



The Mammoth Hunters

Jean M. Auel

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This eBook includes the full text of the novel plus the following additional content:

- An exclusive preview chapter from Jean M. Auel's *The Land of Painted Caves*, on sale in hardcover March 29, 2011
- An Earth's Children® series sampler including free chapters from the other books in Jean M. Auel's bestselling series
- A Q&A with the author about the Earth's Children® series

Ayla, the independent heroine of **The Clan of the Cave Bear** and **The Valley of Horses**, sets out from the valley on Whinney, the horse she tamed. With her is Jondalar, the tall, handsome, yellow-haired man she nursed back to health and came to love. Together they meet the Mamutoi--the Mammoth Hunters--people like Ayla. But to Ayla, who was raised by the Clan of the Cave Bear, they are "the Others." She approaches them with mixed feelings of fear and curiosity.

Talut, a powerful bear of a man with bright red hair, a booming laugh, and a gentle heart, and his tall, dark-haired sister, Tulie, are the leaders of the Lion Camp of the Mamutoi. It is here that Ayla finds her first women friends, but some among the Mamutoi dislike Ayla because she was raised by "flatheads," their name for the people of the Clan. Ayla is haunted by her memories of the Clan because Rydag, a child of mixed parentage living with the Mamutoi, bears so strong a resemblance to her own son, Durc.

It is the Mamutoi master carver of ivory--dark-skinned Ranec, flirtatious, artistic, magnetic--who fascinates Ayla. She finds herself drawn to him. Because of her uncanny control over animals, her healing skills, and the magic firestone she discovered, Ayla is adopted into the Mammoth Hearth by Mamut, the ancient shaman of the Great Earth Mother.

Ayla finds herself torn between her strong feelings for Ranec and her powerful love for the wildly jealous and unsure Jondalar. It is not until after the great mammoth hunt, when Ayla's life is threatened, that a fateful decision is made.

Set in the challenging terrain of Ice Age Europe that millions of Jean Auel's readers have come to treasure, **The Mammoth Hunters** is an epic novel of love, knowledge, jealousy, and hard choices--a novel certain to garner Jean Auel even greater acclaim as a master storyteller of the dawn of humanity.

The Mammoth Hunters Details

Date : Published (first published 1985)

ISBN :

Author : Jean M. Auel

Format : Kindle Edition 736 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Fantasy, Romance

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From Reader Review The Mammoth Hunters for online ebook

Amy Norris says

Due to my love of the previous two books, I am being generous giving this 3 stars, it is actually closer to 2 stars. I love Ayla, the main character of this series but I am so sick of her being ABSOLUTELY INSTANTLY AMAZING at everything ever. EVERYBODY that meets her is in love with her or if they don't like her, it is only because they hate things that are 'different' and she wins them over in no time with her amazingness. Anyway, I guess she is the destined one yada yada yada so all of that would be bearable except that the only conflict in this entire book was MISCOMMUNICATION. The entire book could have been resolved if two people didn't misread blatantly obvious signs and just said a couple of words to each other. UGH it was terrible and I was literally rolling my eyes while reading this. Anyways, I hope the next one is better. I'm too far in to turn back now.

Efka says

DNF ties maždaug 50 puslapiu.

Buvau išties nustebintas ir paliko tikrai nemaž? ?sp?d?, kaip visai nebologas romanas su survival natom, su kult?riniais, istoriniais intarpais šioje knygoje per 50 puslapi? sugeb?jo degraduoti ? banal? kas-k?-myli-ko-nemyli meil?s trikamp?, balansuojant? ant popras?io YA lygio.

Nuobodu ir nelabai ?domu. Ir labai vidutiniška. Atia, Aila. Nepasiilgsiu tav?s.

Crystal Starr Light says

WARNING: This book has caused me a lot of heartache, and as I review it, I may end up in a ball of mush, blathering unintelligibly.

When we last left Ayla and Jondalar, they were returning to Jondalar's family, standing smiling as they met one of the Mamutoi. Now, Ayla is quivering in fear, afraid that this Other is going to see her and immediately know, somehow, that she lived with the Clan and hate her (this is only 1 of the many continuity conflicts in this story). Jondalar, being the perfect perfectness of perfect maleness (You do know, after all that Jondalar is "The Mother's Gift to Women"), assures her that the Mamutoi are good people, and the two hang out with the Mamutoi.

Before I start my ranting, I need to say the good things about this book or I will completely forget them and start censoring profanities. Firstly, Auel opens up her world and introduces us to the Mamutoi and their ways; describing different cultures, digging into the past and revealing it to the audience is Auel's strong suit, and it's nice to have her back in her element. At points, I was almost transported back to The Clan of the Cave Bear: learning how the Mamutoi hunt, make clothes, and go about their day-to-day lives; getting a peak into their religion; learning their social structure.

The plotline with Rydag was actually not that bad. It gave Ayla a way to see what her child might have been

like, to explore the motherliness of her character. And finally, there are a lot more developed characters this time around--and characters that I actually liked (I don't think I cared for ANY of the characters in The Valley of Horses). My favorite was Ranec; he was such a jolly guy, so friendly, outgoing, clever, witty, and smart. It would have been interesting to see *tries to breath slowly* what would have happened if he had ended up with Ayla. I liked Deejee; Ayla hasn't had a chance to interact with many females, so it was great that she had a strong female friend. And many of the other clan were pretty well done.

Now that I've done my duty and said all the good things about this book, I can focus on the 75% of the crap that bugged the hell out of me and nearly broke me.

This book has all the stuff we saw in Valley of the Horses. We are treated to at least six really bad sex scenes (the wording in each is almost identical, the sex is uncomfortable and not sexy at all, the times people have sex is really odd). Auel steps away from the story to go into Textbook Mode, describing concepts these people would have no knowledge of (permafrost, homogeneous crystalline silica or flint, asides into what would happen thousands of years later, etc.). Ayla invents the needle, domesticates a Wolf cub, possesses shamanic powers that the Mamut (spiritual leader of the Mamutoi) encourages her to use to "see visions", and generally grows to be an even bigger Mary Sue than even the first two books made her out to be (and that is a feat, lemme tell you).

But none of those elements really compare to the most horrible thing that nearly destroyed all the good things this book had going for it. What did the most destruction to the goodness of this book was one of the absolute stupidest, most inane, childish, disgusting, vapid, retarded Big Misunderstandings in the world of Big Misunderstandings.

I can live with the info-dumping (even if it is terribly boring, distracting to the "plot", and way above the knowledge of the characters). I can even enjoy the really bad sex scenes in a MST3K way (if you enjoy reading about Jondalar's "manhood" and Ayla's "petals", this is your book). But when an author resorts to having her characters act like lobotomized chimpanzees in order to drive a plot that should have been wrapped up in no more than a chapter and probably more like a paragraph...I draw the line!

After Ayla and Jondalar meet up with the Mamutoi, almost immediately, Ranec wants the Perfect, Majestic, Mother-Incarnate Ayla. He eyeballs her, makes constant jokes about bedding her, and makes it so that generally everyone knows what he wants.

Well, everyone EXCEPT AYLA.

Eventually, the Mamutoi agree to adopt Ayla. At her adoption ceremony, Ranec kisses her and tells her he wants to bed her. Ayla, being raised as a Clan member to drop and spread 'em at a man's whim, agrees. Meanwhile, Jondalar stands in a corner and pouts and complains and whines, "How could she be going with another man when he was waiting for her? No woman had ever chosen someone else when he wanted her." Uh, Jondalar, don't you remember Ayla talking about how THAT IS HOW SHE'S BEEN TRAINED? Oh, right, it was just after having sex; you were asleep.

Normal human beings would approach each other after the incident and have it out. But nooooooooooooooo! Instead, Ayla and Jondalar begin a painful, stupid, nonsensical "falling out". They avoid each other, thinking the other doesn't care for them anymore. They stop having really bad sex (and talking about the origin of babies, which was a great disappointment to me, as I enjoyed counting the times in the last book that that topic appeared). They sleep on opposite sides of the bed. At one point, they fight over Ayla's adoption of a Wolf cub (cleverly named "Wolf"), and he moves out. All the while, they

both have googly eyes for each other, lust after each other, dance around talking to each other...but never actually have the conversation that would fix this problem.

You know what's even worse? (Yes, I did say "worse".) I *MAYBE* could understand this happening if they were in a vacuum. But there is a whole TRIBE of people around them. And you know what?

THEY DON'T FRAKKIN' BOTHER TO SAY ANYTHING TO THIS COUPLE!!

All these supposedly "open" and "blunt" Mamutoi in the previous book (and even earlier in this book) SUDDENLY really respect private thoughts and REFUSE TO CLARIFY A SITUATION THAT WOULD TAKE TWO SECONDS TO CLEAR UP!!

Hyperventilates

This goes on...and on...and on...for the REST OF THE BOOK.

And do you want know how it is resolved?

(view spoiler)

is shackled and chained up

And THIS is what ruins a book that otherwise wouldn't have been too bad. Auel made her supposedly smart "perfect" characters act stupid for 50% of the book, just to have a half @ssed plot.

This book did NOT need a Big Misunderstanding to be interesting. You could have had some actual Mammoth Hunting (there is only ONE scene, and it is so short, I almost missed it). You could have had some conflict with characters who think that the Clan are a bunch of animals (and not the mustache twirling Friebag who immediately is converted to Ayla-ism when Ayla saves his wife from labor). You could have had an interesting conflict with Jondalar being ashamed of Ayla living with the Clan and how his family would take it (that actually wasn't too bad). You could have had some interesting stories just with Ayla and Jondalar living with the Mamutoi. Hell, I would have GLADLY taken a Romantic Triangle with Ranec if it meant NO BIG MISUNDERSTANDING. It's stupid, it's insulting, it's unbelievable that two GROWN ADULTS (one of whom SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER--and that would be Jondalar) would act in such a stupid, childish fashion.

I've wandered all over the place, wondering if it is as good as or worse than Valley. In the end, I'm voting it down lower (YES LOWER) than Valley. Even with the boring Jonalar/Thonalan segments in Valley, at least it didn't strain credibility of the characters' intelligence with a prolonged Big Misunderstanding.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

P.S. Even though this book made me want to go postal, I am STILL proceeding with the rest of the series. I will NOT let this be the book series that breaks me.

P.P.S I think there's a lot of stuff I've also missed in my attempt to rehashing the gruesomeness of the Big Misunderstanding. Just take a peek at my status updates for this book to see the other off-the-wall stuff I didn't talk about in this review.

Henry Avila says

In the distant unknown , murky past (no history books to tell their stories), during the era of the caveman , two groups of people struggle to survive in a cruel territory that someday the nation of Ukraine will be established ...our ancestors the Cro-Magnon man, the new arrivals from Africa, where the human race was born and the more primitive Neanderthals who have been in Europe for at least 200,000 years, never very numerous, short but quite powerful , very durable too and contrary to the modern view of them...intelligent, even speaking a language that will never be heard again. Nevertheless a weakness that proves fatal , a failure to progress, they have remained static.. unable or an unwillingness to improve or change for 1,000 centuries. The "Others " continue to seek a better life, new tools made, weapons, shelters , clothes , food and more lands to settle. Anything to make them abide ..increasing their population in contrast to the rivals , (who they despise and the same sentiment is mutual from the enemy) the obvious conclusion is confirmed, the bleak future no surprise, for one branch of mankind . Ayla a talented woman without a clan, banished in fact by the Neanderthals who found the orphan 5 -year -old , (her parents succumbed in a devastating earthquake) and raised her... with a companion the man she loves Jondalar. Big , strong , attractive with brains that women find irresistible. After leaving Ayla's valley of horses at Jondalar's insistence they encounter a group of fierce Mammoth hunters...friendly though. She , her bold man , and strange menagerie, two horses, Whinney and Racer and soon a baby wolf..naturally called Wolf (we won't even mention the gigantic cave lion) . The hunters are shocked seeing the teenage girl riding a horse...back then these animals were eaten. The wolf a feared predator , she befriends, the young, tall, blonde -haired, beautiful girl of 17, must be some kind of a mighty ominous spirit , yet seems quite a normal looking person... they are accepted . In a land of astonishing blue ice, the massive freezing glaciers , little food supply , only a tribe that adopts to the inclement weather elements , can hope to prosper , always needing to be alert in this unforgiving environment. Ayla meets another man, Ranec, she feels an attraction for and with no rules back then anything goes... stay or follow the jealous traveler Jondalar in his dream to return home, she must decide but first an exciting , and dangerous mammoth hunt in the cold north, if the nearby apocalyptic volcano doesn't become too violent . This extremely popular book series 45 million copies sold and counting, maybe not quite accurate as new research has shown, yet is the closest anyone today can experience the atmosphere of the crude time, no civilization , intensely superstitious people, harsh customs, strange ways and only the fittest prevailed...

Spider the Doof Warrior says

I'm sorry, but if you can invent new sex positions you should be able to tell your partner how you feel!

Kaitlin says

Absolutely loved this one again, she's keep[ing me super into this world and I've barely been reading other books becuase I've just been immersed into this world :)

Ayla's story is once more continued in this book but now we have Jondalar accompanying her to integrate with new types of people and clans. She's managed to learn so much from Jondalar, but her heritage and customs from living as part of the Clan of the Cave Bear are still ingrained in her behaviour and finally meeting more 'Others' is both a welcome adventure and a trial once again. Ayla is resourceful and inquisitive and highly intelligent, but she's also unsure of all the subtle nuances and the ways that the other's have been raised. She knows she was raised unconventionally, but until the Summer gathering of the Mammoth Hunters she doesn't realise quite how different her way is...

What I loved about this book was getting to see the way that Ayla integrated herself and her animals with the Lion camp. She's a very likeable character for the way she understands and adapts to all situations, but in some ways she's very naive too and this leads her to both good and bad situations with friends and lovers alike.

The element I would say is a bit irritating about some moments is the repetition. Sometimes I feel like I have been told 100 times that Ayla wonders how babies are made or that Jondalar thinks he's ruined things. However, even with that complaint occasionally, I still love the detail Auel goes to with her descriptions and immersion in the culture and time period.

Overall I loved the ending of this book and particularly enjoyed meeting the leaders of the Lion Camp and their spirit man. There was also a lot of genuine love in the Lion camp which I felt really rubbed off on Ayla and her animals, and she got some of the care she'd been so desperately missing during her years alone.

I also think that the magic of this world became a lot more prominent in this book and there was a definite blend of Clan and Mamutoi within Ayla and the others who got to know her was very intriguing and sometimes awing! There was one particular scene which was pretty creepy and sounded like very intense spirit magic, and I like all the rituals and music associated with the magic (even though I have no idea how accurate it is - it sounds cool!)

One character that I just have to mention is the young boy who Ayla meets at Lion Camp who cannot speak. He is a mixed child who is a blend of Clan and Mamutoi much like someone Ayla used to know, and she forms a firm attachment to this character. I loved their relationship and found that it progressed quickly and beautifully into something I really loved to read about... Until... (I'll say no more!) 3

Overall another very solid continuation and despite the repetition I am really loving the series. I have already started the 4th one on audio and hope to read it fairly quickly too and I am excited to be past half-way through Ayla's adventure, but also super intrigued about where she will end up. 4.5*s for this one :)

Goldenwattle says

The short rundown:

A page turner, as in: Pedantic description – turn page. Tell not show – turn page. Angst and more angst – turn page. Repeat history (telling) again and again and – turn page. Describe all actions in minute detail – turn page. Another long description of “pleasures” – turn pages.

The longer rundown:

All actions 'must' be described in mind numbing detail. Ditto descriptions, feelings, etc. AND then repeated later. Does anyone actually read these stories word by word by word, or do they, like me, skim large angst/description ridden sections? And that takes up a lot of the book.

I hear often that authors should show, not tell, and after reading this book, glazing over and page turning past large sections of telling (often repeating what has been told before) I fully appreciate that advice. We did not need to be told about things that were not relevant to the story. An example: Telling how wolves would be selected for pets because they had different features to the norm. Smaller, a different colour, etc. Yes eventually becoming pet dogs of different breeds, but telling this as part of the story was unnecessary, because it is NOT part of this story.

The magical colds are back again. The tribe meets no-one, but they catch colds. Obviously the people in Ayla's time did not need to catch a virus. Their colds are magic spells brought by evil spirits or something. Someone please tell the author a cold is caused by a virus and they need to catch the virus from another person who has it or carries it. The tribe doesn't meet anyone else to catch it from.

Ayla and Jondalar not talking about their feelings to each other for months, each thinking the other doesn't love them. Please spare me; so unbelievable and corny, and overdone.

This is the third book in this series I have read. I really would like to follow Ayla's journey across prehistoric Europe, but with the extreme overwriting and the author's habit of telling rather than showing, I don't think I can face another of her books. This book is just short of 800 pages, but the story could have been told in 200 pages and been far the better for it.

Kelly Dubs says

This has been my least favorite out of the Earths Children series, although I find it hard to dislike any of the books.

The love story in this one starts out strong, and by the time you get half way through, you are so sick of the misunderstandings and hurt feelings that you feel no one could be that stupid about love.

For some reason, both of the main characters bothered me to some degree in this book. Aside from the love story being obnoxious, you half expect that Jondalar has reverted back to a child that has no idea how to verbalize emotions and handle stress and that Ayla is going to invent nuclear fusion any day now.

I still enjoyed reading about how these people might have lived and survived in that time, but the long diatribes of the vegetation and land formations almost put me to sleep a few times and I found myself skimming over whole pages just to get past it.

Although you know that in the end Ayla and Jondalar are going to end up back together again, you don't really expect it to be the VERY end, and when it finally happens, it seems so rushed that it overlooks many of the "problems" the author laid out before them. Or maybe love really does just conquer all.

Manny says

We had this au pair, an extremely smart girl who later became the editor of an architecture journal. A friend who liked women's erotica lent her a copy of *The Mammoth Hunters*, assuring her that it was a good smutty read. A couple of days later, I asked Isabel if it had lived up to its advance billing. She made a face.

"Well," she said, "it's the first time I've ever read a book where I found myself skipping the sex scenes.

They're soooo boring."

She had a way with words, and, like many reviewers on this site, she sometimes enjoyed being contrarian for its own sake. It's possible that I was unduly influenced by her dismissive judgment; but, sure enough, when I flipped through the book looking for a piece of sex (it didn't take long), the passage did seem to have an unpleasantly mechanical, formulaic character.

I was put off Jean M. Auel for life! This incident happened over 20 years ago, and I haven't looked at her since. Please don't waste your time trying to persuade me that I've made a mistake. I've invested too much in this decision, and nothing is going to change my mind now.

Ellen says

I have a huge Love hate relationship with these books. The author repeats herself over and over again; she treats the reader like they're stupid and cannot remember a thing. In fact I believe any good editor could cut these books down by hundreds of pages. Yet, this series is addicting. The first one is by far the best but be prepared to be sucked in - if you read the first you will want to read them all.

Stephanie *Very Stable Genius* says

Spoilers, maybe

What did I learn from the first three books of this series?

Ayla is Jesus.....I know!

Well there is a little more to it I suppose.

The first book in the series "Clan of the Cave Bear" is about the life of a young human child, Ayla, who due to an earthquake, is orphaned and then is raised by a group of Neanderthals. Ayla, inventing feminism, goes against the rules of the "Clan" and does a bunch of stuff women of the Clan are not supposed to do, like hunting and speaking her mind.

This pisses off the next in line to be leader of the Clan, Broud (I think). He hates her so much for her independence and intelligence, he invents rape to punish her. What a Neanderthal!

She then gets pregnant with Broud's child "Dirk", and prejudice is introduced to the world. Now, all those who walk on their hind legs believe that spirits and/or totems mix to make a baby.....but not Ayla, she is the first to figure out how babies are made.

In "Valley of the Horses", Ayla has been kicked out of the Clan and forced to leave her son Dirk behind. She adopts an orphaned foal (she orphaned it!), tames it and invents horseback riding. She smacks two stones, flint and Iron pyrite together and is the first to discover that you can make a real quick fire with it. Then she adopts an orphaned Cave Lion (she orphaned it too!) and becomes the worlds first Siegfried, or maybe, Roy.

But then she saves a man of the “others” from her Cave Lion named Baby, who turns out could have had a few more obedience classes. His name is Jondalahar. She discovers great sex, and it all goes down hill from there. Oh they still invent stuff, the spear thrower for example, but now it’s all.....giant shaft....blah, blah, blah..... deep warm cleft.....yada, yada.....erect pink nipple.

Boring.

In “The Mammoth Hunters” it’s more of the same old great sex, with the addition of a black man to spice things up. Boring. Every man wants her. What else is new.

Yeah she invents the needle and thread, ho hum. It’s the fact that all the people she currently hangs with in this book decides she just maybe “the Great Mother incarnate” that is the exciting thing.

Jesus. Just way earlier in a woman’s body.

Rebecca ♥ Warner, Kishan, Magnus ♥ says

1. The Clan of the Cave Bear ★★★★★
2. The Valley of Horses ★★★★★
3. The Mammoth Hunters ★★★★

Oh this book drove me crazy! This has one of the most emotionally trying love-triangles that I have ever encountered. For 3/4 of the book I wanted to pull out my hair and slap a whole bunch of people. I am glad that in the next book Ayla and Jondalar have left the Mamutoi. I could not handle any more of that. But I still love Ayla and Jondalar despite their cluelessness and I love this story so I am looking forward to book 4.

Iset says

I was hooked into this series by the first book, "Clan of the Cave Bear", a fun, well-written novel with excellent character relationships. I instantly read the sequel, "The Valley of Horses", but found myself a bit dubious, as there were a couple of issues this time around with the characterisations and it dragged in places. Nevertheless, I persisted, convinced that "The Valley of Horses" had just been a brief dip before the series got back to the good standard of the first book. I was wrong, and I was oh so disappointed that this should be the case, but "The Mammoth Hunters" wasn't even on a par with "The Valley of Horses". Even after "The Mammoth Hunters", I persisted with this series, truly wishing for things to get better... but it was all downhill, and sadly this is the first in the series in that trend.

But there are some good things to be said. Undoubtedly one of Auel's greatest strengths as a writer are her descriptions, which we're hit with right at the beginning of the book and take on a whole new level from even her previous works so far in this series. The description of the Lion Camp's longhouse, constructed out of mammoth bones, was truly atmospheric - the darkness inside, the flickering hearths giving off smoky smells, the gathered people murmuring in hushed tones and turning to look at Ayla. For perhaps the first time in Auel's series, I felt completely and very believably transported back to an environment thousands of years ago. The description of the musical instruments and their use was another descriptive highlight, as were the

interesting titbits on food sources and preparation.

It's obvious that Auel has put a great deal of research into this book, and it comes across in her detailed descriptions of period specific items and activities. I appreciate it, however, Auel takes her research too far in this novel. There are points in the text when Auel breaks off from naturally describing something as part of the story, to engaging in her own voice in a lengthy discussion that could've been lifted whole from an article in a university archaeological and anthropological journal! There are genuinely moments when it's written; "people wouldn't know it until millennia later, but..." This was so horribly jarring, to suddenly and inexplicably be dragged from a historical fiction narrative, into a modern day dry, factual, Palaeolithic site report, that this alone was a major detriment to the book!

The romance scenes were another big thumbs down. It's not that there are too many of them, or that they are too graphic. It's that they're badly written. Very badly written. You'd be forgiven for thinking the printers accidentally stuck some loose pages from a trashy Harlequin romance or cheesy bodice-ripper in the middle of "The Mammoth Hunters". Feast your eyes on such literary incredulities as; "Jondalar's large throbbing manhood", "Ayla's pink place of pleasure" and her "petal-like folds". The word "pleasure" is written with a capital P, and not only is the language used completely fatuous, and their activities are insipidly and repetitively formulaic.

All this brings me to the supposed "love triangle" which apparently forms the main plot of this book. The love triangle plot fires into action when Ranec, who has so far only watched Ayla from afar, makes known to Ayla his desire for her at her adoption ceremony into the tribe. Ayla, having been brought up like a good Neanderthal woman and apparently incapable of telling the guy "I'm just not that into you", knows that when a man makes a signal that he wants her, a woman should instantly submit. I have to say, for someone who's meant to be so brilliant, Ayla was pretty stupid about the whole love triangle thing. Since when has Ayla conformed to the Neanderthal codes? She broke them over and over in the first book, unable to resist her Cro-Magnon nature! And what about Jondalar teaching her all about Cro-Magnon relationships in the previous book? So, despite these baffling contradictions, Ayla hops into bed with Ranec whilst she's still Jondalar's girl. Jondalar is hacked off. Ayla doesn't get why he's mad, despite all the above experiences she's had and having had ample chance to observe from the Mammoth Hunters how relationships work. NO ONE from the cast of supporting characters explains to Ayla just what she has inadvertently done wrong. Because Ayla acts confused and like she has done nothing wrong, Jondalar convinces himself that she doesn't want him anymore and has chosen Ranec over him, and so pulls back from her, deciding to let her be free to make her own choice. Because Jondalar pulls back from her, Ayla thinks he doesn't love her anymore, and decides she'd better stick with Ranec even though she doesn't truly love him, because then at least she'll have someone who cares for her.

And this "misunderstanding" rambles on for over 300 pages. I swear, I was THIS close to throwing the book down in disgust. The big "love triangle" plot could've been resolved in two minutes if Ayla and Jondalar would only SPEAK to each other. And the others in the camp, who, we are given hints, can see what's really going on in the whole big mess of this misunderstanding and know that Jondalar and Ayla still love each other, inexplicably, do NOTHING! Not a single word of advice to point the unhappy couple in the right direction or to fix the relationship. Worst of all, Ayla and Jondalar ALREADY went through the big misunderstanding plot line, where he thinks she doesn't love him, she thinks he doesn't love her, in the immediately previous book! Why oh why is the EXACT same plot being used again?!

And that brings me to without a doubt the most annoying facet of the entire book. The wonderfulness of Ayla. Ayla's only flaw in this book is how she misunderstands the love triangle situation. But apart from this her achievements are endless! In the course of the series so far, Ayla has invented the double-shot technique

using the sling, tamed a horse for the first time ever, tamed a lion for the first time ever, tames the very birds out of the trees, is the first person ever to discover how to make fire with flint, learns the Zelandonii language to fluency within a few months and the same for the Mamutoi language, tames a wolf for the first time ever thus creating the first ever domesticated dog, invents the needle, and saves a prematurely born baby using her medical skills. In addition to all this, the Mamutoi shaman tells Ayla that she has the whole kit and caboodle of shamanic powers! I wouldn't be surprised if she invents the wheel and achieves world peace in the next book! She is completely unrealistic in her talents, skills, achievements, and attractiveness. I understand what her fans are saying, that someone's got to make all these prehistoric discoveries, and I'd go along with it if it was just one thing she invents, but no single individual invented all those things. It's archaeological and historical fact, these items and features appeared at different periods, millennia apart, it's simply not possible. The annoying thing about Ayla in this book is that she's flat as a character, she has no deeper levels, she has no dark side, she's always honest, helpful, and naive, and she ultimately comes off as both boring and irritatingly over-powered. It doesn't exactly inspire interest or confidence when the two leads of this series have become so riddled with problems. I don't care what happens to Ayla or Jondalar, and I wouldn't have been upset if Jondalar had ridden off alone, or even if the other camps of the Mamutoi banded together witch-hunt style and chased off Ayla due to her Neanderthal connections. All the other characters are complete cardboard stereotypes

Finally, as far as I can see, this book was just a completely unnecessary detour from the main plot of Jondalar and Ayla travelling back to his homeland. At the start of the book they intend only to stay with the Mamutoi a few days and then continue on their way... and by the end of the book, not much has happened at all and Ayla and Jondalar continue on their way.

Plant Girl says

This book could have been much shorter and I probably would have enjoyed it more! Is she getting paid per word? ha. The characters became more weak and aggravating, their silly storylines were drawn on for far too long. Still, it was somewhat enjoyable, but I don't know if I want to continue reading this series (I'm taking a break!) ha.

Karen says

5 STARS

Wow! These books are good! Now I'm beginning to see how they became such a craze back in the eighties. It boggles the mind how much research and simple creative story-telling the author has pulled together to make this epic story come to life.

And yes, it is a love story.

My only complaint is the length. The author occasionally goes a bit overboard with her descriptive explanations of tool making and hide curing etc etc etc! Very interesting, but I think they could be honed down a good bit. (no pun intended)

There was also a good bit of animosity and misunderstanding in this part of the story. And as a reader it was absolutely maddening. There was way too much stupid going on between Ayla and Jondalar, and the results were nearly disastrous. And considering the sheer length of the book... the resolution was far too long in coming. But I have to admit... it kept me glued to the book.

So with that said, and the story finally moving forward in its proper direction, I will proceed on to the next and even longer book in the series.

I am listening to the audio books, and I have to say that the narrator, Sandra Burr has really stepped up her game from the first book. Sometimes I can't believe that it's only one person doing all of these voices. She really is quite talented.

And even though my enthusiasm seems a bit subdued for my usual 5-star reads, all I can say is that it must be sheer exhaustion from my loss of sleep and emotional turmoil of getting through the book. I definitely couldn't have given it any less.

So now that I am rested and recovered...

on to book 4... .
