zarita) and he will have his vengeance. Aboard the ship he finds comfort from one of the free men who row for the Captain Cosimo. Lomas helps to keep Saulo safe from the less honourable men who sail with them. Saulo also bonds with the Captain and finds out that he has a natural aptitude for sailing. Meanwhile, back in the Spanish town where Zarita lives the inquisition have arrived and are only too happy to seek out heretics and the devil's work.

As the novel builds both Zarita and Saulo have to confront their mistakes, their guilt and their losses. The story is told from their alternating points of view and as the reader you feel affection for both characters. The plot is well-crafted and expertly paced with tension rising as the purposes of the inquisition come to light. The setting of fifteenth century Spain and life on board a trading ship are vividly described and compelling.

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Prisoner of the Inquisition explores themes that relate to the heart of what it is to be human: beliefs, anger, forgiveness, compassion, love. It was a novel that swept me away into its historical period and enveloped me in the need for the characters to find atonement. I loved it!

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### **Lara Moon says**

Surprisingly, I really loved this book, and have read it twice. The first time, I read it within an afternoon, and got a shock to see it was dark outside by the time I finished reading. The story is well formed, and once I started reading and got into it, I became absorbed into the old 1940's Spain setting. I'm not one for religious type novels, but this book captured the passion of Spanish life, the hardships during the inquisition, and twists towards the ending.

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### **Chloe Macphail says**

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almost five stars. enjoyed the fast pace and development of the characters. wish it was made longer.

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## **Aisha Patel says**

JUST READ IT. IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE JUSTIFIED. IT LITERALLY ROCKS! IT'LL BLOW YOUR MIND.

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## **Julianne Bailey says**

The Blurb;

The flames began to rise around her...

Zarita, only daughter of the town magistrate, lives a life of wealth and privilege.

Saulo, son of a beggar, witnesses his father wrongfully arrested and brutally dealt with. Hauled off to be a slave at sea, he swears vengeance on the magistrate and his family.

The cruel agents of the inquisition arrive in Zarita's town bringing suspicion, terror and death. Then, amid the intrigues of the royal court, Zarita and Saulo meet once more, to face final acts of betrayal and revenge.

My opinion;

I borrowed this book from one of my local libraries for both the blurb and the cover... mainly the cover.

However, when I began reading this tale, it was a lot, lot darker than I suspected. And I have to say, so very powerful! The writing style and theme seems similar yet so very different to that of The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood.

The story follows the characters of Zarita and Saulo in Spain around the time of 1496, combining history and imagination, the novel proves to be something extraordinary! These two characters lives are detailed to us from their points of views separately in different chapters – an innovative idea and very well written. It is inevitable that these two characters lives must cross, this first happens right at the beginning at the book. It is very easy to love the character of Saulo as, even though he has been forced to sea, the captain of the ship he is on eventually brings out his characteristics, and after a terrible start in life, being only of sixteen, a happiness is presented towards the character. However, back in Spain, the impacts of the Inquisition on the day to day lives of the people living there begins to show in a terrible way with such brutal consequences from actions that can only be described as harmless. With her father being a strong representative for the town she lives in, Zarita is in direct firing line of these cruel human beings, the most evil being Father Besian - A priest in charge of the Inquisition. The destruction this man brings with him is both horrifying and terrifying. This destruction doesn't seem to effect Zarita whilst he is there, but her stepmother who is plagued with jealousy over the girl seems to have other things planned for the young lady.

Eventually Zarita is forced out of her house to live with her aunt at her convent by her stepmother, events take place – some involving the inquisition - and soon enough, Saulo is reunited with this girl in an unsuspected circumstance but doesn't know who she is. When they meet, Saulo is determined to find the girl that caused his fathers death but soon becomes distracted by Zarita and romance blossoms, but sadly, this doesn't last long through another nasty turn of events.

The end of this book is what surprised me the most, heroic acts take place at this point and it seems the love shared between these two characters has a chance at blooming again, but what will happen to Zarita?

I honestly think this is one of the best books I have read, absolutely fantastic and so well written. The author has clearly paid such attention to detail that it is word perfect presenting emotions that are unimaginable before reading this book and an ending that is just as shocking as the beginning. I would definitely give this book a five out of five. It is simply fantastic and I would recommend it to anyone for the emotional rollercoaster portrayed throughout!

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## Margo Tanenbaum says

I don't usually order books from England before they are even available in the U.S., but when I read about *Prisoner of the Inquisition* in an article about England's prestigious Carnegie Award I couldn't help myself. *Prisoner* was short-listed for this year's Carnegie and won the Carnegie Shadowing Award (books chosen by young people who shadow the official judges and is written by a well-known author of historical fiction in her native Great Britain, Theresa Breslin).

One of my favorite historical fiction titles from back in my own teen days was Samuel Shellabarger's swashbuckling *Captain from Castile*, (adapted into a famous film with Tyrone Power), also set in the dark days of the Spanish Inquisition. Scottish author Theresa Breslin's young adult novel focuses on some of the same themes of adventure, romance, revenge, and abuse of power by the church that I relished so many years ago in Shellabarger's novel. In alternating chapters we meet two teenaged characters: Zarita, the thoughtless, spoiled, only daughter of the wealthy town magistrate, and Saulo, son of a beggar. Their lives intersect when Saulo's father, needing money to save his sick wife and hungry son, begs at the church where Zarita is praying, grasping her hand in desperation. Saulo's father is soon cruelly executed for daring to assault Zarita, despite her pleas that the man does not deserve to die. Saulo himself barely escapes the executioner's rope, and swears revenge on Zarita and her family.

Their stories are then told in parallel; Saulo is thrown into the harsh life of a galley slave, where through his wits, he is able to learn some navigation, is pursued by pirates, and eventually becomes acquainted with Christopher Columbus, a confident sailor from Genoa who hopes to gain patronage from the Spanish monarchs to explore an alternate route to the Indies. Zarita, on the other hand, has troubles of her own. The Inquisition has come to her town, and with it fear, suspicion, and cruelty. No one is immune from the Inquisitor's tactics, even Zarita's aunt, a nun, a simple-minded relative, and Zarita herself. Soon Zarita and Saulo's lives will intertwine again, in a way neither of them could ever have suspected. Can they escape the dangers of the Inquisition?

I thoroughly enjoyed this historical novel about one of the darkest periods in Spanish history, although I found the transformation of Zarita's character from a self-absorbed young girl who thinks nothing of a poor beggar in the church to a kind, sensitive young woman a bit difficult to believe. Some of the other characters in the book, including Zarita's young step-mother, are also somewhat one-dimensional, but the novel effectively captures the spirit of the period and is well worth reading. I hope it will soon be released to an American audience.

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