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Rikki-Tikki-Tavi



Synopsis

Here is the thrilling story of Rikki, a fearless young mongoose who finds himself locked in a life-and-death struggle to protect a boy and his parents from Nag and Nagaina, the two enormous cobras who stalk the gardens outside the family's home in India. Nobel Prize winner Rudyard Kipling's timeless masterpiece has been lovingly passed from one generation of readers to the next. Triumphant brought to life in stunning watercolors from Caldecott Honor artist Jerry Pinkney, this is a tale that will win the hearts of young and old alike.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD810L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 48 pages

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Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (1,109 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 3

Customer Reviews

This has been rewritten to dumb it down. The beautiful language originally used by him has been replaced with dumber versions, and entire paragraphs have been removed. As someone who read and loved the original story as a child, I was very disappointed to see this when I began reading it to my 7 year old son.

There are two schools of thought regarding illustrated adaptations of literary classics. One school holds that stories that are simplified for early listeners can be ruined in the process, because the listener's first experience doesn't contain the beauty and depth of the original. The second school holds that well-written adaptations can serve as stepping-stones to original works, making them

more accessible. I am still between the two camps, but in making decisions about specific classic titles I ask two questions: 1. Is the story content appropriate for a reading level that can't yet master the language in the original? If not, it's probably better to wait until a child is linguistically and emotionally ready for the original. 2. Is the quality of the adaptation high enough that it entices, rather than discourages, readers to explore further? If it can't stand on its own merit but only piggybacks on the original's popularity, it may cause the reader to associate the original with mediocrity. The answer to question 1 will be different for different families and readers. I would say that Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, a young Indian mongoose who is adopted by a British family and drives the venomous snakes out of their home and garden, may appeal more to boys than girls, and parents of sensitive children should certainly screen this book since it contains dramatic animal violence, multiple attempted murders by talking snakes (in one of these a child is threatened), and Rikki-Tikki's merciless execution of many cobras in their eggs. But this story is a classic for good reason: Rikki-Tikki exemplifies courage, loyalty, defending the helpless, and a relentless commitment to oppose the evil snakes regardless of the cost. Every child will want a pet mongoose after experiencing this story. As for question 2, Pinkney's adaptation uses modern language, retaining almost none of Kipling's masterful language, but telling the story very well. What really makes this book are his lavish, exuberant watercolor paintings which draw the reader in and dramatize the story in a very vivid way. I recommend this story for children who are able to tolerate suspense and conflict, who have no reptile phobias, and who are transitioning out of the picture-book stage but are not yet ready for Kipling's sometimes challenging language. Although this book could stand on its own as a part of a home library, I recommend that it ought to be followed very closely by a version with the original language. Once the story is understood, this method will provide a great opportunity for vocabulary expansion and an appreciation of more elevated prose.

As a child, I grew up with Kipling stories. My mother would read me "Just So Stories" and selections from the surprisingly long and complex, "Jungle Book" when I was just a wee lass. And had this lush and lovely version of "Rikki-tikki-tavi" been available to me when I was a kid, I've little doubt that I'd have devoured it just as readily as I did tales like, "How the Elephant Got His Trunk". Though I missed out on "Rikki-tikki-tavi" the written tale, I did take great pleasure in the 1975 Chuck Jones animated (with voices by Orson Wells and June Foray) faithful film of the same story. For those of you eager to instill in your children a sharp jolt of Kipling to the veins, I suggest you start them out on "Rikki", both the film and this lovely picture book, then move on slowly to "Just So Stories" and finally, "The Jungle Book" (but not THAT film). Then, years later, when you're trying to get them to

read "Stalkey and Company", you'll have already hooked 'em young."This is the story of the great war that Rikki-tikki-tavi fought, all by himself, through the English family's house in India". After finding a half-drowned mongoose outside his home, a young boy named Teddy and his family take in the little creature and nurse him to health. A naturally curious creature, the mongoose (named, you must have guessed, Rikki-tikki-tavi for the sounds he makes) explores the home and decides to stay. Good thing that he does too. Lurking in the garden is the deadly cobra Nag and his wife Nagaina. The snakes determine that Rikki is a threat to their unhatched children and decide that if the family dies then Rikki will leave the area. Now Rikki, with the help of the tailor birds Darzee and his wife, must defeat the snakes and defend the family that was kind enough to take him in. Like "The Secret Garden", this is one of those early children's books that taught me a heckuva lot about British colonialism. When I was a kid, I just could not figure out what the English were doing in India in books like this one. Now, there's little doubt that the danger the family faces mostly comes from the fact that Rikki was in their house in the first place. Nag and Nagaina only plan to kill the family because they believe that Rikki will leave if they do. One element to this tale that I enjoyed was the role that the female creatures take in it. Admittedly, Teddy's mother is so faint of heart that she, "wouldn't think of anything so awful", as the possibility of a snake in her boy's bedroom. But Nagaina is far more powerful than her husband and Darzee's wife (who, unfortunately, hasn't a name of her own) is the one who helps Rikki out in the end. Not her silly hubby. By the way, someone should let the tailor birds know that when a mongoose is hungry and isn't eating snakes, its next favorite food is bird eggs. If you don't believe me, ask someone from Hawaii sometime. The release of mongoose in Hawaii (to combat the rats) not only decimated the reptiles but also severely reduced the native bird populations. Just FYI. It is true that Pinkney has edited down and simplified the words of Kipling's original tale to make it more palatable to young ears. Far more criminal than the editing though is the fact that Pinkney makes NO mention of the fact that he has done so anywhere in the book. I've scoured the publication page, title page, and bookflaps for Pinkney's explanation of the change. Nuthin'. For those first time "Tikki" readers, this version will strike them as being the original Kipling text. Pinkney could have at least admitted the changes he made. That he didn't is irresponsible. Otherwise, it's hard to object to this book. The illustrations are classic Pinkney with Rikki a very realistic (and not particularly cute) mongoose. Knowing Pinkney's fine attention to detail, I wouldn't put it past him to have carefully researched the kinds of plants, birds, and snakes found in India for these lush watercolors. The clothing of the human characters definitely doesn't belong to the days of Kipling, of course. They look far more contemporary, which is fine. The nice thing about "Rikki-tikki-tavi" is that it can really belong to any era. This is a story that

has always been, and will always remain, a classic in the hearts and minds of children everywhere. Pinkney is not the first children's illustrator to adapt this tale. That honor may fall to Lambert Davis. If you are looking for a version of this tale that has NOT been edited down, locate the Davis version (which .com has inexplicably linked to the Pinkney reviews). Otherwise, for superior pictures and a gripping tale, Pinkney's the man to turn to. A wonderful tale and an even better mongoose.

In college I had to memorize parts of this story and had to tell the story in speech class. I love the way this story rolls off the tongue so it is definitely a story to read out loud. The plot is simple but the message is comforting. Basically you have a mongoose who is found half dead and is revived and brought back to health. Then you have a boy who becomes friends with the mongoose. The mongoose, Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, is a very clever animal who knows how to kill snakes. He takes on numerous snakes in this story and also kills baby snakes before they can hatch. So basically a lot of snakes die in this story. If you love snakes you won't want to read this but if like me you lived in Africa then you will know how you can fear them. My dad once killed a cobra in our kitchen. I would have loved to have a mongoose as a pet to protect our family. That is exactly what the mongoose in this story does. Therefore it is comforting.~The Rebecca Review

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