



# The Nightingale

*Hans Christian Andersen , Fiona Black (Adaptation) , Catherine Huerta (Illustrator)*

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## The Nightingale Details

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Author : Hans Christian Andersen , Fiona Black (Adaptation) , Catherine Huerta (Illustrator)

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# From Reader Review The Nightingale for online ebook

## Abigail says

The Nightingale, illustrated by **Bagram Ibatoulline**.

"*In China, as you know, the Emperor is Chinese, and all the people are Chinese, too,*" begins this classic tale from Hans Christian Andersen, originally published in 1843, as part of the first volume of Nye Eventyr (New Fairy Tales). The story of an emperor who learns the true worth of the nightingale's song only when beset by death, and virtually abandoned by his many courtiers and servants, it has been interpreted as everything from a tribute to Swedish opera singer Jenny Lind ("The Swedish Nightingale"), to a meditation on the superiority of individual creation to mechanized production.

However one chooses to read the story, Stephen Mitchell's lovely translation for Candlewick Press must surely entertain and enthrall. His detailed explanation of his process - which he correctly labels "adaptation," rather than pure translation - will be particularly welcome to anyone who enjoys comparing various retellings of the same story. Bagram Ibatoulline, who has also illustrated Andersen's *The Tinderbox* and *Thumbelina*, delivers gorgeously detailed ink, watercolor and gouache illustrations, inspired by classical Chinese art. Every panel is a pleasure to behold, with a lush palette and many expressive details - even the endpapers are beautiful!

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## Shirley Revill says

A book from my childhood that I have read many times over the years to my children and grandchildren. One of my favourite childhood stories.

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## Renée Paule says

Some lovely lessons to be learnt in this little gem!

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## Nhi Nguy n says

H i x a say m  ??c tuy n t p truy n c  Andersen, m nh    bi t   n c u chuy n "Ho ng    v  H a Mi", k  v  m t v  ho ng    say m  ti ng h t tuy t di u c a m t con chim h a mi, nh ng sau n y l i chuy n sang m    m m t con chim m y. Th ng qua n t v  c a Quentin Gr ban, c u chuy n gi    y s ng l i tr n nh ng trang gi y couch  l ng o, s  v o m t r  i v  nh ng b c tranh m nh h a   p tuy t v i :))

  n k t c  h i ch ng h ng m t t  (hay ch c t i m nh mu n   c th m? :D), nh ng d  sao   y v n l  m t cu n truy n thi u nhi  r t   ng   c    M nh s  g n gi  cu n n y th t c n th n    sau n y n u c  con th  s  cho con   c v    c c ng v i con :))

P.S.: M nh mua cu n n y tr n Tiki, b i   c   p nh a lu n n  m y ch    i :D

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## Foad says

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## Huda Aweys says

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## Jane says

Have you ever thought how challenging it must be to match a drawing to a text? Take a look at Nancy Burkert's *Nightingale* if you want to see a master at work. Gorgeous!

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## Bionic Jean says

What a relief!

I am currently reading through the short stories by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen, and intermittently reviewing a few. So far I had not found a single one I liked, and a couple of them I disliked intensely. This one however, entitled, **The Nightingale**, was a delight. It captured my imagination. It is captivating, whimsical and completely charming.

**The Nightingale** was originally published as "*Nattergalen*" in 1843. Both the critics and the public liked this story, and it made its author even more successful. The story has been adapted and rewritten many times, including as a television drama and an animated film, but also unusually as a musical play, an opera called "*Le Rossignol*" by Stravinsky, followed by a ballet from his original score, with sets by Henri Matisse, and choreography by Léonide Massine.

Hans Christian Andersen always wrote using a very colloquial and informal style, which is one reason why

the critics did not like him (and also a reason why I would dearly have loved to like everything he wrote!) This one begins,

*"You know that in China the Emperor is Chinese, and all the people there are Chinese too. This story happened there a long time ago, which is all the more reason I should tell it to you now, before it is forgotten."*

It's the equivalent of *"Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin"* ... a chatty question, making a child feel as if they are the only one listening. You feel as if Hans Christian Andersen is sitting right there beside you, and you give him your complete attention.

The storyteller goes on to describe the Emperor's beautiful garden, admired by all who lived there. But what was most admired by everybody, was without question the nightingale,

*"who sang so sweetly that even the fisherman, with all his cares, would stop to listen ... 'It does my heart good to hear it,' he said"*

And all who heard the nightingale paused awhile, and said, *'That's the best of all.'*

Eventually the Emperor got to hear about the bird with the marvellous voice, famed for singing so sweetly in his garden. He sent various servants to find the bird, and the nightingale agreed to come to court and sing for the Emperor. The Emperor was so moved by the beauty of the nightingale's song, that he broke down and wept.

Even the Emperor of Japan got to hear about the wonderful nightingale, and sent a gift of an beautiful jewelled artificial bird. It was a mechanical bird, which sang the same song over and over again. The Emperor of China and his people liked it just as much - in fact even better - than the live nightingale, who sang in her natural way. They liked to be able to learn the song of the artificial bird. *'She keeps perfect time'* said the music master. *'She knows the rules'* ... The storyteller commented wryly,

*"This was the thirty-fourth time they had heard the very same tune; but it was a very complicated one so they didn't notice."*

Meanwhile the real living nightingale flew away, unnoticed, back to the green of the forest.

The Emperor invited lots of guests to hear his new bird, but eventually the mechanism broke. A watchmaker said regretfully that it was almost worn out, and that there was no fixing it. It could only be played a few more times. So the mechanical bird was allowed to sing just once a year.

For five years the whole empire sorrowed over the loss of the nightingale's song, even though the music master insisted that the artificial bird was singing as well as ever. The Emperor himself was now very ill and close to death. Things were looking so hopeless, that a new Emperor had been chosen in readiness.

Lying on his bed, the Emperor looked up and could see,

*Vilhelm Pedersen*

*"Death, wearing the Emperor's gold crown and holding in one hand the imperial sword and in the other the*

*imperial banner."*

(view spoiler)

**The Nightingale** was almost certainly inspired by the author's passion for the opera singer, Jenny Lind, later called "*The Swedish nightingale*",

Hans Christian Andersen had met her three years earlier in 1840, and fallen in love with her. Jenny Lind however, preferred to think of him as her brother. This tale is generally considered to be a tribute to her. In his 1847 autobiography, Hans Christian Andersen wrote,

*"Through Jenny Lind I first became sensible of the holiness of Art. Through her I learned that one must forget one's self in the service of the Supreme. No books, no men, have had a more ennobling influence upon me as a poet than Jenny Lind".*

Hans Christian Andersen's story was actually responsible for Jenny Lind's nickname of "*The Swedish Nightingale*", well before she became internationally famous. Ironically, the nightingale story became a reality for Jenny Lind, when she herself fell in love with the Polish composer Frederick Chopin, who suffered and later died from tuberculosis. Chopin wrote that he "*felt better*" when she sang for him. Jenny Lind raised funds for a tuberculosis hospital in London, and after his death devoted the rest of her life to enshrining Chopin's legacy.

As well as his imagination being fired by his love for Jenny Lind, Hans Christian Andersen may have been inspired by John Keats' poem, "*Ode to a Nightingale*" of 1819, which Keats wrote just after his brother's death from tuberculosis. The poem mentions both a nightingale and an Emperor,

*"Thou was not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down  
The Voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown".*

Keats was himself to die from tuberculosis two years later.

As well as the writing style of this story having a lovely intimate feel, the story also has a lot of humour. Hans Christian Andersen pokes fun at the servants who are so pompous, and at the ladies who try to gargle in their throats to imitate the nightingale's song, among other things. It is descriptive, imaginative, original and very whimsical. Apparently Oscar Wilde admired Hans Christian Andersen's stories, and this one clearly influenced some of Oscar Wilde's own fairy stories for children.

The story deals with both nature and Art. The natural world's artistry is far lovelier than an artificial substitute, and as time moves on, and we make more and more technological advances - sometimes at the expense of nature - this tale becomes yet more meaningful and poignant. But for all that, Hans Christian Andersen has written a beautiful, optimistic tale about life. It is a rare joy to read a story with such a positive slant by this author.

On now to "*The Ugly Duckling*". And I like that one too!

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## Abigail says

The Nightingale, illustrated by **Mary J. Newill**.

Originally published by D.B. Updike at the Merrymount Press in 1895, and then reprinted in this edition by R.H. Russell in 1898, this nineteenth-century retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Nightingale* features the translation of H.W. Dulcken, and the gorgeous engraving-style illustrations of Mary J. Newill.

A student at the Birmingham School of Art, and a participant in the late nineteenth, and early twentieth-century Arts and Crafts Movement, Newill was a well-known illustrator, stained glass designer, and embroiderer. Her landscape work was considered particularly fine, and won praise from figures such as Walter Crane.

The five plates contained in The Nightingale are simply beautiful: detailed, bold, compelling. Judged on artwork alone, this outstanding little gem of a book merits a five-star rating. Unfortunately, Dulcken's stiff, archaic-sounding translation - so very Victorian in style - detracted somewhat from my enjoyment. Still, Newill's illustrations are the real appeal here, and they do not disappoint. If they ever do publish a retrospective of her work, I'll be first on line to buy it!

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## Abigail says

The Nightingale, illustrated by **Beni Montresor**.

Italian artist Beni Montresor, who was awarded the Caldecott Medal in 1965 for Beatrice Schenk de Regniers' May I Bring a Friend?, turns his attention to Hans Christian Andersen in this picture-book retelling of *The Nightingale*. The story of the Emperor of China, who discovers the beauty to be found in nature - as embodied by the humble brown nightingale - it has been retold many times and interpreted by many artists.

This version of the tale is translated and adapted by Alan Benjamin, whose narrative is competent, but rather stiff and unexciting. Montresor's illustrations, which remind me a bit of Friso Henstra's work, have a

somewhat dated sensibility, and are not particularly appealing. Although ostensibly set in China, they sometimes felt very Western to me, which seems an odd criticism to level against artwork meant to accompany a European man's Chinese fantasy. Still, the story *is* set in China, and I would like the illustrations to convince me that that is where we are. Bagram Ibatoulline and Nancy Ekholm Burkert do a much better job in this respect, as do their respective translators, and I think most Andersen fans will gain more from looking at those editions, than from hunting down this out-of-print selection.

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### Ahmad Sharabiani says

Nattergalen = The Nightingale, Hans Christian Andersen

"The Nightingale" (Danish: "Nattergalen") is a literary fairy tale written by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen about an emperor who prefers the tinkling of a bejeweled mechanical bird to the song of a real nightingale. When the Emperor is near death, the nightingale's song restores his health. Well received upon its publication in Copenhagen in 1843 in *New Fairy Tales*, the tale is believed to have been inspired by the author's unrequited love for opera singer Jenny Lind, the "Swedish nightingale". The story has been adapted to opera, ballet, musical play, television drama and animated film.

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### Chelsey Ellice says

I enjoyed this fairy tale. I'd never read it before. I love how the nightingale comes back in the end and doesn't want a reward for doing something it loves and brings joy to it

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### Stacy says

Wonderful story with a good moral for children about how all that glitters is not gold. I enjoy this much myself.

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### Abigail says

The Nightingale, illustrated by **Nancy Ekholm Burkert**.



Like *The Little Mermaid* , or *The Ugly Duckling* (with which it was originally published in 1843), *The Nightingale* is one of Hans Christian Andersen's original fairy-tales, relating the story of the Emperor of China, who learns to value natural beauty above mechanized dazzle. Discovering that foreign visitors consider the humble nightingale - whose song he has never heard - the greatest treasure of his kingdom, the Emperor demands a performance. Enchanted at first with the bird's beautiful song, he soon finds a new favorite in a jewel-encrusted copy of the nightingale, sent to him by the Emperor of Japan. Which is superior: the flesh-and-blood bird, whose songs are beautiful but irregular, or the beautiful machine, whose one song is always perfect?

Interpreted in a number of different ways over the years, *The Nightingale* has, for me, always been most meaningful as an exploration of the idea that many of the things truly worth having - beauty, authenticity, truth - are not the sort of things that can be caged and put on display. This picture-book retelling, with an immensely readable text - translated by actress Eva La Gallienne - and gorgeous watercolor artwork by Nancy Ekholm Burkert, who also illustrated Andersen's *The Fir Tree*, is one of my favorites! I would say that it's just about tied with Bagram Ibatoulline's version as the best one out there.

## Riju Ganguly says

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