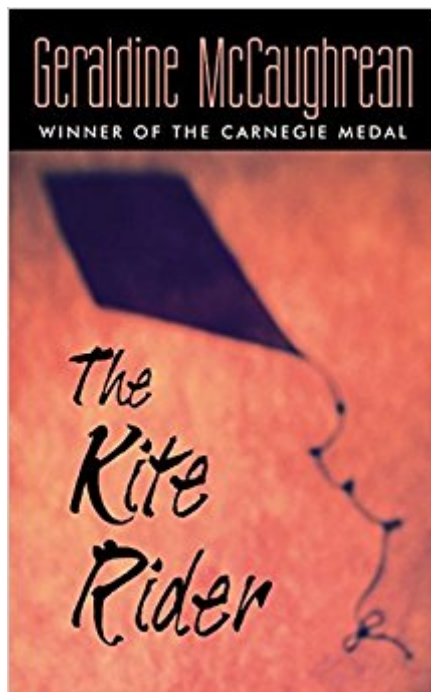


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The Kite Rider



Synopsis

Up and up the wind drew him. Haoyou looked about him and saw the whole world beneath him. And it was his. The Great Miao, master of the Jade Circus, offers Haoyou the amazing chance to escape his family's poverty -- by becoming a kite rider. Strapped onto a beautiful scarlet-and-gold kite, Haoyou is sent into the sky, earning money, freedom, and unexpected fame. Miao even plans for Haoyou to perform before Kublai Khan himself. From Carnegie Medalist Geraldine McCaughrean comes a dazzling story of adventure, betrayal, family, and sacrifice set in the dramatic world of thirteenth-century China.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With her exuberant, nonstop plotting and supremely colorful setting, McCaughrean (*The Stones Are Hatching*) grabs hold of readers' imaginations and doesn't let go. In 13th-century China, a 12-year-old boy prepares to say goodbye to his father, who is about to put to sea as a crew member of the Chabi, and to watch the testing of the wind, which involves strapping a man to a huge kite and seeing if it flies straight up (a good omen for the Chabi's voyage) or at a certain angle (foretelling danger). But almost before Haoyou knows what is happening, the first mate makes his father the wind-tester, and Haoyou looks on in horror as his father becomes a speck in the distant sky, then returns, lifeless, to earth. All this McCaughrean accomplishes in less than 10 pages, establishing a breakneck pace, which she maintains with seeming ease. The story takes Haoyou from his determined efforts to prevent the evil first mate from marrying his beautiful mother to his joining a traveling circus as a kite rider, mastering his father's tragedy as he himself flies skyward into what the circus-goers take to be the spirit world. Eventually the circus reaches the court of the Kublai

Khan, evoked here in splendor and awe. While Haoyou never becomes as compelling a character as those around him a spirit medium cousin, the circus master, Kublai Khan McCaughrean offers more than enough adventure, plot twists and exotic scenery to keep the audience fully engrossed. Ages 12-up. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 5-9-In 1281, the Chinese lived under a foreign emperor, Kublai Khan, whose nomadic Mongol warriors had just toppled the glorious Sung Dynasty. The pageant of changing dynasties is an epic backdrop for the story of 12-year-old Haoyou. After watching his father die, the boy must fend for himself and protect his widowed mother from their greedy, overbearing uncle and a suitor responsible for his father's death. With his cousin Mipeng, Haoyou joins a traveling circus headed by the mysterious, charismatic Miao Jie. The cousins create a popular and profitable act as Haoyou, strapped to the crossbars of a kite, rides the winds high in the sky, where, gullible villagers believe, he can speak to spirits. Written in a rich vocabulary saturated with metaphor, McCaughrean's account of Haoyou's journey from innocence to experience is driven by a plot that sweeps readers along like the famous kamikaze wind that nearly kills the boy and destroys a fleet sent by Kublai Khan to invade Japan. Readers ride the winds with Haoyou, thanks to the author's vivid, realistic re-creation of his thrilling but terrifying flights. Her deliberate, shifting focus straddles insider and outsider, Mongol and Chinese, earth and sky, and life and death. Ultimately, the characters transcend all boundaries as their common humanity touches readers' hearts. Margaret A. Chang, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, North Adams Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

What a lovely story and so well-written! I was engaged from the first page forward. I couldn't put it down and my children loved it as well. Excellent, excellent read.

It was a wonderful book. The story was interesting and original. The characters were believable. Because it passed my test against smut and disrespectful young characters, I'll send it to my 10-year-old grandson.

Awesome book, my sixth grader had to read the book as a school project but he really enjoyed the book very much. I think he read it in like two days.

This is one of the worst children's books I've ever read. The characters are like caricatures--honestly, this was a comic book or graphic novel without the graphics. The writing is awkward and clumsy, and the plot is flimsy and unsatisfying.

I always have a hard time convincing students to read this wonderful adventure epic. I think it is the length, and its historical setting (China during the Mongol Dynasty) doesn't sound exciting. Kite Rider, though, is a thrill ride of great literature. Students who take on the challenge are enthralled with the young Hoyou, who while just trying to support his family, finds himself at the center of a natural disaster, a kidnapping, a hurricane, a clan war, a family feud, and an organized crime syndicate seeking revenge. Whew! This is an excellent novel for teaching students to read slowly and really think about the writing and the words. It is also a good choice to use with the CCC standards for ancient civilizations and for historical fiction. A masterpiece.

This story will interest young people and adults in learning about the era of Kubla Kahn. It is a page turner for sure. This society, where the women and young people must follow their elders no matter how dishonest and awful those elders are, is so different from ours. What an amazing and curious society it was. I think this book should be required.

Unlike most stories where the hero faces one evil person or group, *The Kite Rider* by Geraldine McCaughrean pits the hero, Haoyou, against two unassociated malevolent individuals. This exciting story takes place in 13th century China, where Di Chou, a sailor, kills Haoyou's father in the hopes of marrying his wife, Qing'an, and sets fire to Haoyou's house. At this point, Haoyou and his mother move into Haoyou's great uncle Bo's house. Bo forces Haoyou's mother to work in a drinking house, locked up in the cellar and away from sunlight for months at a time to pay for his gambling addiction. Haoyou and his cousin, Mipeng, set out to stop Di Chou by sending him and his evil plans on a sea voyage. However, Haoyou must bribe the ship's crew to get them to take Di Chou on board. He agrees to be a wind tester - a dangerous job where Haoyou is strapped to a kite and propelled upwards into the wind to test to see if the ship's voyage will be successful. Haoyou wanted so much for his mother to be saved from the man who killed his father that he found the courage to risk his own life. After a man in the crowd sees Haoyou's skill as a wind tester, he approaches Haoyou's great-uncle Bo to ask that Haoyou join the circus. Bo gives Haoyou and Mipeng to the circus in the hopes of them earning money for him to gamble away. When Haoyou and Mipeng begin to earn money in the circus, Haoyou's uncle Bo is there, ready to take it away from them.

Haoyou faces a difficult decision - should he be obedient and respect his elders as is correct in 13th century China, or go against everything he has been taught and save the money for his mother and himself? This exciting and suspenseful story about Haoyou's quest to save his mother from Di Chou and his own family is sure to keep you turning page after page.

So, who's worse--the guy who kills your father and then burns up your house and livelihood in order to get his paws on your beautiful mother, or the great uncle who is doing his best to sell off that beautiful mother to the killer? And what has Kublai Kahn got to do with this historic adventure story that poses the question to teenagers--What if you are taught to always obey your relatives and those relatives make the Dursleys look like Ozzy and Harriet? Haoyou is the boy living this nightmare, adrift in a sea of tradition, obedience, and superstition, who takes the daring gamble of offering himself as a wind tester: "...Again the crew tugged on the rope, to tilt it back into the face of the wind. Haoyou's head cracked against the matting, and the rope handles burned the skin off his palms. He could hear the fibers of the rope creaking under the strain, his ribs bending inward where the harness crossed his chest. Perhaps his kite would burst apart. Perhaps there would be no air at all to breathe at the top of the sky" The key to this riveting story set in thirteenth century Cathay (China) is a strong, cunning, heroic female character--a distant relative named Mipeng. I was continually touched and astounded by her bravery and intelligence as well as her friendship and support of Haoyou. She is fiercely determined to strip that blindfold of obedience from his eyes. "And all at once, as if fear were a cloud layer through which he had risen, Haoyou looked about him and saw the whole world beneath him. And it was his. Like a silver shield daubed with blue and green, it throbbed, convex, complex, beautiful. He was a swimmer floating on the surface of an ocean, borne up by such a clarity of water that he could see each sunken treasure, each darting fish, each twist of coral down there in the unbreathing fathoms below. He, out of all its sluggish inhabitants, could breathe! He alone had mastery over this shining province so beautiful that it spangled red and black and green in front of his eyes." It is also fascinating to get such a vivid taste, vision, and smell of the Cathay encountered by Marco Polo--from the grimy, oily seaside villages to the opulence of the aforementioned Mongol conqueror. And it's a rare adventure story that could top that feeling McCaughrean gives us in THE KITE RIDER--of flying hundreds of feet in the air, over a land of long ago, anchored to Mother Earth by a kitestring.

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